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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Sara Dianne Ray entitled “Developing Comic Book and Graphic Novel Collections in Libraries.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Information Sciences.

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DEVELOPING COMIC BOOK AND GRAPHIC NOVEL COLLECTIONS IN LIBRARIES

A Thesis Presented for the
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Degree
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ABSTRACT

This research study has several objectives. The first is to research graphic novels and comic books, their history and the issues this visual and literary medium has had with censorship, with preconceived notions that the medium is only meant for a juvenile audience, and with the development of rating standards. The second objective is to study current literature that has been written by scholars and librarians on this medium. This exploration of graphic novels and comic books and the scholarship and collection development efforts related to them provides a foundation for considering the issues and challenges which current and future librarians may have to face, in maintaining this literary form in library collections. The third objective is to conduct a focus group and to survey librarians in Tennessee from a range of backgrounds in order to consider a number of questions, including: if these librarians have encountered patrons who challenged having these books included in their institutions' collections, what age range the surveyed librarians believe this medium is meant to appeal to, and how the librarians would rate content in comic books and graphic novels; such as, violence, language, sexual activity, etc.; including terms used by publishers in their rating standards to describe different levels of content.

The results from this study showed there was quite a difference between what librarians feel is appropriate for the levels they were given and the types of content; with there being usually at least a 2 - 3 year age difference between the top two to three options chosen or there being a difference between the participants selecting an age range and selecting either "All Ages" or "None" as appropriate. The literature research and the data obtained from the survey along with the responses received from the focus group indicate that, since the majority of participants stated they "sometimes" experienced selection difficulties and problems with cataloging and shelving these books, picking an appropriate age range for a comic book or graphic novel is very subjective and librarians and publishers are still a long way away from agreeing on the appropriateness of the content.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

There has been concern from librarians and other groups about the content in comic books and graphic novels and whether that content is suitable for young children. Several articles discuss the mature content in graphic novels and comic books, but also note that the view that these materials are meant solely for children and teen audiences still persists among a significant majority of people (Ellis and Highsmith 21; Lavin 41; Highsmith 60; Micciche 5; Raiteri 58). Comic books have been denied the respect that the medium deserves and have been relegated to only being of interest to juvenile audiences; at the same time there has been concern that these books are corrupting America's youth. This medium is deemed by many as targeted to children and teens, possibly because it is misconstrued with comic strips, the pictorial aspect of the medium, etc. Furthermore, graphic novels and comic books have frequently been viewed as corrupting their youth audiences with violent, sexual or other types of mature content. However, the problem should not be with the content contained in these books, but rather with expanding people's understanding of the complexity of the medium. By looking at the content of these materials and at the current rating standards used by publishers, this research will hopefully help to diminish the misconception that this medium should be limited to only children and teenage audiences among library professionals and demonstrate the value of keeping these books in libraries. Librarians need to make sure they are providing these materials for all of their patrons and not just a select age group. Libraries should focus not only on providing these popular fiction items for children and young adults, but also must look into titles for mature audiences; in order to provide these books for their entire community.

In recent years, while there are still an abundant number of comic books and graphic novels published which are targeted at children and teen audiences, there are also many American, European comics, and the popular Japanese manga (Japanese word for comic) published aimed at drawing interest from adult audiences. Librarians must take extra care to identify comics and graphic novels that are aimed at older audiences, in order to keep those titles in sections separate from juvenile titles. In considering the difference between juvenile, teen/young adult and adult titles; Steve Raiteri published an article in *Library Journal* regarding graphic novels and the issue of maintaining young adult and adult collections in libraries. Raiteri mentions there can be some overlap between these collections, in that some titles can have appeal to both juveniles and young adults and some to young adults and adults. He clarifies the difference between “young adult” and “adult” collections by making the statement that young adult collections are usually meant for teens between the ages of 12-18, therefore indicating that adult collections would be books meant to appeal to adults 18 and up and juvenile titles would be anything meant for children under the age of 12 (Raiteri 94). A graphic novel such as *Watchmen* by Alan Moore is not meant for the same audience as a comic book released from the DC Kids line of comics, even though they are both the same medium, so these books should be kept in separate sections of a library. If these books were not kept in separate sections of the library, it could lead to challenges from patrons.

Due to the explicit content that can sometimes appear in these books, some librarians have been concerned about where to keep comic books and graphic novels in their institutions, and how to determine which books are created for adult audiences, which for juvenile audiences, and which might draw the interest of both. One source

that librarians can use to help determine the placement of these books in their collections are the rating standards placed on the books by publishers. Understanding these ratings, librarians can then better determine if those rating standards match local community standards.

While American publishers have taken steps to put ratings and age appropriate guides on graphic novels and on some comic books, there is still prevalent belief throughout the country that comic books and graphic novels only appeal to children and teen audiences. There are also questions about whether the rating standards publishers have created match the rating standards that librarians, educators, and even parents would apply to certain texts. By noting how closely (or how differently) publishers' standards match the standards of librarians', this research will help librarians to compare mature and young adult graphic novel and comic books to help them when developing these collections and determining their placement in their institutions. Comparing publishers' rating standards to librarians' standards will determine how closely these align; thereby, providing helpful data for librarians to follow when developing adult and juvenile graphic novel and comic book collections, in other words, librarians will know how closely they can rely on the ratings provided by publishers. To provide a context for understanding the relationship between libraries, collection development, and graphic novels and comic books, this research project first discusses the history of the medium and of rating standards for it.

Comic Books and Graphic Novels – Terminology, Genres

Many people have trouble distinguishing between a comic book and a graphic novel. During the course of my research, I found several definitions for comic books

and graphic novels. Doug Highsmith defines a comic book as “a story-telling/communications medium; one which traditionally combines graphic art with narrative prose” (Highsmith 60). Katy Foster’s definition of a comic book is similar. According to Foster, “Stories told in both pictorial and word form are considered comics. Comic books are episodic stories” (Foster 30). Jane Griffin defines a graphic novel as “a self-contained story, printed with a heavy paper cover and better quality paper.” Lila Christenson’s definition for graphic novels are “stand-alone stories told in comic book format” (Christenson 227). From these definitions, it seems that both comic books and graphic novels are stories told with text and pictures, but comics tend to be ongoing stories, while graphic novels are usually “self-contained.” Another format that can be confused with the other two terms is a trade paperback, which is defined by Griffin as, “a collection of reprinted stories, rarely original stories. It can be an anthology or a series that encompasses one story line” (Griffin 73).

The genres for comic books and graphic novels are also varied. Many librarians and experts on this form listed several different genres, some of those being superhero stories, manga, war, romance, horror, crime, jungle stories, sci-fi, western, adventure and nonfiction graphic novels. The two most well-known of these genres are superhero stories and manga.

American Comic Book Eras

In order to understand comic books today, it is important to study the development of the medium. Fans and historians of comic books have created their own era system to describe the significant changes in both content and art that have taken place in these books from their beginnings to now. Though the beginning and ending

points for the comic book eras may be a point of dissension between comic book fans (as discussed below), there are significant factors that distinguish these comic book eras from each other. According to the different sources that were reviewed, the Superhero genre is sorted into the Platinum Age, the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age (though there is some debate on whether this age exists) and the Modern Age, sometimes also referred to as the Iron Age. According to David Serchay, author of *The Librarian's Guide to Graphic Novels for Children and Tweens*, the “Platinum Age” refers to the period of comic book publishing from 1842 to 1933, though Terrence Wandtke, author of *The Amazing Transforming Superhero! Essays on the Revision of characters in Comic Books, Film and Television*, does not even mention this age in his book (Serchay 3). The Golden Age has several different beginning and ending points, depending on which source is consulted. Terrence Wandtke refers to the Golden Age as lasting from the late 1930s and ending in the late 1950s, also claiming that the Golden Age “represents Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and a wide array of others created or purchased by the company that would come to be known as DC Comics” (Wandtke 28). In comparison, Serchay said the Golden Age lasted from 1935 to 1949. According to David Serchay, the beginning of the Silver Age was in 1956 when the character Flash appeared in the comic book Showcase # 4 until this age ended “anywhere between 1969 and 1985” (Serchay 4, 84). Arie Kaplan, author of *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books*, agreed with Serchay on the beginning of the Silver Age being in 1956 with the arrival of the “new Flash” (Kaplan 213). Wandtke refers to the Silver Age as representing “Spiderman, the Hulk, and The Fantastic Four, and a wide array of others owned by Marvel Comics” (Wandtke 28). According to Serchay, “the names and

periods of the other ages have been debated among comic fans and historians” (Serchay 4). Wandtke refers to a third era, which he calls the Modern Age, and which he states are the comics of the 1980s. He does mention that this may sometimes be referred to as the Bronze Age, as well as, the “Dark Age” (Wandtke 28). Kaplan refers to the Bronze Age as starting in 1978 with the publication of *A Contract with God*, by Will Eisner, “considered by many to be the first modern graphic novel. The creation of the graphic novel officially puts the lid on the Silver Age of Comics and beckons the Bronze Age of Comics, which is still underway” (Kaplan 214). However, as Serchay said there is some debate on whether or not comic books are still in the Bronze age. According to RandomHistory.com, the Bronze Age lasted from 1971-1980 and there have been two other ages following it; “Iron (1980-1987), and Modern (1987-present)” (RandomHistory.com).

Manga Formats

Manga has become very popular in recent years, so it is important that librarians become familiar with this type of comic and its appeal to people of all ages. While manga is sometimes referred to as a genre, it is actually the Japanese word for comic. According to Frederik Schodt, it is “the most common form of Japanese comic today is the story-comic. It is first serialized in comic magazines and then compiled into books, and in its entirety may be thousands of pages long” (Schodt 12). According to Paul Gravett in his book, *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics*, he states that:

“Manga are not comics, at least not as most people know them in the West. The Japanese have liberated the medium’s language from the confining formats and genres of the daily newspaper strip or the 32-page

American comic book, and expanded its potential to embrace long, free-form narratives on almost every subject, for both sexes and almost every age and social group” (Gravett 10-12).

Adam Schwartz and Eliane Rubinstein-Avila wrote an article *Understanding the manga hype: Uncovering the multimodality of comic-book literacies* about the growing popularity of this medium and the need for educators to recognize this trend. The authors provide two reasons why educators’ should note this trend, which included “the comics’ sheer popularity – evident by the sale of manga across the United States” and “the unique multimodal reading that manga seem to demand” (Schwartz and Rubinstein-Avila 41). There is a mixture of manga genres and they include ninjas, romance, science-fiction, mystery, magical girl, and more. In her discussion of manga genres, Robin Brenner stated, “in Japan the elements of genre are so regularly broken apart and recombined in new ways that it’s rare to find a title that remains purely one genre. For new readers, this shift from genre to genre, and attitude to attitude, feels uncomfortable and confusing; for manga readers it is all part of the appeal” (Brenner 107-108). The genres of manga are so vast and varied, it would be difficult to go into complete details on each of them, especially since so many of them coincide. However, Brenner provides a very informative section in her book on anime and manga explaining the way that the Japanese create manga specifically for girls and boys and also for juvenile and adult audiences. According to Brenner, there is Kodomo Manga for children, Shonen Manga for boys 12-18 yrs of age, Seinen Manga for men, Shojo Manga for girls 12-18 yrs of age, Josei Manga for women, and finally there is Ero or Hentai Manga, which are pornographic comics (Brenner 31-38).

American – History

Concerns regarding the content found in comic books and the medium's possible influences on young people occurred almost from their founding. As Paul Lopes notes in his article, *Culture and Stigma: Popular Culture and the Case of Comic Books*, “Comic books have been stigmatized since their introduction in the mid-1930s, and this stigma has affected comic books as well as artists, readers, and fans of comics” (Lopes 388). Modern American comic books (modern referring to its format) did not make an appearance until *Funnies on Parade* was published in 1933, though American comic strips had been around since the *Yellow Kid* was published in the *New York World* in the 1890s (Daniels 2). It was soon followed by *Action Comics* in 1938, which featured the first appearance of Superman (Kaplan 212). At this time, there were no restrictions on the content of these books, so violence and sexual themes were prevalent in many comic books. There were comic books available in numerous genres, from romance, to western, science fiction, war comics and more. According to Allen Ellis and Doug Highsmith in *About Face: Comic Books in Library Literature*, comic books reached “the peak of comics’ Golden Age popularity” around the time of World War II and at this time it was “very much a part of the fabric of daily life for most American families – voraciously consumed by boys and girls of all ages, as well as by a fair number of adults” (Ellis and Highsmith 23).

Many researchers in this field have identified factors that explain why comic books came under fire and why the Comic Code Authority was eventually established. Most critics of comic books at this time could not find any redeeming qualities in comic books. According to Bradford Wright, “Critics charged that comic books caused

eyestrain, promoted illiteracy, celebrated bad taste, and encouraged anti-social behavior in children” (Wright 86). Cultural elites derided this new form of popular culture and this battle against comic books also occurred on a generational level. As Ellis and Highsmith note in their study on the library literature written about comic books from the 1940s to the 1990s, “A dismissive, often actively hostile, attitude toward the comics medium was accepted as a matter of course by many members of the academic community – with a substantial number of librarians among them” (Ellis and Highsmith 21). The chief assumption about comic books that led to the creation of the Comic Code Authority was that these books were children’s’ reading material. Many of the genres for comic books that had become popular in the years prior to the establishment of the code, such as crime and jungle stories, had content that was of a more mature nature. Bradford Wright, in his book *Comic Book Nation*, discusses the comic book industry’s superhero beginnings and its expansion into other genres such as jungle stories and crime stories. In his discussion of crime stories, the author mentions the excessive violence that was featured in these books. However, he stated, “Whatever might be said about their moral values, these crime comic books marked an important stage in the evolution of the industry and youth culture. By demonstrating that successful comic books need not be confined to juvenile adventure stories, fatuous teen humor, and talking animals, they expanded the creative possibilities of the medium considerably” (Wright 84). However, because of the escalation in violence and sexual content that occurred in the years leading up to the establishment of the Code, critics of the medium argued that comic books were not appropriate for children and were the reason for the rise in juvenile delinquency.

The American public at this time was afraid of change and afraid of the effects that certain media would have on America's youth. Comic books were not the first media that was targeted by educators, librarians, and parents. Amy Nyberg in her book, *Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code*, discusses how dime novels, comic strips and film also were targeted by certain audiences for fear that they were a corrupting influence on the youth of America. Criticism from the public and the Catholic Church led the film industry to create its own rating system, the Production Code Administration in 1934, in order to prevent federal censorship or religious groups from attempting to target certain films for boycotting (Nyberg 3). This Code, which was established to censor content in movies, stayed in force until 1968 when the Motion Pictures Association of America (MPAA) discontinued the code in favor of the MPAA rating system still in effect today (MPAA.org). The establishment of this code set a precedent for the government to take steps later to censor comic book publishers and also led publishers to establish their own guidelines in order to prevent interference from the government. Comic publishers first established the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers Comics Code (ACMP) on July 1, 1948, due to pronounced criticism of the medium and its content. Some major publishers already had their own codes, established by advisory committees, such as the ones used by National Comics Publications and Fawcett Publications (Nyberg 106-107).

Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist, beyond writing the book *Seduction of the Innocent*, also wrote several other articles that claimed that comic books were detrimental to the psyches of children and participated in the Senate hearings on comic

books. David Park, points out in his article discussing the hearings against comic books, that:

“It is important to note that these condemnations of the comics were not based on scientific evidence. Instead of stating what effects such material could have on children, most critics in the popular periodicals allowed descriptions of indecent content to speak for themselves. Implicit in their arguments was a presumed consensus of disgust. The problem with comics could be exposed by merely describing the content; there was no need to establish a relationship between this content and the reader’s behavior” (Park 263).

As the uproar against comic books grew, the federal government finally stepped in and in spring 1954 the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency met to study the comic book industry and its effects on America’s youth. Though there were specialists called in who defended comic books, with detractors such as Fredric Wertham in the majority comic book publishers were forced to create their own “decency” guidelines for the content in comic books (Nyberg 53).

After ACMP’s code failed due to lack of participation by major publishers and lack of funds and the Senate hearings, comic publishers formed the Comics Magazine Association of America, which established the Comics Code Authority on September 16, 1954 and started enforcing the new code on October 26, 1954 due to pressure from the government and also further criticism from several sources – the most notable of them being Fredric Wertham in his book *Seduction of the Innocent* (Kaplan 77; Reitburger and Fuchs 136; Nyberg 35, 83). This new “Code” voluntarily and severely

limited the content that would be portrayed in comic books and many genres (e.g. horror comics) and publishers disappeared because of its creation. The 1954 Comic Code was revised in both 1971 and 1989 and specifics of the code will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter. Once the Comic Code was established, mainstream publishers focused mostly on the superhero or super-heroine genre, though there were alternative or underground comic book publishers that still printed titles outside of this genre without the stamp of approval of the Comic Code Authority. William Savage, in his book, *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954*, describes the history and reasons behind the creation of the Comic Code Authority. He admits that critics like Wertham, while not using scientific means to justify their derision for the comic book medium; were “on target with regard to the excesses of comic-book publishers.” However, he states later that, “Industry compliance with the provisions of the Comics Code ended what has since come to be known as the “golden age” of the comic book and, some have claimed, destroyed the creativity of the medium” (Savage 96, 99-100).

Outside of these mainstream comic book publishers, there are independent comic book publishers, such as Image, Dark Horse and Acclaim, although Image Comics has become so successful that it is slowly becoming thought of as a mainstream publisher. Between 1968 and 1975, a genre of underground comics referred to as commix emerged. The spelling change was made “both to set them apart, and to emphasize the ‘x’ for X-rated” (Sabin 128). This movement in America later inspired a similar movement to take place in Britain. This movement mainly evolved as a form of protest against the established Comic Code Authority. As Sabin states in his book *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels*,

“Where the Code had stipulated ‘no violence’, ‘no sex’, ‘no drugs’, and ‘no social relevance’, the underground comix would indulge themselves to the maximum in every category. If the Code meant, essentially, that a comic was prevented from saying anything meaningful about the real world, then by defying it this possibility was reawakened” (Sabin 128).

These books took their content to extreme levels, featuring explicit sexual activity, horror, violence, but also addressing women’s political issues such as sexism and abortion. While underground comics eventually lost their appeal in the late 1970s, from them sprang the new alternative comics. According to Sabin, “The underground had shown that a comic need not be restricted to any particular age group, art style or subject matter, and had established a completely new economic rationale for creators. Both these achievements revolutionized comics, alternative and, to an extent, mainstream, forever” (Sabin 128). After the revisions of the Comic Code in 1971 and 1989, some publishers began establishing lines for adult comics and started breaking away from the Comic Code. One of the two major comic book publishers, Marvel Comics, broke away from the Comic Code entirely in 2001 and established their own rating system (Dean archives.tcj.com; Yarbrough comicbookresources.com; Weiland comicbookresources.com). Now, only a few publishers still submit comic books for Comic Code approval and only for their juvenile lines.

Since their creation, American comic books have faced disdain from the general public and the academic community, censorship from the government and publishers, and many genres have come and gone, but the comic book format has survived, evolved into other forms, such as the graphic novel, and has begun to be recognized for all its

literary, cultural, and artistic characteristics. There was a belief in the past that comic books are a bad influence on youth, have no literary or artistic benefit, and condone and even encourage violent behaviors and criminal tendencies. Many studies have been conducted to establish this supposed “harmful” effect that comic books have on our youth. This will be looked at in more detail later in this paper.

Japanese History

Another issue that librarians are facing is that comic books and graphic novels from other countries are now being translated and released in America. However, unlike their American counterparts, although European and Asian comic books and graphic novels may have faced derision and censorship in the past they have been widely accepted for years as appealing to adult, teen and juvenile audiences (Raiteri 58; Reitberger and Fuchs 185; Schodt 51, 56). When these materials are brought over to America, are publishers rating them based on our cultural standards or on the countries’ of origins rating standards? Because of foreign titles possibly being more mature than what American audiences are used, they may need to be carefully considered before determining their placement in libraries to make sure that they are placed in the appropriate audience section based on the maturity of the content. Paul Gravett in his book, *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics* discusses some of this mature content and notes that, “(manga) can indeed be ‘irresponsible’, irredeemably so, often the products of largely unfettered individual minds allowed to respond to the moment and to their readers’ desires” (Gravett 9). Gravett also talks about the audience for these books in Japan where these books are not only written for children and young adults, but also for adult men and women (Gravett 116 – 119). Japanese manga publishers make a point

to publish titles in genres that will appeal to adult readers. There is also a difference in the maturity of the content between American, European and Asian comics/manga. Because other countries have different ages of consent and cultural standards, aspects of their content may be more explicit than what is acceptable in American comic books and graphic novels. In her book, *Understanding Manga and Anime*, Brenner comments on those cultural differences and states, “In some ways, Japanese age ranges may not fit U.S. standards. The nudity or sexual humor and slapstick the Japanese consider appropriate for younger readers would be considered vulgar or risqué here. In Japan, such incidents are considered part of human nature, not to be ashamed of, and often provide ripe targets for jokes” (Brenner 38).

The Japanese people have had a long history of expressing themselves with visual art. From Bishop Toba’s first work of cartooning in the 12th century on scrolls, the Japanese moved on to other forms of visual art such as Zen pictures and woodblock prints and then finally into more comic book forms of art (Schodt 28, 36). Some of these styles involved expanding on the idea of woodblock prints by binding many pictures together with thread and then in the 18th century, the creation of *kibyoshi* “yellow-cover” booklets, which consisted of “monochrome prints and captions that told stories, often published as a series” (Schodt 37), *Toba-e* which refers to “collections of pictures showing comical situations using visual humour and minimal text,” and finally the *ukiyo-zoshi*, which “featured pictures containing additional dialogue not found in the main text” (Gravett 20). While Katsushika Hokusai, a print artist, actually invented the word “manga” in 1814 (he meant the term to describe “looser, unself-conscious sketches in which he could lay with exaggeration, the essence of caricature” (Gravett 21), the

kind of manga that is present today really had its beginnings from work created by artists during the Meiji period from 1868-1912 (Gravett 21).

The Japanese were introduced to European cartooning and comic art techniques by two men. The first was Charles Wirgman (1835-91), an English artist and correspondent in Japan for the *Illustrated London News*, who created *The Japan Punch* in 1862, which was a humor magazine published for foreigners living in Yokohama. The second man was George Bigot (1860-1927), who was a Frenchman who not only taught art in Japan at an army officer's school, but also, like Wirgman, started his own satirical magazine named *Tobae* focused on issues related to both Japan's society and government. American comic strips and political cartoons also influenced the Japanese, with some actually becoming serialized later in Japan. However, Japan's own comic industry was flourishing, so while foreign publications did draw interest, they in no way matched the popularity of Japanese comics. Some of the Japanese comic strips and comics became so popular they were later released in book form. Starting in the 1930s, comic magazines began releasing longer comic stories and then re-releasing these comics in book form and this is how Japanese manga is still released today (Schodt 38–54). After World War II, Osamu Tezuka (1928-89) created his first comic, *Shintakarajima* ("New Treasure Island"), that at the same time created a new comic style and started a comic revolution. As Schodt describes it in his book *Manga!* "*Shintakarajima* was 200 pages long. Its creative page layout, clever use of sound effects, and lavish spread of frames to depict a single action made reading *Shintakarajima* almost like watching a movie" (Schodt 62). This style of comic became so popular, that Tezuka released several more comics in this style and it was adopted by

several other aspiring comic artists. This new style caused a boom in the comic industry in Japan and is a major reason why manga became and still is so popular in Japan today. According to Gravett, Osamu Tezuka is known as the “God of Manga.” “He led the way in transforming manga’s image through the sheer range of genres and subjects he tackled, his nuanced characterizations, his kinetic layouts and above all his emphasis on the need for a compelling story - one that was unafraid to confront the most basic human questions of identity, loss, death and injustice” (Gravett 24).

Censorship and government interference with the content contained in comic strips and comic books was also something that Japanese comic artists and publishers faced along with their American counterparts. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, some artists were threatened with jail time and publishers were forced to close, if they released comics that were considered to contain “subversive” ideas. Some publishers folded under this pressure from the government or practiced self censorship, while some artists abandoned political drawing to write either children’s comics or ero-gur-nansensu (erotic, grotesque, and nonsensical) comics for adults (Schodt 51). During the years that Japan was involved in World War II, 1937-1945, the Japanese government persecuted comic artists they considered to be dissidents, but also recruited artists to draw comics that supported the war effort. As Schodt writes, “cartoonists who were not banned from working or off fighting on the front were active in one of three areas: producing family comic strips that were totally harmless or promoted national solidarity; drawing single-panel cartoons that vilified the enemy in *Manga* (cartoon magazine published throughout the war years) or other domestic media; and working in the government and

military service creating propaganda to be used against the opposing troops” (Schodt 56).

Since the war, there have been other instances of censorship of media in Japan. One such instance was when stories about samurais, judo, karate, sumo wrestling, and other sports were banned in the years following the war by the American forces to prevent “belligerency” (Gravett 54). However, this restriction on content in media was shortly lifted by General MacArthur in 1950. There was also the founding of the Youth Policy Unit in 1967. This government agency “placed any suspect manga on a ‘Harmful Designation List’” (Gravett 54). Despite the freedom Japanese comic artists and publishers have experienced since these times, they do have a history of censorship like America.

Issues with Censorship in Other Countries

Many European countries also have a long history with comic books and censorship. In Europe, comic books developed from children’s picture stories in books and magazines, so for many years just as in America, comics were seen as a children’s medium. Each country’s comic book industry developed differently and, like Japan, have their own format & style for comics.

According to Roger Sabin in his book, *Adult Comics*, there were two different outlooks on comics in Britain when they first were released. The first was that they were “jolly, lightweight, gag-oriented entertainment,” the second outlook was that they were a “threat to literacy” (Sabin 21). He goes on to say that they were “considered to be base ephemera: working-class, mass-produced, often shoddy-looking and essentially flippant. At best, they were ‘railway literature’, mildly diverting lowbrow entertainment

to read between stops on a train” (Sabin 21). Though there were some protests against American comics being distributed in Britain, due to a prejudice against America and its customs, American crime and horror comics began to arrive in Britain in the 1940s and 1950s. Just as in America, many British people who considered comics to be a child’s medium, began to strive to have them banned and were finally successful with the *1955 Children and Young Person’s Harmful Publications Act*. However, this did not hamper the importation of American comics to Britain for long, because once the Comic Code was established in America, many of the titles and the genres that the British people had found necessary to protest and ban disappeared, so that by 1959, American comics were readily being distributed in Britain (Sabin 30-31). The prejudice against comics still persisted in Britain as it did in America, though the thoughts behind the prejudice differed. According to Roger Sabin, in Britain comics were a ‘threat to literacy’, but in America they could “seduce the innocent into delinquency” (Sabin 34).

Germany experienced its own censorship movement in the 1950s, inspired by the American movement. Their movement, named *Books for Young People in Exchange for Rubbish* focused on adventure comics. There were also instances where imported American and Italian comics were censored before being published in Germany. Reitberger and Fuchs give several examples of this in their book *Comics: Anatomy of a Mass Medium*, such as weapons being taken out of certain pictures or violent actions being removed and replaced with text passages. As the authors state,

“In view of the concern of the guardians of culture (comic critics), it should be remarked that in these paperbacks more and more text passages were inserted in order to invalidate the reproach of picture illiteracy. In

the end, two comics pages were always followed by two pages of text - and the magazines were passed over to other people: a glorious success for voluntary self-control” (Reitberger and Fuchs 179).

Another example of censorship in Germany occurred when the German Democratic Republic (GDR) banned comic strips because it was determined that they served as “vehicles of imperialistic propaganda” (Reitberger and Fuchs 180).

Just as in Germany, France had a movement develop against American comic strips. However, the reason for this movement was not only due to American comic books’ excessive content, but also due to political reasons, according to Reitberger and Fuchs, because “they stressed an individualism which was incompatible with Marxist teachings” and the country’s own comic industry’s interest in removing any sort of competition (Reitberger and Fuchs 185). This movement against American comics led to a law approved in 1949 which entailed a control board that monitored production of French comics and has led to updated additions to this law in 1958 creating penalties for not complying with the 1949 law and finally in 1960 to the establishment of a European Federation. According to Reitberger and Fuchs, the European Federation “laid down directives similar to those of the American Code Authority. “The Moral Code issued by Europress Junior places even greater emphasis on protecting the young than the American code” (Reitberger and Fuchs 185).

American comics were in high demand in Italy in the 1930s and though they were banned from 1938 until the end of the Fascist regime, there were protests against the ban due to their extreme popularity (Reitberger and Fuchs 193). After the Second World War, comics for both children and adults were established and extremely popular.

Just like in America, Italian comics began to contain excessive violence and sexual content and these comics perhaps even exceeded what was found in their American counterparts. As Reitberger and Fuchs note, “Everything which Dr. Wertham saw and thought he saw in comics, before the Comics Code was introduced, is shown here” (Reitberger and Fuchs 199). Some examples of this excessive content that they note in their book were sadistic violence, severed limbs, torture, homosexual and heterosexual relationships, and bestiality. Due to this there was an attempt in 1966 to ban some of this excessive content from being published, but this ended in failure mainly because of the guaranteed freedom of the press, according to judges that oversaw the proceedings (Reitberger and Fuchs 200).

Graphic Novels

Graphic Novels can be considered an offshoot of comic books and have been defined as “a sophisticated story told between two covers, usually a 64-, 128-, or 176-page book” (Weiner 55). What usually sets these novels apart from comics is that they usually involve a stand-alone story whereas comic books are usually long-running series. Many of them have mature stories meant for older audiences, though there are many graphic novels being published for juvenile audiences now as well. Douglas Wolk comments in his article, *Comics: Not Just For Specialty Stores Anymore*, “While the business of selling monthly, saddle-stitched pamphlets flails, its companion, the graphic novel market, especially in traditional bookstores, is booming” (Wolk 36). Most comic researchers agree that the first real graphic novel was Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*, which was originally published in 1978. Stephen Weiner, in his book *Faster than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel*, discusses

Eisner's graphic novel and states that there were several aspects to the work that made it different from anything that had ever come out before.

“Not only was the subject matter new to comic book readers, the presentation was fresh as well. Rather than crowding the pages with panels detailing character movements, the drawings were large, focusing on facial expression, and the panels opened outward, almost beyond the page” (Weiner 20).

There were three graphic novels that came out after Eisner's which really impacted the growth in this medium. The first was Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, which is a historical graphic novel based around the Holocaust that was published in 1986 and won a Pulitzer Prize. The other two books were both released by the comic book publisher DC comics. The first was Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* which was published in 1986. This Batman story is set in a potential, dark future where a 55 year old Batman is forced to come out of retirement in order to fight crime again in a Gotham that has been nearly taken over by the criminal element. The second influential graphic novel released by DC is *Watchmen* by Alan Moore, which was released as a 12-issue limited series from 1986 to 1987 and then released together in book format in 1987. *Watchmen* is a story that focuses on a group of costumed heroes that reunite and come out of retirement, though they were banned by the law from being superheroes, in order to save the world. Graphic novels are now growing in popularity due in part to many of them now being released as films, such as *A History of Violence*, *Sin City*, *Road to Perdition* and *Watchmen* (Tabachnik 24; O'English, Matthews, & Lindsay 173; Thompson 40-42; Weiner 17-20, 32-38).

Development of Rating Standards

Though attitudes toward comic books and graphic novels continue to change, there is still confusion over the intended audiences for these books and how to rate them appropriately. Fans of comic books and graphic novels are people of all ages, nationalities and of both genders. As Anne Behler writes in her article, *Getting Started with Graphic Novels: A Guide for the Beginner*, “the fact that academic librarians are paying attention to the form simply strengthens the argument that this particular type of reading experience has far exceeded its day as a boyhood pastime (if indeed that perception was ever true)” (Behler 16). Comic book and graphic novel publishers, having recognized this trend, have been publishing more content of a mature nature to appeal to a wider audience. This makes collection development librarians’ jobs harder, because it becomes more difficult to determine the appropriate audience for these titles as well as to determine their placement in the library. “The Second World War had a brutalizing effect on the output of all the mass media, including comics. Things that would have been judged sadistic in 1940 were deemed accurate reporting in 1945; but later some comics went too far and what weighed most heavily against them was the fact that they could be bought by anybody, including children” (Reitberger and Fuchs 19). As previously mentioned, a few publishers tried to create their own rating standards, while the Association of Comic Magazine Publishers tried to establish a code in 1948. The ACMP code established in 1948 had basic guidelines against comics featuring sexually explicit scenes or nudity, sympathy for criminals or showing youth committing crimes or incompetent law enforcement officials, scenes of sadistic torture, use of foul language, portraying divorce as good, and finally it had a guideline against making fun

of or harassing any religious or racial groups (Nyberg 165 - See Appendix). The ACMP code failed in 1948, but another code was established in 1954 by the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) and the Comics Code Authority. This new comic code was much stricter and more detailed than the previous code that was established and this code also censored all terror and horror comics and actually prevented the use of the words “weird,” “horror” or “terror” from being used. The fear that comic books would lead to corruption led to the creation of the Comic Code Authority, which led to years of self-censorship by the industry. Not only did the 1954 Comic Code ban horror and terror comics, it also gave detailed restrictions on the use of crime, dialogue, religion, costume, marriage and sex, and the advertising allowed to be displayed. For instance, while obvious items like liquor and tobacco were included on the list of items not to be advertised in comic books, other products such as fireworks and “questionable” medical, health or toiletry items were also prohibited (Nyberg 166-169, See Appendix).

Now, though a few publishers still use the Code on some of their juvenile titles, the majority of publishers have created their own rating standards. This has led to a flurry of new, creative stories that stretch beyond the boundaries that American comic books and graphic novels were relegated to in the past that interest not only the juvenile audiences that have been considered the medium’s main audience, but also have drawn the interest of mature audiences. Each comic book or graphic novel publisher has created their own rating standards and librarians must understand these different rating standards in order to effectively collect these books for intended audiences.

Purpose of the Study

This research study has several objectives. The first is to research graphic novels and comic books, their history and the issues this visual and literary medium has had with censorship, with preconceived notions that the medium is only meant for a juvenile audience, and with the development of rating standards. The second objective is to study current literature that has been written by scholars and librarians on this medium. This exploration of graphic novels and comic books and the scholarship and collection development efforts related to them provides a foundation for considering the issues and challenges which current and future librarians may, in maintaining this literary form in library collections, face in the present and in the future. The third objective is to conduct a focus group and to survey librarians from a range of backgrounds in order to consider a number of questions, including: if these librarians have encountered patrons who challenged having these books included in their institutions' collections, what age range the surveyed librarians believe this medium is meant to appeal to, and how the librarians would rate content found in comic books and graphic novels; such as, violence, language, sexual activity, etc.

The aim of this study is to be a helpful resource for librarians, both those with and those without graphic novel and comic book collections at their institutions. This study, by providing librarians with an improved understanding of the graphic novel and comic book medium may assist librarians in more appropriately placing these books in their library collection. Moreover, the results from the focus group and survey are intended to help librarians become more aware of the various contents featured in comic books and graphic novels. The goal is not only to provide librarians with an improved

understanding and awareness of this medium's potential, but also to help librarians be more skilled in choosing both mature and juvenile titles for their collections and in determining where those items should be placed in these collections. In this way, libraries can better provide reading material for their whole community, not only for a portion of the community.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

History

There were several sources that consulted in order to get background on the history and terminology of comic books and graphic novels, as well as to see how comic books and graphic novels have been regarded from their conception up to now.

Censorship & Challenges/Stigma/Appropriateness

Censorship has been a major concern of comic book artists and publishers since early on. One form of self-censorship occurred through the establishment of the Comic Code Authority, which was implemented in order to avoid greater government censorship. This code was created in reaction to harsh criticism of comic books in the 1950s. This Comic Code Authority still exists today, though most comic book publishers have moved away from using these standards and have created their own. Phoebe Gloeckner discusses this period in her brief article *Comic Books: A Medium Deserving Another Look*. As she states, “the intellectual Puritanism of America in the 1950s found comic books an easy target and a case brought to The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency resulted in the censorship of many titles and the formation of the Comic Book Code, which sought to restrict horrific elements and sexual innuendo in comic books” (Gloeckner 246). This has mainly been an issue for the American comic book industry. In Europe and Japan, these books and their creators are held in much higher esteem according to the author. As Gloeckner states, “Although comics are

beginning to get more serious attention in the United States, they are still regarded by many as “just so much fluff” (Gloeckner 247).

In *Graphic Novels in Libraries: An Expert's Opinion*, Katy Foster refutes arguments for keeping graphic novels out of libraries; stating that they are an “invaluable literary form” and that they are very popular with patrons. She discusses the fact that the violence in some graphic novels being is used as an excuse for keeping them out of libraries, but counters that there are non-violent novels as well and that “it is simply a matter of selection” (Foster 32, 30-32). Michael Lavin provides *A Guide for Librarians* on comic books and graphic novels on the University of Buffalo's library website. Lavin discusses the five main concerns that librarians have regarding acquiring comic books and graphic novels in their collections. The last two concerns Lavin identifies involve the durability of the books along with their availability to patrons; stating librarians have expressed concerns that the books are not sturdy enough to be in libraries and, if they are included, they will be in danger of being stolen. The first three concerns that Lavin identifies in this guide reflect the concerns against the content and medium of comic books and graphic novels themselves, which has led to censorship and prejudice against these kinds of materials. Those concerns included worry that parents or members of the community would protest the inclusion of graphic novels and comic books in libraries, belief from many librarians that these books have no redeeming value, that they are in fact “junk literature,” and belief that these books contain stories only featuring “violence, sexism, anti-social behavior, and other inappropriate messages

or themes” (Lavin library.buffalo.com). Lavin comments that in most cases, librarians will not have any complaints from patrons against having comic books and graphic novels in a library collection, however, he does warn they should be careful in their selection practices regarding these books, because they must make sure that the books are appropriate additions that will not offend their community. They must be prepared to defend the books if there are any concerns expressed. Lavin warns there will also be many patrons who will consider these books as “junk reading,” but there are still patrons who enjoy these kinds of materials and many comic books and graphic novels have won awards and contain more serious content, so librarians should not hesitate to add these popular culture items to their institutions. Finally, regarding the content of comic books and graphic novels, Lavin states that while there are some of these books that will have

“questionable material, including raw language, extreme violence, sexual activity, the objectification of women, and flagrant disrespect for authority,” there are also many of them, including the superhero titles, that present “positive messages, such as using one’s abilities to help others, the value of perseverance, and striving to be the best one can be” (Lavin library.buffalo.edu).

Lavin also writes a section about censorship in his guide, discussing from what sources it can start and also giving librarians ideas of how to fight against it. Lavin warns that censorship can come from the library’s community, such as from specific religious groups, and there are some particular genres that may have higher risk for

complaints; such as horror and supernatural, crime, science fiction and fantasy, satire and dark humor, and realistic or autobiographical genres. He also states that some librarians will have a prejudice against these kinds of materials and will not acquire them for their selections because of their own dislike for the books. Lavin suggests that libraries prepare for prejudice and complaints against comic books and graphic novels by having a set of procedures ready to fight against such censorship in their collection development policies and that they should be familiar with organizations that will help libraries defend such censorship attempts, such as the American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom and the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (Lavin library.buffalo.edu).

Keith DeCandido's article, *Picture This: Graphic Novels in Libraries* is slightly dated, since it was published in 1990, but it does give a brief history of graphic novels and discusses the importance of including graphic novels in libraries. The article briefly mentions the Comics Code Authority and how it was considered mainly "useless" even then (Decandido 50). Decandido also discussed the audience for graphic novels and according to him, "Graphic novels capture a higher age group, mid 20s, due to their generally greater sophistication" (Decandido 52). Stephen Weiner confirmed Decandido's statement in his article *Beyond Superheroes: Comics Get Serious* in which he comments that the main distributor of these books in the United States has done some research into the audience for these books and "the average graphic novel reader is 29 years old" (Weiner 56). Devon Greyson discusses the issue of how comics and graphic

novels are perceived and the problems faced with having comic books in libraries in his article *GLBTQ content in comics/graphic novels for teens*. As Greyson states, “Because of the pervasive (albeit mistaken) idea that comics are a children’s genre, comic books with more mature themes are potential fertile ground for material challenges in our libraries” (Greyson 130). According to this article, which was published in 2007, there have been 14 challenges for comic books; at least that is what has been reported by the ALA (Greyson 130). According to an article written by the Associated Press and featured on the First Amendment Center website, some of these challenges were against books like *The Watchmen* by Alan Moore, which was challenged in Florida and Virginia; *Akira, Volume 2* by Katsuhiro Otomo, challenged in Texas; *New X-Men Imperial* by Grant Morrison, challenged in Maryland; and *Maus* and its sequel *Maul II*, challenged in Oregon. These books were challenged for a variety of reasons which included being unsuitable for younger readers, offensive language, nudity, violence and for being anti-ethnic. As Carrie Gardner, a spokeswoman for the ALA’s Committee for Intellectual Freedom and a professor at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. stated in the article, “Some people find graphical depictions of things more offensive than text” (Associated Press firstamendmentcenter.org). However, as Laura Micciche comments in an essay published in *Rhetoric Review*, “precisely because they (comic books) combine visual and verbal textual strategies, comic books have the potential to deal with complex ideas on multiple levels” (Micciche 8). Challenges are a major concern for librarians in dealing with comic books and graphic novels. In 2005, the Denver Public

Library canceled subscriptions to some of their books that were in a comic format.

These books were fotonovelas or Spanish-language adult books that are published in a comic format. The reason that some of these types of books were removed was because of complaints from the public because of nudity, sexual content, and violence against women found in the books. The Denver Public Library did release a statement regarding the removal of these books where they said that, while the books did not overstep the library's policies, they determined that "in looking at each series as a whole, staff have determined that four of the 14 series are inappropriate for the collection because of their consistent portrayal of sexually explicit content"

(Blumenstein and Oder 16). In April 2006, the book, *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics* by Paul Gravett, was pulled from all the San Bernardino County, CA libraries due to a complaint from Cynthia Jones, whose 16-year old son had checked out the item. The book is a history of Manga and therefore, shows images from many types of different Manga stories, including some that showed sexually explicit content. Because of these images, Bill Postmus, the chair of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, deemed the book inappropriate and decided to have it removed (B.G. 21; Oder 14). In 2006, a patron of the Marshall Public Library, MO made a complaint regarding two graphic novels contained in the library's collection. These books were *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel and *Blankets* by Craig Thompson. According to Louise Mitchell, the source of the complaint, "My concern doesn't lie with the content of the novels, rather my concern is with the illustrations and their availability

to children and the community” (ALA ala.org). While the books were removed from the library’s shelves for a time due to their sexually explicit images while the board assessed the books, they were eventually re-admitted to the library and the board approved a new policy on materials selection to try to prevent such complaints from occurring in the future. One of the books, *Blankets* by Craig Thompson, was originally shelved in the young adult area of the library, but with the new selection policy in place, it was determined that it would be more appropriate to have the book shelved in the adult book section along with *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel (ALA ala.org; Associated press firstamendmentcenter.org; B.G. 21; Oder 14).

Devon Greyson, writer of *GLBTQ content in comics/graphic novels for teens*, also does a section in this article for librarians discussing how to handle these books at their institutions. After all, librarians need to make efforts to add these materials to their collections, but it is difficult to do so when you are concerned about whether the materials will offend your patrons. Greyson discusses the difficulty in determining a book’s appropriateness. “The fact that most comics in North America have no labels at all guiding readers to the type of content makes it difficult to select materials for a youth collection, especially in a controversial area such as GLBTQ content for teens” (Greyson 132). Greyson stresses the importance of keeping these materials in libraries and also warns librarians to be prepared to defend their inclusion in their libraries (Greyson 130-134).

In *A Librarian's Guide to Graphic Novels for Children and Tweens*, David Serchay agrees with Decandido's and Greyson's assessment that the average age of comic book readers are people in their twenties. According to Serchay, that is why there may be some mature content even in books rated for younger audiences. David Serchay comments on issues that arise from having graphic novel collections in libraries; such as adults assuming all graphic novels are meant for children, "Even if adult-level titles are located in a separate area of the library, there is a chance that an adult will complain even if children do not find them. They may be under the mistaken impression that all comics and graphic novels are for children, and if the library has this book in the collection then obviously they intended it for children despite it being both catalogued and shelved as an adult title" (Serchay 131). However, Serchay also acknowledges that parents may not be the only group that may find some of these books objectionable. Library staff and even students in school libraries have made complaints and had issues with having these kinds of books in a collection. As Serchay states, "Of course, complaints about comic books are nothing new. Similar to movies, rock and roll, video games, Dungeons and Dragons, Myspace, and whatever this year's controversial item is, comic books have been something that adults have had to "protect" children from" (Serchay 134, 131-134). Mary Jane Heaney, in her article *Graphic Novels: A Sure Bet For Your Library*, suggests that because graphic novels are not only words or text, but pictures, that this is the reason why there are more objections expressed about these books because of their content (Heaney 72). According to Heaney, one of her two main

reasons why some libraries and people have problems with these books is because “it is sometimes difficult to find age appropriate material” and “the comics that some might find personally thrilling or entertaining are beyond what is comfortable in a school library” (Heaney 73). She also suggests that along with considering graphic novels’ “genre, quality, artistic merit, and the reputation and style of the author and illustrator” before acquiring it for your collection, the “target audience” for the book must also be considered (Heaney 74). The author maintains that, despite any problems that might arise with having a graphic novel collection, there are more benefits than drawbacks from having these books in libraries (Heaney 72-76). Steve Raiteri discussed the perception of graphic novels in his article titled *Graphic Novels*, which was published in *Library Journal* in November 2003. Raiteri commented that graphic novels are still seen as immature and only meant for juvenile audiences. As he states in the article, “there is still some resistance to the idea that graphic novels can and should be included in adult collections. The notion that comics are strictly for kids lingers on, though it simply isn’t true” (Raiteri 58). He explains some of the history of comic books and why these perceptions still exist, such as the nature of the content that came out while the Comics Code was still firmly in place. He mentions both Japanese and French comic books as having many adult titles available and how graphic novel collections for adults in those other countries are widely accepted. He does caution librarians that some of the titles available will have “explicit images, and decisions on including such books need to be made in accordance with local community standards” (Raiteri 58). Overall, he presents

several arguments for adult graphic novel collections to be established in libraries (Raiteri 58). Allen Ellis and Doug Highsmith studied the library literature that was published concerning comic books from the 1940s to the 1990s and wrote a paper discussing their findings titled *About Face: Comic Books in Library Literature*. They showcased how this medium was given harsh criticism by librarians for many decades, but how this has slowly changed and this medium is finally beginning to obtain the respect that it deserves. They observed in their study of the related literature that comic books have progressed from being seen as possibly harmful to readers as to now being naturally accepted as an important part of library collections that needs to be studied to provide librarians with matter-of-fact information regarding its use and care (Ellis and Highsmith 39, 21-43). Hollis Margaret Rudiger and Megan Schliesman in their article, *Graphic Novels and School Libraries*, discuss the issue of how graphic novels are sometimes perceived as always having more mature or violent content than other kinds of books due to them being called “graphic” (Rudiger and Schliesman 57). Rudiger and Schliesman comment in defense of graphic novels that just as graphic novels may have some questionable content, “some novels have dialogue, violence, or sexual situations that may be upsetting; some picture books have images that may be distressing; and some nonfiction contains information that may be shocking” (Rudiger and Schliesman 57). These authors state that as long as librarians make an effort to promote the usefulness of graphic novels, such as by holding graphic novel discussions, they should not experience as many protests from patrons and educators regarding their presence in

the library. Rudiger and Schliesman also state that if any challenges should occur against these books, then the librarian should already have a section in their collection development policy on how to deal with such challenges and that they should use the same defense for a complaint against a graphic novel as they would for a complaint against other kinds of book contained in their library's collection (Rudiger and Schliesman 57-59).

Studies

There have been many studies related to graphic novels and comic books in regards to their content and their presence in libraries. While few of them focused on rating standards for these books, they have studied different concerns with having comic books and graphic novels in libraries. In *About Face: Comic Books in Library Literature*, Ellis & Highsmith did a study on the literature written discussing comic books from the 1930s through the 1990s. Their analysis of the literature indicates that the opinions of librarians towards comic books and graphic novels has slowly changed from negative to positive over several decades (Ellis and Highsmith 39). Ellis and Highsmith identified six factors that have contributed to this change of attitude. The first two factors involved a change in the way these books have been treated by the library profession; with many librarians now having a more “democratic, less elitist ethic” regarding collection development and the inclusion of comic books and graphic novels in the Library Bill of Rights. The next two factors were the improved standing of popular culture items (which included these books) along with modifications made by

the comic book industry itself in regards to some of their “business aspects” that helped to generate more reporting on the “positive” features of the medium. Finally, the last two factors came into effect with the ending of the “Silver Age” of comic books.

Publishers have worked to “rehabilitate their image with the general public” and because many people, who became fans of this medium because of the revitalization movement by publishers, later became librarians who then worked to promote these books (Ellis and Highsmith 39-40, 21-43).

In 1994, Waldomiro C.S. Vergueiro conducted a survey that was sent to Sao Paolo’s public libraries. He presented his results in his article *Comic Book Collections in Brazilian Public Libraries*. This survey found that 57 out of 132 libraries had included comic books in their collections. Vergueiro discusses the development of these library collections both in Brazil and in other countries and he covers the reasons behind this new trend, as well as the difficulties in maintaining these collections. The author mentions the disregard that librarians have expressed toward this medium in the past and offers several reasons why these opinions have slowly changed. These reasons include more academic research on the medium, new educational uses for these books, the emergence of graphic novels, and patron demand, which the author makes a point of stating this demand comes from both juvenile and adult patrons. The author also covers problems that these libraries have experienced with organizing and developing comic book collections. This article shows that the interest in comic books is worldwide and points to problems with developing and maintaining these collections (Vergueiro 14-18).

Steven Kirsh and Paul Olczak conducted a study looking at violence in comic books. They discussed the results of their study in an article titled *Rating Comic Book Violence: Contributions of Gender and Trait Hostility*. In this study, 246 students participate in a survey which tested their violent tendencies. Kirsh and Olczak then had the students read extremely violent and mildly violent comic books. Once they read these books, they had them answer questions to determine how or if reading the violent comic books affected their hostility level. The results showed that the participants rated the extreme and the mild comic books differently, with the extremely violent books being “rated as significantly more violent than were the mildly-violent comic books” (Kirsh and Olczak 835). It also indicated that males preferred the extremely violent titles over the mildly violent ones; however the female participants held the exact opposite viewpoint (Kirsh and Olczak 833-836).

In 2002, Timothy Perper and Martha Cornog did a study of the sexual content that is depicted in Japanese manga and described their findings in *Eroticism For the Masses: Japanese Manga Comics and their Assimilation into the U.S.* The authors looked into the diverse sexual content and themes that are common in Japanese manga and found examples from published manga to illustrate this content. They also compared this content to the content in Western comics and described how it was different from what is usually found in Western comics. As the authors state, “And that, perhaps above all, is what manga with sexual content offers the Western viewer and scholar of sexuality: a world where sexuality is organized along lines that differ from

what we so readily believe is natural, ordained by God or evolution, and universal.

Manga is a much-needed antidote to Western insularity” (Perper and Cornog 93). The authors provided descriptions of the explicit sexual content that is contained in these books; such as rape, female/male homosexuality, sadomasochism, transvestitism, etc.

According to the authors, “Also of interest are details of how manga with sexual themes are experienced by American readers of various backgrounds. The ardent fan’s reactions will no doubt differ from those of someone who knows little about comics or dislikes them, or who dislikes explicit depictions of sexuality. We also wonder if responses of American and Japanese readers to manga and its sexual content are influenced by, now obvious, culture differences that underlie erotic art in Japan and in the West” (Perper and Cornog 93-94, 3-126).

In 2002, David Park studied the Senate subcommittee’s hearings regarding comic books and their content, which led to the creation of the Comic Code Authority and also studied Fredric Wertham’s contributions to the creation of the Comic Code. As Park describes his study, it “examines the authoritative voice of Fredric Wertham and the symbolic politics of the Kefauver comic book hearings, with a particular emphasis on how the interests of the comic book publishers made a self-censorship code an almost predetermined outcome” (Park 259). Park maintains that comic books first came under scrutiny and were then forcefully regulated because of a matter of “taste,” because many experts found comic books to be too vulgar for youth audiences (mostly those in the horror and crime genres) or that they were “lowering the children’s aesthetic standards

to a sub-normal level” (Park 262). Wertham, a psychiatrist, determined while working with juvenile delinquents, that comic books were one of the main factors for causing or inspiring juveniles to start perpetrating delinquent acts. He discussed his “findings” in his book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, which was published in 1954, though some experts in the academic community criticized Wertham’s findings for being “over-simplistic” (Park 264). However, he and some other experts who were invited to testify at the Senate subcommittee’s hearings on comic books were responsible for shifting the focus of the criticism on comic books from simply a matter of “taste” to actually questioning what the possible media effects were on America’s youth (Park 282, 259-288).

Also in 2002, Christopher Blair wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on content regulation of mass media. The title of his dissertation was “To Protect the Children: An Examination of Arguments for the Content Regulation of Mass Media.” Rachel Fordyce reviewed this dissertation in 2004 and noted that not only did he study the reasoning behind the regulation of comics, but he also studied the regulations that were set in place for motion pictures and for television. He determined from his research that, while people still maintain the same reasoning for establishing regulations against some forms of mass media, they prefer the idea of creating rating systems for those forms of media, rather than having the content regulated (Fordyce 271; Kannenburg comicsresearch.org; Blair 380pp).

Alyson A. W. Lyga with Barry Lyga, in their book *Graphic Novels in Your Media Center: A Definitive Guide* which was published in 2004, conducted a survey of

about a dozen media specialists and librarians from elementary, middle, and high school libraries, with one public librarian included, in order to get testimonials from them concerning graphic novels in their libraries. Some of the initial questions covered asking the librarians why they started using graphic novels in the first place and finding out how they started using them. Participants were also questioned on whether they had problems with the inclusion of graphic novels from parents or administrators and were also asked to advise on how their students reacted to the addition. Along with asking librarians why they started using graphic novels and reactions to the new collection, participants were asked how they decided to catalog and shelve the new collection (Lyga and Lyga 79). The participants all indicated that they did not begin using graphic novels before 1998 and the majority of them had actually only started adding them to their library collections in the last year or two. The reasons that most of the participants gave for starting graphic novel collections at their libraries are because of their popularity and also in the hope of drawing interest from reluctant readers. All the participants agreed the graphic novels circulated as well as the other books in their collections and many participants indicated that they even circulated more than other books in their collections. They also indicated that graphic novels were effective in encouraging reluctant readers to begin reading. The librarians surveyed all had different amounts of graphic novels in their collections, some with only half a dozen titles and others with more than a hundred; though some of the participants with small numbers indicated that with the popularity of the items they were planning on increasing the size of their

collections. One participant in the survey discussed the difficulties that she experienced in starting a graphic novel collection, due to reluctance from the head librarian at her institution and also resistance from the administration; though she did indicate that she has managed to convince them of the potential of the medium. However, the majority of the participants indicated that they did not have much resistance to graphic novels being added to their collections. Though one participant did mention they had some adults and teachers who expressed their dislike for the medium, these detractors did not request their removal from the collection. Despite this participant's experience, some of the other librarians and media specialists surveyed indicated that teachers were "pleased" with the addition of graphic novels to the collection since it encouraged students to read (though many teachers were still not using the books in the classroom). The authors concluded that "While each experience is obviously unique to the specific situation it embodies, certain issues – content considerations, circulation figures, general acceptance, extraordinary success with boys and reluctant readers – were high-universal among those we spoke with" (Lyga and Lyga 88, 79-88).

In 2005, Olivier Charbonneau presented the results of a survey study he performed at the Octogone Library located in the LaSalle borough of Montreal to question their graphic novel collection's users in order to "identity these patrons' demographic characteristics and to determine their satisfaction with regard to this subcollection" in his article *Adult Graphic Novels Readers: A Survey in a Montreal Library* (Charbonneau 39). From the results of the survey, Charbonneau drew several

conclusions. The first was that graphic novels appealed to all users, of both sexes and of all ages, so the collection attracts patrons to their institutions and the participants in the survey were all “stable users.” Charbonneau also determined from the survey that the institution should make efforts to supply the types of books that their clientele are interested in and that young people are very interested in manga. Finally, the results showed that customers would be interested in activities sponsored by the library and that overall his institution’s patrons were “very satisfied” with their collection. Overall, he concluded that the graphic novel collection at their institution was “a desired and vibrant part of the Octogone Library” (Charbonneau 40, 39-42).

Melissa Bergin wrote an article *Who Is Reading Manga? One High School’s Story* that was published in 2005 about a one-page survey she sent out to her students interested in graphic novels to find out what characteristics they shared and why they enjoyed these books. She obtained a total of thirty-three surveys back from her students. Bergin commented that she learned “several things from this small survey.” From the survey, Bergin found that her graphic novel reading students included “three basic groups.” These groups included readers who were mainly interested in manga and anime, those who were “avid readers” and read a variety of items and those who were “reluctant readers” that were interested in the books due to their relation to anime and television series. Bergin also determined that she needed to make more of an effort to build “a balanced collection reflecting the interests of all your users and potential users” (Bergin 26). She came to this conclusion because when she asked these students for

their top three manga series “of the top fifteen titles suggested we only had nine of them in the school media center” and she commented that there were some titles that they listed she was not aware of (Bergin 26, 25-26).

Valerie Palmer-Mehta and Kellie Hay were interested in the representation of men in comic books, particularly focusing on male gay relationships. This article was related to this study, since content contained in comic books and graphic novels is part of what was studied. Because of this, they studied the audiences’ responses regarding a Green Lantern comic book that was done featuring a story about a gay hate crime. The reactions were mixed, but 16% of the responses expressed “dissatisfaction with the story line.” In the article they wrote discussing these results, *A Superhero for Gays?: Gay Masculinity and Green Lantern*, they noted that “there is still a lacuna in the literature regarding the representation of gay American masculinity, antigay hate crimes in comic book culture, and audience response to these representations” (Palmer-Mehta & Hay 394, 390-404).

The American Library Association has several sections on their website discussing book challenges and particular challenges dealing with graphic novels. According to the *Graphic Novels: Suggestions For Librarians* that was prepared by The National Coalition Against Censorship, The American Library Association and the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, “In theory, dealing with challenges to graphic novels is no different than dealing with challenges to print material. In practice, however, it is important to keep in mind that many people consider an image to be far more powerful

in its impact than any written description of that image” (NCAC, ALA & CBLDF 6).

This is why many librarians are concerned when choosing graphic novels to add to their collections. The ALA’s Office of Intellectual Freedom felt this was an important enough issue that they conducted their own survey from March to April of 2005, which was given to librarians. This survey was meant to assess why these librarians had started collecting graphic novels in their libraries, if they had experienced any problems or challenges with these books, and finally how they are cataloging and shelving them in their libraries, as well as, requesting comments on any other tips or issues they would like to address. From 185 responses, 23% of the participants indicated they had experienced some problems and some challenges with having graphic novels in their libraries, which was not a large percentage, but indicated there was cause for librarians’ concerns in regards to these books (NCAC, ALA & CBLDF 1-9).

Collection Development

There are several books and articles written regarding developing comic book and graphic novel collections in libraries which offer both advice on how to get started, as well as warnings regarding acquiring and keeping these books in libraries. Comic books and graphic novels are becoming important additions to libraries because of their growing popularity. Alison Ching comments on the popularity of these books in her own library in an article titled *Holy Reading Revolution, Batman! Developing a Graphic Novel Collection for Young Adults*. Ching comments on the circulation percentages at

her library and notes that graphic novels were their “top circulating section” when this article was published in 2005 (Ching 19).

Comic books and graphic novels have become more popular with certain American audiences in recent years due to several factors, which include the increase in Japanese manga being translated and released in America now, the increase in the number of movies being created based on popular comics, the growing acceptance of the comic format itself, and more. Anne Behler gives several reasons for the growing popularity for graphic novels in her article, *Getting Started with Graphic Novels: A Guide for the Beginner*, some of which include; the youth of today prefer visual media over just the written word and they engage readers. Behler also references studies that show that graphic novels are not only popular with many patrons, but that they can also be more useful as “literacy tools” than many other children’s books. Because of these two reasons, their popularity and educational usefulness, Behler concludes that librarians must begin to learn more about these books and add them to their library’s collection (Behler 17, 16-21).

Clare Snowball, in her article, *Teenage Reluctant Readers and Graphic Novels*, emphasizes how graphic novels are becoming great tools for librarians who want to encourage reluctant readers to begin reading. Snowball comments that to get reluctant readers to begin reading, librarians must start supplying them with materials that draw their interest and she states that she and other writers feel that graphic novels may be the solution. Snowball also mentions a research study that was done in 1999 in Austin,

Texas where sixth graders were questioned regarding their most popular reading choices. The responses that were acquired from this research study indicated that “regardless of reading ability or gender,” these sixth graders’ most popular choices were scary books and comic books (Snowball 43; 43-45).

Lila Christenson in her article, *Graphic Global Conflict: Graphic Novels in the High School Social Studies Classroom*, discusses the usefulness of graphic novels in a teaching environment. As she states, “The visual component of graphic novels supports text comprehension, making the stories accessible to readers at all levels” (Christenson 227). She provides several examples of particular graphic novels that she believes would be useful in a social studies classroom and also ideas for group discussions on the books and their content. Some of the graphic novels she suggests are *Palestine* by Joe Sacco which was published by Fantagraphics Books in 2002, *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi published by Pantheon in 2004, and more. However, in her conclusion, she does warn educators to be wary of possible “objections” to using graphic novels in a classroom setting, because of the false assumption made by some people that the word “graphic” means these books contain sexual content. Christenson does comment that some of the comic books and graphic novels that are being released may have “profane language, sexual content, and the portrayal of extreme violence” and she advises that it is the educators’ responsibility to review the books and also to prepare a defense for their use in the event that there are some protests against them (Christenson 230; 227-230). An article published in *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for*

Library Service to Children titled *Graphic Novels for Children Should They Be Considered Literature?*, looked into these books and their potential. According to the article, “One educator argues that the graphic novel is not only an alternative to other visual media, but also it is essential for a literate democracy because it allows for real diversity by presenting alternative views” (ALSC Research and Development Committee 50; 49-51). In Mary Chelton’s article, *Perspectives on Practice: Young Adult Collections Are More Than Just Young Adult Literature*, she states, “Graphic novels are must-buy items for contemporary YA collections, not only because of their overwhelming popularity with the age group, but also because boys, in particular, like them” (Chelton 11). She also mentions that YALSA has started a committee in order to help libraries to identify the best graphic novels that are released every year for young adults (Chelton 10-11). Geraldine Walshe in her article *Starting a Graphic Novel Collection*, discussed the “resounding success” they had establishing a young adult graphic novel collection in her library. The new collection had high circulation numbers and “feedback was very positive, with both customers and staff requesting more GNs (graphic novels)” (Walshe 33).

Stephen Weiner discusses in his article *Beyond Superheroes: Comics Get Serious* collecting and selection of graphic novels and the different kinds that are available. He comments that many libraries have been wary of starting these types of collections because of some of their bad press and also because reading these types of books is an acquired skill. Weiner also discusses that there have been inroads into

establishing children and YA comic book and graphic novel collections by librarians, but that is not the case for adult collections. According to the article, “those buying for adult collections have not made similar efforts for their readers, perhaps because the term adult, when associated with the comic book industry, has often referred to pornographic materials. This definition no longer holds: owing to the more mature work produced in graphic novel form, adult doesn’t necessarily mean pornographic but may refer to philosophical and emotional content aimed at adult and mature teens” (Weiner 56; 55-58).

In *A Practicing Comic-Book Librarian Surveys His Collection and His Craft*, Randall Scott discusses the problems and challenges that Michigan State University experienced when their Comic Art Collection was first getting started. He covers the issues he experienced with cataloging and shelving the collection. One of the problems he has faced is keeping the collection well-preserved, while also making it readily available for their patrons (Scott 49-51). David Serchay also comments on issues involved with comic book collections in his article *Comic Research Libraries* that provides a description of 14 different established comic research libraries (one of those being Michigan State University’s collection). Serchay states, “Among other problems, there is no definite rule on how to classify them” (Serchay 37). *Comics Librarianship* by Randall Scott (1990), while slightly dated, still has pertinent advice for librarians who are interested in working with comic books. Near the end of his book, he also includes a chapter on Suggested Research Topics. A few of those suggested topics

included researching the Comics Code and its influence on the industry, as well as considering how comic books that did still have the seal were different from ones that did not display the seal in the 1980s. Some of the other suggested topics for research involved studying whether all comic books were appropriate for children and, if they are not, what restrictions should be applied, at what age should there be “unlimited freedom” to read these books and should a rating system such as what has been applied to movies be created for comic books (Scott 148-149). This shows that librarians have had these concerns with content and age appropriateness for these books for some time.

In “*Graphic Novels in Academic Libraries: From Maus to Manga and Beyond*,” the authors, Lorena O’English, Gregory J. Matthews and Elizabeth Blakesley Lindsay, discuss what graphic novels are and cover the issues involved with establishing collections in university libraries. The authors believe these books, with comic books, have started making their way into academic libraries due to their popularity, as well as, their potential academic usefulness in studying popular culture issues. Potential issues with processing and cataloging graphic novels in libraries are also discussed, such as difficulties in classifying them. The authors mention the issue of age-appropriateness for these books, and states that libraries need to be prepared to deal with these type of selection issues depending on their institution’s guidelines. Steps to promote the collection to their patrons, especially their student body are also covered in this article; such as placing them in special displays (O’English, Matthews, Lindsay 173-182).

Doug Highsmith, in his chapter titled “*Developing a “Focused” Comic Book Collection*

in an Academic Library” in the book *Popular Culture and Acquisitions*, also discusses the difficulties in establishing these types of collections in university libraries.

Highsmith talks about how, at least at this time, it was rare for academic libraries to have collections of comic books and most that did have them were piecemeal collections. He stresses that librarians must create a valid academic reason or justification for the collection, as well as have specific criteria in mind when acquiring items for the collection. Highsmith provided four different recommendations for suitable criteria when beginning comic book collections in academic libraries. Two of his recommendations for suitable criteria involved collecting a “representative” group of comics, possibly based on the different eras of comic books that were previously covered in Chapter 1, or collecting a group of comics based on time period or genre. The other two recommendations he gives for suitable criteria include creating a collection based on “particular artists or specific writers” or starting a collection by focusing on a group of comic books that “reflect particular themes, trends or developments in American life and/or popular culture” (Highsmith 62). He also includes suggestions of where and how to acquire items for the collection, such as inquiring at local comic book stores, putting advertisements out requesting certain hard-to-find titles and accepting donations that meet your collection criteria from patrons (Highsmith 63-67, 59-68).

Graphic Novels in Your Media Center: A Definitive Guide by Allyson A. W.

Lyga and Barry Lyga provides helpful information for school librarians wanting to start

graphic novel collections at their libraries. While the authors comment that there has not been much resistance reported from teachers, librarians, and students over starting such collections, they do warn librarians to be prepared for some problems in the future. When starting the collection development process, these authors recommend focusing on “story, art (both good), age appropriateness, and appeal” (Lyga and Lyga 85). One of the four main factors that they recommend is exactly what this research study was focused on. This guide also offers a list of recommended titles for elementary, middle, and high school collections, as well as, providing a list of resources to help the librarian in making determinations regarding a title’s appropriateness for a collection (Lyga and Lyga 79-88, 151-160). Michele Gorman in her book, *Getting Graphic!: Using Graphic Novels To Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens*, recommends when selecting graphic novels for a young adult collection to focus on the books: “popularity, age, level of target audience, genre, artistic quality, artistic style, reputation of writers and artists, publisher, type of binding, and whether the item is published in black-and-white or color” (Gorman 30). Gorman also notes in her book that after studying the subject, she identified five different methods of cataloging graphic novels. Two methods she suggests for cataloging and shelving these books are keeping them as non-fiction items in the 741.5 section with comic strips or classifying them as non-fiction and fiction books based on subject. Another method that Gorman covers in her book is to catalog and shelve these books based on “maturity,” with some being grouped together in the young adult section and the rest being placed in the adult fiction and non-fiction sections. The

remaining two methods that Gorman covers is to keep all the graphic novels, children, young adult and adult titles, together in one main graphic novel section or keep the books as a “browsing collection” and choosing not to catalog these books at all (Gorman 32). Gorman notes that there are both positives and negatives to all of these approaches and it depends on the individual library and its policy on graphic novels to determine which shelving method would be best for it to apply (Gorman 30-33). Hollis Margaret Rudiger and Megan Schliesman in their article, *Graphic Novels and School Libraries*, recommend two different methods of cataloging and shelving graphic novels in school libraries. The first method they suggest is to shelve the books by topic and the second method is to catalog and shelve them by their format. While Rudiger and Schliesman state that some librarians choose the first method because “graphic novels cover a wide range of subjects,” they note that most librarians choose to catalog and shelve the books by the second method, because that helps their students who may only be interested in reading books in that particular format find the material they want easily (Rudiger and Schliesman 58).

Annette Haines wrote a paper titled “*Strategies for Developing a Graphic Novel/Comic Book Collection*” which gives librarians who are contemplating starting such collections several helpful guidelines to follow. Haines guidelines include: “Develop Parameters,” “Acquire Materials,” and “Provide Access” (Haines 31-35). Under “Developing Parameters,” Haines recommends that the librarian should “evaluate their user group” and the particular types and genres of comics books and graphic novels

they are interested in, “garner support” and suggestions for the collection from the other library staff, and “define the scope of their collection,” which involves determining what genres/types of books will be in your collection and how many comic books you are interested in acquiring for your library (Haines 31). With the “Acquire Materials” guideline, Haines suggests “establishing funds,” “making connections” with local comic book stores and patrons who might be willing to benefit the collection, and also to solicit gifts from such patrons or other potential sources (Haines 34). Finally with the third guideline, “providing access,” the librarian needs to understand that “catalogers make accessibility happen,” “finding space can be problematic,” and must “consider binding the collection” (Haines 35). How to catalog the collection is important and she mentions two methods in her article; catalog in PN 6700s, in fiction, or another section related to the content of the graphic novel. With so many comics books and graphic novels available, if your library begins collecting these books, the collection can grow quickly and take up a lot of room fast. Also, these books usually are printed in the paperback format, which means they are more prone to damage than most of the other materials that are housed in the library, so a librarian should seriously consider binding the books they acquire, despite any potential visual drawbacks, if they do not want to be replacing them quite frequently (Haines 31-36).

Kerry Ireland endorses starting graphic novel collections in her article *Build It and They Will Come: Graphic Novels For Your Collection*. In her article, she explains what a graphic novel is and states that they are “a mixture of words and pictures to tell the

story” (Ireland 14). She discusses how these books have grown in scope and how they are a format that has come into its own. She also includes a list of criteria for libraries to consider when starting the selection process for their collections. Three of the criteria that she provides deal specifically with rating the content of the books for age-appropriateness. These selection criteria included questioning the appropriateness of the language featured in the book, looking at how people of different “race, gender and social class” were treated throughout the text and considering how violence was used in the story, whether it was warranted to further the story’s development or just “gratuitous.” The only other criteria that Ireland mentioned that purely focused on the story or plot of the book asked librarians to consider whether the books were “coherent, imaginative, interesting and well written.” The other selection criteria Ireland covered focused on the physicality of the books; whether they were “well produced”, were the illustrations of a “high standard,” did the illustrations and the text support each other, and looking at the text and its legibility (Ireland 16-17). She also provides several arguments for why graphic novels should be included in school libraries (Ireland 14-18).

David Serchay in his book, *The Librarian’s Guide to Graphic Novels For Children and Tweens*, briefly covers how determining the placement of the books in a library is very important, because keeping all of them in one section could cause many problems. As he states, “in the case of a collection in which adult, YA, and juvenile are intermixed, there is a chance that a child will, accidentally or deliberately, pick up a book with R-rated material, including gore, foul language, and nudity, and even some PG-13 material

might cause problems” (Serchay 130). He also recommends that in handling complaints against these books, it is best if the librarian handles it just as they would a complaint against other materials in their collection. However, he does state it can be useful if graphic novels are actually addressed in a library’s collection development policy (Serchay 130-133).

Robin Brenner gives her advice on how to evaluate a title to determine its placement in the institution in her book *Understanding Manga and Anime*. She recommends having three sections of manga, for children, teenagers, and adults and she also provides several criteria to help librarians determine a title’s placement in the library. Some of these criteria included considering how the questionable content compared to other visual media and also how it compared to other text materials. Another suggestion made by Brenner is consider how the “publisher, production company, or distributor” rated the material to help determine the book’s appropriate placement in the library. The final two criteria that Brenner covers to help librarians determine a manga book’s appropriate placement in a library is considering who would be interested in the subject of the book (one example she provides is focusing on the age of the main characters in the books) and also browsing through the book to see if there are any objectionable “panels or sections” that would make the title unsuitable for a particular audience (Brenner 103-104).

Michael Lavin, in his *A Guide for Librarians* on the University of Buffalo’s library website, provides a list of reasons why graphic novels and comic books should be

included in library collections. Three of Lavin's reasons for the inclusion of comic books and graphic novels in libraries involve their educational uses; in that these books can help "assist poor readers," "connect with visual learners," and "develop strong language arts skills." The next two reasons Lavin provides for maintaining comic book and graphic novel collections in libraries involve the potential of the medium to "convey educational messages" and to "stimulate readers to explore other literature." The last two reasons that Lavin covers for keeping these books in libraries is their ability to "encourage unmotivated and 'dormant' readers" at the same time they "engage adult readers" (Lavin library.buffalo.edu). Lavin makes a point to mention that these kinds of books are appealing to an adult audience, especially those who were fans when they were in their teens and that the average age of graphic novel readers in America is twenty-five. Lavin also provides librarians with several selection guidelines. The first few guidelines he covers are general criteria; considering the books popularity, their relation to other media, target audience and genre. The next several selection guidelines Lavin provides instruct librarians to consider the quality and style of the books; focusing on the writing and artistic characteristics of the books and considering such issues as the appeal of color versus black and white illustrations. The rest of the selection guidelines that Lavin covers suggest librarians consider the "reputation" of the books themselves (whether they have won any kind of industry awards or have any kind of repute with fans) and the "reputation" of their creators; including the writers, artists, and publisher (Lavin library.buffalo.edu).

Graphic Novels Now: Building, Managing, and Marketing a Dynamic Collection by Francesca Goldsmith is a helpful guide to librarians wanting to begin graphic novel collections in their libraries. Goldsmith's approach differs from others in that she does not limit her book to only discussing children, teen, or adult graphic novel collections, but discusses having all three at the same time. As Goldsmith states, "Because the term *graphic novel* refers only to a format, it in no way defines the age, literary tastes, or aesthetic interests of the prospective target audience. In fact, American publishers produce more graphic novels for adult readers than for juvenile readers" (Goldsmith 28). She suggests that librarians interested in starting graphic novel collections should "define the purpose and goals of their project." Goldsmith comments in her book that in order to achieve this librarians should consider three main questions; these questions covering concerns of who in their community they will be acquiring the books for, the constraints of their budgets, and determining whether the library's collection development policy already in place covers these kinds of books (Goldsmith 28). Goldsmith also provides a list of concerns and items that must be addressed in a collection development policy for graphic novels. Several of those concerns focus on content and defining the collection and its range; whether the books were chosen for the collection based on subject, genre, and/or the artistic and educational value and whether they were chosen with a specific audience in mind. Another item that Goldsmith states should be addressed in a collection development policy is determining what methods of selection will be taken to acquire titles for the collection, along with determining who in

the library will be responsible for acquiring the books; stressing that a particular librarian position should be identified in the policy if the “selector” is different from the librarian who acquires books for the rest of the collection. Other matters that should be addressed on graphic novels in a collection development policy are maintenance of the collection; considering both where the books should be kept in the library and its availability to patrons along with making sure the collection is appraised periodically for both its physical condition and its value and scope. Finally, the last item Goldsmith states should be covered in a collection development policy in regards to graphic novels is setting up a process for re-assessing the titles in the collection if necessary (Goldsmith 41-42, 106). Goldsmith also discusses the issue of intellectual freedom and challenges regarding books in this format. She discusses the prejudice with which many people view graphic novels. Some of the prejudices include not seeing graphic novels as a literary medium, viewing them as only being for kids or seeing them in the completely opposite vein, as being too “graphic” for kids. She states, “What is perceived as mainstream on some European newsstands might well be identified as pornographic by many Americans” (Goldsmith 85-86). Goldsmith agrees with several other researchers that because graphic novels have images along with text, this can make the medium more vulnerable to challenges. She included a list of reasons why patrons bring complaints against graphic novels. Several of these reasons involve these books portraying violent or sexual content and sometimes treating “sensitive” subjects tactlessly. Other reasons Goldsmith gives for these books sometimes causing

complaints were also related to their content, in that these books can sometimes feature stories that tend to portray “disrespect” for different groups; some of those being women, adult and other authority figures. Her last concern involves the “ease of access” of these books for children, because of some of the content that can be found in them which was just covered (Goldsmith 86). Goldsmith also talks about facing challenges against these books and how to defend having these books in library collections and states that challenges to graphic novels should be defended the same way that you would defend a challenge against any other book in your collection (Goldsmith 28-29, 41-42, 85-86, 106).

Rating Standards – Comic Code and other issues

There were several articles and books that discussed the Comic Book Code and the publishers’ rating standards that have been established for comic books and graphic novels and whether those standards were useful and necessary. John Goldwater’s book *Americana in Four Colors* offers an interesting perspective on the Comics Code. While the book offers informative input into how the Code works and operates, what is different about this book is the author’s attitude toward the Comics Code. Most texts talk about how the Code prevented writers and artists from creating new content and stifled comics artistically. However this book talks about the achievements of the Comic Code Authority and the author appears to highly regard the self-censorship practices of the industry. As Goldwater states,

“The self regulation program of the comics magazine industry has proved to be one of the most constructive achievements in publishing history. Its remarkable success in maintaining high standards of decency in comics for two decades – attested to by many commendations received from governmental and private agencies concerned with the welfare of children – has amounted to an extraordinary demonstration of public responsibility by the members of CMAA, as well as a confirmation of the strength of the principle of self-regulation” (Goldwater 32).

Since so many of the sources written on the subject look at the harm the Code did to the industry and its growth, this book offers an interesting counter perspective.

Seal of Approval: The History of the Comics Code by Amy Kiste Nyberg provides a complete history of the Comic Book Code and its developments. The author speculates on what would have happened if the Code had never been established, but affirms that the publishers did the best thing they could do at the time by agreeing to self-regulation, though she does maintain that they should have planned more before creating the harsh restrictions that they were then forced to adhere to for many years to come.

“A more thoughtful, less hurried approach to the problem might have resulted in a more visionary structure for the code based on the idea there should be different rating categories depending on the intended audience. Such a code would have paved the way for the comic book industry to cater to its child audience while at the same time considering ways it could expand

its market to encompass older adolescents and young adults to help stem the loss of its audience to television” (Nyberg 157).

She goes on to talk about the growing trend to publish comic books without the Comic Code Authority’s approval. Nyberg believes that this is a good move on the behalf of the industry and it is a sign that these books may be growing in their appeal for adult audiences. However, she does warn that:

“The comics code, while it has helped perpetuate the idea that comics are a children’s medium, also protects the industry from a public that perceives comics as strictly juvenile fare by continuing to designate certain titles as appropriate for readers of all ages. Retaining the comics code, in some form, is a defense mechanism that publishers cannot yet afford to abandon; until the comic book is able to recreate itself as a legitimate art form and change the public perception of it as juvenile entertainment, the seal of approval will remain a necessity” (Nyberg 163).

Now that it has been many years since most publishers have abandoned the Comic Book Code and are using their own rating standards, several issues have come up for librarians regarding starting collections of comic books and graphic novels in libraries. Gorman, in *Getting Graphic! Using Graphic Novels to Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens*, discusses the Comic Code and its decline. Gorman covers Marvel’s decision to stop using the Code in favor of developing their own rating standards that, according to them, are “more applicable to today’s societal standards” (Gorman 4). While Gorman

states this decision may have come about due to the Code's outdated and strict guidelines, she also notes that the Code prevented or "censored" a great deal of obscene and explicit content from being published in comic books. As she states, "Although some feel the Code is irrelevant and is essentially ignored by comic book readers, others believe that its presence protects the comic publishing industry from government regulation and ensures that comics remain "safe" for readers of all ages" (Gorman 4). Gorman also notes that with Marvel no longer using the Comic Code, only 3 major publishers are still following its guidelines: DC Comics, Dark Horse Comics, and Archie Comics; though she speculates that they may follow Marvel's lead and discontinue its use in the future (Gorman 4).

In *Manga Tackled at NY Comic-Con*, a brief article published in *Library Journal* in 2006, Michael Rogers briefly reports on a panel on manga (Japanese comic books) that was sponsored by *Library Journal*. At this panel, the differences between Japanese and American comic books, specifically differences in sexual content were discussed. In the article, it discusses how there is not a national standard for rating graphic novels right now, so publishers are forced to create their own standards. The problem is that though they do provide an age recommendation for these titles, librarians' state that there is not an explanation for why a book is rated for a more mature audience over a different book. Per a YA librarian that was quoted in this article, "Why is it appropriate for that age and not others – does the book contain violence, real sex, just mild nudity, or simply someone in their underwear?" (Rogers; Kim 20). Also briefly mentioned at the panel

was how manga is often kept in the YA section in libraries, whether or not its content warrants it being there. According to this article, “publishers suggested that librarians work on the issue” (Rogers; Kim 20).

Michael Lavin briefly covers some of the concerns that librarians have with having comic books and graphic novels in libraries in his article *Comic Books and Graphic Novels For Libraries: What to Buy*. He talks about issues librarians have faced when involved with establishing a comic collection at their institution. One of the issues this article addresses is the appropriateness of subject matter for younger readers, including the idea of age-specific comics. The article states that most of mainstream titles could have a “PG-13 rating from the Motion Picture Association of America” (Lavin 41). However, “At least three of today’s mainstream publishers - Dark Horse, DC’s Vertigo Imprint, and Image - are more problematic, and need to be examined on a title-by-title basis. Some publishers, such as Vertigo, indicate ‘Mature Audience’ on the cover, but most do not” (Lavin 41). The main concern for comic books, Lavin writes, is the violence that is contained in them, rather than any sexual content (Lavin 41). Lavin also provides selection tips regarding selecting age-appropriate materials in his *A Guide for Librarians*, on the University of Buffalo’s library website. He discusses that, while most “adult” comics are usually labeled by publishers, some of the graphic novels that contain mature themes and content may be labeled as “mature,” but also may not have anything labeled at all and since many publishers no longer use the Comics Code Authority ratings, librarians may find it difficult to judge what age-level some comic books and

graphic novels are appropriate for. Lavin provides several selection tips for determining these books' age appropriateness. The first and main tip that Lavin gives is to look over or "preview" each comic book or graphic novel that is meant for the collection to "avoid unpleasant surprises" and to help determine the target audience for the book. The next two tips that Lavin's suggests for determining age appropriateness are to consider the publishers and the authors of the books, because certain publishers and authors are known for releasing books with more "mature themes" and that contain "controversial materials." Lavin also recommends studying the comics industry and asking local comics retailers for help in understanding age appropriateness in regards to comic books. Lavin's last two selection tips actually are not tips for determining age appropriateness, but are just tips on dealing with comic book and graphic novel collections. These tips were making sure the library has a "statement about comics and graphic novels" in their collection development policies and also making sure that librarians are "prepared to address censorship challenges, should they arise" (Lavin library.buffalo.edu).

The article *Graphic Novels* published in *Library Journal* May 1, 2003 by Steve Raiteri covers shelving issues with mature graphic novels. According to the article, "there is a gray area in between kids and adults that causes difficulty for librarians-a variety of titles that appeal to older teens but contain content that some would find objectionable in YA collections" (Raiteri 94). He discusses some of the ratings standards used by large comic book and graphic novel publishers. Some examples of

ratings used by different publishers that are mentioned in this article are marking some titles “suggested for mature readers” and putting age suggestions. He mentions that some manga has been released that was originally marked appropriate for younger audiences, but raised the age rating mid-series when it became more “explicit.” It does not specifically mention the “explicit content” that made the publisher decide to change the age recommendation. He ends with the issue that some of the titles coming out have been marked inappropriately in his opinion, some being marked for younger audiences when they have mature content and others being marked for adults that should be rated for juvenile audiences. He concludes that librarians will need to check several sources for age recommendations for graphic novel titles and will have to do their own self-assessment in order to determine the proper placement for these materials in their institutions (Raiteri 94).

Nina Exner warns librarians about trusting publisher-issued rating standards in her article, “*Basic Reader’s Advisory for Manga Select Popular Titles and Similar Works.*” As she states, “Not all of these ratings are perfect” (Exner 14). One of the issues is that because there are different standards for Japan than there are for American comics, what may be deemed appropriate for all ages in Japan, may not find the same acceptance here. Exner offers the example of the partial nudity that is sometimes shown in these books when characters are bathing, because in Japan communal baths are common. Also, she brings up the example of the “transformation sequences” in the magical girls subgenre, because the characters are shown in “nude outline.” Some of the content common in

manga that may be found objectionable by some American patrons are “homosexuality, frank discussions about relationship issues, crude language, occult references, and especially violence” (Exner 14). Exner states, “libraries with extremely sensitive or conservative patrons or parents should be careful to examine manga themselves rather than assume that the ratings on the cover are perfect for their particular situation” (Exner 14). She also recommends that while librarians should be cautious in which titles they select for their libraries and where they are shelved, these books should still be included in library collections (Exner 13-21).

Serchay also discusses the problems with some of the current rating standards being used by publishers. While he states that there are many graphic novels available for librarians to choose from, problems arise when trying to pick titles for a children or tween collection, because many of the titles now available will have too much violence, sexual content, risqué language or adult themes for more juvenile collections. As he states, “It is not because these books are bad – far from it; many of the best books out there are for older readers, but they are inappropriate for this particular age range (children and teens)” (Serchay 98). He discusses current age ratings being used by publishers and comments that while some publishers, such as Marvel and Tokyopop, have developed rating systems that can be helpful, he agrees with Raiteri’s assessment, that some series will “jump” ratings mid-series and that some of these ratings can be subjective. “What the person who applies the rating feels is suitable for children may be

different from how you feel. Of course, as with any ratings system, some might still find “appropriate” materials inappropriate” (Serchay 99, 98-100).

Bradford Wright also comments on the problems with publisher rating standards in his book *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Wright comments that though publishers did introduce their own rating systems, they were not very effective in deterring young audiences from purchasing them. Wright states, “some publishers, like DC, adopted a loose and rather cynical ratings system that labeled some comic books “For Mature Readers Only” (Wright 278). This device, however, served mainly to enhance the appeal of the comic books to consumers of all ages, who naturally preferred the “mature” material” (Wright 278). This statement suggests a lack of concern toward rating these items appropriately and suggests the difficulties that librarians experience in determining whether certain items would be good acquisitions for their collections, as well as, if they do decide to acquire the items, determining their placement in their institutions.

In *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* by Frederik Schodt, he discusses that after the 1960s, restrictions regarding the content that Japanese graphic novel artists and writers were allowed to cover were relaxed. However, certain restrictions do still exist for Japanese manga publishers, though they are much less restrictive than those that American comic book publishers adhere to. As Schodt states, “What was once unthinkable in Japanese comics is now the norm. Horribly well behaved Japanese children are reading stories with scenes that make adult visitors from other, more

“liberal” cultures blanch” (Schodt 125-126). The author also compares the restrictions placed on American comic book publishers to the less stringent restrictions that Japanese manga publishers faced. As Schodt states about the Comic Code established in America, “Graphic violence, intimations of sex, and bad language are all prohibited. The vast majority of Japanese children’s comics today would immediately be disqualified” (Schodt 127). This shows how cultural disparities and especially diverse rating standards for media from different countries can affect collection development policies in libraries. In one of the final sections of her book *Understanding Manga and Anime*, Brenner provides her recommended titles list and also gives the publishers’ ratings for the titles as well as her own personal rating for the titles. While most of her assessments agreed with the publishers’ findings, some of her ratings were higher than what the publisher determined for the book. Some of the standards gave the rating for a title as teen, which when most people think of teen they consider the title to be appropriate for ages 11 and up, but on some of the titles where the publisher recommended the book appropriate for teen audiences, Brenner recommended it only for older teens – grades 9-12. A couple of examples of this are *Fullmetal Alchemist*, *Naruto*, *Bleach*, *W Juliet* and more (Brenner 260-291). She also covers the issue of how to deal with challenges and even how to avoid challenges. As she states, “Given manga and anime’s rising popularity and visibility, we may be seeing more challenges in the future” (Brenner 105). Her suggestions include creating a specific graphic novel collection policy as well as assessing titles by counting the number of panels with

objectionable material and/or using the same standards to assess these books as you would for assessing your visual media items (Brenner 105-106).

While one of the main objectives to this project is to determine the usefulness of rating standards for librarians who are concerned with acquiring comic books and graphic novels for juvenile, teen and adult audiences; it is also important to note the American Library Association's position on using rating standards in this manner. The American Library Association has made several statements regarding their position on rating standards and librarians using them in regards to collection development. In the document *Labeling and Rating Systems: An interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*, the following statement was made regarding their position on rating standards and their use:

“Many organizations use rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public regarding the organizations’ opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, games, or other materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by a library violates the Library Bill of Rights. When requested, librarians should provide information about rating systems equitably, regardless of viewpoint.”

“Adopting such systems into law or library policy may be unconstitutional. If labeling or rating systems are mandated by law, the

library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations" (ALA ala.org).

The American Library Association has also dealt with the issue of denying access to certain sources and materials to minors. The statement below from the document *Free Access to Libraries for Minors* from the American Library Association's website indicates their stance on this matter:

"Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation. Equitable access to all library resources and services shall not be abridged through restrictive scheduling or use policies."

"Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community, and restricts access for all library users."

"Children and young adults unquestionably possess First Amendment rights, including the right to receive information through the library in print, nonprint, or digital format. Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them" (ALA ala.org).

This research project was not intended to promote the use of rating standards to librarians, nor was it meant to convey that certain types of graphic novels or comic

books should not be included in libraries. One of the main aims of this project was to promote the inclusion of comic books and graphic novels in libraries and, for public libraries, to encourage librarians when acquiring comic books and graphic novels for their collections to consider all members of their community; so the collection would have appeal to people of all ages.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Purpose of the Study

As previously stated in Chapter 1 of this paper, there were three main objectives to this research study. The first was to research graphic novels and comic books, their history and the issues this combined visual and literary medium has had with censorship, with preconceived notions that this medium is only meant for a juvenile audience, and also the development of rating standards for this medium. The second objective was to study current literature that had been written by experts on this medium and librarians who have worked with developing comic book and graphic novel collections in their libraries to see what issues and challenges keeping these types of books in today's libraries that current and future librarians may have to face in the present and in the future. The third objective was to conduct a focus group and survey a mix of librarians to see if they have experienced any problems or challenges from patrons with having these books included in their institutions' collections, what age range that librarians currently working in the field believe this medium is meant to appeal to, and to see how they would rate content, such as, violence, language, sexual activity, etc.; in comic books and graphic novels. The aim of this study is to be a helpful resource for librarians, both currently with or without graphic novel and comic book collections at their institutions, to provide librarians with an improved understanding of this medium and to use the results from the focus group and survey to help them be more aware of the various contents that are featured in comic books and graphic novels so that librarians

can more appropriately place these books in their library collections. The goal is not only to provide this improved understanding and awareness, but also to help librarians be able to pick both mature and juvenile titles so that they will be providing material for their whole community, not only a portion of their community, and to help librarians to determine their placement in their institutions.

Conceptual Framework:

For the conceptual framework, different variables and dimensions were assessed to determine what would need to be researched during the course of this project. There were three independent variables identified in this project. “Content” is defined in this study as the character, language, graphics, violence, and sexual content that appear in comic books and graphic novels were studied and questioned the age appropriateness of this content at different levels. The second independent variable, “Evaluator,” refers to the different parties who view these materials and make judgments regarding the appropriate age for readers of these works. This variable includes the publisher, librarians, parents, readers, and community. The final independent variable was for the different types and genres of comic books and graphic novels, including superhero stories, crime, western, manga, humor and satire, and more. Several dependent variables were also identified for this project. The first was the different restrictions and guidelines that were established when the Comic Code Authority was implemented. I have listed the standards for the Production Code along with the 1948, 1954, 1971, and 1989 versions of the Comic Code. For comic books, the standards and labels now used

by Marvel and DC comic book publishers were included. DC also had its own manga line until July 2010 and rating standards for the materials they released from it. Besides DC's manga line, the standards used by the two major publishers of manga in the United States: Tokyopop and Viz were also studied. Below is a concise list of the variables and the content that were assessed under them:

- **Dimension for "Content"** (Independent variable):
 - Character
 - Language
 - Graphics
 - Violence
 - Sexual Content
- **Dimension for Evaluator** (Independent variable):
 - Publisher
 - Teacher/Librarian
 - Parent
 - Reader
 - Community
- **Types of Graphic Novel/Comic Book Genres** (Reference Foster 30-31 and Lavin 35) (Independent variable):
 - Superhero or Superheroine Stories
 - Science Fiction
 - Fantasy
 - Horror
 - Crime
 - Western
 - War
 - Funny Animal
 - Cartoon
 - Reality
 - Alternative
 - Human Interest Stories
 - Manga
 - Adaptations or Spinoff Stories
 - Humor and Satire Stories

- Educational and Nonfiction Stories
- **Ratings** (Reference: Hayes productioncode.dhwritings.com; mpaa.org) (Dependent variable):
 - **The Production Code (1930-1968):** (Appendix A)
 - **The Motion Picture Association of America Rating System (CARA Code):** (Appendix B)
- **Ratings of a Comic Book** (Dependent variable):
 - **1948 Association of Comic Book Publishers:** (Appendix C; Reference: Nyberg 165)
 - **1954 Comic Book Code:** (Appendix D; Reference: Nyberg 166)
 - **1971 Revision of Comic Book Code** (Appendix E; Reference: Nyberg 170)
 - **1989 Revision of Comic Book Code** (Appendix F; Reference: Nyberg 175)
 - **Present Marvel Rating System** (Appendix G; Reference: subscriptions.marvel.com/help)
 - **Previous Marvel Rating System** (Appendix H; Reference: comicbookresources.com)
 - **DC Rating System** (Appendix I; Reference: dccomics.com; web.archive.org)
- **Ratings of a graphic novel** (Dependent variable):
 - **Viz** (Appendix J; Reference: viz.com/ratings/)
- **Ratings of a graphic novel** (Dependent variable):
 - **Tokyopop** (Appendix K; Reference: tokyopop.com)

Research Question: *What are the perceptions of librarians on the publishers' rating standards for comic books and graphic novels?*

--Do they think the current rating standard for violence appropriate?

--Do they think the current rating standard for sexual content is appropriate?

--Do they think the current rating standard for risqué language is appropriate?

Research Design

After considering the different types of research goals, it was determined that this research project should be an exploratory study designed to generate theory, because there was not a preconceived theory of what the results of this project would be. The objective was to determine what librarians' standards regarding age appropriateness for comic books and graphic novels were along with questioning them on the age appropriateness for the different types of content that could be included in these books to see how they compared. Another aspect of this study was to determine if the rating standards currently being used by publishers' are helpful to librarians currently working on building or have already developed comic book or graphic novel collections at their libraries. If the majority of standards or responses that librarians' selected in the survey matched, then it would show that librarians are in agreement with the age appropriateness of comic books and graphic novels containing various types of content at multiple levels of intensity. If the results from the survey showed that the majority of librarians did not agree on the age appropriateness of comic books and graphic novels under the various types of content they were given at the different levels of intensity, then this project would show that librarians may still need to debate what is and is not appropriate for certain age levels with comic books and graphic novels and collection development librarians should continue to be careful when selecting these types of books for their collections.

In studying comic books and issues with collection development, it was

important to begin with research into the history of comic books and its characteristics, also looking into past perceptions of librarians on comic books and their relevance to individuals and society. This research included studying the history of the Comic Code Authority, which has been revised several times, though today they are seldom used by mainstream publishers who have created their own rating standards to follow. After studying the history and standards of the Comic Code Authority, it was helpful to also research the standards used by the major comic book publishers today; Marvel and DC, listed above. Some publishers have developed separate labels for comic books, such as DC's Vertigo imprint and Marvel's MAX label. Other rating standards, such as the CARA's rating system for movies, were also among some of the standards included in this study.

Next graphic novels were studied, specifically manga, and the literature that has been devoted to establishing graphic novel collections in libraries. European and Asian countries, because of differences in culture and age of consent, have fewer restrictions than the United States regarding content limitations, rating standards and assessment for appropriateness for their juvenile customers. The standards used by two main publishers of manga in the United States, Viz and Tokyopop, were also included in this research.

Finally, a survey was developed and distributed to librarians and also a focus group was conducted to get qualitative data regarding this subject matter. The survey provided examples of actual words used to describe content of publishers' rating standards and had the participants rate them for appropriate age level; terms included

mild, moderate, intense and excessive. This was a quantitative survey; and the numbers of responses were totaled to determine if there was a correlation between the participants' responses. This survey was distributed by email to librarians in Tennessee, both public and school library media specialists, and an email was also sent out to obtain participants for the focus group. The survey and the focus group were restricted to respondents who live or work in the state of Tennessee. The sampling framework for this study was any public or school librarian who could legitimately answer the questions in the focus group and the survey. From the Tennessee Department of State's website, the statistics for the number of public librarians were approximately 232 for those with MLS degrees and there were approximately another 257 librarians without MLS degrees for a rounded total of 489 public librarians in Tennessee (State of Tennessee state.tn.us/tsla/). For school libraries, there are a total of 1,693 public schools in Tennessee. Of those 1,693 public schools, 982 are elementary, 306 are middle and 318 are high schools. If you estimate that there is at least one librarian for each elementary and middle school and two for each high school, then an estimate of the number of school librarians in the state of Tennessee would be approximately 1,924 (EducationBug Tennessee educationbug.org). The respondents to the survey and the focus group were self-selected and they were a convenience sample of librarians. The website <http://tennessee.gov/tsla/pld/> was used to obtain emails from several Tennessee public libraries in each region in order to gain participants for the survey and was sent to the listserv "tasl-bounces@discoveret.org" for the Tennessee Association of School

Librarians to gain responses from school librarians. Since the survey was sent to a listserv, it is not possible to calculate what the return rate was for the surveys. The results of the focus group and the survey were compared and the participants' opinion of comic books and graphic novels age appropriateness along with their opinion on the age appropriateness of certain types of content were studied to see if librarians are in agreement on this matter and to help librarians know what to look for when developing adult and juvenile comic book and graphic novel collections in their libraries.

Survey

This survey is part of a study being done on graphic novel and comic book rating standards. The study will take about 15 minutes to complete. There are several demographic questions at the beginning of this survey to determine the survey's coverage of the population. Then below are questions regarding the content in graphic novels and comic books and its age-appropriateness. Please look over this content and give the age rating that you feel is appropriate. You must be age 18 or older to participate in this study. By completing the survey, you provide your informed consent to participate. There are no known risks for study participants. If at any time, you wish to quit the project, simply close the survey. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it. If you have questions about the study or the procedures, you may contact the lead researcher, Sara Ray at (865) 966-0255 or sray@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact Research Compliance Services at (865) 974-3466.

1. Age:

<u>20 or younger</u>	<u>21-25</u>	<u>26-30</u>	<u>31-35</u>
<u>36-40</u>	<u>41-45</u>	<u>46-50</u>	<u>51-55</u>
<u>56-60</u>	<u>61-65</u>	<u>66 or older</u>	

2. Gender:

<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
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3. Occupation:

Young Adult Services Librarian Adult Services Librarian
School Library Media Specialists Other: _____

4. Who in your family reads comic books or graphic novels:

You Spouse Child Sibling
Parent Everyone None Other: _____

5. What are your perceptions of comic books' and graphic novels' target audience?

a. 10 and under b. 11-20 c. 21-30 d. 31-40
e. 41-50 f. 51-60 g. 61 and older
h. None i. All j. Other: _____

6. Do you have a graphic novel or comic book collection in your library now?

Yes No

7. Do you have difficulty selecting graphic novels and comic books for your library collection now? (Check the one that applies)

Always Sometimes Seldom Never N/A

8. Do the publisher's rating standards now in place help you in acquiring these books for your collection? (Check the one that applies)

Always Sometimes Seldom Never N/A

9. Have you had any problems with cataloging or shelving the comic books or graphic novels in your collection? (Check the one that applies)

Always Sometimes Seldom Never N/A

10. Have you had any complaints from patrons about having graphic novels in your library or against any particular graphic novel or comic book in the collection? (Check the one that applies)

Always Sometimes Seldom Never N/A

11. In your perception, for which age should the comic books contain the types of violence listed below and to what degree? Please select from the age ranges listed.

All Ages 8+ 10+ 13+ 16+ 18+ None

Crime: (content featuring drugs, larceny, murder, activities outside of the law)

_____;
mild moderate intense excessive

Horror: (torture, supernatural creatures: vampires, werewolves, etc.)

_____;
mild moderate intense excessive

War/Battles: (fighting, bloodshed, weapons, etc.)

_____;
mild moderate intense excessive

12. In your perception, for which age should the comic books contain the types of sexual content listed below and to what degree? Please select from the age ranges listed.

All Ages	8+	10+	13+	16+	18+	None
Embracing:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	mild	moderate	intense	excessive		
Kissing:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	mild	moderate	intense	excessive		
Nudity:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	mild	moderate	intense	excessive		
Sexual Activity:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	mild	moderate	intense	excessive		

13. In your perception, for which age should the comic books contain the degrees of language listed below? Please select from the age ranges listed.

All Ages	8+	10+	13+	16+	18+	None
Mild :	_____					
Moderate:	_____					
Intense:	_____					
Excessive:	_____					

14. In your perception, for which age should the comic books contain the types of romantic relationships listed below and to what degree? Please select from the age ranges listed.

	All Ages	8+	10+	13+	16+	18+	None
Children Heterosexual Relationships:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		mild		moderate		intense	excessive
Teenage Heterosexual Relationships:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		mild		moderate		intense	excessive
Adult Heterosexual Relationships:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		mild		moderate		intense	excessive
Children Homosexual Relationships:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		mild		moderate		intense	excessive
Teenage Homosexual Relationships:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		mild		moderate		intense	excessive
Adult Homosexual Relationships:	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
		mild		moderate		intense	excessive

Focus Group Questions

1. *Do you have a graphic novel or comic book collection in your library now?*
 - a. *Why or Why not?*
 - b. *If no, why have you not started acquiring some of these books for your collection? If so, why did you start acquiring these books for your collection?*
2. *Do you have difficulty selecting graphic novels and comic books for your library collection now?*
 - a. *Why or Why not?*
3. *Do the publisher's rating standards now in place help you in acquiring these books for your collection?*
 - a. *Why or Why not?*
4. *What suggestions would you give other librarians who are struggling with creating these types of collections due to difficulties in determining whether these books are appropriate for the type of collections they maintain for their communities?*
5. *Have you had any problems with cataloging or shelving the comic books or graphic novels in your collection?*
 - a. *If so, what kinds of problems? If not, what method have you chosen to catalog and shelve these books?*
6. *Have you had any complaints from patrons about having graphic novels in your library or against any particular book in this medium in the collection?*

Chapter 4 – Findings

Focus Group

For the first part of this research study, school librarian media specialists and public librarians were sent an email invitation to participate in an online chat to discuss the development of graphic novel and comic book collections in libraries. Four librarians agreed to be a part of this study. For the remainder of this study, they will be referred to as Participants A – D. They also agreed to take the survey, whose results will be discussed in a later section of this paper. Three of the participants in the study were female and one was male. Two of the participants work as School Media Specialists and the other two work in public libraries. The ages of the focus group participants ranged from 21-25, 36-40, 46-50 and 56-60. The study was conducted in the evening on February 25th, 2010.

All of the participants in the focus group stated that the libraries where they worked had current graphic novel and comic book collections. The comic books were in the trade paperback format. They all agreed that, while they tried to collect a combination of “comic-y” and “serious” graphic novels, the more popular books were the more “comicy” graphic novels. Participant C, a school librarian, stated during the course of the discussion, “We try to collect a mixture between Japanese manga, which is really more comicy, and the more serious graphic novels. That may be a bit of librarian vanity, because honestly the serious stuff, the better stuff, we kind of have trouble getting to circulate.” Participant C goes on to state, “The graphic novels are a lot harder

to sell to kids, because the manga readers don't want anything that serious – this is my theory – the manga readers don't seem to want anything that meaty and the kids who really want to read meatier books are kind of turned off by all of the pictures.”

Participant A, also a school librarian, agreed with Participant C's statements and added, “We have a huge following for those books and they just go in and out constantly.”

Participant A continued, stating, “We have a small collection, but the ones that really keep going in and out are the manga, the Japanese kind of comic book ones.”

Participant D, a public librarian, stated that there was a third category of graphic novels. According to Participant D, “We've got a third category, because we've got the manga books and we've got some serious novels, but we also have what I would call graphic novel comic books (*as previously discussed these are also referred to as trade paperbacks*), like the Batman and Spiderman and that kind of stuff. The more serious stuff, no, it hasn't circulated very much. Manga circulates, but it is hard for us to maintain those collections because they're so big in terms of buying them, so we've been buying more of the Batman kind of stuff.” Participant B, also a public librarian, agreed that the superhero comics like Batman are popular, especially with her adult patrons, but she does try to “purchase equally across the board, including the juvenile section so we actually have graphic novels in juvenile, teen and adults and we try to keep it as even as possible, but the reality is more is available for the adult collection.”

Regarding classifying and shelving graphic novels and comic books, Participant B, a public librarian, stated that while she agreed with the other participants on the

popularity of the manga genre and how, especially juvenile, patrons did not express as much interest in the more serious graphic novels. She also may “have the situation of classifying some graphic novels as adult, in the adult collection, and others as teen. Most of the manga goes in the teen collection and that gets used by kids that walk in and know exactly what they want, they are die hard readers, but typically what I see are adults that place holds on the graphic novels and, they seem like two very different groups.”

Participant C also brought up issues with shelving these kinds of books and stated that while they currently keep a separate graphic novel section she, “wondered about maybe pulling the things that are not manga and interfiling them with our fiction to see if that would boost circulation a little bit - maybe it would capture people who don’t always wander over to the graphic novel section.” Per Participant D, “One thing we did in terms of shelving is they used to be all shelved under the 741 section, for cartooning – we decided these were more like novels, so we inter-shelved them with the rest of our youth/young adult novels and we have graphic novel stickers on the spine to help people identify them if there is any question about them.” Participant D stated later that the idea behind inter-shelving the graphic novels with the young adult novels is an attempt to get the graphic novel readers to notice and hopefully take interest in some of the non-graphic collection. Participant A, a school librarian for a county school system, stated regarding her shelving practices that, “... County School Media Centers made the decision to create a new call number called GF, for graphic format...we have all of our

graphic, whether its fiction or the comic book, what used to be in the 741 area – we pull it to just graphic fiction- one area right together.” However, Participant A stated that not all of the graphic format books seemed to go together, such as superhero and manga genre books being mixed with the more serious graphic format books about important topics. In response to this, Participant C stated, “We deal with that difference by putting all of our graphic format books in one section under GF and under that GF we further classify them. So a graphic fiction, which right now our graphic novels and manga are all together, that would have the call number GF for graphic format and then FIC for fiction and then letters for the last name. And then our graphic non-fiction has the call number GF, for the format, and then the regular Dewey number – and so on and so forth.” Per Participant B, her library does not interfile, but keeps these books in the 741 category – in their juvenile, adult and teen sections. Because they are a public library and collect these books for juvenile, teen and adult audiences she commented during the discussion that they had to be very careful to get these books in the right collection. As Participant B commented, “a lot of the folks in the library think if it’s a graphic novel – its teen period...but that is just so not true. That’s kind of a constant battle for me – not so much whether it is interfiled with fiction, but getting it into the right collection in terms of adult or teen, because definitely a lot of the graphic novels, definitely need to be in the adult collection for sure.”

While none of the participants in this focus group said they had received “official” challenges/complaints about books in their libraries’ collections, they all

expressed some concern about the possibility of complaints about these books, as well as concern about difficulties selecting items for their collections. The participants mentioned several possible resources to use when selecting comic books and graphic novels for their collections. They suggested searching bookstores, especially used bookstores and sites like diamondbookshelf, ALA reluctant readers recommendations, and the New York Times Bestseller lists. They suggested asking for advice from other librarians in the area and from patrons, as well as checking local listservs.

Participant C said when selecting items, she does keep in mind the age ratings that the publishers provide, but she doesn't "treat them religiously" just as a "reasonable guideline." Participant D stated that he was not even aware that the publishers had their own rating systems, but that he was going to "check into it." Regarding complaints, Participant D mentioned an incident in which one patron "questioned" him concerning a graphic novel that "pretty clearly showed a sex scene" though the patron did not make an "official" complaint. While Participant D said that he was initially going to leave the book in the collection despite the informal complaint, he changed his mind by the next day; "I thought it was probably not worth what could happen because there wasn't really too much misinterpreting that – we didn't really have an adult section, but that wouldn't necessarily protect us, it's a small library and folks go all over, so I went ahead and pulled it."

Both Participants A and C mentioned incidents in which they had ordered a book and then, after receiving it, they realized some of the content in the books was not

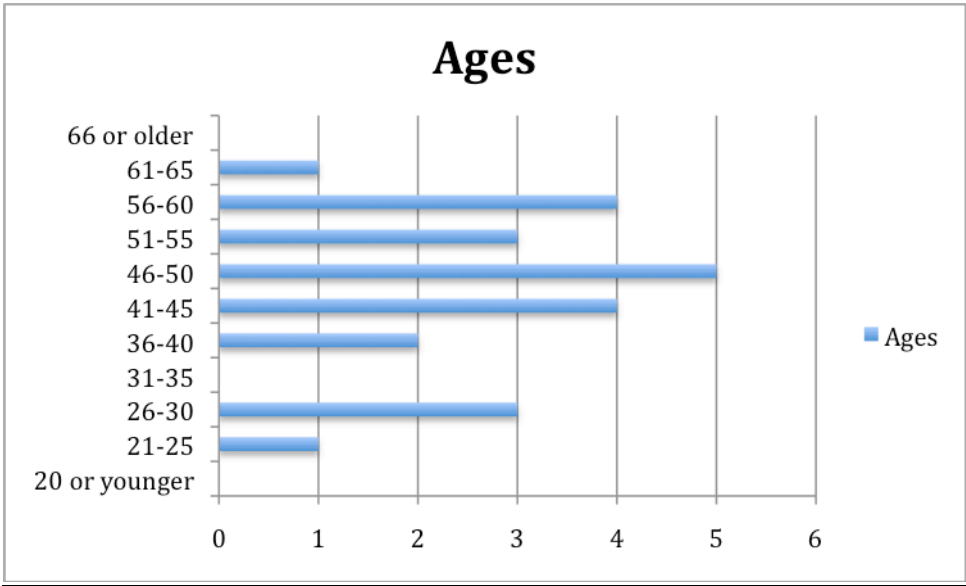
appropriate for their audiences. Those items ultimately were not shelved. As Participant A stated, “you have to be so so so careful and it is so hard beforehand to know that until you get the book.” Participant C agreed with Participant A’s comments. She added that she tries, “to hand check just about every page of graphic novels before they go on the shelf, because that is sort of an infamous problem.” Both Participant A and Participant B agree that even though they can “appreciate the format,” when they have a concern about the content in one of these books they struggle with finding a way to justify keeping the book in the collection. As Participant B stated that it is a challenge “when you are looking for a real good reason not to pull something and sometimes you can’t always find a real good reason.” Participant C made a very good point regarding why books in the graphic novel and comic book formats are sometimes more at risk of being challenged and/or censored in libraries; “I have found some things that have sort of bothered me, because the pictures have been of things that, if they had been in text form, none of us would have batted an eye about it, if it had been just a plain prose novel. We have things much worse than that on our shelves, but because its pictures, it is so hard...It makes it a much different decision about whether it put it out.”

Survey

In addition to the four surveys that Participants A – D completed prior to the focus group, 19 other librarians responded to the email request to participate in this study, 23 surveys were received and analyzed in all. The 19 librarians that responded to the email invitation will be referred to as Participants E – W. The participants’ ages ranged greatly. The most common age range for the participants of this survey study

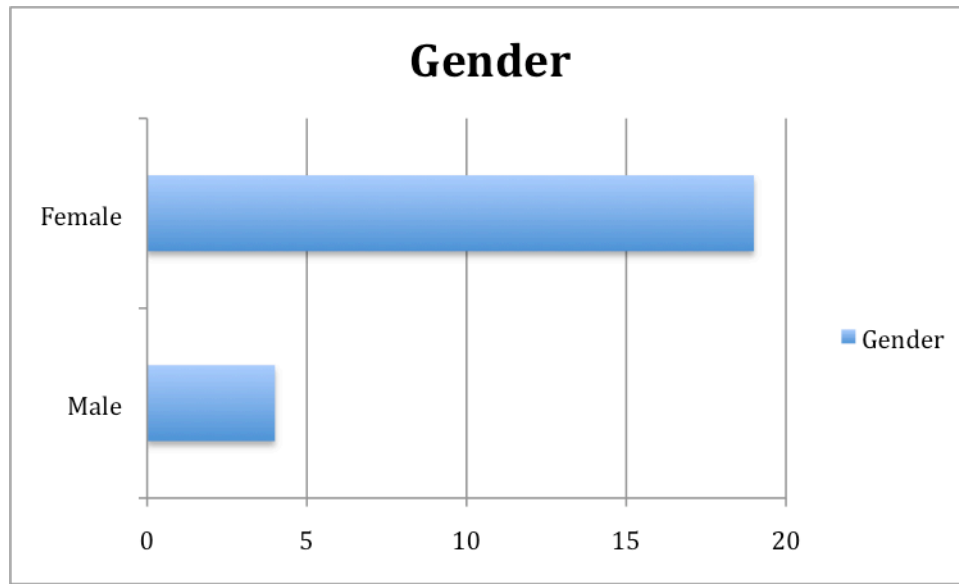
was “46 – 50,” with five participants being in that range. There were four participants in each of the age ranges “41 – 45” and “56 – 60.” Both age ranges “26 – 30” and “51 – 55” had three participants each. There were two participants in the “36 – 40” age range, one participant in the age ranges “21 – 25,” and finally one participant in the “61-65” group. No participants were “20 or younger,” “31 – 35” or the “66 and older” age ranges (please see bar graph for an illustration of the distribution of the participants’ age ranges).

Figure 1: Question 1 - Ages of Participants



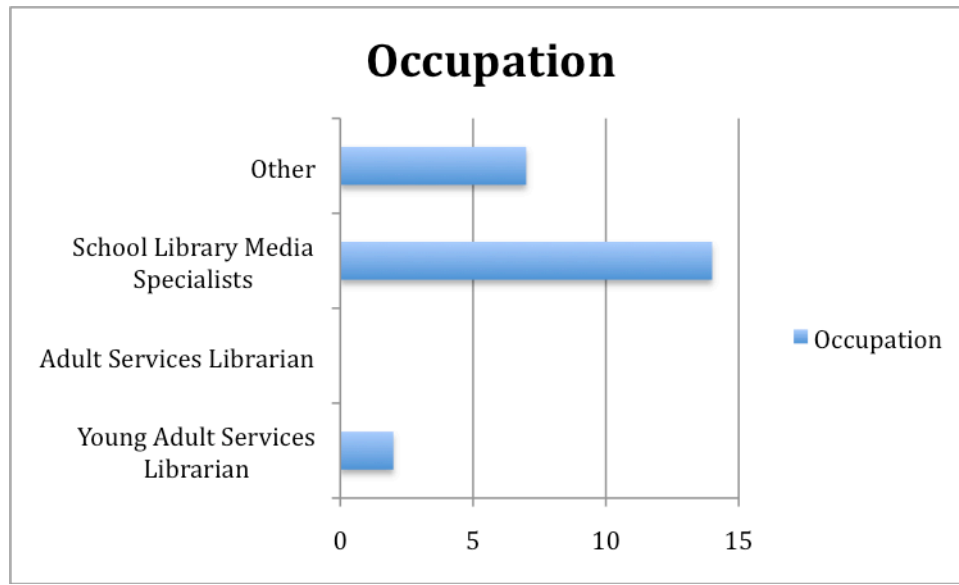
Of the 23 participants, the majority of the participants in this survey study were female, with nineteen of the participants being female and only four being male (see bar graph included below).

Figure 2: Question 2 - Gender of Participants



Of the 23 participants, fourteen were School Library Media Specialists, so this group's responses made up the majority. Only two participants identified themselves as Young Adult Services Librarians, and none of the participants were Adult Services Librarians. The remainder of the participants identified themselves as "Other" types of librarians. The "Other" types of librarians included a Senior Branch Assistant/Teen Collection Specialist, a Library Administrator, four Library Directors/Managers, and an Assistant Reference Clerk to make the total of "Other" librarians to be seven. (Please see bar graph below to see an illustration of the distribution of librarians that participated in this survey study.)

Figure 3: Question 3 – Occupations of Participants



The first question on the survey related to the subject matter of comic books and graphic novels asked participants to identify whether they or someone in their family reads comic books or graphic novels. The participants were allowed to select more than one of the options listed. There was also an “Other” option, for which they could list a family relation not already in the list. Ten of the librarians said that no one in their family – including themselves – read comic books or graphic novels, while another nine participants said that they read comic books and graphic novels. Five participants said they had a child that read comic books and graphic novels. Only one participant apiece indicated that their spouse, sibling, or “Other” members of their family (in this case it was a niece and nephew) read comic books and graphic novels. (Please see Table for Question 4 on next page for an illustrated view of this data).

Table 1: Question 4 - Interest in Format

Participants	You	Spouse	Child	Sibling	Parent	Everyone	None	Other
Participant A							X	
Participant B								Niece & Nephew
Participant C	X							
Participant D	X		X					
Participant E							X	
Participant F							X	
Participant G	X							
Participant H	X							
Participant I							X	
Participant J							X	
Participant K	X							
Participant L							X	
Participant M	X			X				
Participant N		X	X					
Participant O							X	
Participant P							X	
Participant Q							X	
Participant R	X		X					
Participant S	X							
Participant T							X	
Participant U			X					
Participant V			X					
Participant W	X							

The second question the survey related to the subject matter asked participants to identify what they felt was the target audience for comic books and graphic novels. The age ranges the participants were given to choose from were done by decade. As shown by the Table for question five included below, participants were allowed to select more than one age range, so while some participants only chose one age range, such as “10 and under,” another might select the age ranges “10 and under,” “11-20,” and “21-30,”

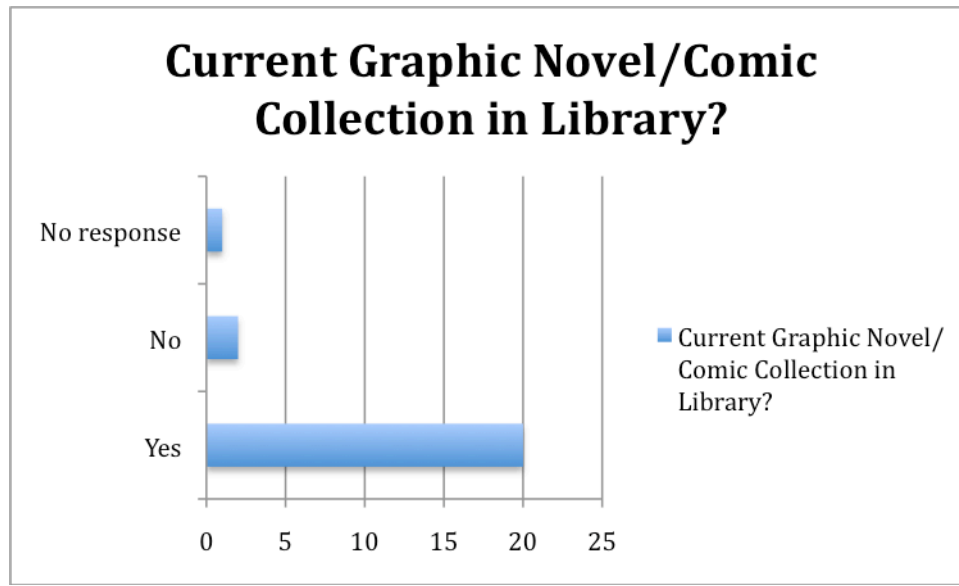
indicating that they felt the target audience for comic books and graphic novels was anyone between the ages 1 – 30. The majority age group that was selected by fourteen of the participants as the target audience for comic books and graphic novels was “11 – 20.” The age level that was selected the most often by participants after “11 – 20” was “21 – 30,” with eight participants selecting that age range. Seven participants selected the age range “10 & under” after that. One participant selected the age range “31 – 40” for the target audience, while two participants selected the “Other” option. Both participants included clarification on the “Other” audience – one commented “several age groups” and the other indicated an age range of “11 – 60.” Only four of the participants selected the “All” age ranges option for the target audience.

Table 2: Question 5 - Target Audience

Participants	10 & under	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 & older	None	All	Other
Participant A	X	X	X							
Participant B		X	X							
Participant C		X								
Participant D		X	X							
Participant E		X								
Participant F										Several Age Groups
Participant G	X	X	X							
Participant H										11-60
Participant I	X	X	X							
Participant J		X								
Participant K									X	
Participant L		X								
Participant M		X	X							
Participant N									X	
Participant O									X	
Participant P	X									
Participant Q		X								
Participant R	X	X	X							
Participant S		X	X	X						
Participant T	X									
Participant U		X								
Participant V	X									
Participant W									X	

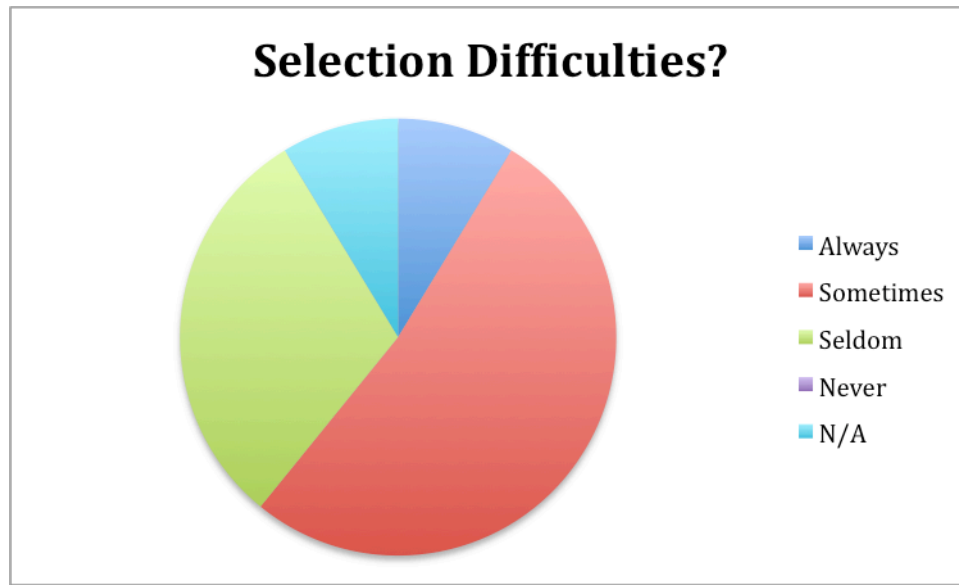
Participants were then asked if the library they are currently working for has an established comic book or graphic novel collection. Twenty of the participants responded that the libraries they currently work for do have comic book and/or graphic novel collections. Two of the participants responded that their libraries do not have current comic book or graphic novel collections, while one participant chose not to answer the question.

Figure 4: Question 6 – Current Collection in Library



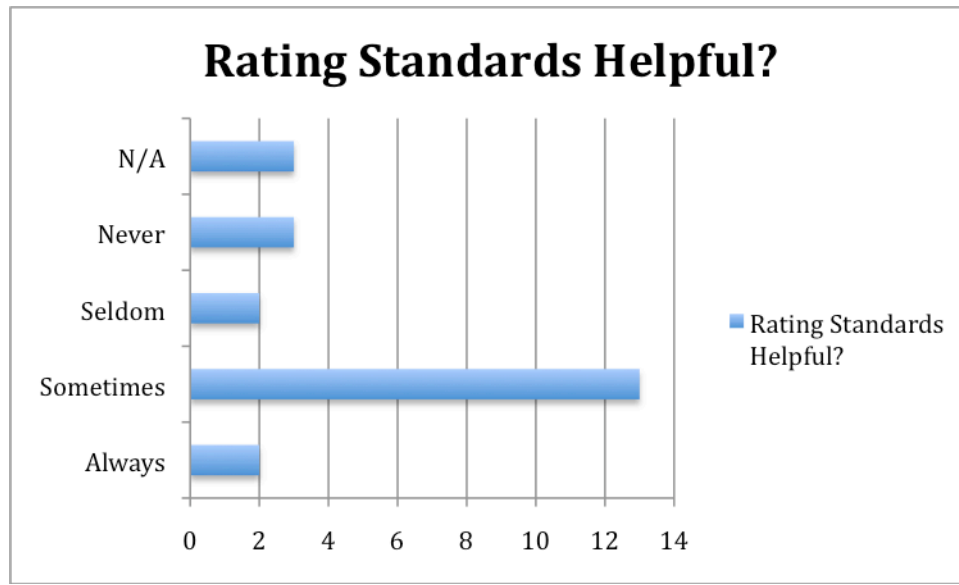
Another question on the survey asked the participants if they had any difficulty selecting graphic novels and comic books for their library's collection. The participants could choose between: "Always," "Sometimes," "Seldom," "Never," and finally "N/A." (Questions 7-10 all were arranged in this same manner.) The majority of the participants, twelve in total, stated that they did "sometimes" have trouble selecting these kinds of books for their collections. Seven participants indicated that they "seldom" had any difficulty. Two participants responded that they "always" have trouble, and two participants chose the response "N/A" (most likely because they do not have comic book or graphic novel collections currently at their libraries). None of the participants chose "Never" as a response to the question of whether they have difficulty selecting comic books or graphic novels for the library collection.

Figure 5: Question 7 – Issues with Selection



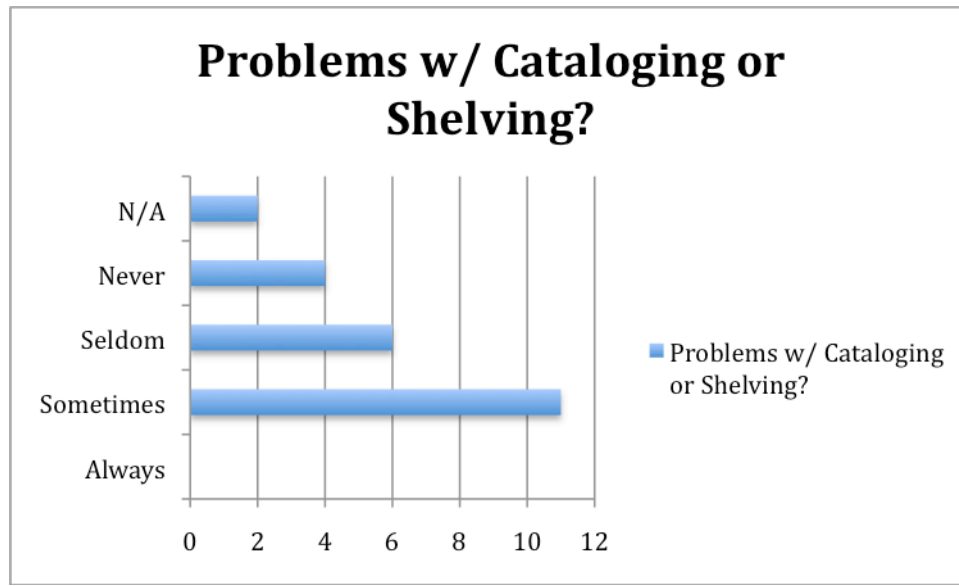
Question 8 asked whether the current publishers' rating standards ever proved helpful when selecting new items to add to their libraries' collections. Thirteen of the participants stated that the rating standards "sometimes" are useful to them. Two participants each indicated that these rating standards are "always" and "seldom" helpful to them when picking these types of books for their library's collection. The "never" and "n/a" choices on the survey were selected by three participants each.

Figure 6: Question 8: - Usefulness of Rating Standards



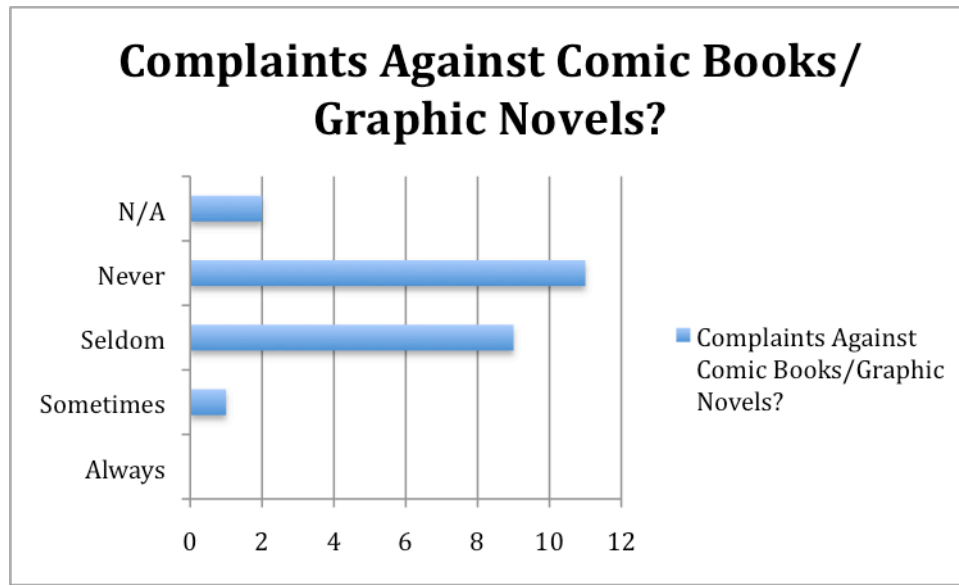
The next question asked whether participants had ever had problems cataloging or shelving comic books or graphic novels that they have acquired for their collection. Eleven participants stated they “sometimes” experienced problems cataloging or shelving these kinds of books in their collections. The next largest response for participants was “seldom”, with six out of the 23 participants choosing that response. The response “never” was chosen by four participants, “N/A” was selected by two participants. None of the participants chose the response “always” when stating whether they ever experienced problems with cataloging or shelving comic books or graphic novels (see chart below).

Figure 7: Question 9 – Issues with Cataloging and Shelving



In question 10, participants were asked if they had ever received complaints from patrons about having graphic novels or comic books in their collections, or if they had ever received a complaint against a particular graphic novel or comic book in their collection. The majority of the participants, eleven in total, indicated they had “never” had problems of this nature. Nine participants stated they had “seldom” received any complaints. Two participants gave the response “N/A.” Only one participant responded with “sometimes.” None of the participants indicated that they “always” had trouble with complaints from patrons against graphic novels or comic book collections (see chart below).

Figure 8: Question 10 – Issues with Complaints



Content Questions

Questions 11-14 were broken up into 4 parts: mild, moderate, intense and excessive. These terms were chosen from descriptions of current publishers' age ratings; with mild being the lowest level and increasing in intensity from there to moderate, intense, to the highest level of excessive for the purposes of this study. When indicating what kind of content is appropriate for a given audience, participants could choose from several age ranges: "All Ages", "8+", "10+", "13+", "16+", "18+", and "None." These age ranges were chosen from some of the current comic book and graphic novel publishers' age ratings. (See Appendices for details on these ratings.) Some participants wrote their own responses instead of the ones they were given to choose from. Some of those responses included "16-", "0." Some participants left sections blank without entering a response – the blank sections will be referenced in this paper as "no response."

Violent Content - Crime

Question 11 looked at violent content and was broken into three parts: crime, horror and war/battles. Survey participants had varied responses regarding the appropriate age for mild violent content contained in the crime genre. Seven participants indicated the age “10+” as appropriate for a mild level of violent crime content. Six participants gave the age range of “13+” as the appropriate age level. One participant each selected “All Ages”, “8+”, “16+”, “16-“, and “None” as appropriate age levels for a mild level of violent crime content. Five participants gave no response to this question (see Table for Question 11 - A).

When assessing the appropriate audience for comic books and graphic novels with a moderate level of violent crime content, the majority of the participants, eleven in total, chose “16+” as the appropriate age level. Five participants chose the age range “13+”. The response “None” was chosen by two participants, and one participant each chose the options “10+” and “16-.” Three participants gave no response to this question.

When considering the appropriate audience for works with an intense level of violent crime content, nine participants chose “18+” as an appropriate age level. The second highest age range chosen by participants was “16+”, with four participants choosing that age range. Three participants chose the response “None” and one participant chose “13+” as an appropriate age range. As seen on the next page in the Table for Question 11 - A, six participants did not respond to this question.

For the question of the appropriateness of reading which contains an excessive level of violent crime content, seven participants each chose “18+” and “None” as an

appropriate age level. Only one participant chose the age range “16+”. Eight participants entered no response to this question.

Table 3: Question 11 – A Violent Crime Content

Participants		Violent Content - Crime		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant C	13+	16+	18+	No response
Participant D	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant E	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant F	10+	16+	None	None
Participant G	8+	10+	13+	16+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant I	10+	16+	18+	None
Participant J	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant K	10+	13+	18+	18+
Participant L	None	None	None	None
Participant M	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant N	No response	16+	18+	No response
Participant O	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant P	All Ages	None	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant T	No response	13+	No response	No response
Participant U	13+	16+	16+	18+
Participant V	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant W	16-	16-	18+	None

Violent Content - Horror

The next questions addressed the horror genre of comic books and graphic novels.

Participants were asked to give age ranges for appropriate audiences of comic books and graphic novels with mild, moderate, intense and excessive levels of violence in this horror. For a mild level of violent horror content, the majority of participants, nine in

all, chose the age range “10+” as appropriate. Six participants chose “13+” as appropriate for mild, violent horror content. Two participants chose “16+” as an acceptable age range and one participant each selected the “All Ages” and “8+” options for appropriate age ranges for mild violent horror content. Four participants gave no response to this question.

When assessing the appropriate audience for comic books and graphic novels with a moderate level of violent horror content, most participants seemed to agree that “16+” was an appropriate age range, with eight participants selecting that option. After that, seven participants chose the age range “13+” as appropriate for moderate violent horror content. Two participants chose the option “18+” and one participant selected “None” as a response. Five participants did not respond to this question.

Eight participants chose the age range “16+” as appropriate for an intense level on violent, horror content in comic books and graphic novels. The age range “18+” was chosen by seven participants and three participants gave “None” as an appropriate age range for an intense level of violent, horror content. Out of the 23 participants in this study, five gave no response for this question.

Only three of the possible eight age ranges were selected by participants for an excessive amount of violent horror content. Eight participants gave no response for this question. For the age ranges “18+” and “None”, seven participants apiece chose those options. Only one participant selected “16+” as an appropriate age range for an excessive level of violent, horror content in graphic novels and comic books.

Table 4: Question 11 – B Violent Horror Content

Participants		Violent Content - Horror		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	10+	13+	18+	18+
Participant C	13+	16+	No response	No response
Participant D	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant E	No response	No response	16+	No response
Participant F	16+	18+	None	None
Participant G	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant I	10+	18+	None	None
Participant J	No response	No response	16+	No response
Participant K	8+	13+	16+	18+
Participant L	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant M	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant N	10+	16+	18+	No response
Participant O	13+	16+	16+	18+
Participant P	All Ages	None	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	10+	16+	18+	18+
Participant T	No response	13+	No response	No response
Participant U	10+	13+	16+	16+
Participant V	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant W	13+	16+	18+	None

Violent Content - War/Battles

The third section of Question 11 asked the participants to give an appropriate age range for mild, moderate, intense and excessive levels of violent content in War/Battle genre graphic novels and comic books. When assessing the appropriate audience for comic books and graphic novels with a mild level of war/battle violent content, the majority of participants, nine in total, chose “10+” as the appropriate age range. Five participants chose “13+” as an appropriate age range for violent war/battle content.

After “10+” and “13+”, the age range that was chosen the most by participants for violent war/battle content was “8+,” which was selected by three of the participants. One participant each chose “All Ages” and “16+” as an appropriate age range for violent war/battle content in comic books and graphic novels. Four participants in the survey chose not to give a response to this question.

In the next level of content, moderate, nine participants chose “16+” as an appropriate age range for a moderate level of violent war/battle content. Six participants chose “13+” and five participants chose “10+” as an appropriate age range for a moderate level of violent war/battle content in graphic novels and comic books. No response was given by three of the participants of the survey.

The majority of the participants selected “18+” as an appropriate age range for an intense level of violent war/battle content in graphic novels and comic books, with nine participants choosing that age range. Five participants selected “16+” as an appropriate age range for an intense level of violent war/battle content and two participants chose “13+” as an appropriate age range. One participant selected the “None” option for an intense level of violent content featuring war/battles and six participants gave no response to this question.

For an excessive level of violent war/battle content in graphic novels and comic books, seven participants selected “18+” as an appropriate age range, while only two participants selected “16+” as an appropriate age range. Six participants chose the “None” option and eight participants gave no response to this question, as shown on the Table for Question 11 – C.

Table 5: Question 11 – C Violent War/Battles Content

Participants		Violent Content - War/Battles		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	10+	10+	16+	18+
Participant C	13+	16+	18+	No response
Participant D	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant E	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant F	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant G	8+	10+	13+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant I	10+	16+	18+	None
Participant J	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant K	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant L	10+	13+	18+	None
Participant M	8+	10+	13+	16+
Participant N	10+	16+	18+	No response
Participant O	8+	10+	16+	18+
Participant P	All Ages	10+	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant T	No response	13+	No response	No response
Participant U	10+	13+	16+	16+
Participant V	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant W	10+	13+	18+	None

Sexual Content - Embracing

After studying violent content in comic books and graphic novels, the next item that was studied in this survey was sexual content. Four different types of sexual content were studied in this survey: embracing, kissing, nudity and sexual activity.

Many of the publishers' ratings listed sexual content and nudity in their ratings' descriptions, so different types of sexual content were listed to see how participants would rate them separately. Sexual content can encompass all of the four types listed in this survey. Again, for these four types of sexual content, four levels of intensity were listed. Participants were asked to determine which age range was appropriate for that level of sexual content. The levels of intensity were again listed as mild, moderate, intense and excessive.

When considering the appropriate audience for works with a mild level of sexual content for the first category embracing, seven participants indicated "8+" was an appropriate age range for this level of content. Five participants each chose the age ranges "10+" and "13+" as appropriate for a mild level of embracing sexual content. Two participants determined that "All Ages" should be allowed to read comic books and graphic novels that have a mild level of embracing sexual content in them. No response was given for this question by four of the survey participants.

Age range "13+" was selected most by participants for a moderate level of embracing sexual content in graphic novels and comic books, with eight of the participants choosing that option. After "13+", age ranges "10+" and "16+" were then selected the most by survey participants, with each of these ranges being chosen by four participants apiece. One participant each selected age ranges "8+" and "18+" as appropriate for a moderate level of embracing. Five participants gave no response to this question on the survey.

For the question of the appropriateness of reading which contains an intense level of embracing sexual content, ten participants chose the age range “18+.” After this majority selection, the participants’ responses varied on this question, with three participants selecting “16+,” two participants selecting “13,” two participants selecting the option “None” and only one participant selecting “10+” as an appropriate age range for a moderate level of embracing sexual content. Again, five participants gave no response to this question on the survey.

When considering the appropriate audience for works with an excessive level of embracing sexual content, eight participants selected the age range “18+” as an appropriate age level. Also under the excessive level for the embracing category, four participants chose the “None” option, two participants selected the “16+” age range and one participant selected the “10+” age range. The number of no responses increased under this level of intensity in the embracing sexual content category with eight participants choosing not to respond.

Table 6: Question 12 – A Sexual Content – Embracing

Participants		Sexual Content - Embracing		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	All Ages	10+	13+	16+
Participant C	10+	13+	No response	No response
Participant D	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant E	No response	No response	18+	No response
Participant F	13+	16+	None	None
Participant G	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant I	13+	18+	18+	None
Participant J	No response	No response	18+	No response
Participant K	8+	13+	18+	18+
Participant L	10+	13+	18+	18+
Participant M	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant N	8+	10+	18+	No response
Participant O	8+	8+	10+	10+
Participant P	All Ages	10+	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	8+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant T	No response	13+	No response	No response
Participant U	8+	10+	13+	16+
Participant V	8+	13+	16+	18+
Participant W	8+	13+	18+	18+

Sexual Content - Kissing

The next type of sexual content that was studied in Question 12 was kissing.

When assessing the appropriate audience for comic books and graphic novels with a mild level of kissing sexual content, “10+” was the age range that was most selected, with nine participants choosing that option. Six participants chose the age range right after “10+,” “13+,” as an appropriate age range for a mild level of kissing in graphic novels and comic books and two participants selected the age range under it, “8+” as an

appropriate age range. One participant each selected the “All Ages” and the “16+” age range as appropriate for a mild level of kissing. No response was given for this question by four participants.

For the question of the appropriateness of reading which contains a moderate level for kissing sexual content, seven participants chose “13+” as an appropriate age range for this kind and level of content in comic books and graphic novels. The age range “16+” was chosen as an appropriate age range for a moderate level of kissing by five participants. Four participants selected “18+” as appropriate, while three participants selected “10+” as an appropriate age range for a moderate level of kissing in a comic book or graphic novel. Again, under the moderate level of kissing sexual content, four participants gave no response to this question.

The number of participants that gave no response increased to seven under the intense level of kissing sexual content in comic books and graphic novels. Out of the remainder of participants that did choose to respond, the majority selected “18+” as an appropriate age range for an intense level of kissing sexual content, with eight participants selecting it as appropriate. After the “18+” age range, the range that was selected the most by participants as appropriate for an intense level of kissing was “16+,” with six participants choosing that option. The “None” and “13+” options were selected by one participant apiece.

When considering the appropriate audience for works with an excessive level of kissing sexual content, eight participants selected the “18+” age range as appropriate for this level of content, while another eight participants gave no response to this question. Four participants determined that “None” or no one should be allowed to read a graphic

novel or comic book with an excessive level of kissing sexual content. The age range “16+” was chosen by three of the participants of this survey for an excessive level of kissing (See Table for Question 12 – B).

Table 7: Question 12 – B Sexual Content - Kissing

Participants		Sexual Content - Kissing		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant C	10+	13+	No response	No response
Participant D	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant E	No response	18+	No response	No response
Participant F	16+	18+	18+	None
Participant G	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant H	10+	13+	16+	16+
Participant I	13+	18+	18+	None
Participant J	No response	No response	18+	No response
Participant K	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant L	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant M	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant N	10+	18+	No response	No response
Participant O	10+	10+	16+	16+
Participant P	All Ages	10+	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	8+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant T	No response	13+	No response	No response
Participant U	8+	10+	13+	16+
Participant V	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant W	13+	16+	18+	18+

Sexual Content - Nudity

The third type of sexual content that was studied in Question 12 was nudity. With the nudity type of sexual content, six participants deemed “None” or no one should read even a mild level of this type of content in comic books and graphic novels. One

participant, instead of choosing the “None” option, gave “0” as their response of an appropriate age range for a mild level of nudity in a comic book or graphic novel, while two participants gave no response at all. Five participants each selected “13” and “16+” as appropriate age ranges for a mild level of nudity in comic books and graphic novels. Four participants picked “18+” as an appropriate age range for a mild level of nudity in comic books and graphic novels.

When assessing the appropriate audience for comic books and graphic novels with a moderate level of nudity, seven participants gave no response, but six participants selected the “18+” age range as appropriate. After “18+,” the only other age range that was selected as appropriate for a moderate level of nudity in comic books and graphic novels was “16+,” with five participants picking that option on the survey. The last five participants chose the option “None” indicating they felt no one should be allowed to read a comic book or graphic novel with a moderate level of nudity sexual content.

The only age range that participants in this survey selected as appropriate for an intense level of nudity in a comic book or graphic novel was “18+,” with eleven participants choosing that option. Five participants selected the “None” option that was provided on this survey indicating those participants felt no one should be allowed to read a comic book or graphic novel with an intense level of nudity. No response was given by seven of the participants of this survey under the intense level of nudity in a comic book or graphic novel.

Again, as in the intense level of nudity, the only age range that participants in this study selected on the survey was “18+” as appropriate for an excessive level of nudity in a comic book or graphic novel, with six participants selecting that option. The “None”

option on the survey was selected by eight of the participants for an excessive level of nudity. Nine participants decided not to participate in this part of Question 12 on the survey (See Table for Question 12 - C).

Table 8: Question 12 – C Sexual Content - Nudity

Participants		Sexual Content - Nudity		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	18+	18+	18+	18+
Participant C	13+	16+	18+	No response
Participant D	None	None	None	None
Participant E	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant F	None	None	None	None
Participant G	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant I	None	None	None	None
Participant J	No response	No response	18+	No response
Participant K	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant L	16+	18+	18+	None
Participant M	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant N	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant O	18+	18+	18+	18+
Participant P	None	None	None	None
Participant Q	0	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	None	None	None	None
Participant T	None	No response	No response	No response
Participant U	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant V	16+	18+	No response	No response
Participant W	16+	18+	18+	None

Sexual Content - Sexual Activity

Finally, the last type of sexual content that Question 12 covered was actual sexual activity. For the question of the appropriateness of reading which contains a mild level of sexual activity in comic books and graphic novels, the majority of the participants,

eight in total, selected the age range “16+” as appropriate for this level of content. The age range that was selected the most after “16+” by participants as appropriate for a mild level of sexual activity was “18+,” with five participants choosing that option. The age range “13+” was only selected by two participants as appropriate. The “None” option was selected by five participants and one participant, instead of using the “none” option, just wrote “0” as their response to what is appropriate for a mild level of sexual activity. Two participants gave no response to this part of Question 12 that covered a mild level of sexual activity in comic books and graphic novels.

When considering the appropriate audience for works with a moderate level of sexual activity in comic books and graphic novels, most of the participants selected the age range “18+” as appropriate, with eight participants selecting that option. The only other age range that was selected as appropriate by participants for a moderate level of sexual activity was “16+,” with three participants selecting that age range. Five participants determined that “None” or no one should read a comic book or graphic novel with a moderate level of sexual activity. Out of the 23 participants of this survey, seven gave no response to this part of Question 12.

Under the intense level for sexual activity in comic books and graphic novels, only one age range was selected as appropriate. This age range was “18+” and ten participants selected this age range as appropriate for an intense level of sexual activity. While none of the other age ranges were selected for the intense level of sexual activity

in comic books and graphic novels, five participants did select the “None” option as appropriate. Eight participants gave no response to this part of Question 12.

The fourth level for the sexual activity part of Question 12, excessive, followed the same pattern as the intense level, but the numbers were slightly different for the responses. Again, the only age range that was selected by participants as appropriate was “18+” for an excessive amount of sexual activity in comic books and graphic novels. However, only six participants chose this option for the excessive level, versus the ten participants that selected it for the intense level of sexual activity. Also, the number of participants that selected the “none” option they were provided for an excessive level of sexual activity in comic books and graphic novels increased to eight. The number of participants that gave no response to the excessive level part of Question 12 increased by one, for a total of nine participants, compared to the eight that did not respond to the intense level part.

Table 9: Question 12 – D Sexual Content – Sexual Activity

Participants		Sexual Content – Sexual Activity		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	18+	18+	18+	18+
Participant C	16+	18+	No response	No response
Participant D	None	None	None	None
Participant E	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant F	18+	None	None	None
Participant G	16+	16+	18+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant I	None	None	None	None
Participant J	No response	No response	18+	No response
Participant K	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant L	16+	18+	18+	None
Participant M	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant N	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant O	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant P	None	None	None	None
Participant Q	0	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	None	None	None	None
Participant T	None	No response	No response	No response
Participant U	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant V	16+	18+	No response	No response
Participant W	16+	18+	18+	None

Language Content

Question 13 on the survey asked participants about their perception of what is an appropriate age level for reading comic books and graphic novels that contain mild, moderate, intense and excessive levels of language. For each level of content participants were allowed to choose from the age ranges listed in the previous section:

“All Ages,” “8+,” “10+,” “13+,” “16+,” “18+” and “None.” For comic books and graphic novels with a mild level of language, the age range “13+” was selected the most by participants, with ten of the participants choosing that age range. When considering the appropriate audience for works with a mild level of language, seven participants chose “10+” as an appropriate age level. After those two age ranges, the only other age range selected by participants as appropriate for a mild level of language in comic books and graphic novels was “16+,” which was selected by three participants. One participant selected the “None” option, meaning that he/she felt no one should read a comic book or graphic novel with a mild level of language. Two participants out of 23 decided not to give a response to this question.

For the question of the appropriateness of reading which contains a moderate level of language in comic books and graphic novels, eleven participants selected the age range “16+” as appropriate. The only other two age ranges that were selected by participants of the survey as appropriate for a moderate level of language in comic books and graphic novels were “13+,” with four participants choosing that age range, and “18+,” with two participants selecting that option. The “None” option was chosen by two participants for a comic book or graphic novel with a moderate level of language content. There were four participants that gave no response to the moderate level of language question.

After the moderate level, participants were asked on the survey to give an age range they deemed appropriate for an intense level of language in comic books or

graphic novels. The youngest age range that participants selected as appropriate for an intense level of language in these types of books was “16+,” with five participants choosing that option. Right after “16+,” the majority of participants, ten in total, selected “18+” as an appropriate age range for an intense level of language. Under the intense level of language, five participants decided no one should read a comic book or graphic novel with this level by selecting the “none” option on the survey. Three participants chose not to answer this question, by leaving this section blank on their survey.

The only age range that was selected under an excessive level of language in comic books or graphic novels by participants of this survey was “18+.” This age range was selected by eight of the 23 participants of this survey. The majority of participants, ten in total, selected the “none” option on the survey for this question stating in their opinion, no one should read comic books or graphic novels with an excessive level of language. Five respondents left this section of their survey blank (see Table attached to next page for an illustration of the participants’ responses).

Table 10: Question 13 – Language Content

Participants		Language		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant C	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant D	16+	18+	None	None
Participant E	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant F	16+	None	None	None
Participant G	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant I	13+	18+	18+	None
Participant J	No response	No response	16+	No response
Participant K	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant L	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant M	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant N	10+	16+	18+	None
Participant O	10+	13+	18+	18+
Participant P	None	None	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	10+	16+	16+	18+
Participant S	13+	16+	None	None
Participant T	13+	16+	None	None
Participant U	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant V	13+	16+	18+	No response
Participant W	13+	16+	18+	None

Romantic Relationships – Children Heterosexual

On the last question of the survey, participants were asked their perception of the appropriateness of representing certain types of romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels to various age groups. The six types of romantic relationships covered in this question were: children, teenage and adult heterosexual relationships and children, teenage and adult homosexual relationships. Again, the levels of intensity for these types of relationships were listed as mild, moderate, intense and excessive.

For the first type of romantic relationship covered in Question 14, children heterosexual relationships, when assessing the appropriate audience for comic books and graphic novels with a mild level of intensity the majority of participants chose the age range “10+” as appropriate, with six participants choosing that option. After “10+” the age range that was chosen the most by participants was “13+,” with three participants selecting it. Two participants selected the age range “8+” and one participant each selected “All Ages” and “16+” as an appropriate age range for a mild level of children heterosexual relationships in graphic novels and comic books. Five participants selected the “None” option, stating no one should read a graphic novel or comic book with a children heterosexual relationship and another five participants chose not to give a response to this section of the survey.

The next level of intensity for children romantic relationships that was covered by the survey was moderate. Under the moderate level, six participants chose “13+” as an appropriate age level, while another four participants chose “16+” as an appropriate age level for this level of intensity. For a moderate level child relationship in a comic book or graphic novel, two participants chose “10+” as an appropriate age level, while only one participant selected the age range “18+” as appropriate for a moderate level child relationship. Four participants determined that no one should read a graphic novel or comic book featuring a moderate level child relationship by selecting the “None” option on the survey. Another six participants did not give any response to this section of the survey.

With an intense child relationship, the age range that was selected the most by participants was “18+,” by five participants; however, the majority of the participants did not select any age range at all. The majority of participants selected either the “None” option, six participants selected this option on the survey, indicating that in their opinion no one should read comic books or graphic novels with an intense child relationship featured in the plot or they chose not to give a response to this part of the survey at all, nine participants left this area of the survey blank. The remainder of the participants selected the age ranges “16+,” chosen by two participants, and “13+,” selected by one participant, for an intense romantic child heterosexual relationship featured in a comic book or graphic novel.

The only age ranges that were selected by participants for an excessive romantic child heterosexual relationship featured in a comic book or graphic novel were “18+” and “16+.” The age range “18+” was selected the most by a total of five participants, while the age range “16+” was only selected by two of the participants of the survey. The “None” or no one option was chosen by seven participants in total. As in the case of the intense level relationship, again another nine participants did not enter a response for what age level they considered appropriate for an excessive romantic child heterosexual relationship that would be shown in a comic book or graphic novel.

Table 11: Question 14 – A Children Heterosexual Relationships

Participants		Romantic Relationships – Children Heterosexual		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant C	10+	13+	No response	No response
Participant D	None	None	None	None
Participant E	No response	No response	No response	16+
Participant F	None	None	None	None
Participant G	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant I	None	None	None	None
Participant J	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant K	10+	13+	18+	18+
Participant L	13+	16+	None	None
Participant M	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant N	None	No response	No response	No response
Participant O	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant P	All Ages	10+	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	None	None	None	None
Participant T	No response	13+	No response	No response
Participant U	8+	10+	13+	16+
Participant V	13+	16+	18+	No response
Participant W	8+	13+	18+	18+

Romantic Relationships - Teenage Heterosexual

The next type of romantic relationship that was studied in this survey was a teenage heterosexual romantic relationship. Ten participants selected the age range “13+” as an appropriate age range for reading a comic book or graphic novel that features a teenage heterosexual romantic relationship. The age range selected the most by participants after “13+” was “10+,” but only three participants selected it as appropriate. Two participants apiece selected the age ranges “8+” and “16+” as appropriate age ranges for a mild teenage heterosexual romantic relationship shown in comic books or graphic novels. “All Ages” and the age range “18+” were selected by one participant each for the mild level of teenage heterosexual relationship. No response was given by four of the participants of the survey in this section.

The second level that was covered for a teenage romantic heterosexual relationship covered in a graphic novel or comic book was moderate. Again, as for the mild level, a majority of the participants selected one age range. The age range that was chosen the most by participants was “16+,” which was chosen by a total of twelve participants. Three participants selected “13+” as an appropriate age range for a moderate teenage heterosexual romantic relationship covered in comic books or graphic novels and two participants selected “18+” as appropriate. Only one participant selected “10+” and the “None” options for a moderate teenage heterosexual romantic relationship in comic books and graphic novels. Four participants left this section of the survey blank.

Only three age ranges were selected by participants as appropriate for viewing an intense level of teenage heterosexual romantic relationship in comic books and graphic novels. Those age ranges were “18+”, “16+” and “13+.” Nine participants chose the age range “18+”, two participants chose “16+” and only one participant chose the age range “13+” as appropriate for reading intense teenage heterosexual romantic relationships in these kinds of books. The remainder of the participants selected the “None” option, three participants chose this option, or left this section of the survey blank, eight participants in total did not leave a response in this section.

For the final level of teenage heterosexual romantic relationship, excessive, the only age range that was selected by participants of this survey was “18+”, with seven participants choosing this option. Another seven participants entered the “None” option on the survey, indicating that in their opinion no one should read a comic book or graphic novel featuring an excessive level teenage heterosexual romantic relationship. The remaining nine participants of the survey chose not to give a response to this question on the survey.

Table 12: Question 14 - B Teenage Heterosexual Relationships

Participants		Romantic Relationships – Teenage Heterosexual		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant C	13+	16+	No response	No response
Participant D	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant E	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant F	18+	18+	None	None
Participant G	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant I	13+	16+	None	None
Participant J	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant K	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant L	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant M	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant N	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant O	8+	10+	13+	18+
Participant P	All Ages	None	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	13+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	10+	13+	18+	18+
Participant T	No response	13+	No response	No response
Participant U	13+	16+	16+	18+
Participant V	13+	16+	18+	No response
Participant W	8+	16+	18+	None

Romantic Relationships - Adult Heterosexual

The issue studied in this survey concerning what content is appropriate for certain age levels in comic books and graphic novels was adult heterosexual relationships. For a mild adult heterosexual romantic relationship, the response (or age level) that most participants selected as appropriate was “13+”, with eight of the participants choosing that age range. After “13+”, the age ranges “10+” and “16+” were both chosen by three participants apiece. Two participants chose the age range “8+” as an appropriate age range for a graphic novel or comic book that features a mild adult heterosexual romantic relationship. The options “18+” and “All Ages” was selected by one participant apiece, while five participants chose to not give a response to this question.

Under moderate heterosexual romantic relationships featured in graphic novels and comic books, the age range that most participants selected as appropriate was “16+”, with twelve participants selecting that option. Four participants selected “18+” as the appropriate age range for comic books and graphic novels featuring adult heterosexual romantic relationships. The remaining age ranges that were chosen by participants were “13+” and “10+”, with two participants selecting “13+” and only one participant selecting “10+” as an appropriate age range. The “None” option was chosen by one participant, while the final three participants left this section on the survey blank.

The third level of adult heterosexual romantic relationship, intense, had the majority of participants, eleven in total, selecting “18+” as an appropriate age range. The only other age ranges that participants of this survey selected as appropriate for a comic book

or graphic novel featuring an intense adult heterosexual romantic relationship were “16+” and “13+”, with only one participant apiece choosing those age ranges. The remainder of the participants selected the “None” option, with three of the participants selecting this response indicating they believe no one should read a comic book or graphic novel with an intense heterosexual romantic relationship featured in the story, or chose to leave this section of the survey blank, seven of the participants did not leave a response to this part of the survey.

The participants only chose two of the options that were available to them when selecting an appropriate age range for comic books and graphic novels featuring an excessive adult heterosexual romantic relationship. Seven participants apiece selected the age range “18+” and the option of “None” as an appropriate age range for an excessive adult heterosexual romantic relationship featured in a comic book or graphic novel. The remaining nine participants did not enter a response to this question on the survey.

Table 13: Question 14 – C Adult Heterosexual Relationships

Participants		Romantic Relationships – Adult Heterosexual		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant C	No response	18+	18+	No response
Participant D	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant E	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant F	18+	18+	None	None
Participant G	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant H	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant I	13+	16+	None	None
Participant J	No response	16+	No response	No response
Participant K	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant L	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant M	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant N	10+	16+	No response	No response
Participant O	8+	10+	13+	18+
Participant P	All Ages	None	None	None
Participant Q	10+	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	13+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant T	No response	13+	No response	No response
Participant U	16+	16+	18+	18+
Participant V	13+	16+	18+	No response
Participant W	8+	16+	18+	None

Romantic Relationships - Children Homosexual

Next the survey asked participants to determine appropriate age ranges for comic books and graphic novels featuring children, teenage and adult homosexual romantic relationships. The four levels previously used - mild, moderate, intense and excessive – were again used to describe the representation of these relationships. The option chosen the most by participants for comic books and graphic novels featuring mild children homosexual romantic relationships was “None,” indicating that eight participants determined that no one should read a comic book or graphic novel featuring children homosexual romantic relationships. One participant also entered their own response of “0” in this section, which could also be counted with the total for the “None” option. This would make the total for this category nine for mild children homosexual romantic relationships. Three participants also decided to leave this section of the survey blank. The actual age range that was selected the most as appropriate for mild children homosexual relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels was “16+”, with four participants choosing that age range on the survey. After “16+”, three participants apiece selected the age ranges “13+” and “18+” as appropriate for mild children romantic relationships. Only one participant selected “10+” as appropriate for a comic book or graphic novel featuring children homosexual romantic relationships.

Under the moderate level for children homosexual romantic relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels, the “None” option was again selecting the most, with eight participants choosing that option. The number of participants who decided

not to give a response to this question increased to ten in total. The age range “16+” was still the age range selected the most, with three participants choosing that option, and leaving only one participant apiece to select the age ranges “13+” and “18+” as appropriate for comic books and graphic novels featuring moderate children homosexual romantic relationships.

For intense children homosexual romantic relationships shown in comic books and graphic novels, the same number of participants selected the “None” option, eight in total, or decided not to enter a response to this part of the survey, with ten participants in total leaving this section blank, as they did for the moderate level. Only two age ranges were selected by participants as appropriate for intense children homosexual romantic relationships shown in comic books and graphic novels. The age range “18+” was selected by four of the participants, while only one participant selected the age range “16+” as appropriate for intense children homosexual romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels.

Finally, for excessive children romantic relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels, the only age range that participants selected as appropriate was “18+”, with four participants selecting that option on the survey. Nine participants chose the “None” option on the survey indicating in their opinion no one of any age should read a comic book or graphic novel featuring a excessive children homosexual romantic relationship. The remaining ten participants decided to not give a response to this section of the survey by leaving this section blank.

Table 14: Question 14 – D Children Homosexual Relationships

Participants		Romantic Relationships – Children Homosexual		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant C	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant D	None	None	None	None
Participant E	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant F	None	None	None	None
Participant G	10+	13+	16+	18+
Participant H	18+	None	None	None
Participant I	None	None	None	None
Participant J	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant K	16+	16+	18+	18+
Participant L	None	None	None	None
Participant M	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant N	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant O	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant P	None	None	None	None
Participant Q	0	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	13+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	None	None	None	None
Participant T	None	No response	No response	No response
Participant U	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant V	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant W	None	None	None	None

Romantic Relationships - Teenage Homosexual

The next type of relationship that could be featured in a graphic novel or comic book that was studied in this survey was teenage homosexual romantic relationships. Most participants selected the age range “16+” as appropriate for comic books and graphic novels that feature a mild level of teenage homosexual romantic relationships, with nine of the participants choosing that option. Seven participants indicated the age “13+” as appropriate for a mild level of teenage homosexual romantic relationship shown in comic books and graphic novels. The last age range that participants selected was “18+”, with only one participant choosing that as an appropriate age range for a mild relationship of this type. The remaining participants selected “None”, created their own category by writing “0” as their response, or did not leave a response at all. Four participants selected the “None” option, one participant wrote “0” as their response, while one participant left this section of the survey blank for a mild teenage homosexual romantic relationship to be featured in comic books and graphic novels.

The age range “16+” was picked by participants the most, eight in total, for the second level of intensity, moderate, for teenage homosexual romantic relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels. After “16+”, only five other participants selected two different age ranges as appropriate for a moderate teenage homosexual romantic relationship to be shown in these types of books. The first was “18+”, with four participants choosing that option, and the second was “13+”, with only one participant selecting that age range from the options they were given on the survey.

Three participants selected the “None” option stating that no one should read a comic book or graphic novel featuring a moderate teenage homosexual romantic relationship, while seven participants decided to leave this section of the survey blank.

Under the intense level of teenage homosexual romantic relationship shown in comic books and graphic novels, the “None” option was chosen by the majority of participants with seven participants selecting that option. Six participants chose “18+” as an appropriate age range for comic books and graphic novels that feature an intense level of teenage homosexual romantic relationships. Only one of the participants selected “13+” as an appropriate age range for an intense relationship of this sort to be shown in these kinds of books. Nine of the participants left this question blank on their survey.

For a graphic novel or comic book featuring an excessive teenage homosexual romantic relationship, nine of the participants chose not to give a response to this question by leaving this part of their survey blank. The remainder of the participants chose only two of the seven options/age ranges they were given. Six of the participants chose the age range “18+” as appropriate for a comic book or graphic novel which shows an excessive teenage homosexual romantic relationship. The option “None” was selected by eight of the participants indicating that in their opinion no one should read a comic book or graphic novel featuring an excessive teenage homosexual romantic relationship.

Table 15: Question 14 – E Teenage Homosexual Relationships

Participants		Romantic Relationships – Teenage Homosexual		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant C	13+	16+	No response	No response
Participant D	16+	18+	None	None
Participant E	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant F	None	None	None	None
Participant G	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant H	16+	18+	None	None
Participant I	None	None	None	None
Participant J	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant K	16+	16+	18+	18+
Participant L	16+	16+	None	None
Participant M	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant N	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant O	13+	13+	13+	18+
Participant P	None	None	None	None
Participant Q	0	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	13+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant T	None	No response	No response	No response
Participant U	13+	16+	18+	18+
Participant V	16+	18+	No response	No response
Participant W	16+	16+	None	None

Romantic Relationships - Adult Homosexual

The final question on the survey asked participants to give their opinion on what age range would be appropriate for a comic book or graphic novel that featured mild, moderate, intense and excessive adult homosexual romantic relationships. For a mild adult homosexual relationship featured in a comic book or graphic novel, the age range “16+” was chosen the most by ten participants. Three of the participants chose the age range “18+” as appropriate for a comic book or graphic novel showing an adult homosexual romantic relationship. The other two age ranges that were selected by participants as appropriate for a comic book or graphic novel showing a mild adult homosexual romantic relationship were “13+”, by two of the participants, and “8+”, by one participant. Of the remaining seven participants, three selected “None,” one participant listed their own response of “0,” and another three participants chose not to give a response.

Under the moderate level for an adult homosexual romantic relationship featured in a comic book or graphic novel, the age range “18+” was selected most often, and by nine of the participants. Another three participants selected the age range “16+” as appropriate. One participant selected “13+” as an appropriate age range for a comic book or graphic novel with a moderate adult homosexual romantic relationship. Three of the participants selected the option “None” indicating that they believe no one of any age should read a comic book or graphic novel featuring a moderate adult homosexual

romantic relationship. The final seven participants decided to leave this question on the survey blank.

When assessing the appropriate audience for comic books and graphic novels with an intense level adult homosexual romantic relationship, the age range “18+” was again the most selected by participants, with seven participants choosing that option. The only other age range that was selected by participants as appropriate for a comic book or graphic novel with an intense adult homosexual romantic relationship was “16+.” Only one participant selected that option. The option “None” was chosen by six of the participants showing that they do not think anyone should read a comic book or graphic novel featuring an intense adult homosexual romantic relationship. Nine participants left this section of the survey blank.

Finally, for the last question on the survey, participants had to give their opinion of an appropriate age range for a comic book or graphic featuring an excessive adult homosexual romantic relationship. The only age range that any of the participants selected for this category as appropriate was “18+” and only six of the participants chose that option. All of the other participants selected either the “None” option or decided not to give a response to this question. Eight of the participants chose the “None” option, while the remaining nine participants left this final section of the survey blank.

Table 16: Question 14 – F Adult Homosexual Relationships

Participants		Romantic Relationships – Adult Homosexual		
	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Excessive
Participant A	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant B	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant C	No response	18+	No response	No response
Participant D	16+	18+	None	None
Participant E	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant F	None	None	None	None
Participant G	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant H	18+	None	None	None
Participant I	18+	18+	None	None
Participant J	No response	No response	No response	No response
Participant K	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant L	16+	18+	None	None
Participant M	13+	16+	18+	None
Participant N	18+	No response	No response	No response
Participant O	13+	13+	16+	18+
Participant P	None	None	None	None
Participant Q	0	No response	No response	No response
Participant R	16+	No response	No response	No response
Participant S	16+	16+	18+	18+
Participant T	None	No response	No response	No response
Participant U	16+	18+	18+	18+
Participant V	16+	18+	No response	No response
Participant W	8+	16+	18+	None

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

From the focus group and the answers that the survey participants provided many conclusions can be drawn. Determining what factors may have influenced the respondents responses to the content questions is just as important as what their actual responses to the content questions were. The final analysis of the data obtained from both the focus group and the survey will attempt to interpret not only the responses to each of the questions on the survey, but also the possible reasons for those responses. However, due to the small number of respondents to the survey, some of the conclusions reached in the survey may not be completely accurate, because it may not be possible to generalize.

Influencing Factors

Some factors that might have influenced some of the responses that were received in the survey are the fact that the majority of the participants were women (82.6%), they were mostly between the ages 41-60 (69.5%), and over 50% of them were School Library Media Specialists (60.8%). There was almost an even split between participants that said they did read comic books and graphic novels (39.1%) and those that said they personally did not and also that no one in their family reads comic books or graphic novels (43.5 %).

The way these participants view the target audience for comic books and graphic novels may also have influenced the responses they chose concerning what age ranges were appropriate for the level of content contained in a comic book or graphic novel. As

previously mentioned in Chapter 4, several of the participants chose more than one age range, which did make it difficult to interpret the data. However, it was not impossible. Out of the 23 participants, 39.1% of them only chose the age ranges “10 and under” and “11-20”, with some participants choosing both of those age ranges. The percentage of the participants that chose the age ranges “10 and under”, “11 – 20”, and “21 – 30”, with some of those participants selecting all of those age ranges, a combination of them, or only one, was 69.6%. Less than 20% of the participants stated they believed comic books and graphic novels were meant to appeal to people of all ages (17.4% in total). This indicates that, while the view of comic books and graphic novels may be slowly changing, the majority of librarians surveyed still feel these kinds of books are only meant to appeal to people of a certain age, and mostly those that are still in their teen years or younger.

Besides the demographic questions and the very basic questions concerning librarians’ experiences with the medium and their view of its target audience, there are other factors that may have influenced the participants’ responses and/or the final results of this study. As shown in Chapter 4, a number of participants left several of the sections of this survey blank or entered responses to 1 to 3 of the levels of content (mild, moderate, intense and excessive) but then left 1 to 3 of the content levels blank. At times, approximately 30 - 40 % of the participants chose not to enter a response to certain sections of these questions. The blank responses were included because these respondents answered some questions and not others, so it was decided to count both the

responses to the questions they answered along with noting the questions they did not. This inclusion of the non-response surveys does limit the accuracy of the data somewhat, but they were included to track which questions the respondents had issues with answering and because there were such a small number of surveys that were returned. Some of the participants may not have read each of the questions and the options they were given closely or there may have been some confusion on how to answer some of the questions on the survey, so they may have thought they were either:

1. Supposed to only enter an age range for one of the levels
2. Supposed to only enter age ranges for the levels of content they thought were appropriate to be shown in graphic novels and comic books
3. Entered an age range for an intermediate level, such as the moderate and intense levels, but left the lower sections blank trying to indicate that that the age range they entered was appropriate for that level as well as the levels below it.
4. By leaving it blank, they meant to indicate they felt no one should read a comic book or graphic novel that contained content of that level, however, they did not notice the “None” option they were given along with the different age ranges and the “All” options
5. They did not feel it was appropriate to answer the question, either because they felt they did not have enough experience with the medium to give a well-thought out answer or they were uncomfortable with the nature of the question itself
6. Missed or overlooked the question entirely

The limitations of a survey is that, if a participant chooses to or accidentally leaves a section of the survey blank, there is no way of knowing the true reason for the participant not answering the question. It also means there is less actual data retrieved from the survey, because there is no way to interpret a blank response to a question on a survey.

Of the participants in the survey, 87% stated they did currently have comic book and/or graphic novel collections at their libraries. With only 13% stating they either did not have current collections of these kinds of books in their libraries or choosing not to leave a response, even with some of the limiting factors listed above, the responses that were obtained in both the focus group and the survey should be helpful for any librarian trying to start or expand a comic book or graphic novel collection in their library.

Interpreting Responses to Collection Development and Other Related Topics

Several of the participants indicated they did have some problems selecting graphic novels and comic books for their library's collections. While the majority of the responses on the survey showed these librarians only "sometimes" or "seldom" had issues selecting these kinds of books for their collections, the fact that not one of the participants stated they "never" had any difficulties with selection was telling. As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, two participants in the focus group mentioned instances where they had ordered books based on the descriptions and, once they received them and looked over the content, they realized they were not appropriate

books to have in their libraries' collections. They both recommended "hand checking" each book and looking through the pages to make sure that the books you ordered meet your library's standards for the collection. As stated throughout this paper, because these books are such a visual medium, as well as literary, librarians must be careful that what they are putting on the shelves is appropriate for the audience they are trying to reach. There are also many sources that librarians can turn to when trying to find either initial or additional comic books or graphic novels to include in a library collection. Some of the suggestions that were discovered in both the focus group discussion and the research of the literature on the topic were (these are listed in random order):

1. Book Stores, especially Used Book Stores – see what is out, what has been bought by other customers, ask store owners for advice or suggestions
2. Comic Book stores, - ask store owners for advice and suggestions
3. Ask other Librarians in the Community
4. Ask Patrons for Recommendations
5. Check Local Listservs for suggestions
6. American Library Association's reluctant readers recommendations
7. New York Times Bestseller lists
8. Review Publisher's websites for information and age ratings

Regarding publisher's age ratings for their books, 65.2% of the participants found that they were either "always" or "sometimes" helpful when selecting comic books or graphic novels for their collections. However, as shown by the literature research, focus

group and the 21.7% of the survey participants that stated the publisher's rating standards were either "seldom" or "never" helpful; the age ratings that the publisher's provide cannot always be relied upon. As previously covered in the literature section, some issues that can arise from using publishers' ratings standards:

1. Publishers can change ratings mid-series
2. Publisher's rating standards may not mesh with your library's standards or your community's
3. It may sometimes be difficult to understand the publisher's rating standards or why one book is rated more mature than another
4. Even if you use the publisher's ratings standards and put it in the recommended age rating; it may still find its way into inappropriate hands

Of course, there could be other reasons besides the publisher's age ratings not being useful, for why the participants selected "never" on the survey. One example is that they may not have been aware that the publisher's provide age ratings, as in the case of one of the focus group participants that stated he was not aware of them during our group discussion. It also may be because their libraries do not collect these types of books, so they would not have any use to look at the publishers' rating standards for them.

Another potential issue that was covered frequently throughout my literature research and which was covered in both the focus group and survey was the topic of shelving and cataloging comic books and graphic novels in libraries. While none of the

survey participants stated they “always” had trouble cataloging and shelving these books, 47.8 %, almost half of the participants, said they did “sometimes” have this issue. As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the members of the focus group had several different methods for cataloging and shelving their comic books and graphic novels. Two participants in the focus group mentioned how their libraries have created a new call number, called GF for graphic format, to classify these books in their collection. To keep the books separated by their content, one of the participants in the focus group stated how they further classify them under the GF format as FIC for fictions books and for the non-fiction titles they use the GF number and then include the typical Dewey number after it. Another member of the focus group mentioned how they had moved their graphic novels and comic books out of the 741 section and started intershelving them with their youth and young adult novels and distinguish them by having graphic novel stickers on the spines of the books. The fourth member of the focus group said her library kept these kinds of books in the 741s, but they have separate sections for juvenile, teen and adult books. The difference in the techniques used here can probably be explained by the difference in the libraries. The two school librarians follow their counties’ standards of shelving their books in the GF format, while the two public librarians had to come up with their own methods of shelving these books, which ended up being very different. As previously covered in Chapter 2, there are several methods that libraries can use to shelve these kinds of books. With only 17.3 % of the survey participants stating they “never” had issues with cataloging and shelving these kinds of

books, each library must be careful which method they use when considering their placement to make sure the books are readily available for the members of their community while also making sure they kept in an appropriate section based on the books' maturity level.

While several articles mentioned librarians should be concerned about receiving complaints from patrons about these books, 47.8 % of the participants in the survey indicated they had “never” received a complaint on these kinds of books. Of the remainder of the participants, 39.1 % indicated they “seldom” had any issues and only one participant indicated they “sometimes” had issues with complaints on these books. The four members of the focus group mentioned being concerned about receiving complaints on these books, but only one of them mentioned anyone having a complaint about one of the graphic novels in their collection. However, as covered in the literature section, there have been reports about formal complaints being made against these books, which have caused their removal from the library or caused them to be moved to a different section of the library. Based on these findings, while librarians should keep in mind that, because of the visual format of these books, they can sometimes be under the threat of censure from patrons, as long as the library takes into consideration their communities' standards, has a strong collection development policy, makes an effort to look over these books before they are added to the collection and makes sure they are shelved in the appropriate section of the library based on their maturity; they should not

fear receiving complaints on these books anymore than they would other items in their collection.

Interpreting Responses to Content

The responses that were received under the content questions on the survey were difficult to interpret, partly because one can only speculate why one person chose one age range over another, and partly because many of the participants left sections of these questions blank. However, the responses that were entered can be studied to see what age ranges these librarians felt were appropriate for the kind and level of content that they were given.

Violent Crime

Under the violent crime content questions, there were three different types of violent content that the participants were questioned on; crime, horror, and war/battles, and then 4 different levels of violence were given for each; mild, moderate, intense and excessive. Under the mild level for all three types of violent crime, the majority of the participants selected the age ranges “10+” and “13+” as appropriate. The percentages for the number of participants that selected these age ranges were very similar if not exactly the same. For the age range “10+”, 39.1 % of the participants selected it for the horror and war/battles type and 30.4 % chose it for the crime type. Under the “13+” age range, 26.1 % of the participants selected it for the crime and horror types, while 21.7 % selected it for the war/battles genre. However, an interesting note is that one participant selected the option “None” for a mild level of violent crime content, but this option was

not selected for a mild level of horror or war/battle violent content. With almost 17 to 22 % of the participants choosing not to leave a response and the remainder of the age ranges/options having only been selected by between 4 to 13 % of the participants if they were selected, the age ranges “10+” and “13+” are clearly what the majority of participants believed to be appropriate for a mild level of violent content in comic books and graphic novels for all three of the types of violent content they were given.

For the moderate level, most participants agreed on the ages again, with the age ranges “16+” and “13+” being selected most often. However, the percentages did change between the different types of violent content. While 47.8 % of the participants chose “16+” as an appropriate age range for a moderate level of violent crime content in a graphic novel or comic book, only 34.8 % chose that age range for the horror genre and 39.1% for the war/battles genre. The next age range selected most often, “13+”, also had the same differences; 21.7% selected that age range for the books in the crime category, 30.4 % selected it for the horror type, and 26.1% chose it for the war/battle type. Besides the approximate 13 – 22% of the participants that did not give responses to these questions, there were a couple of other responses that were selected in this violent content section that are worth noting. While 21.7% of the participants selected the age range “10+” as appropriate for a moderate level of war/battle violent content, only 4.3%, or one participant, selected that age range for a moderate level of crime content. None of the participants selected that age range as appropriate for a moderate level of horror content. The remainder of the participants selected the “None” option for

the moderate level of violent content; 8.7% selected it for moderate crime content and 4.3% for moderate horror content. However, the “None” option was not selected by any participant for a moderate level of war/battle content.

When asked about books with intense representations of violence some of the participants began to treat the three types of violent content (violent crime, horror and war/battles) differently than they had previously when rating content that is considered mild or moderate levels. For books classified in the crime and war/battles categories as having an intense level of violence, the majority of participants selected the age range “18+” as appropriate, with 39.1% of the participants selecting that option for both of these types. After that, they then chose the age range “16+” the most, with 17.4% selecting it for violent crime content and 21.7% selecting it for violent war/battles content. Instead of following this same pattern, the participants were split almost evenly between the age ranges “16+” and “18+” for an intense level of violent horror content. The ages were switched with “16+” being selected slightly more often than the age range “18+”; 34.8% of the participants selected “16+” and 30.4% chose “18+” as appropriate. Only 13% chose “None” for books with an intense level of crime and horror content, while even fewer (4.3%) chose “None” for books with war/battles content. The age range “13+” was selected by 8.7% of the participants for an intense level of war/battle content, by 4.3% for the crime content and was not selected at all for the horror content. The percentage of the participants that chose to leave the intense level section for these 3 types of violent content blank was approximately 21 – 27%.

While most of the participants seemed to agree that either the age ranges “16+” or “18+” were appropriate for an intense level of violent content in all of the three types, there was a difference in the percentages of the responses between the crime and war/battles types and the horror type.

Finally, for the excessive level of violent content in crime, horror and war/battle comic books and graphic novels, the participants seemed to again mostly agree. The number of times that each of the responses were selected by participants was almost identical. Also, the two responses chosen most often were selected by a nearly equivalent percentage of participants. For books with “excessive” levels of violence, both the options of “18+” and “None” were selected the most by participants. For the age range “18+”, 30.4% of the participants selected this age range as appropriate for all three of the types of violent content; i.e., crime, horror and war/battles. There was a slight difference in the percentages of “None” responses; again 30.4% selected that option for books with an excessive level of crime and horror violent content, but only 26.1% chose it for the war/battle type of violent content. Unfortunately, the next most common response was not responding; 34.8% of the participants left that question blank for all three types of violent content. The only other response chosen in this section was the “16+” age range, but again, the numbers were almost similar; 4.3% selected that age range for crime and horror violent content, and 8.7% chose it for the war/battle type of violent content. The majority of respondents chose the “18+” age range and the option of “None” as appropriate for an excessive level of violent content in the three types they

were given. However, the participants were clearly almost evenly divided on these two options.

Sexual Activity

The sexual content questions on the survey addressed four types of sexual content: embracing, kissing, nudity and sexual activity. Unlike the participants' responses to the survey items about violent content, which were somewhat similar across all three violent content categories, the responses to questions about the four types of sexual content covered in this survey were very different. For books representing a mild level of embracing, the age range most selected by participants was "8+", with 30.4% of the participants selecting that option. However, for books representing other types of sexual content with a mild level of intensity, the age ranges participants selected were much higher. For kissing content 39.1% of the participants selected the age range "10+", for nudity content 26.1% selected "None" and for a mild level of sexual activity 34.8% of the participants selected the age range "16+". The age ranges participants gave for the nudity and sexual activity types of sexual content were much higher than the ones given for the embracing and kissing types. This trend stayed the same throughout. The age ranges "8+" and "10+", which were the top selected age ranges for representations of embracing and kissing were never selected for representations of nudity and of sexual activity. The lowest age range selected for either the nudity or sexual activity types of sexual content was "13+", so it is clear that the librarians who participated in this survey considered representations of embracing and kissing acceptable for children, while most

believed that nudity and sexual activity should only be available to older teens or young adult readers (if such representations should be made available to anyone). The librarians who took this survey seemed to make a distinction between these four types of sexual activity, by comparing the embracing and kissing types and then the nudity and sexual activity types. Therefore, this analysis will compare the different types of sexual content the way the librarians did; by making a comparison between the responses for embracing and kissing content and making a comparison between the responses for nudity and sexual activity content.

As previously stated above, the top two selected age ranges for representations of embracing and kissing were “8+” and “10+”, with kissing being given a slightly higher age range by most participants. However, while the age range 8+ was the most selected by participants for representations of embracing only 8.7% of the participants selected it as appropriate for a graphic novel or comic book featuring a mild level of kissing. After those age ranges, 21.7% of participants selected the age range “10+” and another 21.7% selected the age range “13+” as appropriate for a mild level of embracing, so there was an even split between participants on these two ages. Under a mild level of kissing, after “10+”, the age range “13+” was the option most selected, with 26.1% of participants selecting that age range as appropriate. The remaining options selected were chosen by only approximately 4 – 9% of participants, besides the participants that gave no response, which was 17.4% for both embracing and kissing content. One interesting note, the option “All Ages” was selected by 8.7% of participants for representations of

embracing and by 4.3% for representations of kissing and this option was not selected again for any of the other levels of intensity; i.e., moderate, intense or excessive. The final results show for mild representations of embracing in comic books and graphic novels, the age ranges most selected ranged from “8+”, to “10+” to “13+”, with there being approximately a 5-year age difference between the responses given by librarians on the survey. For representations of kissing in comic books and graphic novels, the difference in the top two selected choices, “10+” and “13+”, was only 3 years.

With the moderate level of intensity for representations of embracing and kissing, a few of the participants’ responses matched for both of these types of sexual content. The age range most participants selected as appropriate for a moderate level of embracing and kissing in a comic book or graphic novel was “13+”; 34.8% selected it for embracing content and 30.4% selected it for kissing content. However, there were differences in the second option selected most often by participants for these two types under the moderate level. For moderate embracing content, 17.4% of the participants selected the age range “10+”, while another 17.4% selected “16+” and only 4.3% selected the options “8+” and “18+.” With moderate representations of kissing, 21.7 % of participants selected “16+” and 13% selected the age range “10+”, which was similar to the percentages for embracing content. However, for moderate kissing content, another 17.4% of participants selected the age range “18+” as appropriate, compared to only 4.3% that selected it for embracing content. Again, approximately 17 – 22% of participants gave no response, so those percentages must be left out of this analysis.

While approximately 21 – 31% of participants gave no response to representations of embracing and kissing in comic books and graphic novels for the intense level; there were still 69 – 79% of the responses that could be analyzed. The responses participants entered as appropriate age ranges for an intense level of embracing and kissing content in comic books and graphic novels were very similar; 43.5% selected “18+” as appropriate for embracing content and 34.8 % selected it for kissing content. While “16+” was the age range most often selected by participants after “18+” for embracing and kissing content, the percentages for the number of responses were farther apart with this age range. For representations of kissing, 26.1% of participants chose the age range “16+,” but only 13% selected it for representations of embracing. This indicates there was more variation in the responses for an intense level of embracing content than there was for an intense level of kissing content in comic books and graphic novels. In the embracing type, 8.7% of participants selected “13+” and another 8.7% chose the “None” option, while 4.3% selected the age range “10+”, but for the kissing type only 4.3% of the participants selected the “None” option and another 4.3% selected the age range “13+.” While the majority of participants chose the two age ranges “18+” and “16+” as appropriate, there seemed to be more variation in participants’ responses in the embracing category than there was in the kissing category.

For excessive representations of embracing and kissing in comic books and graphic novels, participants again agreed on the top two age ranges. The age range “18+” was chosen by 34.8% of participants and 17.4% of participants selected “None” for both

embracing and kissing content at an excessive level. While 34.8% of participants gave no response to these questions, in the remaining 13% of responses there was a slight change from the above trend. In the remaining 13%, 8.7% of those participants selected the age range “16+” for excessive embracing content and 4.3% chose “10+”, but the entire 13% selected the age range “16+” as appropriate for comic books and graphic novels featuring excessive kissing content.

As previously covered above, the age ranges for nudity and sexual activity content started out overall much higher than they were for embracing and kissing content; with the most often chosen options for the mild level of intensity being “None” (26.1%) for representations of nudity and “16+” (34.8%) for representations of sexual activity. After the top selected choices, there was an even split between the next most often chosen age ranges for both nudity and sexual activity content. The age ranges “13+” and “16+” were selected for mild representations of nudity and “None” and “18+” were chosen for mild representations of sexual activity by the same percentage of participants (21.7% for each option). While “18+” was one of the choices that came in second for mild sexual activity content, based on the percentage of participants that selected it as appropriate, this same age range came in fourth for mild nudity content, since only 17.4% of participants selected it for that category. The same occurrence happened with the age range “13+.” Only 8.7% of participants selected the age range “13+” for sexual activity content, but the same age range tied for second for nudity content, based on the percentage of participants that chose it as appropriate (21.7%). The remaining 13% of

participants chose to either leave no response or entered a response of “0”, which cannot be used since the meaning of the response cannot be determined with 100% certainty.

In the moderate level, for the participants that did enter a response to this question (30.4% gave no response), the age range selected most often for both nudity and sexual activity content by participants was “18+”; 26.1% of participants selected it for nudity content and 34.8% selected it for sexual activity content. The percentage was higher for sexual activity content than for nudity content, because more of the participants chose the higher age range for a moderate level of sexual activity than they did for a moderate level of nudity. In fact, the participants all selected the same three options/age ranges (or gave no response) for the moderate level; there was just slight differences in the percentages for the responses that were chosen. The percentage for the number of participants that selected the “None” option was the same for a moderate level of nudity and sexual activity in a comic book and graphic novel. However, the percentages were slightly different again for the age range “16+”, only 13% of participants selected that option for sexual activity content compared to the 21.7% that selected it for nudity content in comic books and graphic novels.

For an intense level of nudity and sexual activity content, again, the participants all selected the same options/age ranges and there was only a very slight difference in the percentages between these two types. While 47.8% chose the age range “18+” as appropriate for intense representations of nudity featured in comic books and graphic novels, for sexual activity content the percentage was a little lower. In comparison,

43.5% of participants chose “18+” as appropriate for representations of sexual activity in comic books and graphic novels. “None” was selected by 21.7% of participants for both nudity and sexual activity content. The remainder of participants gave no response in this section for intense nudity and sexual activity content.

The option/age ranges selected and the percentages for the responses chosen for excessive nudity and sexual activity content matched exactly. For the “None” option chosen most often by participants, the percentage was 34.8% for both nudity and sexual activity content. Since 39.1% of participants gave no response for excessive representations of nudity and sexual activity featured in comic books and graphic novels, the only other option chosen as appropriate by participants for these types of content at this level was the age range “18+”; selected by 26.1% of participants for both of these types.

So overall, between representations of embracing and kissing compared to representations of nudity and sexual activity featured in comic books and graphic novels; much higher age ranges were selected for nudity and sexual activity content at the beginning levels than were selected at the beginning levels for embracing and kissing content. It was not until the intense level that the age ranges selected for all four types of sexual content began to match. Also, there appeared to be more variation in the participants’ responses under the mild level of intensity than there was for any of the other levels.

Language

When answering survey questions about appropriate ages for reading comic books and graphic novels with language described as mild, moderate, intense, and excessive, participants selected higher age ranges with each increase in level of intensity. In the mild level of intensity, 43.5% of participants selected “13+” as the appropriate age range, for moderate 47.8% selected “16+”, in the intense level 43.5% selected “18+” and in the last, excessive, level of intensity 43.5% selected the “None” option. The next options that were selected the most frequently by participants were the age ranges directly below the previous ones that were mentioned above, except in the case of the intense level. In the mild level, 30.4% of participants selected the “10+” age range, 17.4% selected the “13+” age range for moderate and 34.8% of participants selected the age range “18+” for excessive. However, in the intense level an equal percentage of participants, 21.7%, selected the options “16+” and “None.” After this, the age ranges increased again for the mild and moderate levels (no other age ranges were selected in the intense or excessive levels). The age range “16+” was selected by 13% of participants and 4.3% selected “None” for mild language in comic books and graphic novels. In the moderate level, 8.7% of participants apiece selected the options “18+” and “None.” Between 8 –22 % of the remaining participants gave no response to these questions.

Romantic Relationships

The survey question regarding romantic relationships was divided into heterosexual and homosexual relationships, and within those categories into children, teen and adult relationships. In comparing the responses that participants gave for children heterosexual and homosexual relationships, overall the age ranges selected for children homosexual relationships were much higher than the age ranges selected for children heterosexual relationships. For mild children heterosexual relationships, the majority of participants selected the age range “10+” (26.1%) while for children homosexual relationships the majority of participants (34.8%) selected “None.” Also, some age ranges that were chosen by participants for children heterosexual relationships were not chosen for children homosexual relationships and vice versa. For example, the age range “8+” and the option “All Ages” were selected by 13% of participants for mild children heterosexual relationships, but neither of those options were selected for mild children homosexual relationships. Also, while the age range “18+” was selected by 13% of participants for mild children homosexual relationships, none of the participants selected that age range for children heterosexual relationships. Another large difference occurred where 26.1% of participants selected the age range “10+” for children heterosexual relationships, but only 4.3% of participants selected it for mild children homosexual relationships. Another big difference occurred with the age range “16+,” where only 4.3% of participants selected that option for mild children heterosexual relationships and 17.4% of participants selected it for mild children homosexual

relationships. However, for the age range “13+” the percentage matched; 13% of participants selected it for both mild children heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Again, there were many participants that entered no response to this question; 21.7% for mild children heterosexual relationships and approximately 17.4% for mild children homosexual relationships (if the response of “0” is counted along with the sections left blank on the survey).

For moderate children heterosexual and homosexual relationships, 26.1% of the participants chose the age range “13+” as appropriate for moderate children heterosexual relationships, while again, as for the mild level, the majority of participants (34.8%) selected “None” as appropriate for moderate children homosexual relationship. Only 4.3% of participants selected the age range “13+” as appropriate for moderate children homosexual relationships. While the option “None” was selected by participants for moderate children heterosexual relationships, it was only selected by 17.4% of participants compared to the 34.8% that selected it for moderate children homosexual relationships. The age range “10+” was selected by 8.7% of participants for moderate children heterosexual relationships, but none of the participants selected this age range for moderate children homosexual relationships. The rest of the participants’ responses were very similar; with the age range “16+” being selected by 17.4% of participants for moderate children heterosexual relationships and 13% of participants selected it for moderate children homosexual relationships. The same percentage of participants, 4.3%, selected the age range “18+” for both moderate children heterosexual and

homosexual relationships. Around 26 – 44% of participants gave no response to this question.

Under the intense level for children heterosexual and homosexual relationships, the options/age ranges the participants selected for these two types of children relationships began to become somewhat more similar. The “None” response was again the most often selected for children homosexual relationships, chosen by 34.8% of participants for the intense level. However, for the first time for children heterosexual relationships the majority of participants (26.1%) also selected the “None” option for the intense level. The participants appeared to agree again for the second most often selected option, with the age range “18+” being selected by 21.7% of participants for representations of intense children heterosexual relationships and 17.4% of participants selected it for representations of intense children homosexual relationships. The age range “16+” was also selected by participants for both representations of intense children heterosexual and homosexual relationships, with the difference being in the percentage of people that selected that age range. For children heterosexual relationships, 8.7% of participants chose that option and 4.3% selected it for children homosexual relationships at the intense level. There was only one age range that was selected for intense level children heterosexual relationships that was not chosen for intense children homosexual relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels, which was “13+” and was selected by 4.3% of participants. Between 39 – 44% of participants left these two questions blank on their surveys.

The responses participants entered for excessive children heterosexual and homosexual relationships shown in comic books and graphic novels were very similar to their responses at the intense level. At the excessive level, “None” was again selected by a majority of participants, chosen by 30.4% of participants for excessive children heterosexual relationships and 39.1% selected it for excessive children homosexual relationships. The only actual age range that was selected as acceptable by participants for excessive representations of children homosexual relationships featured in graphic novels and comic books was “18+”; chosen by 17.4% of participants. While “18+” was the next most often chosen option by participants, with a percentage of 21.7%, for excessive children heterosexual relationships; the age range “16+” was also selected by 8.7% of participants as an acceptable age range for comic books and graphic novels. The percentage for participants that gave no response to both of these types of children relationships was between 39 – 44% of participants.

In comparing representations of teen heterosexual and homosexual relationships to representations of children heterosexual and homosexual relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels, the majority of participants selected higher age ranges for the lower levels of intensity in teen heterosexual relationships than they did for children heterosexual relationships. However, participants selected lower age ranges for the lower levels of intensity for teen homosexual relationships than they did for children homosexual relationships shown in comic books and graphic novels. For mild teen heterosexual relationships, the majority of participants selected the age range “13+”,

chosen by 43.5% of participants, compared to the majority of participants that selected “10+” as an appropriate age range for mild children heterosexual relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels. However, in the case of mild homosexual relationships, while the majority of participants selected “None” for representations of mild children homosexual relationships; for mild teen homosexual relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels the majority of participants selected the age range of “16+” (39.1%). The same pattern continued in the moderate level for these kinds of relationships. In the moderate level, 52.2% of participants selected the age range “16+” as appropriate for teen heterosexual relationships, compared to the children heterosexual relationships where the majority of the participants selected the age range “13+” as appropriate (26.1%). For moderate homosexual relationships, the majority of participants selected the age range “16+” (34.8%) for moderate teen homosexual relationships; while the majority of participants (34.8%) selected the “None” option for moderate children homosexual relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels. For the higher levels of intensity, the age ranges between the children and teen heterosexual relationships were more similar, as will be shown in the synopsis of the responses received which is included below.

As stated above, 43.5% of participants in the survey chose the age range “13+” as appropriate for representations of mild teenage heterosexual relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels and 39.1% chose the age range “16+” as appropriate for representations of mild teenage homosexual relationships. After the age range “13+”,

the participants varied in their responses for appropriate age ranges for mild teenage heterosexual romantic relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels. The age range that was selected by the majority of participants after “13+” for mild teenage heterosexual romantic relationships, was “10+”; chosen by 13% of participants. The age ranges “8+” and “16+” were each chosen by 8.7% of participants and the options “All Ages” and “18+” were each selected by 4.3% of participants. The remaining 17.4% gave no response for mild teenage heterosexual romantic relationships. In comparison, the participants were not as varied in their responses regarding teenage homosexual relationships at the mild level of intensity. Meaning participants tended to agree more on what age range was appropriate for mild teenage homosexual relationships than they did for mild teenage heterosexual relationships. After the age range “16+”, 30.4% of the participants selected the age range “13+” as appropriate for mild teenage homosexual romantic relationships shown in comic books and graphic novels. “None” was the third most often selected response for mild teenage homosexual romantic relationships, chosen by 17.4% of participants. With the age range “18+” chosen by 4.3% of participants, a response of “0” chosen by one participant (which cannot be used since it was not one of the options provided on the survey) and no response given by another 4.3%; participants tended to agree more on the age ranges for mild teenage homosexual relationships than for mild teenage heterosexual relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels.

At the moderate level for teenage heterosexual romantic relationships, the participants still showed a lot of variation in their responses. While 52.2% of participants did select the age range “16+” as appropriate for moderate teenage heterosexual romantic relationships, the second most often selected option under this level was “13+”, chosen by 13% of participants. Another 8.7% of participants selected the age range “18+” as appropriate, while the age ranges “10+” and “None” were selected by 4.3% of participants each as appropriate for moderate teenage heterosexual romantic relationships. The same percentage, 17.4%, of participants gave no response at the moderate level as they did for the mild level of intensity for teenage heterosexual romantic relationships. Again, as in the mild level, participants appeared to agree more on their responses when selecting an appropriate age range for moderate teenage homosexual romantic relationships. After 34.8% of participants chose the age range “16+” as appropriate for moderate teenage homosexual romantic relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels, the second most often selected response was the age range “18+”; chosen by 17.4% of participants. “None” was chosen by another 13% of participants and only 4.3% of participants chose the age range “13+” as appropriate for moderate teenage homosexual romantic relationships. However, the number of participants that gave no response to this question increased from 4.3% in the mild level to 30.4% of participants in the moderate level for teenage homosexual romantic relationships.

There was slightly less differentiation in the responses for intense representations of teenage heterosexual and homosexual relationships than there was for the mild and moderate levels. However, part of the reason for the differentiation being less was because the percentage of participants that gave no response for teenage heterosexual romantic relationships doubled (34.8%) under the intense level compared to the mild and moderate levels. While the percentage of participants that gave no response did not double for intense teenage homosexual romantic relationships, it did increase to 39.1%. For participants that did enter a response, the option that was chosen by the majority of those participants as appropriate for intense teenage heterosexual romantic relationships was the age range “18+”; chosen by 39.1% of participants. “None” was the second most often selected option, chosen by 13% of participants. The only other two responses chosen by participants as appropriate for intense teenage heterosexual romantic relationships were the age ranges “16+” and “13+”; 8.7% of participants chose it for “16+” and 4.3% chose “13+”. For intense teenage homosexual romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels, participants were almost evenly divided between two responses; the age range “18+” and the “None” option. “None” was selected by a slightly higher percentage, 30.4% of participants chose that option, and 26.1% of participants chose the age range “18+.” The only other response that was chosen by participants was the age range “13+” and only 4.3% of participants chose that option as appropriate for intense teenage homosexual romantic relationships in graphic novels and comic books.

Under the excessive category for teenage heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships, participants selected the same responses, but the percentages were slightly different between the heterosexual and homosexual relationships. While 30.4% of participants chose the age range “18+” and another 30.4% of participants selected “None” as appropriate for excessive teenage heterosexual romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels; the percentages were a little different for excessive teenage homosexual romantic relationships. For excessive teenage homosexual romantic relationships, 34.8% of participants selected “None,” while the other 26.1% of participants chose the age range “18+” as appropriate. The only place where the participants’ percentages agreed on the excessive level for heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships were the participants that gave no response, which was 39.1% of participants for both of these types of teenage relationships.

The responses for adult heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships were very similar to the responses that participants gave for teenage heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels. While some of the percentages changed slightly, for most of the different levels of intensity the majority of participants selected the same age ranges for the adult types of relationships that they did for the teen types of relationships. Just as for mild teenage heterosexual romantic relationships, the majority of participants, 34.8%, chose the age range “13+” as appropriate for mild adult heterosexual romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels. While the percentage was slightly different, 43.5% of participants chose

the age range “13+” for mild teenage heterosexual romantic relationships versus the 34.8% that chose it for adult heterosexual romantic relationships. However, the majority of participants still selected the same age range for the teen type as they did for the adult type. The same pattern held true for mild adult homosexual romantic relationships; however in reverse. The majority of participants chose the age range “16+” as appropriate for mild adult homosexual romantic relationships shown in comic books and graphic novels, chosen by 43.5% of participants; just as the majority of participants, 39.1%, chose 16+ as appropriate for mild teenage homosexual romantic relationships.

All of the responses for mild adult heterosexual romantic relationships matched the responses for mild teenage heterosexual relationships, with the exception that because a smaller percentage of participants selected the age range “13+” as appropriate for mild adult heterosexual relationships, that 8.7% of the participants’ responses were different from the responses for the teenage category. So, the responses for the age range “16+” increased to a total of 13% for mild adult heterosexual romantic relationships compared to the 8.7% that selected it for mild teenage heterosexual relationships. The number of participants that gave no response increased to a total of 21.7% compared to the 17.4% that gave no response for mild teenage heterosexual romantic relationships.

However, for mild teenage and adult homosexual romantic relationships, there was a greater difference in the responses between the two types; even where an additional age range was selected for mild adult homosexual relationships than for mild

teenage homosexual relationships. As mentioned previously, more of the participants selected the age range “16+” as appropriate for mild adult homosexual relationships than they did for mild teenage homosexual romantic relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels. While 30.4% of participants selected the age range “13+” as appropriate for mild teenage homosexual romantic relationships, only 8.7% of participants selected it for mild adult homosexual romantic relationships. The age range “18+” was the second most often selected option for mild adult homosexual romantic relationships, chosen by 13% of participants. The additional age range that was chosen for mild adult homosexual romantic relationships was “8+”, selected by one participant, where none of the participants chose that option as appropriate for mild teenage homosexual romantic relationships. Other differences between mild teenage and adult homosexual romantic relationships included 13% of participants who chose “None” for mild adult homosexual content compared to the 17.4% that selected it for mild teenage homosexual content. Also, the participants that gave no response increased for mild adult homosexual content to a total of 13% of participants compared to the only 4.3% of participants that gave no response for mild teenage homosexual content.

In comparing the age ranges selected by participants for mild adult heterosexual romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels to responses chosen for mild adult homosexual romantic relationships, as covered above, many of the responses between the teenage relationships matched the responses given for adult relationships. Therefore, many of the findings between teenage heterosexual and homosexual

categories matched the findings for adult heterosexual and homosexual categories. For mild adult heterosexual romantic relationships, the majority of participants selected lower age ranges compared to the age ranges that were chosen for mild adult homosexual romantic relationships, just as participants did for teenage heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships.

While for the moderate level, participants mostly chose the same age ranges again between the teenage and adult heterosexual romantic relationships featured in comic books and graphic novels; the bulk of participants did select a different age range for the moderate adult homosexual romantic relationship category than they did for the moderate teen homosexual romantic relationship category. In selecting an appropriate age range for both a moderate teenage and adult heterosexual romantic relationship featured in comic books and graphic novels, 52.2% of participants selected the age range “16+” for both the teenage and the adult types. Again, just as in the mild level, the participants selected the same options for the moderate teenage and adult heterosexual categories, but again for some of the age ranges and options the percentages of the responses were slightly different. Some of the different percentages included the age range “18+” which was selected by 17.4% of participants for moderate adult heterosexual relationships compared to the 8.7% of participants who chose it for moderate teenage heterosexual relationships; and the age range “13+” which was selected by 8.7% of participants for moderate adult heterosexual relationships compared to the 13% of participants who selected it for moderate teenage heterosexual

relationships. Also, where 17.4% of participants gave no response for the moderate teenage heterosexual category, only 13% of participants gave no response to the moderate adult heterosexual category. Compared to the mild level, under the moderate level of intensity for adult homosexual romantic relationships, participants that did enter responses all selected the same four options that were chosen for the teenage homosexual category; however the percentages for the responses did not match and the age range that was selected by the majority of participants was different for moderate adult homosexual relationships than it was for moderate teenage homosexual relationships. The age range that was selected by the majority of participants as appropriate for comic books and graphic novels with moderate adult homosexual romantic relationships was “18+”, chosen by 39.1% of participants; compared to the majority of participants that selected the age range “16+” (34.8%) as appropriate for moderate teenage homosexual romantic relationships. Only 13% of participants selected the age range “16+” as appropriate for representations of moderate adult homosexual relationships in comic books and graphic novels and only 17.4% of participants selected the age range “18+” as appropriate for moderate teenage homosexual romantic relationships. Participants seemed to agree that a higher age range was appropriate for representations of moderate adult homosexual romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels than for representations of moderate teenage homosexual romantic relationships. All of the percentages for other age ranges chosen by participants for moderate teenage and adult homosexual romantic relationships in comic books and

graphic novels were the same. In comparing moderate adult heterosexual and homosexual romantic relationships, again, overall a majority of participants selected higher age ranges for the moderate adult homosexual category than they did for the moderate adult heterosexual category.

The pattern of responses given by participants for the intense level were the same as they were for the moderate level, in that, while the majority of participants chose the same age range as appropriate for comic books and graphic novels featuring an intense teenage and adult heterosexual romantic relationship; there was a slight difference in the selection that was chosen by the majority between the intense teen and adult homosexual romantic relationships. Participants chose the age range “18+” as appropriate for both the intense teen and adult heterosexual romantic relationship categories; 39.1% of participants chose it for the teenage category and 47.8% of participants selected it for the adult category. The only other differences between the intense teenage and adult heterosexual categories were that 8.7% of participants chose the age range “16+” as appropriate for intense teenage heterosexual relationships, while only 4.3% selected it for adult heterosexual relationships; and 34.8% of participants gave no response to the intense teen heterosexual category, while 30.4% of participants gave no response to the intense adult heterosexual category. However, for representations of intense teenage and adult homosexual romantic relationships in comic books and graphic novels, the highest selected options were flipped between these two types. While 30.4% of participants selected “None” for intense teen homosexual romantic relationships, 26.1%

of participants selected “None” for intense adult homosexual romantic relationships. The majority of participants selected the age range “18+” as appropriate for intense adult homosexual romantic relationships; chosen by 30.4% of participants, compared to the 26.1% that chose the age range “18+” as appropriate for intense teen homosexual relationships in comic books and graphic novels. Also, another difference between the intense teen and adult homosexual categories was that 4.3% of participants chose the age range “16+” as appropriate for intense adult homosexual relationships, while 4.3% chose the age range “13+” as appropriate for intense teenage homosexual relationships. While the bulk of participants chose the same age range again for teenage and adult heterosexual relationships at the intense level, for teen and adult homosexual relationships at the intense level participants responses were reversed. With the age range “18+” being selected by a slightly higher percentage than “None” was for intense adult homosexual relationships and with this being the exact reverse for intense teenage homosexual relationships; it appears that participants felt representations of intense teenage homosexual relationships in comic books and graphic novels should be more restricted than representations of intense adult homosexual relationships. Also, in comparing intense adult heterosexual and homosexual relationships, the majority of participants seemed to agree on “18+” being an appropriate age range, with “None” being the second most often selected option for both of these types.

With the final excessive level, participants’ responses matched between the teenage and adult heterosexual and homosexual categories. For the age range “18+”,

30.4% of participants selected it for representations of excessive teenage heterosexual relationships and for representations of excessive adult heterosexual relationships in comic books and graphic novels. With the “None” option, again, another 30.4% of participants chose it for excessive teenage heterosexual relationships and 30.4% chose it for excessive adult heterosexual relationships in comic books and graphic novels. The total of participants that gave no response for both excessive teenage and adult heterosexual relationships was 39.1% for both of these types. Under the teenage and adult homosexual categories at the excessive level, 34.8% of participants selected “None” and 26.1% of participants selected the age range “18+” as appropriate for comic books and graphic novels; the remaining 39.1% gave no response to this question. Participants were evenly split between “None” and the age range “18+” for representations of excessive adult heterosexual relationships in comic books and graphic novels, 30.4% of participants selected each of these responses; while for representations of excessive adult homosexual relationships a slightly higher percentage of participants selected “None” over the age range “18+”, with “None” being chosen by 34.8% of participants and 26.1% having selected the age range “18+.”

Final Analysis

As is evident from the data covered above, most participants in this survey seemed to agree about two, sometimes three, of the options they were given to choose from for appropriate age ranges. There is a noticeable difference between what librarians feel is appropriate for the levels of intensity specified in the survey and the

types of content. When looking at the top two to three most often selected age ranges for any of the levels of intensity and different categories of content, there was usually a 2 - 3 year difference in the responses participants chose as appropriate for this reading material, sometimes even more, if the difference occurred from one participant selecting an appropriate age range to another choosing “All Ages” or “None” as appropriate. This illustrates how careful librarians have to be when selecting items for juvenile and teenage audiences. What seems completely acceptable to one individual may seem absolutely inappropriate to another.

Besides indicating what specific age ranges participants chose as most appropriate for the different types of content covered in the survey under the four levels of intensity, there are several other trends revealed by the data. For instance, at the lower levels of intensity, the mild and moderate levels, there seemed to be more variation in the participants’ responses. In other words, participants seemed to agree less often on the appropriate age ranges for different types of content in the lower levels. In the higher levels of intensity, the intense and excessive, the librarians’ responses suggested more agreement than those in the lower levels. Only one to three options were selected by participants the majority of the time (71.4% not including participants that gave no response). Another trend emerged regarding response about the sexual and relationship content of comic books and graphic novels; participants tended to be stricter (by choosing higher age ranges) for some of the different kinds of content than for other kinds. For representations of nudity and sexual activity participants tended to select

higher age ranges for these books in the lower levels of intensity than they did for representations of embracing and kissing in the lower levels. In the survey questions about representations of romantic relationships participants tended to select higher age ranges in the lower levels of intensity for the types of homosexual relationships, than they did for the types of heterosexual relationships.

In comparing the survey and focus group responses to publishers' rating standards, there were a couple of items of note. It is not really possible to compare these findings to the Comic Code, since the code did not really give ratings, but rather simply stated what kinds of content would and would not be allowed in comic books. The words chosen to represent the different levels of intensity on the survey have been used by publishers to describe the content found in age ratings they have created for comic books and graphic novels. Just as the participants of the survey did not agree on which age ratings were appropriate for books including content and language rated at different levels of intensity, the publishers' seem to sometimes disagree as well. While publishers sometimes used the term "mild" to describe content for a graphic novel intended for "All Audiences" or "For Everyone" (like in the case of the CMX Manga ratings - though the CMX line has been retired), this term is also used to describe content in both the Youth Age 10+ (Y) and the Teen Age 13+ (T) ratings in the Tokyopop line of graphic novels (Anime News Network animenewsnetwork.com). Another example of publishers not agreeing on how these terms are used occurred with the term "intense." While both the CMX and Viz lines used the term "intense" to describe content in their Teen Plus (T+)

ratings books, which could be for teens 16+ and adults, the publisher Tokyopop uses the term “intense” to describe content in their Mature Ages 18+ (M) books. Just as these publishers gave different age ratings and interpretations to the terms used in the survey for the “levels of intensity,” so did the participants in the survey and the focus group also give different age ratings and interpretations to these terms (CMX web.archive.org; Tokyopop tokyopop.com; Viz Media viz.com).

What conclusions can be drawn from the data obtained in the survey and the literature research? What might explain the difference in the selection of age ranges between the survey participants and between the publishers? Why would an age range be selected by participants at a level for one type, such as war/battle, but the same age range only be selected once, twice or not at all at the same level for the horror and crime violent types? There could be several reasons for this:

- The librarian(s) felt that exposure to one type of violent content was more inappropriate for a certain age than another type of violent content
- The librarian may feel that the plot mitigates the violent content (for example, a moderate level of war/battle content in a graphic novel featuring a story about WWI may seem of more value to a younger audience than a story featuring horror content, such as zombie or vampire stories featured in a graphic novel)
- The librarian does not approve of that kind of level of content being shown in a graphic novel or comic book

Picking an appropriate age range for a comic book or graphic novel is very subjective. Selecting an appropriate age range is difficult because everyone can have a different opinion of what is appropriate or inappropriate, based on influencing factors such as: age, gender, education, ethnicity, family environment, work environment, religion, etc. Even publishers' rating standards may be subjective based on the initial reviewer; what a publisher may consider to be mild or moderate in content, a librarian may consider excessive and inappropriate for younger audiences. The literature research and the data obtained from the survey along with the responses received from the focus group indicate that, since the majority of participants stated they "sometimes" experienced selection difficulties and problems with cataloging and shelving comic books and graphic novels, librarians are still very concerned with determining their community's standards and they are still a long way away from agreeing on the appropriateness of the content in these books.

There are multiple possibilities for future research in this field of study. For example, further exploration of different genres such as sci-fantasy, western, superhero, and a comparison of their popularity and maturity levels would be useful. This study could also be done in another state to see if the responses from librarians on the survey would be any different. Another possibility is to conduct a similar study that includes other types of books or media type items and compare the way they are rated.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (Also known as Hays Code; 1930-1968) (Reference: productioncode.dhwritings.com)

Preamble

Motion picture producers recognize the high trust and confidence which have been placed in them by the people of the world and which have made motion pictures a universal form of entertainment.

They recognize their responsibility to the public because of this trust and because entertainment and art are important influences in the life of a nation.

Hence, though regarding motion pictures primarily as entertainment without any explicit purpose of teaching or propaganda, they know that the motion picture within its own field of entertainment may be directly responsible for spiritual or moral progress, for higher types of social life, and for much correct thinking.

During the rapid transition from silent to talking pictures they have realized the necessity and the opportunity of subscribing to a Code to govern the production of talking pictures and of re-acknowledging this responsibility.

On their part, they ask from the public and from public leaders a sympathetic understanding of their purposes and problems and a spirit of cooperation that will allow them the freedom and opportunity necessary to bring the motion picture to a still higher level of wholesome entertainment for all the people.

General Principles

- No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.
- Correct standards of life, subject only to the requirements of drama and entertainment, shall be presented.
- Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

Particular Applications

I. Crimes Against the Law

These shall never be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation.

1. Murder

- a. The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation.

- b. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.
 - c. Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.
- 2. Methods of Crime should not be explicitly presented.
 - a. Theft, robbery, safe-cracking, and dynamiting of trains, mines, buildings, etc., should not be detailed in method.
 - b. Arson must subject to the same safeguards.
 - c. The use of firearms should be restricted to the essentials.
 - d. Methods of smuggling should not be presented.
- 3. Illegal drug traffic must never be presented.
- 4. The use of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization, will not be shown.

II. Sex

The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.

- 1. Adultery, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated, or justified, or presented attractively.
- 2. Scenes of Passion
 - a. They should not be introduced when not essential to the plot.
 - b. Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures, are not to be shown.
 - c. In general passion should so be treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and baser element.
- 3. Seduction or Rape
 - a. They should never be more than suggested, and only when essential for the plot, and even then never shown by explicit method.
 - b. They are never the proper subject for comedy.
- 4. Sex perversion or any inference to it is forbidden.
- 5. White slavery shall not be treated.

6. Miscegenation (sex relationships between the white and black races) is forbidden.
7. Sex hygiene and venereal diseases are not subjects for motion pictures.
8. Scenes of actual child birth, in fact or in silhouette, are never to be presented.
9. Children's sex organs are never to be exposed.

III. Vulgarly

The treatment of low, disgusting, unpleasant, though not necessarily evil, subjects should always be subject to the dictates of good taste and a regard for the sensibilities of the audience.

IV. Obscenity

Obscenity in word, gesture, reference, song, joke, or by suggestion (even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience) is forbidden.

V. Profanity

Pointed profanity (this includes the words, God, Lord, Jesus, Christ - unless used reverently - Hell, S.O.B., damn, Gawd), or every other profane or vulgar expression however used, is forbidden.

VI. Costume

1. Complete nudity is never permitted. This includes nudity in fact or in silhouette, or any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in the picture.
2. Undressing scenes should be avoided, and never used save where essential to the plot.
3. Indecent or undue exposure is forbidden.
4. Dancing or costumes intended to permit undue exposure or indecent movements in the dance are forbidden.

VII. Dances

1. Dances suggesting or representing sexual actions or indecent passions are forbidden.
2. Dances which emphasize indecent movements are to be regarded as obscene.

VIII. Religion

1. No film or episode may throw ridicule on any religious faith.
2. Ministers of religion in their character as ministers of religion should not be used as comic characters or as villains.
3. Ceremonies of any definite religion should be carefully and respectfully handled.

IX. Locations

The treatment of bedrooms must be governed by good taste and delicacy.

X. National Feelings

1. The use of the Flag shall be consistently respectful.
2. The history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly.

XI. Titles

Salacious, indecent, or obscene titles shall not be used.

XII. Repellent Subjects

The following subjects must be treated within the careful limits of good taste:

1. Actual hangings or electrocutions as legal punishments for crime.
2. Third degree methods.
3. Brutality and possible gruesomeness.
4. Branding of people or animals.
5. Apparent cruelty to children or animals.
6. The sale of women, or a woman selling her virtue.
7. Surgical operations.

Reasons Supporting the Preamble of the Code

- I. Theatrical motion pictures, that is, pictures intended for the theatre as distinct from pictures intended for churches, schools, lecture halls, educational**

movements, social reform movements, etc., are primarily to be regarded as ENTERTAINMENT.

Mankind has always recognized the importance of entertainment and its value in rebuilding the bodies and souls of human beings.

But it has always recognized that entertainment can be a character either HELPFUL or HARMFUL to the human race, and in consequence has clearly distinguished between:

- a. Entertainment which tends to improve the race, or at least to re-create and rebuild human beings exhausted with the realities of life; and
- b. Entertainment which tends to degrade human beings, or to lower their standards of life and living.

Hence the MORAL IMPORTANCE of entertainment is something which has been universally recognized. It enters intimately into the lives of men and women and affects them closely; it occupies their minds and affections during leisure hours; and ultimately touches the whole of their lives. A man may be judged by his standard of entertainment as easily as by the standard of his work.

So correct entertainment raises the whole standard of a nation.

Wrong entertainment lowers the whole living conditions and moral ideals of a race.

Note, for example, the healthy reactions to healthful sports, like baseball, golf; the unhealthy reactions to sports like cockfighting, bullfighting, bear baiting, etc.

Note, too, the effect on ancient nations of gladiatorial combats, the obscene plays of Roman times, etc.

II. Motion pictures are very important as ART.

Though a new art, possibly a combination art, it has the same object as the other arts, the presentation of human thought, emotion, and experience, in terms of an appeal to the soul through the senses.

Here, as in entertainment,

Art enters intimately into the lives of human beings.

Art can be morally good, lifting men to higher levels. This has been done through good music, great painting, authentic fiction, poetry, drama.

Art can be morally evil in its effects. This is the case clearly enough with unclean art, indecent books, suggestive drama. The effect on the lives of men and women are

obvious.

Note: It has often been argued that art itself is unmoral, neither good nor bad. This is true of the THING which is music, painting, poetry, etc. But the THING is the PRODUCT of some person's mind, and the intention of that mind was either good or bad morally when it produced the thing. Besides, the thing has its EFFECT upon those who come into contact with it. In both these ways, that is, as a product of a mind and as the cause of definite effects, it has a deep moral significance and unmistakable moral quality.

Hence: The motion pictures, which are the most popular of modern arts for the masses, have their moral quality from the intention of the minds which produce them and from their effects on the moral lives and reactions of their audiences. This gives them a most important morality.

1. They reproduce the morality of the men who use the pictures as a medium for the expression of their ideas and ideals.
2. They affect the moral standards of those who, through the screen, take in these ideas and ideals.

In the case of motion pictures, the effect may be particularly emphasized because no art has so quick and so widespread an appeal to the masses. It has become in an incredibly short period the art of the multitudes.

III. The motion picture, because of its importance as entertainment and because of the trust placed in it by the peoples of the world, has special MORAL OBLIGATIONS:

- A. Most arts appeal to the mature. This art appeals at once to every class, mature, immature, developed, undeveloped, law abiding, criminal. Music has its grades for different classes; so has literature and drama. This art of the motion picture, combining as it does the two fundamental appeals of looking at a picture and listening to a story, at once reaches every class of society.
- B. By reason of the mobility of film and the ease of picture distribution, and because the possibility of duplicating positives in large quantities, this art reaches places unpenetrated by other forms of art.
- C. Because of these two facts, it is difficult to produce films intended for only certain classes of people. The exhibitors' theatres are built for the masses, for the cultivated and the rude, the mature and the immature, the self-respecting and the criminal. Films, unlike books and music, can with difficulty be confined to certain selected groups.

D. The latitude given to film material cannot, in consequence, be as wide as the latitude given to book material. In addition:

- a. A book describes; a film vividly presents. One presents on a cold page; the other by apparently living people.
- b. A book reaches the mind through words merely; a film reaches the eyes and ears through the reproduction of actual events.
- c. The reaction of a reader to a book depends largely on the keenness of the reader's imagination; the reaction to a film depends on the vividness of presentation.

Hence many things which might be described or suggested in a book could not possibly be presented in a film.

E. This is also true when comparing the film with the newspaper.

- a. Newspapers present by description, films by actual presentation.
- b. Newspapers are after the fact and present things as having taken place; the film gives the events in the process of enactment and with apparent reality of life.

F. Everything possible in a play is not possible in a film:

- a. Because of the larger audience of the film, and its consequential mixed character. Psychologically, the larger the audience, the lower the moral mass resistance to suggestion.
- b. Because through light, enlargement of character, presentation, scenic emphasis, etc., the screen story is brought closer to the audience than the play.
- c. The enthusiasm for and interest in the film actors and actresses, developed beyond anything of the sort in history, makes the audience largely sympathetic toward the characters they portray and the stories in which they figure. Hence the audience is more ready to confuse actor and actress and the characters they portray, and it is most receptive of the emotions and ideals presented by the favorite stars.

G. Small communities, remote from sophistication and from the hardening process which often takes place in the ethical and moral standards of larger cities, are easily and readily reached by any sort of film.

H. The grandeur of mass settings, large action, spectacular features, etc., affects and arouses more intensely the emotional side of the audience.

In general, the mobility, popularity, accessibility, emotional appeal, vividness, straightforward presentation of fact in the film make for more intimate contact with a larger audience and for greater emotional appeal.

Hence the larger moral responsibilities of the motion pictures.

Reasons Underlying the General Principles

I. No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil or sin.

This is done:

1. When evil is made to appear attractive and alluring, and good is made to appear unattractive.
2. When the sympathy of the audience is thrown on the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil, sin. The same is true of a film that would throw sympathy against goodness, honor, innocence, purity or honesty.

Note: Sympathy with a person who sins is not the same as sympathy with the sin or crime of which he is guilty. We may feel sorry for the plight of the murderer or even understand the circumstances which led him to his crime: we may not feel sympathy with the wrong which he has done. The presentation of evil is often essential for art or fiction or drama. This in itself is not wrong provided:

- a. That evil is not presented alluringly. Even if later in the film the evil is condemned or punished, it must not be allowed to appear so attractive that the audience's emotions are drawn to desire or approve so strongly that later the condemnation is forgotten and only the apparent joy of sin is remembered.
- b. That throughout, the audience feels sure that evil is wrong and good is right.

II. Correct standards of life shall, as far as possible, be presented.

A wide knowledge of life and of living is made possible through the film. When right standards are consistently presented, the motion picture exercises the most powerful influences. It builds character, develops right ideals, inculcates correct principles, and all this in attractive story form.

If motion pictures consistently hold up for admiration high types of characters and present stories that will affect lives for the better, they can become the most powerful force for the improvement of mankind.

III. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

By natural law is understood the law which is written in the hearts of all mankind, the greater underlying principles of right and justice dictated by conscience.

By human law is understood the law written by civilized nations.

1. The presentation of crimes against the law is often necessary for the carrying out of the plot. But the presentation must not throw sympathy with the crime as against the law nor with the criminal as against those who punish him.

2. The courts of the land should not be presented as unjust. This does not mean that a single court may not be presented as unjust, much less that a single court official must not be presented this way. But the court system of the country must not suffer as a result of this presentation.

Reasons Underlying the Particular Applications

I. Sin and evil enter into the story of human beings and hence in themselves are valid dramatic material.

II. In the use of this material, it must be distinguished between sin which repels by its very nature, and sins which often attract.

- a. In the first class come murder, most theft, many legal crimes, lying, hypocrisy, cruelty, etc.
- b. In the second class come sex sins, sins and crimes of apparent heroism, such as banditry, daring thefts, leadership in evil, organized crime, revenge, etc.

The first class needs less care in treatment, as sins and crimes of this class are naturally unattractive. The audience instinctively condemns all such and is repelled.

Hence the important objective must be to avoid the hardening of the audience, especially of those who are young and impressionable, to the thought and fact of crime. People can become accustomed even to murder, cruelty, brutality, and repellent crimes, if these are too frequently repeated.

The second class needs great care in handling, as the response of human nature to their appeal is obvious. This is treated more fully below.

III. A careful distinction can be made between films intended for general distribution, and films intended for use in theatres restricted to a limited audience.

Themes and plots quite appropriate for the latter would be altogether out of place and dangerous in the former.

Note: The practice of using a general theatre and limiting its patronage to "Adults Only" is not completely satisfactory and is only partially effective.

However, maturer minds may easily understand and accept without harm subject matter in plots which do younger people positive harm.

Hence: If there should be created a special type of theatre, catering exclusively to an adult audience, for plays of this character (plays with problem themes, difficult discussions and maturer treatment) it would seem to afford an outlet, which does not now exist, for pictures unsuitable for general distribution but permissible for exhibitions to a restricted audience.

I. Crimes Against the Law

The treatment of crimes against the law must not:

1. Teach methods of crime.
2. Inspire potential criminals with a desire for imitation.
3. Make criminals seem heroic and justified.

Revenge in modern times shall not be justified. In lands and ages of less developed civilization and moral principles, revenge may sometimes be presented. This would be the case especially in places where no law exists to cover the crime because of which revenge is committed.

Because of its evil consequences, the drug traffic should not be presented in any form. The existence of the trade should not be brought to the attention of audiences.

The use of liquor should never be excessively presented. In scenes from American life, the necessities of plot and proper characterization alone justify its use. And in this case, it should be shown with moderation.

II. Sex

Out of a regard for the sanctity of marriage and the home, the triangle, that is, the love of a third party for one already married, needs careful handling. The treatment should not throw sympathy against marriage as an institution.

Scenes of passion must be treated with an honest acknowledgement of human nature and its normal reactions. Many scenes cannot be presented without arousing dangerous emotions on the part of the immature, the young or the criminal classes.

Even within the limits of pure love, certain facts have been universally regarded by lawmakers as outside the limits of safe presentation.

In the case of impure love, the love which society has always regarded as wrong and which has been banned by divine law, the following are important:

1. Impure love must not be presented as attractive and beautiful.
2. It must not be the subject of comedy or farce, or treated as material for laughter.
3. It must not be presented in such a way to arouse passion or morbid curiosity on the part of the audience.
4. It must not be made to seem right and permissible.
5. In general, it must not be detailed in method and manner.

III. Vulgarity; IV. Obscenity; V. Profanity; hardly need further explanation than is contained in the Code.

VI. Costume

General Principles:

1. The effect of nudity or semi-nudity upon the normal man or woman, and much more upon the young and upon immature persons, has been honestly recognized by all lawmakers and moralists.
2. Hence the fact that the nude or semi-nude body may be beautiful does not make its use in the films moral. For, in addition to its beauty, the effect of the nude or semi-nude body on the normal individual must be taken into consideration.
3. Nudity or semi-nudity used simply to put a "punch" into a picture comes under the head of immoral actions. It is immoral in its effect on the average audience.
4. Nudity can never be permitted as being necessary for the plot. Semi-nudity must not result in undue or indecent exposures.
5. Transparent or translucent materials and silhouette are frequently more suggestive than actual exposure.

VII. Dances

Dancing in general is recognized as an art and as a beautiful form of expressing human emotions.

But dances which suggest or represent sexual actions, whether performed solo or with two or more; dances intended to excite the emotional reaction of an audience; dances with movement of the breasts, excessive body movements while the feet are stationary, violate decency and are wrong.

VIII. Religion

The reason why ministers of religion may not be comic characters or villains is simply because the attitude taken toward them may easily become the attitude taken toward religion in general. Religion is lowered in the minds of the audience because of the lowering of the audience's respect for a minister.

IX. Locations

Certain places are so closely and thoroughly associated with sexual life or with sexual sin that their use must be carefully limited.

X. National Feelings

The just rights, history, and feelings of any nation are entitled to most careful consideration and respectful treatment.

XI. Titles

As the title of a picture is the brand on that particular type of goods, it must conform to the ethical practices of all such honest business.

XII. Repellent Subjects

Such subjects are occasionally necessary for the plot. Their treatment must never offend good taste nor injure the sensibilities of an audience.

Appendix B

The Classification and Rating Administration's Rating System (www.mpa.org/):

G – General Audiences: All Ages Admitted. A G-rated motion picture contains nothing in theme, language, nudity, sex, violence or other matters that, in the view of the Rating Board, would offend parents whose younger children view the motion picture. The G rating is not a “certificate of approval,” nor does it signify a “children’s” motion picture. Some snippets of language may go beyond polite conversation but they are common everyday expressions. No stronger words are present in G-rated motion pictures. Depictions of violence are minimal. No nudity, sex scenes or drug use are present in the motion picture.

PG – Parental Guidance Suggested: Some Material May Not Be Suitable for Children. A PG-rated motion picture should be investigated by parents before they let their younger children attend. The PG rating indicates, in the view of the Rating Board, that parents may consider some material unsuitable for their children, and parents should make that decision. The more mature themes in some PG-rated motion pictures may call for parental guidance. There may be some profanity and some depictions of violence or brief nudity. But these elements are not deemed so intense as to require that parents be strongly cautioned beyond the suggestion of parental guidance. There is no drug use content in a PG-rated motion picture.

PG-13 – Parents Strongly Cautioned: Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13. A PG-13 rating is a sterner warning by the Rating Board to parents to determine whether their children under age 13 should view the motion picture, as some material might not be suited for them. A PG-13 motion picture may go beyond the PG rating in theme, violence, nudity, sensuality, language, adult activities or other elements, but does not reach the restricted R category. The theme of the motion picture by itself will not result in a rating greater than PG-13, although depictions of activities related to a mature theme may result in a restricted rating for the motion picture. Any drug use will initially require at least a PG-13 rating. More than brief nudity will require at least a PG-13 rating, but such nudity in a PG-13 rated motion picture generally will not be sexually oriented. There may be depictions of violence in a PG-13 movie, but generally not both realistic and extreme or persistent violence. A motion picture’s single use of one of the harsher sexually-derived words, though only as an expletive, initially requires at least a PG-13 rating. More than one such expletive requires an R rating, as must even one of those words used in a sexual context. The Rating Board nevertheless may rate such a motion picture PG-13 if, based on a special vote by a two-thirds majority, the Raters feel that most American parents would believe that a PG-13 rating is appropriate because of the context or manner in which the words are used or because the use of those words in the motion picture is inconspicuous.

R – Restricted: Under 17 Requires Accompanying Parent or Adult Guardian. An R-rated motion picture, in the view of the Rating Board, contains some adult material. An R-rated motion picture may include adult themes, adult activity, hard language,

intense or persistent violence, sexually-oriented nudity, drug abuse or other elements, so that parents are counseled to take this rating very seriously. Children under 17 are not allowed to attend R-rated motion pictures unaccompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Parents are strongly urged to find out more about R-rated motion pictures in determining their suitability for their children. Generally, it is not appropriate for parents to bring their young children with them to R-rated motion pictures.

NC-17 – No One 17 And Under Admitted. An NC-17 rated motion picture is one that, in the view of the Rating Board, most parents would consider patently too adult for their children 17 and under. No children will be admitted. NC-17 does not mean “obscene” or “pornographic” in the common or legal meaning of those words, and should not be construed as a negative judgment in any sense. The rating simply signals that the content is appropriate only for an adult audience. An NC-17 rating can be based on violence, sex, aberrational behavior, drug abuse or any other element that most parents would consider too strong and therefore off-limits for viewing by their children.

Appendix C

Association of Comics Magazine Publishers Comics Code 1948 (Nyberg 165)

The Association of Comics Magazines Publishers, realizing its responsibility to the millions of readers of comics magazines and to the public generally, urges its members and others to publish comics magazines containing only good, wholesome entertainment or education, and in no event include in any magazine comics that may in any way lower the moral standards of those who read them. In particular:

1. Sexy, wanton comics should not be published. No drawing should show a female indecently or unduly exposed, and in no event more nude than in a bathing suit commonly worn in the United States of America.
2. Crime should not be presented in such a way as to throw sympathy against law and justice or to inspire others with the desire for imitation. No comics shall show the details and methods of a crime committed by a youth. Policemen, judges, Government officials, and respected institutions should not be portrayed as stupid or ineffective, or represented in such a way as to weaken respect for established authority.
3. No scenes of sadistic torture should be shown.
4. Vulgar and obscene language should never be used. Slang should be kept to a minimum and used only when essential to the story.
5. Divorce should not be treated humorously nor represented as glamorous or alluring.
6. Ridicule or attack on any religious or racial group is never permissible.

Appendix D

Comics Magazine Association of America Comics Code 1954 (Nyberg 166)

I. Code for Editorial Matter

General standards Part A

1. Crimes shall never be presented in such a way as to create sympathy for the criminal, to promote distrust of the forces of law and justice, or to inspire others with a desire to imitate criminals.
2. No comics shall explicitly present the unique details and methods of a crime.
3. Policemen, judges, Government officials and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority.
4. If crime is depicted it shall be as a sordid and unpleasant activity.
5. Criminals shall not be presented so as to be rendered glamorous or to occupy a position which creates a desire for emulation.
6. In every instance good shall triumph over evil and the criminal punished for his misdeeds.
7. Scenes of excessive violence shall be prohibited. Scenes of brutal torture, excessive and unnecessary knife and gunplay, physical agony, gory and gruesome crime shall be eliminated.
8. No unique or unusual methods of concealing weapons shall be shown.
9. Instances of law-enforcement officers dying as a result of a criminal's activities should be discouraged.
10. The crime of kidnapping shall never be portrayed in any detail, nor shall any profit accrue to the abductor or kidnaper. The criminal or the kidnaper must be punished in every case.
11. The letters of the word "crime" on a comics-magazine cover shall never be appreciably greater in dimension than the other words contained in the title. The word "crime" shall never appear alone on a cover.
12. Restraint in the use of the word "crime" in titles or subtitles shall be exercised.

General standards—Part B

1. No comic magazine shall use the word horror or terror in its title.
2. All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism shall not be permitted.
3. All lurid, unsavory, gruesome illustrations shall be eliminated.
4. Inclusion of stories dealing with evil shall be used or shall be published only where the intent is to illustrate a moral issue and in no case shall evil be presented alluringly, nor so as to injure the sensibilities of the reader.
5. Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism are prohibited.

General standards—Part C

All elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein, but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the code, and are considered violations of good taste or decency, shall be prohibited.

Dialogue

1. Profanity, obscenity, smut, vulgarity, or words or symbols which have acquired undesirable meanings are forbidden.
2. Special precautions to avoid references to physical afflictions or deformities shall be taken.
3. Although slang and colloquialisms are acceptable, excessive use should be discouraged and, wherever possible, good grammar shall be employed.

Religion

Ridicule or attack on any religious or racial group is never permissible.

Costume

1. Nudity in any form is prohibited, as is indecent or undue exposure.
2. Suggestive and salacious illustration or suggestive posture is unacceptable.
3. All characters shall be depicted in dress reasonably acceptable to society.
4. Females shall be drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities.

NOTE: It should be recognized that all prohibitions dealing with costume,

dialog, or artwork applies as specifically to the cover of a comic magazine as they do to the contents.

Marriage and sex

1. Divorce shall not be treated humorously nor represented as desirable.
2. Illicit sex relations are neither to be hinted at nor portrayed. Violent love scenes as well as sexual abnormalities are unacceptable.
3. Respect for parents, the moral code, and for honorable behavior shall be fostered. A sympathetic understanding of the problems of love is not a license for morbid distortion.
4. The treatment of live-romance stories shall emphasize the value of the home and the sanctity of marriage.
5. Passion or romantic interest shall never be treated in such a way as to stimulate the lower and baser emotions.
6. Seduction and rape shall never be shown or suggested.
7. Sex perversion or any inference to same is strictly forbidden.

II. CODE FOR ADVERTISING MATTER

These regulations are applicable to all magazines published by members of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc. Good taste shall be the guiding principle in the acceptance of advertising.

1. Liquor and tobacco advertising is not acceptable.
2. Advertisement of sex or sex instruction books are unacceptable.
3. The sale of picture postcards, "pinups," "art studies," or any other reproduction of nude or seminude figures is prohibited.
4. Advertising for the sale of knives or realistic gun facsimiles is prohibited.
5. Advertising for the sale of fireworks is prohibited.
6. Advertising dealing with the sale of gambling equipment or printed matter dealing with gambling shall not be accepted.
7. Nudity with meretricious purpose and salacious postures shall not be permitted in the advertising of any product; clothed figures shall never be presented in such a way as to be offensive or contrary to good taste or morals.

8. To the best of his ability, each publisher shall ascertain that all statements made in advertisements conform to fact and avoid misrepresentation.
9. Advertisement of medical, health, or toiletry products of questionable nature are to be rejected. Advertisements for medical, health, or toiletry products endorsed by the American Medical Association, or the American Dental Association, shall be deemed acceptable if they conform with all other conditions of the Advertising Code.

Appendix E

Comics Magazine Association of America Comics Code 1971 (Nyberg 170)

I. Code for Editorial Matter

General Standards-Part A

1. Crimes shall never be presented in such a way as to promote distrust of the forces of law and justice, or to inspire others with a desire to imitate criminals.
2. No comics shall explicitly present the unique details and methods of a crime, with the exception of those crimes that are so farfetched or pseudo-scientific that no would-be lawbreaker could reasonably duplicate.
3. Policemen, judges, government officials and respected institutions shall not be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority. If any of these is depicted committing an illegal act, it must be declared as an exceptional case and that the culprit pay the legal price.
4. If a crime is depicted it shall be as a sordid and unpleasant activity.
5. Criminals shall not be presented in glamorous circumstances, unless an unhappy ends results from their ill-gotten gain, and creates no desire for emulation.
6. In every instance good shall triumph over evil and the criminal punished for his misdeeds.
7. Scenes of excessive violence shall be prohibited. Scenes of brutal torture, excessive and unnecessary knife and gun play, physical agony, gory and gruesome crime shall be eliminated.
8. No unique or unusual methods of concealing weapons shall be shown, except where such concealment could not possible be duplicated.
9. Instances of law enforcement officers dying as a result of a criminal's activities should be discouraged, except when the guilty, because of their crime, live a sordid existence and are brought to justice because of the particular crime.
10. The crime of kidnapping shall never be portrayed in any detail, nor shall any profit accrue to the abductor or kidnapper. The criminal or the kidnapper must be punished in every case.
11. The letters of the word "crime" on a comics magazine cover shall never be appreciably greater in dimension than the other words contained in the title. The word "crime" shall never appear alone on the cover.
12. Restraint in the use of the word "crime" in titles or subtitles shall be exercised.

General Standards Part B

1. No comics magazine shall use the word horror or terror in its title. The words may be used judiciously in the body of the magazine. [Footnote: The word horror or terror in a story title in the body of the magazine has been ruled to be an injudicious use, and therefore is not permitted.]
2. All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism shall not be permitted.
3. All lurid, unsavory, gruesome illustrations shall be eliminated.
4. Inclusion of stories dealing with evil shall be used or shall be published only where the intent is to illustrate a moral issue and in no case shall evil be presented alluringly nor so as to injure the sensibilities of the reader.
5. Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, or torture, shall not be used. Vampires, ghouls and werewolves shall be permitted to be used when handled in the classic tradition such as Frankenstein, Dracula, and other high calibre literary works written by Edgar Allen Poe, Saki, Conan Doyle and other respected authors whose works are read in schools around the world.
6. Narcotics or Drug addiction shall not be presented except as a vicious habit. Narcotics or Drug addiction or the illicit traffic in addiction-producing narcotics or drugs shall not be shown or described if the presentation:
 - (a) Tends in any manner to encourage, stimulate or justify the use of such narcotics or drugs; or
 - (b) Stresses, visually, by text or dialogue, their temporary attractive effects; or
 - (c) Suggests that the narcotics or drug habit can be quickly or easily broken; or
 - (d) Shows or describes details of narcotics or drug procurement, or the implements or devices used in taking narcotics or drugs, or the taking of narcotics or drugs in any manner; or
 - (e) Emphasize the profits of the narcotics or drug traffic; or
 - (f) Involves children who are shown knowingly to use or traffic in narcotics or drugs; or
 - (g) Shows or implies a casual attitude toward the taking of narcotics or drugs; or
 - (h) Emphasizes the taking of narcotics or drugs throughout, or in a major part, of the story, and leaves the denouement to the final panels.

General Standards - Part C

All elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein, but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the Code, and are considered violations of good taste and decency, shall be prohibited.

Dialogue

1. Profanity, obscenity, smut, vulgarity, or words or symbols which have acquired undesirable meanings- judged and interpreted in contemporary standards- are forbidden.
2. Special precautions to avoid disparaging reference to physical afflictions or deformities shall be taken.
3. Although slang and colloquialisms are acceptable, excessive use should be discouraged and whenever possible good grammar shall be employed.

Religion

1. Ridicule or attack on any religious or racial group is never permissible.

Costume

1. Nudity in any form is prohibited. Suggestive and salacious illustration is unacceptable.
2. Females shall be drawn realistically without undue emphasis on any physical quality.

Marriage and Sex

1. Divorce shall not be treated humorously or represented as desirable.
2. Illicit sex relations are not to be portrayed and sexual abnormalities are unacceptable.
3. All situations dealing with the family unit should have as their ultimate goal the protection of the children and family life. In no way shall the breaking of the moral code be depicted as rewarding.
4. Rape shall never be shown or suggested. Seduction may not be shown.
5. Sex perversion or any inference to same is strictly forbidden.

II. Code for Advertising Matter

The regulations are applicable to all magazines published by members of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc. Good taste shall be the guiding principle in the acceptance of advertising.

1. Liquor and tobacco advertising are not acceptable.
2. Advertising of sex or sex instruction books are unacceptable.
3. The sale of picture postcards, "pin-ups," "art studies," or any other reproduction of nude or semi-nude figures is prohibited.
4. Advertising for the sale of knives, concealable weapons, or realistic gun facsimiles is prohibited.
5. Advertising for the sale of fireworks is prohibited.
6. Advertising dealing with the sale of gambling equipment or printed matter dealing with gambling shall not be acceptable.
7. Nudity with meretricious purpose and salacious postures shall not be permitted in the advertising of any product; clothed figures shall never be presented in such a way as to be offensive or contrary to good taste or morals.
8. To the best of his ability, each publisher shall ascertain that all statements made in advertisements conform to the fact and avoid misrepresentation.
9. Advertisement of medical, health, or toiletry products of questionable nature are to be rejected. Advertisements for medical, health or toiletry products endorsed by the American Medical Association, or the American Dental Association, shall be deemed acceptable if they conform with all other conditions of the Advertising Code.

Appendix F

Comics Magazine Association of America Comics Code 1989 (Nyberg 175)

INSTITUTIONS

In general recognizable national, social, political, cultural, ethnic and racial groups, religious institutions, law enforcement authorities will be portrayed in a positive light. These include the government on the national, state, and municipal levels, including all of its numerous departments, agencies and services; law enforcement agencies such as the FBI, the Secret Service, the CIA, etc.; the military, both United States and foreign; known religious organizations; ethnic advancement agencies; foreign leaders and representatives of other governments and national groups; and social groups identifiable by lifestyle, such as homosexuals, the economically disadvantaged, the economically privileged, the homeless, senior citizens, minors, etc.

Socially responsible attitudes will be favorably depicted and reinforced. Socially inappropriate, irresponsible, or illegal behavior will be shown to be specific actions of a specific individual or group of individuals, and not meant to reflect the routine activity of any general group of real persons.

If, for dramatic purposes, it is necessary to portray such group of individuals in a negative manner, the name of the group and its individual members will be fictitious, and its activities will be clearly identifiable with the routine activities of any real group.

Stereotyped images and activities will be not used to degrade specific national, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups.

LANGUAGE

The language in a comic book will be appropriate for a mass audience that includes children. Good grammar and spelling will be encouraged. Publishers will exercise good taste and a responsible attitude as to the use of language in their comics. Obscene and profane words, symbols, and gestures are prohibited.

References to physical handicaps, illnesses, ethnic backgrounds, sexual preferences, religious beliefs, and race, when presented in a derogatory manner for dramatic purposes, will be shown to be unacceptable.

VIOLENCE

Violent actions or scenes are acceptable within the context of a comic book story when dramatically appropriate. Violent behavior will not be shown as acceptable. If it is presented in a realistic manner, care should be taken to present the natural repercussions of such actions. Publishers should avoid excessive levels of violence, excessively graphic depictions of violence, and excessive bloodshed or gore. Publishers will not present detailed information instructing readers how to engage in imitable violent actions.

CHARACTERIZATIONS

Character portrayals will be carefully crafted and show sensitivity to national, ethnic, religious, sexual, political and socioeconomic orientations.

If it is dramatically appropriate for one character to demean another because of his or her sex, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, political orientation, socioeconomic disadvantages should never assign ultimate responsibility for these conditions to the character themselves. Heroes should be role models and should reflect the prevailing social attitudes.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Healthy, wholesome lifestyles will be presented as desirable. However, the use and abuse of controlled substances, legal and illicit, are facts of modern existence, and may be portrayed when dramatically appropriate.

The consumption of alcohol, narcotics, pharmaceuticals, and tobacco will not be depicted in a glamorous way. When the line between the normal, responsible consumption of legal substances and the abuse of these substances is crossed, the distinction will be made clear and the adverse consequences of such abuse will be noted.

Substance abuse is defined as the use of illicit drugs and the self-destructive use of such products as tobacco (including chewing tobacco), alcohol, prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, etc.

Use of dangerous substances both legal and illegal should be shown with restraint as necessary to the context of the story. However, storylines should not be detailed to the point of serving as instruction manuals for substance abuse. In each story, the abuser will be shown to pay the physical, mental and/or social penalty for his or her abuse.

CRIME

While crimes and criminals may be portrayed for dramatic purposes, crimes will never be presented in such a way as to inspire readers with a desire to imitate them nor will criminals be portrayed in such a manner as to inspire readers to emulate them. Stories will not present unique imitable techniques or methods of committing crimes.

ATTIRE AND SEXUALITY

Costumes in a comic book will be considered to be acceptable if they fall within the scope of contemporary styles and fashions.

Scenes and dialogue involving adult relationships will be presented with good taste, sensitivity, and in a manner which will be considered acceptable by a mass audience. Primary human sexual characteristics will never be shown. Graphic sexual activity will never be depicted.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

I.

All comics which member publishers wish to bear the Comics Code Seal will be submitted to the code administrator for review prior to publication. The administrator will review them according to the guidance he has received from the permanent committee and will either approve them to bear the seal, or return them to the publisher with comments. The responsible editor from the publisher will either revise the comic in accordance with those comments, or discuss with the administrator the concerns raised with him and reach agreement on how the comic can properly bear the Code Seal either without being revised or within a mutually-agreeable set of alternative revisions. In the event no agreement can be reached between the editor and the administrator, the matter can be referred to the permanent committee, which will act promptly to determine if, or under what conditions, the comic in question can bear the Code Seal. Decisions of the permanent committee will be binding on the publishers, who agree not to place the Code Seal on any comic on which it is not authorized.

II.

The members of the Comics Magazine Association of America include publishers who elect to publish comics that are not intended to bear the Code Seal, and that therefore need not go through the approval process described above. Among the comics in this category may be titles intended for adult readers. Member publishers hereby affirm that we will distribute these publications only through distribution channels in which it is possible to notify retailers and distributors of their content, and thus help the publications reach their intended audiences. The member publishers agree to refrain from distributing these publications through those distribution channels that, like the traditional newsstand, are serviced by individuals who are unaware of the content of specific publications before placing them on display.

III.

Recognizing that no document can address all of the complex issues and concerns that face our changing society, the member publishers have established a permanent committee composed of the senior editor of each member's staff. The committee will meet regularly to review those issues and concerns as they affect our publications, and to meet with the guide and administrator of the Comics Code, and will replace the previous written guidelines of the Comics Code.

Appendix G

Present Marvel Rating System (subscriptions.marvel.com/help)

ALL AGES: Appropriate for readers of All Ages.

A: Appropriate for readers Ages 9 and up.

T+ Teens & Up: Appropriate for most readers 13 and up, parents are advised they may want to read before or with younger children.

PARENTAL ADVISORY: 15+ years old. Similar to T+, but featuring more mature themes and/or more graphic imagery. Recommended for teen and adult readers.

MAX: EXPLICIT CONTENT: 18+ years old Most Mature Readers Books will fall under the MAX comics banner, (created specifically for mature content titles) MAX and mature-themed titles will continue to be designed to appear distinct from mainline Marvel titles, with the “MAX: Explicit Content” label very prominently displayed on the cover. MAX titles will not be sold on the newsstand, and they will NOT be marketed to younger readers.

Appendix H

First Marvel Rating System from 2001 (Reference: www.comicbookresources.com/print.php?type=ar&id=24)

ALL AGES: These titles will carry no label and are appropriate for readers of all ages, whether they're 9 or 90.

MARVEL PG: These titles are fine for most readers, parents are advised they may want to read before or with younger children.

MARVEL PG+: Similar to Marvel PG. In these titles you can generally find the violence and language turned up a notch. Recommended for teen and adult readers.

PARENTAL ADVISORY/EXPLICIT CONTENT: Most Mature Readers books will fall under the MAX Comics banner (created specifically for mature content titles). These titles may contain content similar to a R-rated movie – including harsh language, graphic violence, mature themes, nudity and some sexual situations. MAX (and any mature-themed titles) will be designed to appear distinct from mainline Marvel titles, with the “Parental Advisory/Explicit Content” label very prominently displayed on the cover. These will not be marketed at younger readers.

Appendix I

DC Rating System (Reference: <http://www.dccomics.com/dccomics/about/web.archive.org>)

❖ Labels

- DC Kids: Children's line submitted for CCA approval
- DC Universe: Sometimes published without CCA approval: website did not specify a rating system. Home of DC's super heroes
- Vertigo line: Adult line for mature content; more mature, literary readership
- Wildstorm line: Action line; bold alternative take on heroic and adventure comics
- Zuda line: digital imprint
- MAD Magazine
- CMX Manga (Label no longer in print)
 - E: For Everyone. Titles with this rating are appropriate for all age readers. They contain no offensive material. They may contain mild violence and/or some comic mischief.
 - T: For Teen. Titles with this rating are appropriate for a teen audience and older. They may contain some violent content, language, and/or suggestive themes.
 - T+: For Teen Plus. Titles with this rating are appropriate for an audience of 16 and older. They may contain partial nudity, mild profanity and more intense violence.
 - M: Mature. Titles with this rating are appropriate only for mature readers. They may contain graphic violence, nudity, sex and content suitable only for older readers.

Appendix J

➤ **Viz** (Reference: www.viz.com/ratings/)

- A: All Ages. May be suitable for readers or consumers of any age. For example, may contain mild language and fantasy violence but no swearing or nudity.
- T: Teen. May be suitable for early teens and older. For example, may contain violence, infrequent use of strong language, suggestive themes or situations, crude humor, alcohol and/or tobacco use.
- T+: Teen Plus. May be suitable for older teens and adults. For example, may contain intense and/or gory violence, sexual content, frequent strong language, alcohol, tobacco and/or other substance use.
- M: Mature. Suitable for adults only. May contain extreme violence, mature themes and graphic depictions.

Appendix K

➤ **Tokyopop** (Reference: www.tokyopop.com/corporate/booksellers/879)

- A: For all ages. Appropriate for ages 6 and up. May contain cartoon violence and potty humor.
- Y: Youth Age 10+. Appropriate for ages 10 and up. May contain mild language, fantasy violence and bullying.
- T: Teen Age 13+. Appropriate for ages 13 and up. May contain infrequent and mild profanity, mild violence and gore, crude humor, mild sexual language and themes, nondescript nudity, and mild fanservice, as well as references to tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drug use.
- OT: Older Teen Age 16+. Appropriate for ages 16 and up. May contain profanity and strong language, moderate violence and gore, moderate sexual themes and sexual violence, nudity, moderate fanservice, and alcohol and illegal drug use.
- M: Mature Ages 18+. Appropriate for ages 18 and up. May contain excessive profanity and language; intense violence; excessive gore; explicit sexual language, themes and violence; and explicit fanservice.

Appendix L

- **Graphic Novel Library Survey** (Reference: National Coalition Against Censorship; The American Library Association; & The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/ifissues/graphicnovels_1.pdf)

- ❖ Survey conducted by the ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom in March-April 2005; Total number of responses: 185

- ❖ Questions Asked on the Survey
 - **What type of library do you work in?**
 - **Do you include graphic novels in your collection?**
 - **Have you experienced any problems with or challenges to the graphic novels in your collection?**
 - **How are graphic novels catalogued and shelved?**
 - **Comments and Success Stories**
 - **Tips**

Appendix M

Library Bill of Rights

(Reference: <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/index.cfm>)

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries that make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

A history of the Library Bill of Rights is found in the latest edition of the [Intellectual Freedom Manual](#).

Appendix N

Free Access to Libraries for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

(Reference:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/freeaccesslibraries.cfm>)

Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services available to other users violate the Library Bill of Rights. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.

Article V of the Library Bill of Rights states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." The "right to use a library" includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

Libraries are charged with the mission of providing services and developing resources to meet the diverse information needs and interests of the communities they serve. Services, materials, and facilities that fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of library resources. The needs and interests of each library user, and resources appropriate to meet those needs and interests, must be determined on an individual basis. Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation. Equitable access to all library resources and services shall not be abridged through restrictive scheduling or use policies.

Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community, and restricts access for all library users.

Children and young adults unquestionably possess First Amendment rights, including the right to receive information through the library in print, nonprint, or digital format. Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them.¹ Librarians and library governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions in

an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections, because only a court of law can determine whether material is not constitutionally protected.

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize librarians or library governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. As *Libraries: An American Value* states, “We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services.” Librarians and library governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children's—and only their children's—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children.

Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Librarians and library governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the community they serve have free, equal, and equitable access to the entire range of library resources regardless of content, approach, format, or amount of detail. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Librarians and library governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

See also *Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program and Access to Children and Young Adults to Nonprint Materials*. 1 See *Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205 (1975) “Speech that is neither obscene as to youths nor subject to some other legitimate proscription cannot be suppressed solely to protect the young from ideas or images that a legislative body thinks unsuitable for them. In most circumstances, the values protected by the First Amendment are no less applicable when government seeks to control the flow of information to minors.” See also *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S.503 (1969); *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943); *AAMA v. Kendrick*,. 244 F.3d 572 (7th Cir. 2001).

Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; June 30, 2004; July 2, 2008.

Appendix O

Freedom to View Statement

(Reference:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/ftvstatement/freedomviewstatement.cfm>)

The **FREEDOM TO VIEW**, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the **First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States**. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.

To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.

To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.

To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.

To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

Appendix P

LABELING AND RATING SYSTEMS: An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

(Reference:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/labelingrating.cfm>)

Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections or in resources accessible through the library. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library. Likewise, providing access to digital information does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library. Labeling and rating systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Labels on library materials may be viewpoint-neutral directional aids designed to save the time of users, or they may be attempts to prejudice or discourage users or restrict their access to materials. When labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes, it is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library materials.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the material, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the material, render it inappropriate or offensive for all or certain groups of users. The prejudicial label is used to warn, discourage, or prohibit users or certain groups of users from accessing the material. Such labels sometimes are used to place materials in restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Viewpoint-neutral directional aids facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate materials. The materials are housed on open shelves and are equally accessible to all users, who may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion.

Directional aids can have the effect of prejudicial labels when their implementation becomes proscriptive rather than descriptive. When directional aids are used to forbid access or to suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, the effect is the same as prejudicial labeling.

Many organizations use rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public regarding the organizations' opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, games, or other

materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by a library violates the Library Bill of Rights. When requested, librarians should provide information about rating systems equitably, regardless of viewpoint.

Adopting such systems into law or library policy may be unconstitutional. If labeling or rating systems are mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations.

Libraries sometimes acquire resources that include ratings as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse the inclusion of such rating systems; however, removing or destroying the ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation (see “[Expurgation of Library Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)”). In addition, the inclusion of ratings on bibliographic records in library catalogs is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights.

Prejudicial labeling and ratings presuppose the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is appropriate or inappropriate for others. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

Adopted July 13, 1951, by the ALA Council; amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990; January 19, 2005; July 15, 2009.

Appendix Q

Research Question with Variables

Research Question:

*What are the perceptions of librarians (**EVALUATOR – INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**) on the publishers' rating standards (**RATING STANDARDS – DEPENDENT VARIABLE**) for comic books and graphic novels?*

*--Do they (**EVALUATOR – INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**) think the current rating standard (**DEPENDENT VARIABLE**) for violence (**CONTENT & GENRE – INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**) appropriate?*

*--Do they (**EVALUATOR – INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**) think the current rating standard (**DEPENDENT VARIABLE**) for sexual content (**CONTENT & GENRE – INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**) is appropriate?*

*--Do they (**EVALUATOR – INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**) think the current rating standard (**DEPENDENT VARIABLE**) for risqué language (**CONTENT & GENRE – INDEPENDENT**) is appropriate?*

Appendix R

Breakdown of Variables

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Survey Question</u>
Content	Questions 11 – 14: Evaluators were asked to rate content
Evaluator	Questions 1 – 14: Evaluator was questioned on their demographics, their libraries, issues in their libraries and on their perceptions of content and genres age appropriateness
Genres	Questions 11 – 14: Evaluators were asked to rate genres
Ratings	Question 8, 11 – 14: Evaluators were asked whether ratings were useful to them and to give their own age ratings for content and genres

Vita

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