

Derik A. Badman

Comics studies

Resources for scholarly research

Comic books, comic strips, manga, and other forms of what is more generally called comics have gained increasingly serious attention in recent years, such that it is almost at the point where articles entitled “Bif Bam Pow: Comics aren’t for kids anymore” have ceased appearing because of their obviousness. The field of comics studies has had a similar upward trajectory. Avenues for publication of scholarly writing on comics continue to expand (both journals and books), and resources focused on the study of comics are growing.

Comics studies is a broadly interdisciplinary area, often applying the scholarly literature and apparatus of literary studies, communication and mass media, art, history, sociology, or philosophy.

This column highlights resources that are more narrowly focused on comics. The resources below cover a range of types from scholarly publications to reference sources and news sites. I have primarily focused on English-language resources, though researchers should be aware of the prevalence of French language comics studies (which one could argue has a larger academic history than studies in English).

Discussion lists and forums

- **Anime and Manga Research Circle.**

This is a group of scholars, students, and fans interested in research on anime and manga. They maintain a fairly active e-mail list. Access: <http://www.cjas.org/~leng/amrc.htm>.

- **Comics Scholars Discussion List.**

This is an active e-mail list populated by a large number of academics, students, independent scholars, and even a few librarians

involved with comics studies. A good source for CFPs, conference information, publication news, and long discussions (recent examples include discussions of terminology in comics [always contentious] and the “must reads” of comics scholarship). Access: <http://www.english.ufl.edu/comics/scholars/>.

Journals

- **European Comic Art.** A newer scholarly journal focused on European comics (*bande dessinée*). Access: <http://eurocomcart.lupjournals.org/default.aspx>.

- **Image and Narrative.** Another peer-reviewed open access journal out of Belgium devoted to the study of visual narrative in all its forms (including comics). One of the chief editors is Jan Baetens, a Belgian scholar who has published widely on comics in French. This journal publishes articles in English or French, with abstracts provided in both languages. Access: <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/>.

- **ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies.** A peer-reviewed open access journal out of the University of Florida (which has its own comics studies program). Recent special issues focused on the work of Neil Gaiman and William Blake’s relation to visual culture. Access: <http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/>.

- **International Journal of Comic Art.** The premier comics studies journal publishing English-language articles since 1999 by John Lent, a professor at Temple University

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and a major figure in comics studies and bibliography. While recent volumes are indexed in the *MLA International Bibliography*, the journal's own site is the best place to get content information for all volumes. *Access:* <http://ijoca.com/>.

- **The Comics Journal.** The long-running magazine that takes comics seriously is well regarded for long interviews with creators, regular columns, and critical reviews. The Web site includes excerpts from recent issues and hosts an active message board. An index of the first 142 issues is available (www.english.ufl.edu/comics/scholars/TCJ_Index.html) but not for the 150 issues since then. *Access:* <http://tcj.com>.

Bibliographies

- **Comic Research Bibliography.** Michael Rhode and John Bullough's bibliography contains a vast number of citations to articles on comics and comics themselves, unfortunately it hasn't been updated since 2007 and there are no subjects or abstracts to aid in discovery. Contains a wide variety of source types from newspaper articles on movie adaptations of comics to blog posts to scholarly articles. *Access:* <http://www.rpi.edu/~bulloj/comxbib.html>.

- **ComicsResearch.org: Comics Scholarship Annotated Bibliographies.** Gene Kannenberg's large annotated bibliography covers a wide range of publications about comics as well as information on conferences, organizations, library collections, and more, an invaluable resource. Entries often include citations for reviews of books. *Access:* <http://comicsresearch.org/>.

- **Online Bibliography of Anime and Manga Research.** A bibliography of resources on anime and manga (Japanese comics) that covers publications, presentations, and grey literature and is maintained by librarian Mikhail Koulikov. *Access:* <http://www.corneredangel.com/amwess/academic.html>.

Databases

- **Don Markstein's Toonopedia.** An encyclopedia of cartoon/comic characters. The

entries are often long and detailed, providing character histories, publication information, and creator related details. *Access:* <http://www.toonopedia.com/>.

- **Grand Comic Book Database.** A vast database that indexes comics. Invaluable for information on publications, credits, dates, and more. Cover images are included in many cases. The search interface leaves much to be desired (you can only search on one criterion at a time), but a new version of the databases is apparently in the works. *Access:* <http://www.comics.org/>.

- **Lambiek Comiclopedia.** An encyclopedia of comics artists/creators/cartoonists from across the globe. The entries usually include at least one image. *Access:* <http://lambiek.net/>.

Organizations

- **National Association of Comic Art Educators.** NACAE's Web site is a resource for those who teach comics classes or those interested in comics classes. Included is a directory of comics classes and teachers, as well as schools offering comics programs. For educators, there are syllabi from various teachers and teaching guides for a variety of comics. Of particular relevance to anyone is a handout on comics terminology from comics artists/educators Matt Madden and Jessica Abel. *Access:* <http://www.teachingcomics.org/>.

- **Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association.** The PCA/ACA includes a Comic Art and Comics Area, which puts on programs at the Annual Meeting of the association as well as regional events. *Access:* <http://www.pcaaca.org/>.

Library collections

- **Graphic Novel Subject Guide.** Karen Green, Columbia University's graphic novel librarian, maintains this subject guide on comics and comics-related sources. *Access:* http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eguides/graphic_novels/index.html.

- **Michigan State Libraries Comic Art Collection.** MSU's collection focuses

on published work including pamphlets, books, strips, and journals. The vast collection of U.S. comic books and comics strips is supplemented by international and critical materials. Much of the collection is cataloged in MSU's library catalog as well as in WorldCat. Worth pointing out is the long list of comics research libraries (comics.lib.msu.edu/director/comres.htm). *Access:* <http://comics.lib.msu.edu/>.

- **Ohio State University Cartoon Library and Museum.** OSU's large collection of comic art and artifacts, started with the papers of Milton Caniff and has since grown to include numerous collections and works such as Bill Blackbeard's famed collection of newspaper comic strips and a collection of Will Eisner's work and papers. The Web site includes a digital image database with a plethora of wonderful comics to view as well as digital albums, including a full run of Lyonel Feininger's "Kin-der-kids" pages. *Access:* <http://cartoons.osu.edu/>.

Museums

- **Cartoon Art Museum (San Francisco).** A museum of original art and a research library. *Access:* <http://www.cartoonart.org/>.

- **Centre Belge de la Bande Dessinée (Brussels).** A major museum of comic art, which also houses a large library of comics. *Access:* <http://www.comicscenter.net/en/home>.

- **La Cité Internationale de la Bande Dessinée et de l'Image (Angouleme).** The Web site of a conglomeration of locations in Angouleme, France, including a museum, research library, bookstore, and "house of authors" (residencies, services for artists). The museum is the primary French museum of comic art. *Access:* <http://www.citebd.org/>.

- **Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art (New York).** A small museum in New York City that features regular exhibits and events, including the annual MoCCA Festival, a highlight of the nonmainstream comics scene. *Access:* <http://www.moccany.org/>.

Blogs

- **Journalista.** If you only follow one comics-related blog, then Dick Deppey's Journalista is the one to pick. The single daily post of link blogging tends to hit the highs and lows of news, commentary, reviews, and more. *Access:* <http://tcj.com/journalista/>.

- **New and Improved Comic Book Blog Updates.** If you really want to be on the pulse of comics blogging, this site provides a dynamically updated list of posts from a huge number of comics blogs, rather overwhelming but a good way to discover blogs of interest. *Access:* <http://comicblogupdates.blogspot.com/>.

- **The Comics Reporter.** A major source for news, interviews, commentary, links, and more on all sorts of comics. Tom Spurgeon writes and aggregates his way into being a major hub for goings-on in the comics world. *Access:* <http://comicsreporter.com/>.

Podcasts

- **Comics Studies Podcast.** An irregularly appearing podcast from A. David Lewis, often featuring recorded audio from presentations and panels at various conferences and conventions. *Access:* <http://captionbox.net/podcast/>.

- **Inkstuds.** Robin McConnell's weekly radio show from CTR in Vancouver features hour-long interviews with comics artists and scholars. His archive is large, wide-ranging, and downloadable. *Access:* <http://inkstuds.com/>.

Other

- **Comic Art in Scholarly Writing: A Citation Guide.** Allen Ellis' guide to citing comic art as suggested by the Popular Culture Association. Citing comics has also been a bit tricky and is generally not well-supported by any of the major styles. This provides some helpful guidelines. *Access:* <http://comicsresearch.org/CAC/cite.html>.

- **Enjolrasworld.** A collection of annotations (and links to annotations) for a variety

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of course the place and the people. I already knew my dean and my faculty colleagues. I knew who did what and where to go when I needed help. I didn't have a lot to figure out other than how to feel comfortable in this new role. The differences—I was constantly learning, not only out of need, but as almost a rebirth of my initial interest in the field. I no longer worked five days a week—nothing wrong with that—but I was working harder (and please don't tell my former director) than I had in years. I was learning to communicate in a different way and also learning new priorities. Nothing major here, but I still felt a need to identify my “two cultures.”

Librarians, of course, are not only big on lists but also on research. So I took the next step and researched different types of cultures and forgot the previous culture definitions for the time being. First discovery, I identified four types of cultures (and here I am already struggling to bridge the gap between two) that applied to my situation. And as with everything, nothing is black and white. However, as I studied the four main types I decided to be flexible and creative with the definitions and not try to fit into a predefined slot. This attitude helped a lot.

Book three: The track of a storm

The “clan culture” certainly represented the graduate school. It is stable and internally focused. I felt good about the stability and knew it was possible to try to combine the internal focus with the external focus. The library had represented stability but the focus was definitely

external because of the involvement with the entire university. And then there is *adboocracy*, which can be defined as evolutionary and something that is constantly changing. Well, the evolutionary part certainly describes both the library and the library school; the constantly changing could represent the evolving nature of our field and different classes taught and different students in these classes.

Hierarchy represents stability, which seems to be an element in at least some of the other models but also represented ranking and power, so it turned out to be my least favorite. And then there is *market*, which is external and flexible—sounds like a lot of repetition here doesn't it? The role of a teacher is certainly more flexible than a librarian's set hours, but again this didn't define the external focus.

This is when the storm started to settled. I realized my purpose was to define and explain my change in role. Here is when I decided to create my own culture: culture redux. Now this does not mean I'm bringing back something but it's an attempt to explain an experience. I could look back as most of us do and examine the here and now. I can look at the internal changes by relating them to the external changes. I can see the conflicts between internal and external as an opportunity and this is the main crux of my culture

I'm comfortable with culture redux. It has given me focus and seems to be a fitting end to my tale. The big difference is that it is not imaginary but real. And the other difference is that *A Tale of Two Cities* has 45 chapters. ♪

(“Comic studies” continued from page 576) of comics, with a particular focus on the works of Alan Moore. Access: <http://www.enjolrasworld.com/>.

- **Golden Age Comics.** A great source to download out-of-copyright comics from the so-called “Golden Age” of comics. Most of these comics are out-of-print and expensive, so this is valuable for research into the early years of comic books. Access: <http://goldenagecomics.co.uk/>.

- **Institute for Comics Studies.** The ICS has a number of ongoing and new projects

for the purpose of supporting the field of comics studies, including putting on academic programs, a comics studies calendar and map, and the online publication of “lost works” in comic studies. Access: <http://www.instituteforcomicsstudies.org/index.html>.

- **More than 100 comics-related words in eight languages.** Maintained by Belgian comics scholar Pascal Lefèvre, this page offers a multilingual glossary of comics terms. Access: <http://lefevre.pascal.googlepages.com/morethan100comics-relatedwordsin8languages>. ♪