

**Graphic Novels – The Young Man’s Superhero or the Library’s Contemporary Villain:  
An Illuminatory study into the thoughts and feelings of Young Men when discussing the  
suitability of Graphic Novels in the Library**

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## Abstract

**Background.** The literature reveals that great attention has been paid to graphic novels and other forms of drawn literature and their potential to find a place within the library and education. However, none of the previous studies concerned themselves with the views of young adult males, favouring the views of librarians and young children instead.

**Aims.** The study aimed to investigate the attitudes of working-class and new middle-class young adult males when discussing graphic novels and their potential suitability in the library setting.

**Methods.** The author developed a semi-structured interview guide, based on the topics discussed in previous studies. The interview was performed with 10 young adult male participants from the Sheffield area.

**Results.** The young adult males proved themselves to be competent and enthusiastic readers, as well as having an interest in the medium of drawn literature. All participants strongly felt that drawn literature has a definite place in the library, as well as having the ability to appeal to a wide range of readers and attract more users to the library. The participants showed that they believed drawn literature to be of equal value to written texts and that age and socio-economic class should have no influence over peoples interest in the medium. As well as this, the views and findings of various authors featured in the literature review were further confirmed by the similar views expressed by the young adult males.

## **Chapter 1**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Graphic novels, Comic Books and Manga are all forms of drawn literature which continue to be greatly popular with a wide range of readers. They have found themselves to be the primary focus of several studies and investigations wishing to identify their suitability in the library setting and the education system. However, none of these have concerned themselves with the attitudes that young adult males have towards drawn literature. This study will attempt to change that by illuminating the thoughts and feelings of young adult males with a detailed qualitative study into the attitudes of a small sample.

Comic books have had quite an interesting past, being both enjoyed and despised by large numbers of readers in America, Europe and Japan. Comic book publishers have had great success, with the development of a wide range of independent and corporate publishers and an even wider range of publications and titles. However, comics and their publishers have also found themselves to be the target of moral crusades and scandal. In order to effectively study the thoughts of young males on the medium of drawn literature and the potential they have to become an accepted aspect of the library collection, it was felt that a foundation for thought should be offered in the form of a brief study of the medium itself, a brief history of the topic area, and the challenges and successes that have made comic books and graphic novels what they are today.

### **1.2 - A Brief Study of the Topic Area**

#### **1.2.1 - Comic Book Genres**

Around forty years ago, the mainstream comic book publishers offered an extremely wide range of genres, with every popular taste being catered for. However, at the beginning of the 1960s, the super-hero comic quickly became the most dominant and well-known genre (although other popular genres of the time, like westerns and war comics, continued to sell well). By 1970, the industry had become very homogenous and was dominated by DC and Marvel, the two biggest publishers. Genres like western, war, romance detective and funny comics had practically disappeared, and the super-heroes of DC and Marvel had free reign over the market. Today, thanks to the development of over 100 independent comic book companies, the medium is more diverse than ever before (Lavin, 1998). It is the norm for

comic book dealers, historians and collectors to categorise the comics market into a selection of standard genres. Despite there being no selections that are exactly the same, the certain principal classifications can be agreed upon quite readily. What follows are descriptions of some of the most popular genres of comics/graphic novels that librarians are likely to come across when developing a library collection.

### *Super-Heroes and Super-Heroines*

Costume-clad super-heroes and super-heroines are still, by far, the most popular genre of comic books, as well as being the most recognised by non-comic readers. Classic characters like ‘Superman’ (DC), ‘Batman’ (DC), ‘Spiderman’ (Marvel) and ‘Iron Man’ (Marvel) continue to offer adventure stories to readers in much the same way as they have done for the past 50 years. Their continuing popularity is obvious for all to see, especially with Hollywood producing a large number of big-budget action movies based on the traditional super-hero characters. The genre has evolved over the years, and today super-heroes often go beyond the simple ‘action-driven’ narrative. Super-hero comics offer their fair share of reluctant anti-heroes and dark (almost horror) story arcs appealing to slightly older audiences. This can be seen in titles such as ‘Hellboy’ (Dark Horse) and ‘Deadpool’ (Marvel). Super-heroine comics follow a similar pattern to their super-hero counterparts, with standard examples including ‘Super-girl’ (DC) and ‘Wonder Woman’ (DC). Just as with the anti-heroes of the super-hero comics, super-heroines offer their own “bad-girl” genre. These often portray violent, troubled anti-heroines like ‘Witchblade’ (Image) and ‘Vampirella’ (Harris). This sub-genre emerged in the 1990s and is often popular with female readers, primarily because of the ‘death-wish’ revenge fantasies and particularly strong-willed, independent female protagonists that feature within (Lavin, 1998). However, many young males are also attracted to the books ‘pin-up’ art depicting beautiful young women.

### *Science-Fiction and Fantasy*

In prose fiction, the divisions between science-fiction and fantasy can often become blurred when viewed through the eyes of the lay-person or non-enthusiast. Drawn literature, according to Lavin (1998), is no different in that respect. However, it is important to note here that there are other researchers such as Gunn (2006) and Horner (2006) who have paid close attention to the definitions and differences between the genres, as we will later see. Heroic fantasy (often featuring lost lands and dinosaur enemies) has been popular for quite

some time, and that is still the case, as can be seen with titles such as 'Turok: Dinosaur Hunter' (Acclaim). Fantasy comics offer one of the richest and most diverse genres available today, with sword and sorcery comics like 'Conan' (Dark Horse) and 'Red Sonja' (Dynamite) (both based on Robert E. Howards pulp fiction of the 1920s) enjoying the attention of devout and enthusiastic followers. Tolkein-esque mythical fantasy is also available and continues to be extremely popular. One of the most popular categories of the science-fiction comic is the licensed adaptation from movies and television programmes. 'Star Wars' (Dark Horse) and 'The X-Files' (Topps) are among some of the most popular examples of these. As well as this, there are several independent companies creating new and original science-fiction worlds, with a particular focus on traditional sci-fi adventure and space-opera (Lavin, 1998).

### Manga

There are those, like Lavin (1998), who would class Manga as science-fiction, due to a large number of stories utilising futuristic and dystopian themes. However, even Lavin (1998) admits that Manga is really a genre of its own. Manga comics and graphic novels are drawn in the highly distinctive style of Japanese artwork found in Anime (a particularly popular form of Japanese animation). Over recent years, the Manga genre has enjoyed a massive surge in popularity, both on the screen and in book form. The most interesting thing about the genre is its diversity. In that respect it acts more as a medium (like graphic novels as a whole), because it can cater for any taste. Both children and adults of both sexes are offered a wide array of comics and novels which often cannot be placed in any one genre. Fantasy, science-fiction (often of a politically though-provoking and dystopian nature), horror and war are all on offer. Erotica (known as Hentai) is also covered in the Japanese style. However, this has the potential to be mistaken for normal Manga, and may slip through the net if close attention is not paid to the selection process.

### Horror

Traditional Monster and Horror comics suffered greatly during the censorship movement in the McCarthy era of America. By far the most successful publisher of the genre was E.C. Comics who published the now legendary 'Tales of the Crypt'. Unfortunately the controversy that surrounded them in the 1950s put an end to their distribution, but today horror comics are once again on the rise (Lavin, 1998). The supernatural would seem to be an especially popular theme for young adults and the publisher, Gemstone, was responsible for

re-issuing most of the traditional 1950s horror comics in the late 1990s. There are also companies who continue to release original titles, including Swamp Thing (Vertigo/DC), Werewolf by Night (Marvel) and Man-Thing (Marvel).

### **1.2.2 - Comic Book Appeal**

In an attempt to offer a Comic Book Guide for Librarians, Lavin (2001) has identified where the appeal of comics lies and why young adults find it such an interesting and pleasurable medium. Firstly, Lavin (2001) discusses the theme of 'action'. This is a theme that seems to feature heavily in most comics. Readers are offered a large degree of dramatic conflict and heroic adventure by comics and many young minds find this very appealing (Lavin, 2001). This 'action and adventure' is conveyed differently in a comic book when compared to more accepted written literature. Instead of large amounts of text, powerful images are used. The best and most respected comics are produced by skilled artists, who combine their dramatic artwork and memorable images with strong emotional appeal (Lavin, 2001). Comics also deal with certain themes and story arcs that many be considered to be very important by teenagers and young adults. Issues of acceptance, non-conformity, coming of age, prejudice and triumph over adversity are all considered to be themes that feature prominently in young lives (Lavin, 2001). The inclusion of these issues in comic books can be used to explain not only the comics' appeal, but also why young readers find it so easy to relate to some of the outlandish and fantastical characters within them. Lavin (2001) sees a lot of comic book appeal being the result of modern mythology. Mythological stories have been popular for centuries mainly due to a combination of the elements of fantasy/adventure and a strong moral message or learning coming from the actions of the characters. The Super-Hero can be seen as modern mythology and their appeal is no different from that of the Ancient Greek Myths, like Hercules or Perseus (Lavin, 2001). There also seems to be a strong link between comic book readers and creativity. According to Lavin (2001), those young readers with particularly creative minds are naturally drawn to fantasy, science fiction and comics. These genres tend to be their favoured choice of recreational reading as creative minds are easily captivated by well-crafted imaginary worlds (Lavin, 2001). The combination of fantastical elements along with a strong basis on our real world offers the right amount of escapism and real-life meaning.

### **1.2.3 - The Protocols of Graphic Novels**

This link between Science Fiction, Fantasy and Comic Books is an interesting one, and others have been drawn to this area of literacy interest. Gunn (2006) writes about the protocols of Science Fiction. According to Gunn (2006), the conventions of poetry or drama are in themselves separate languages. He names the processes by which one reads those separate languages as “protocols”. Gunn (2006) claims that good reading is a matter of learning these protocols and applying them, with sensitivity and understanding, to the appropriate genre. For example, poetry is not read with the same protocols as an essay or a novel. Further protocols can be found within sub-genres. There are many types of novels, such as the western, horror, crime and romance. Each of these requires the reader to identify the genre then apply the correct protocols. If this is not done or the genre is mis-identified, the reader is likely to misunderstand or misread something (Gunn, 2006). Gunn’s (2006) primary concern is Science Fiction. He believes that Science fiction is subjected to large degree of distaste and negative press because it works differently from other literary categories. It is often seen as “par literature” and is only read by a specific sub-culture (Horner, 2006). However, even though it is often confused with fantasy, science fiction usually attempts to justify its fantasies with grounded scientific theory. This changes the protocols with which one would read the story and enables the reader to question the story-line differently. It is easy to find numerous examples of this. If a reader was to attempt to read ‘Alice in Wonderland’ as if it were a science fiction novel, the reader would end up asking a series of sceptical questions about how Alice managed to become so tall when she grew, where the mass came from and how her bones still managed to support her (Gunn, 2006). All of these are inappropriate questions because they are not part of the protocols of fantasy. Equally, if someone were to read science fiction without asking sceptical questions, the reader would miss the most important aspect of the genre; the fact that it creates a fictional world out of the factual science of our world (Gunn, 2006). It is not enough to know how to read, but a reader must also learn the questions in a particular genre, the assumptions they work on and world they exist in. Horner (2006) notes that, if this is true with science fiction, then it is most certainly true with graphic novels. Many graphic novels are highly self-referential and often rely on many years of back-story, as well as some being very ambitious and abstract in the way they choose their layout. It is no surprise then that comic books have a reputation for being confusing to read (Horner, 2006). Horner (2006) states that to understand comics, the reader must also understand the protocols associated with it. There

would seem to be a general divide between those who enjoy and understand deciphering a complex array of speech bubble and pictures and those who do not. This is a divide that, Horner (2006) claims, could be due to the rise of video games and the popularity of the internet, which offer a huge variety of visual information. Here the protocols of hypertext and multitasking work to reinforce and teach the process of moving quickly from one image to another seemingly unrelated one in much the same way as one would read a comic book (Horner, 2006).

#### **1.2.4 - The European Appreciation of the Medium**

Salvador Dali claimed that comic books would represent the culture of the years 3794. The figure of his estimate now seems rather off the mark, but it is true to say that he recognised the potential appeal held within the humble comic strip of his day (Birch, 2008). It could be said that the potential hinted at by Dali is now being thoroughly explored by today's modern writers and artists who wish to develop comic books and take them beyond the perception of being a medium for children. This development has been noted by Birch (2008), who sees the artists and writers taking the longer narrative of the graphic novel closer and closer to the more traditionally accepted prose novel. The body of graphic literature available to the public has been growing steadily for the past 20 years with an increasing presence in reviews, literary criticism and university courses all working to raise the profile of the graphic novel (Birch, 2008). The subsequent interest currently being shown by other forms of media is testament to this. Film and television have now famously begun to adapt famous comic book works into blockbuster movies and popular television shows, as well as institutions such as art galleries and museums displaying comic art and allowing those who may once have dismissed comic books to see them differently, as a valid form of art and storytelling (Birch, 2008). However, according to Birch (2008), this current Anglo-American phenomenon is "only playing catch-up to the European appreciation of the medium" (Birch, 2008). In France, there has not been the difficulty in acceptance that has been suffered in the Anglo-American tradition. Since, the early 1960s, French critics and academics have greatly valued the *Bande Dessinee* as a major literary art form. The Angouleme International Comics Festival, in Bordeaux, is now regarded as the most important comic book festival in Europe since being established in 1974.

French graphic novels were developed and written as a complete story before being split-up and serialised for publication in famous French magazines like ‘Tintin’, for example. In order to be published as a graphic novel, the works were collected and formed into a novel representing the full story of all the serialised issues, and sold in much the same way as a Dickens novel in Victorian Britain (Birch, 2008). The disappearance of the famous serialised French format of publication resulted in the medium developing further and publishing such graphic-based original literary works in their own right. This is a trend that is now also taking place (albeit a lot more recently) in the Anglo-American area of the business, as is somewhat evident from the falling sales of monthly comic books and the rapid rise in original graphic novels (Birch, 2008). The earliest examples of British graphic novels followed the French idea of collecting together serialised story arcs. The publisher, Titan, began by collecting together ‘Judge Dredd’ strips and selling them as complete books in book shops, in an attempt to reach an audience that did not normally read comics. The actual term graphic novel was coined by an American, Richard Kyle, in 1964, as an attempt to describe the longer narrative of the French graphic albums. However, production of the American graphic novel did not begin until 1978 with Will Eisner’s “A Contract with God” (Birch, 2008). What Birch (2008) is particularly interested in is why it took the Anglo Americans over two decades to catch up to the Europeans in their appreciation of the graphic medium. Birch (2008) sees the answer in the McCarthy era of America, where comic books, like many other things, were blamed by a paranoid society as being causes of juvenile delinquency and communist thinking. The involvement of one man in particular, Dr. Frederick Wertham M.D., is of great interest to anyone studying drawn literature.

### **1.2.5 - Dr. Frederick Wertham – Comic Book Super-Villain**

According to Coville, the most devastating thing to happen to comic books was the arrival of Dr. Frederick Wertham. Wertham was a highly distinguished psychologist who believed that comic books had a number of negative affects of the children who read them. Wertham went to extreme efforts to have comic books censored and even removed from the shelves, and his attempts to do so have left as lasting impression on the comic book world that still affects comics and their publishers to this day.

The wide-spread success of comic books became especially noticeable after the introduction of 'Superman', whose popularity was immediately noted by the media and parents alike. As a result, comic books soon began to develop a lot of media attention and unfortunately, much of the attention was negative. Coville finds a good example of such negative attention as offered by the 'Chicago Daily News' book reviewer, Sterling North, in the May 8<sup>th</sup> issue of the newspaper in 1941.

“Badly drawn, badly written and badly printed – a strain on the young nervous systems – the effects of these pulp-paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant... their hypodermic injection of sex and murder make the child impatient with better, though quieter, stories. Unless we want a coming generation even more ferocious than the present one, parents and teachers throughout America must band together to break the 'comic' magazine.”

This kind of opinion, expressed in the popular media, began to become somewhat common-place and soon even the larger comic book publishers began to feel under pressure and were forced to take internal action in an attempt to show the public that they were trustworthy. DC (the largest publisher at the time) developed their own editorial board in 1941. This was an attempt on their part to show both parents and the media that their comics maintained the standards of traditional entertainment and did not work to corrupt the youth of America (Coville). Impressively, the editorial boards showed evidence of thoughtfulness in their formation as members included psychiatrists, child welfare experts and a few well-respected citizens. It soon became the norm to print the names of the board members on the inside cover of each comic book. As a result of these internal efforts, some of the pressure of the media-fuelled crusade against the comic publishers began to be relieved. Unfortunately, this relief did not last very long (Coville). In 1946, the psychologist Dr. Frederick Wertham founded his clinic for underprivileged people. After a while he soon noticed the enthusiasm with which many of the children, who attended the clinic, read comic books, and he became interested in the effects that reading such literature was having upon the children. By 1948, Wertham brought his belief about comics into the public eye in an interview in 'Collier's Magazine' sensationally entitled "Horror in the Nursery". As the title suggests, Wertham's view of comic books was very negative and public reaction to this was immediate. There was an uproar about comics with several of America's most popular magazines of the time, such as 'Time Magazine', which published damning articles. Various concerned and conservative public figures stepped forward to offer their concerns about the communist teachings and

sexual discriminations appearing in comics (Coville). Surprisingly, there were even mass public comic book burnings. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1948, the people of Binghamton New York performed a house to house collection of all the comics in the area and gathered in the street for a public burning.

The most devastating effects for the comic book publishers would come in 1954 when Dr. Wertham's book "The Seduction of the Innocent" was published. Here, Wertham claimed that his studies with children found that comic books were a major cause of juvenile delinquency. All the deviant and delinquent children that Wertham spoke to were found to be comic book readers. According to Wertham, this meant that the comic books were a major factor, if not even a cause, of deviance and delinquency. However, it is now believed that Wertham's findings were based on the notion of guilt by association (Coville). Apparently most American children in the 1940s and 50s read comic books; both the deviant and the well-behaved. However, Dr. Wertham went further than mere delinquency. According to him, comic books gave children confusing non-truths about the laws of physics (mainly because Superman could fly, and in reality this was impossible). Wertham further claimed that comics both implemented and re-enforced homosexuality in young children, mainly due to the close relationship shared by the two male characters of Batman and Robin (who were often drawn with bare legs that were wide open). It was also noted that the strong female character of Wonder Woman was responsible for giving young girls the wrong impression about a woman's place in society (Coville). "The Seduction of the Innocent" caused a U.S. Senate investigation into comic books and the relationship they had with juvenile delinquents. The Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Senator Estes Kefauver, formed a special Subcommittee to investigate juvenile delinquency. As part of the investigation, the subcommittee held a series of hearings on the topic of comic books and juvenile delinquency in the months of April and June of 1954 (Lavin, 2001). Dr. Wertham testified at the hearings alongside other prominent experts on child deviance, the representatives of the larger comic companies, some advertisers and distributors and the representatives of the National Cartoonist Society. Dr. Wertham had a great deal of experience testifying in front of government committees and most of the representatives of the comic companies were business men who seemed to know very little about the editorial process and the content of comic books. An exception to this was William Gaines, the Publisher of E.C. Horror Comics (whose 'Tails of the Crypt' publication suffered greatly in the media-fuelled moral panic), who stated his side very well and was able to offer good information about his comics due to

his hands- on approach to publishing. The senate report concluded that despite many of Wertham's claims being seemingly exaggerated or unfounded (given his lack of research studies), legalised censorship should be used to control the content of various comics (especially horror and crime comics), as well as some of the advertising appearing in a majority of the books (Lavin, 2001). Even though the Senate committee noticed that Wertham's theories were based purely on juvenile delinquents and not performed in a complete and controlled environment (thus massively decreasing the validity and generalisability of his findings), they advised that the comic companies must embrace stronger censorship by developing a strict and competent self-policing policy within the industry (Coville). The result was the birth of the Comics Code Authority (CCA).

### **1.2.6 - The Comics Code Authority**

The Comics Code Authority (CCA) was officially established in 1954 and has spent the last five decades acting as the comic book industry's body of self-regulation when considering the portrayal of sex, violence and anti-social activity in American comic books (Lavin, 2001). The CCA and its method of self-censorship are administered by the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA). This is a trade organisation, whose members are comprised of America's largest comic book distributors and publishers. The CCA is based on a set of guidelines developed by the CMAA and all the publishers who are members of the organisation must agree to abide by the terms of the Code, as well as submit each issue of their comic books to the authority for their approval before they can be published (Lavin, 2001). The job of the CMAA staff is to study every panel of text and artwork hoped to be included in the submitted comic book issues to ensure that they comply with the Code's guidelines. If any material is deemed unsuitable by the staff, it is returned to the publishers with comments explaining the decisions that have been made and why the objectionable material may not be included. The publishers can then choose to edit or censor the content in question and re-submit the issue to be checked again. Once a comic book has been approved by the CMAA's Code Administrator, the publisher can put the CCA Seal on the cover of their comic and send it to be published (Lavin, 2001).

The CCA's original content was intended to promote "good taste and decency". It included 41 provisions which covered the areas of sex, horror, nudity, crime and violence, as

well as including a separate section restricting publishers from including adverts that showed products that were of a harmful nature to the young, such as gambling devices, alcoholic beverages, tobacco and sex manuals. The code also disallowed the portrayal of authority figures, such as the police and government, in a negative manner. Further ruling inclined that women should only be drawn realistically, with no exaggerated anatomy, and divorce should never be dealt with humorously in a comic book (Lavin, 2001). However, it must be noted that the Code has been revised several times since its creation to ensure that the language has been modified and the provisions have been relaxed in order to keep in with current sensibilities, concerns and values. For many years, most comic book publishers abided by the rules of the Code and submitted their works for approval. There was a time when it was practically impossible to sell a comic that didn't bear the Code Seal on its cover, as wholesalers and newsagents would not distribute comics without a seal. However, since the beginning of the 1980s, all this began to change. Many publishers have stopped submitting their work to the Comics Code Authority, mainly due to the shift into the 'direct-market' (Lavin, 2001). Most comics are now sold through speciality retailers, such as comic book stores, as opposed to the previous retailers being simply newsstands and mass-merchandisers. Today only three comic publishers (Marvel, DC, and Archie) continue to abide by the code.

### **1.2.7 - The Comics Campaign Council and British Comics**

In the United Kingdom, the Reverend Marcus Morris created 'The Eagle' (1950) and 'Girl' (1951) as an inoffensive means of tackling the juvenile delinquency of American comics by offering a wholesome British alternative to the medium. However, in post-war Britain, there were not really that many American comics available, although some arrived as ballast in ships (Birch, 2008). Even though this was the case, in 1952 the National Union of teachers felt the need to begin a campaign against comics. In 1953, the Comics Campaign Council was formed and their goal was censorship (Birch, 2008). Despite the fact that the Children's Department of the Home Office concluded that there was very little evidence to show that crime may be caused or influenced by reading comics, the Children and Young Persons Harmful Publications Act was passed in 1955. Censorship of this degree told Comic publishers that they were not for adults and this in turn resulted in the long-standing British belief that they are only for children (Birch, 2008).

### **1.2.8 - A Librarians Concerns**

As may be expected, with the controversial history of comic books and graphic novels, there are some Librarians who may have some concerns about the inclusion of such materials in their collections. Lavin (2001) has noted this, and has identified some of the major concerns that Librarians may share when considering whether to add comic books to their lending services. The first concern makes reference to the fear that parents and community members will object to comics being in the library. Lavin (2001) notes that this is a widespread concern, but he claims that fear over the matter is completely unfounded. More often than not, Public and School librarians who form a comic book collection will undoubtedly be pleasantly surprised by the lack of complaints from parent, teachers, board members and administrators alike. Rather, the most likely scenario is to experience the complete opposite of any complaints (Lavin, 2001). Large comic book collections can generate a large degree of positive publicity for libraries. A comic book collection can serve as a strong focal point for young people and acts as a good means of enabling young adult programming. Guest speakers, discussion groups and regular swap meetings (where comic enthusiasts can meet up and trade books between themselves) can be likely occurrences in a library that has made a name for itself as being 'young adult friendly'. However, despite this, the issue of selecting age-appropriate material is always present. The selection of age-appropriate comics and ensuring that library users are aware of the varying degree of suitability can be challenging and librarians must be prepared to deal with any censorship issues that may arise (Lavin, 2001). The second common concern shared by many librarians deals with unsuitability. Many librarians may fear that comic books will be seen merely as 'junk literature' and are entirely unsuitable for the library environment. As with most popular culture, the majority of comic books usually represent 'light entertainment', but there are those cases where particularly poor comics are no more than 'junk literature'. However, it is rather easy to identify these junk cases and avoid them. It is also important to note that there is nothing wrong with including light entertainment in the library collection. This gentle escapism can appeal greatly to young people and any librarians who object to 'light entertainment' would be shocked to discover how much of their written literature they may have to remove on that basis (Lavin, 2001). Many graphic novels represent serious works of fiction and are worthy of serious attention despite the presence of the more 'bubble-gum' offerings made by some publishers. Lavin states,

“For every ten titles like “Vampirella versus Lady Death”, comic book publishers manage to produce at least one outstanding title such as “Maus: A Survivors Tale”.” (Lavin, 2001)

A further librarians’ concern would arise when considering the content of the comic books. Given the controversial past of the medium, many have been led to believe that comics feature predominantly violent stories, with themes such as sexism, anti-social behaviour and a variety of other inappropriate messages. However, it is the case that the majority of comic books, especially the traditional (and most popular) super-hero variety, make it their aim to portray positive messages, such as using one’s powers to help the disadvantaged, being the best one can be, and valuing perseverance (Lavin, 2001). Icons such as Superman, Wonder Women and Spiderman have spent the last five decades acting as positive role models for both sexes. However, it is very important to understand that many of today’s comics do offer some material that will not be suitable for younger children. Strong language, extreme violence, sexual activity and a disrespect for authority feature heavily in some of the more alternative and adult-orientated titles on the market. As with any other collection-building, it is up to the librarian to study, understand and choose the appropriate material for their community or the particular audience they wish to appeal to (Lavin, 2001). Finally, Lavin notes that some librarians may worry that comic book issues are not only too fragile for the library, but may also be prone to theft. It is true that physical comics may be easily damaged, but this can be avoided (or the process can be slowed down) by treating the comics like other periodical publications. Monthly periodical journals are cared for simply by keeping them on a current browsing collection and covering them with plastic magazine covers. Also, given the low subscription prices of monthly comic books, their cost-per-circulation ratio can be extremely favourable for libraries. As for theft, it is true that collectors and enthusiasts regard comics so highly that they may be tempted to steal, especially if some of the issues in the library collection are particularly rare or desirable. However, rare comics only have worth to a collector if they are in mint (entirely undamaged) condition. By simply defacing the cover or stamping the library mark on the front, any would-be thieves will be deterred (Lavin, 2001).

## **Chapter 2**

### **2.1 - Literature Review**

When discussing graphic novels and their potential role in the library setting, it is important to study the previous research which has been done in the area. There has been an array of studies focusing on graphic novels performed in recent years, with particular attention being given to librarians' attitudes towards comic books and the influencing factors on library stock management when graphic novels are being considered. However, by far the most common subjects of study when discussing graphic novels and comics are concerned with the educational potential of the medium, and the attitudes and choices of children.

Ujiie and Krashen (1996) were interested in the reading habits of seventh grade boys, with particular focus on reader enjoyment, recreational reading and the link that these may have with comic books. Ujiie and Krashen (1996) believed that comic book reading, contrary to popular belief, does not replace the reading of other types of literature. They claimed that comic book readers, in general, read as much (if not more) written and prose literature as non-comic book readers, and this would act as the hypotheses for their study. Ujiie and Krashen (1996) went on to claim that to their knowledge, all previous studies of comic book reading had been performed on middle class children, and for this reason they intended to focus on the attitudes of children from two different schools, both of which were of a different socio-economic class; one being middle class and the other being working class. This was done, they claim, to determine the extent to which comic book reading varies between the two classes whilst they focused on recreational reading habits.

In terms of methodology, Ujiie and Krashen (1996) used two samples of children (of both sexes). 302 seventh graders from a low socio-economic class school near Los Angeles participated, as well as 269 seventh grade students from a wealthier school in the suburbs of Los Angeles. All the children were given the same questionnaire to complete, in which they were asked a series of 'tick-box' style questions about their reading habits. Topics covered included the children's frequency of recreational reading, whether they enjoyed reading, if they read comic books and if they read normal books. It is from this questionnaire that the results were gathered in a statistical form. Ujiie and Krashen (1996) state that their results showed that it was boys (from both of the schools) who were most involved in the reading of comic books. They found that almost half the girls in both samples claimed to never read

comic books, and those who did said it was rare for them to do so. Ujiie and Krashen (1996) also stated that there was no significant difference in the frequency of comic book reading between the two schools. Children in the poorer school (Chapter 1) reported just as much comic book reading as their more affluent counterparts (Chapter 2). This would lead one to believe that class is not an issue when comic books are concerned. However, it was identified that the Chapter 1 boys were not reading as much in general as the boys from the middle class school. Despite this, Ujiie and Krashen (1996) further claim that comic book readers from the Chapter 1 schools still read a lot more than any Chapter 1 peers who did not read comics.

Millard and Marsh (2001) have also performed a study where both the reading attitudes and the socio-economic class of the children involved were prevalent factors. Millard and Marsh (2001) noted that comic books do indeed have a wide appeal, especially when considering the reading tastes of younger children and those with little motivation to read. The pair believe that the appeal of comics and the interests of working class children in particular are denied by the school library lending service. This is due to the common selection of books that a school library offers. Millard and Marsh (2001) claim that school library books are part of a canon of established children's literature or just part of a published reading scheme and that this should not be the case. The books on offer represent the 'cultural capital' of schooled literacy, which work to portray the norms, values and beliefs of the dominant classes (Millard and Marsh, 2001). Comic books do not represent these beliefs, but act as something which children will find much more appealing. It is true that comics do not reflect the realities of the children's communities, due to their often outlandish storylines, but it is also important to note that the traditional books that harbour the ideologies of the ruling classes do not offer the children any realities either (Millard and Marsh, 2001). However, comics are far more likely to contain references to the television programmes, films, video games and popular music that the children are familiar with. In this sense, Millard and Marsh (2001) claim that comics are located much more firmly in the world experienced by working class children. For these reasons, it was decided that a study would be performed to examine the reactions to a home-school comic lending library based in three primary school classrooms.

In terms of methodology, the study took place over seven weeks. 69 children (34 girls and 35 boys) from three classes acted as the sample and the children came from a diverse selection of ethnic backgrounds, including; African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Chinese,

English, Irish, Pakistani and Somali families. A comic lending library was set up in each of the three classrooms and the children were allowed to borrow one comic a week over the seven week period. The children were then all interviewed (either individually or in focus groups) by a researcher who was well known to them. All interviews, although structured, were informal and follow-up questions were used to clarify the children's interests (Millard and Marsh, 2001). The results of the study, once transferred into statistical form, seemed to be quite positive. Almost all of the boys interviewed (97%) claimed that they preferred borrowing comic books as opposed to normal books. Interestingly, 91% of the girls interviewed agreed with this. 86% of the children stated that they found the stories in comics more appealing than the stories in normal books and 90% of the children said they found comics easier to read. It is these results that lead Millard and Marsh (2001) to claim that there is evidence that comics and materials from popular culture have an appeal that draws in non-traditional support for literacy development.

Arlin and Roth (1978) have performed a study with a specific focus on children's use of time while reading. They set themselves the goal of investigating two specific areas of this subject. Firstly, they wished to identify the factors that were associated with time spent on-task while reading, as well as time spent on-reading. This means that they wished to know what affected the amount of actual reading time spent and the amount of time spent not reading by children who had been told to read during a particular time period. In order to do this, the pair investigated one stimulus variable (comic books vs. normal written books) and two learner variables (reading level and reading attitude). Secondly, Arlin and Roth (1978) wished to know if the time spent on-task while reading could be associated with any comprehension gains. This required an investigation of the relation between two measures of on-task reading behaviour and gain in reading comprehension. Arlin and Roth (1978) hypothesised that comics would increase the 'time-on-task', but would, in turn, decrease 'time-on reading'. They suggested that comic books are very interesting to children and as a result this would be bound to increase their time-on-task. There is a considerable degree of novelty and visual complexity in comic books and viewers must constantly locate words in new places, as well as each page containing a variety of pictures conveying different details (Arlin and Roth, 1978). Arlin and Roth (1978) claimed that this mixture of interest and visual complexity will draw children to comic books and will result in them spending a lot of time-on-task. However, they claimed that books, with their pages filled with written words, are much more likely to ensure that the children experience more time-on-reading. Normal

written books not only feature a lot more words, but also do not include the complex and interesting visual distractions that one finds in comic books (Arlin and Roth, 1978).

The methodology of the study involved participant observation. 42 pupils from two third grade public school classes from an upper middle class section of Vancouver acted as the sample. Within each of the two classrooms, the pupils were randomly told to read either a comic or a standard book during their regularly scheduled daily 20-minute free reading period. The pupils had 125 comics and 130 books to choose from. The researchers made it their purpose to observe each pupil for one period a week, every week, for nine weeks. On-task behaviour was determined by observing each pupil for five seconds. If any of this time was spent not looking at the comic or book it was counted as 'time-off-task' (Arlin and Roth, 1978). A more subjective inference was required to judge time-on-reading. Firstly, the researcher was required to observe a child spending time-on-task, and only then were they able to infer whether the child was actually reading or not by looking for any indicating signs. The children were still at the age where many of them moved their lips or moved their fingers along under the words whilst reading, so these actions were used as the indicators for time-on-reading (Arlin and Roth, 1978). In terms of results, the pair claimed that the statistics they gained confirmed that time-on-reading was significantly higher for written books. They also stated that their studies shows that time-on-reading was positively affected by higher reading ability, as children with a higher ability spent more time-on-reading for both comics and normal books. Interestingly, Arlin and Roth (1978) claimed that children who could read well spent an equal amount of time-on-reading for comics and books alike, children with a poor reading ability spent far less time-on-reading with comics than they did with normal books. This led them to believe that comics are not as good for reader development as normal books which enabled the poor readers to read more.

Like Arlin and Roth (1978), Worthy (1998) is also concerned with the effects that literary choices have on children, although her study does not deal specifically with comics. Worthy (1998) believes that offering children the books they want to read may in fact aid their reader development. Worthy (1998) performed a case study on two middle school reluctant readers (one of which being her son) after hearing them talk passionately about books. Worthy (1998) states that she had been told by her sons reading teacher that he was a reluctant reader, which is why she was so surprised to hear the two boys engaging in a spontaneous, informal and self-directed conversation about reading, akin to the conversations

that adults would have at work or over the dinner table. The book that the two boys were talking about was ‘Cycle of the Werewolf’ (King, 1983), which is a book that would never be considered for use in the classroom, primarily due to its violent and horror-themed content (Worthy, 1998). Worthy (1998) saw the importance in the conversation between her son and his friend because it highlighted the fact that although they were both labelled as reluctant readers as far as curriculum books were concerned. They both, however, showed a passion for reading.

Worthy (1998) notes that research about reading attitudes and voluntary reading have shown that there is a steady decline in reading levels as children progress through school, and that negative attitudes towards reading become especially noticeable in the middle and high schools years. However, Worthy (1998) claims that despite these findings, there are researchers who believe that children and adolescents often do a lot more reading than is noticed. This acted as the hypotheses for the case study she was to perform. In a series of interviews and conversation observations with the two boys, Worthy (1998) came to some intriguing conclusions. It would seem that the reading habits of adolescents are primarily affected by their own tastes. Worthy (1998) notes how genre, author, title and the physical features of the book (like, book length and cover appearance) are the major influencing factors on whether the book is of interest or not. It was also found that the two boys had developed intense interests in reading, but none of the books they wanted to read were covered in the classroom. This worked to create the impression that the boys were reluctant readers and under-achievers. It would seem that student-preferred material, such as light fiction, magazine, comics, horror and satire, are often deemed unsuitable by the school curriculum (Worthy, 1998). What Worthy (1998) suggests is that teachers must harness the interests of young readers and work to expand and develop them in an attempt to include high quality and critically accepted literature. To put this in the specific context of the graphic novel; teachers may be able to positively affect reader development by strengthening the links between their curriculum resources and the graphic novels that so greatly interest young readers, as children are far more likely to read something that is of interest to them.

Schwarz (2006) is a researcher who has focused specifically on the educational potential of drawn literature . Her work was not performed or presented in the form of scientific study as seen in the previous studies, but never-the-less she has identified some interesting points. Schwarz (2006) offers a rationale for the educational use of graphic novels

based on the current need for students to become effective users of multiple literacies by highlighting several appropriate titles and offering some classroom strategies. She has researched a variety of texts and sources that focus on the medium, and has identified a large number of instances where graphic novels have been used effectively in the classroom environment. According to Schwarz (2006), graphic novels are able to offer English teachers the opportunity to involve all their students in the exploration of a medium that offers more than traditional literary sources. Firstly, graphic novels can be seen as being helpful in the promotion of traditional literary values (Schwarz, 2006). Graphic novels seem to have become a good way of getting reluctant readers to enjoy reading because of the great interest that the medium offers to them. Schwarz (2006) also claims that educators have begun to endorse the use of graphic novels as a new and interesting alternative means for students to learn and analyse traditional literary conventions such as character development, dialogue, language structures, satire and writer development. Further interest is drawn from the recognition that both traditional and alphabetical literacy, as well as literacies such as visual, information and media literacy can be covered in class with assistance from the graphic novel (Schwarz, 2006). The medium combines the visual and the verbal, just like television and films. However, unlike films, the graphic novel remains still and allows special and close attention to be given to its combined word and visual arrangement. Due to this, in order to read and interpret graphic novels effectively and appropriately, classroom pupils must pay attention not only to the traditional literary features of plot, dialogue and character, but they must also take into account a variety of visual elements such as colour, shading, panel layout, perspective and even the font used for the lettering (Schwarz, 2006). Schwarz (2006) states that her research has shown her that both scholars and teachers are becoming increasingly aware that our modern and media-dominated society has put new requirements on the education system. A single traditional literacy (the reading and writing of the printed word) may be as equally important as it has ever been, but it is no longer sufficient in conveying all the skills that will be required by modern students as they enter a world which is heavily influenced by multiple literacies and multi-media. Today's young people have to read films, television programmes, magazines and, most importantly, the internet (Schwarz, 2006). Also fictional works, the factual stories of our cultures and even practical information are presented to us in a variety of media formats and in order to develop a sufficient level of comprehension, classroom pupils must be taught the skills to deal with this variety of formats. Given the afore-mentioned word and visual arrangement employed by graphic

novels, Schwarz (2006) claims that they can act as the ideal educational medium for the teaching of the skills required by young people in the age of the World Wide Web.

However, although the graphic novel harbours the ability to aid the teaching of multiple literacies, Schwarz (2006) was also able to identify a number of challenges and obstacles presented by the medium that teachers must overcome if they are to effectively harness the educational value of drawn literature. Firstly, it is often the case that anything new which is introduced to the education system will face resistance (Schwarz, 2006). This is especially the case when popular culture is involved. Understanding the selection of graphic novels and finding appropriate ones is also a concern for teachers, just as Lavin (2001) stated when discussing Librarians concerns. Not all graphic novels are appropriate for the classroom, and even some of the most regarded books can contain sex and violence. The use of graphic novels as an educational tool will require teachers to seek permission from parents and their teaching superiors as well as presenting them with a rationale for the use of particular titles (Schwarz, 2006). Secondly, Schwarz (2006) discusses the complications caused by the alignment of curriculum and standardised testing. Graphic novels currently do not feature in any official tests. As well as this, new literacies may not have been considered for testing let alone the graphic novels as a medium for teaching them. Finally, Schwarz (2006) notes that teachers themselves will have to study if they want their information about multiple literacies to have any academic worth. The themes of media literacy and critical literacy are often not familiar concepts, so teachers must first fully understand what these new skills that they wish to teach actually are, as well as identifying the specific graphic novels that will be of use to them in doing so (Schwarz, 2006).

As we have seen, several studies have been performed with a specific focus on education and the attitudes, beliefs and tastes of young children. At this point it is important to note that studies have also been performed with a focus on the attitudes of librarians. One such example of this is the work of Horner (2006), who made it her goal to investigate librarians' attitudes when regarding graphic novels. Horner (2006) sees graphic novels as part of the "pulp" fiction group of literature alongside genres such as science fiction, horror and romances. According to her, the debate of the role of pulp fiction in the library setting has two main arguments that are separate, but not always easy to distinguish from one another. The first of these is concerned with the classification of pulp fiction. It must be decided whether pulp fiction can be classed as having any literary worth (Horner, 2006). Secondly,

the role of libraries must also be considered. It must also be decided whether libraries are to act specifically as institutions of high culture (with the aim of public education) or whether they should be equally guided by the public's literary tastes and desires (Horner, 2006). According to Horner (2006), this debate has been at the centre of librarianship for the past century, but the last few decades have seen a shift towards a more 'all-inclusive' perspective as far as literature is concerned, with popular series-fiction and graphic novels becoming more accepted in adolescent and young adult collections. Horner (2006) recognises that graphic novels in particular occupy a rather precarious place in both libraries and the field of literature as a whole. It is acknowledged that reluctant male readers will often enjoy reading many comic book issues; however, others believe that comic books actually offer no literary value what-so-ever (Horner, 2006).

In order to shed some light on the debate over the place of pulp fiction and, more specifically, graphic novels in the library, Horner (2006) decided to investigate the attitudes of librarians in the American state of North Carolina. The methodology used consisted primarily of interviews performed with seven librarians who were involved with youth services and collection development. What Horner (2006) found was that all of the libraries she visited had at least a small graphic novel collection, and none of the interviewed librarians stated outright that comic books did not have a place in the library. According to Horner (2006) the most negative responses were merely a form of suspicious acceptance or slight doubt, but neither of these prevented the librarians from selecting graphic novels. When asked if libraries should form large and extensive collections of graphic novels, Horner (2006) found that most responses were also positive. This was due, in part, to the librarians' beliefs that their job was to respond to patrons' demand and encourage library use. Librarians who thought that these goals would be fulfilled by extensive graphic novel collections saw a definite reason for the development of large collections (Horner, 2006). The most common responses were regarding the encouragement of library use. Several of the participants noted that it was increasingly difficult to get young males to read recreationally or visit the library and they believed that graphic novels may hold a solution to this (Horner, 2006). Interestingly, one participant claimed that the inclusion of more Manga in the collection would probably attract more sophisticated readers, because they are harder to read and offer more of a challenge to those who prefer drawn literature. Horner (2006) found that another common reason supporting the collection of graphic novels was their popularity. All the librarians interviewed claimed that young patrons were very interested in graphic novels and

that they regularly got requests or questions about certain titles. However, when questioned about the literary worth of drawn literature, Horner (2006) noticed that reactions became much more uncertain which some participants were reluctant to answer. This seemed to be mainly due to either lack of experience with the medium or a hesitancy to take a stand against the common belief that some reading materials just have more literary value than others (Horner, 2006). Horner's (2006) study shows some very intriguing results. It would seem that although librarians accept the popularity of graphic novels and comics, as well as accepting that they entice younger patrons into the library, they remain hesitant when discussing the literary worth of a reading material that they may not fully understand.

It would seem, from Horner's (2006) results that Librarians' personal tastes have an affect on what they deem suitable for a library collection. This links in well with the work of Cole (2000) who performed a study on the influence of librarians' attitudes on the availability of materials in public libraries. Cole (2000) does not concern herself directly with graphic novels or comic books, but her research may be of some interest when we note Horner's (2006) claims that a librarians personal preferences may have an affect on the potential for an extensive graphic novel collection. Cole (2000) focused on the factors that affect stock management, but also showed particular interest in the library's consideration of the role of intellectual freedom and the effects that personal attitudes have on the availability of materials whose subjects and content conflict with any strong personal views. According to Cole (2000), a democratic and civilised society thrives when its citizens have access to all types of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity. This is a direct reference to intellectual freedom and Cole (2000) wished to see how far this view was represented in the public library.

The primary method used by Cole (2000) was that of in-depth interviews performed on a sample of 24 librarians, 10 elected council members and 42 library users. According to Cole (2000), most respondents claimed that they did not believe that library stock management should be carried out according to the values and principle of intellectual freedom. She found that instead, they believed that factors such as policies of the local council and a consideration of local community values should take precedence when choosing books for the library (Cole, 2000). As well as these, factors such as the influence of the local media, librarians' personal beliefs and the influence of the political climate are responsible for governing the choices made during the stock selection process much more

than the idealistic view of intellectual freedom. Cole (2000) claims that most of the responses given by the sample she interviewed offered answers of a rather 'contradictory' nature. Most of the librarians questioned recognised the importance of intellectual freedom and its application in the library setting, yet at the same time they acknowledged a need for their own tastes and the external pressures of the council and media to take the most important role in the selection process. Cole's (2000) findings may have important implications when considering the role of graphic novels and comic books in the library. As we have seen through the work of Lavin (2001) and Birch (2008), comics have had a controversial past. If the controversy has left any lasting impressions on the affecting factors identified by Cole (2000), then the widespread acceptance of graphic novels, on a level equal to the acceptance of 'normal' written literature may be difficult to achieve.

## **Chapter 3**

### **3.1 - Methodology**

#### **3.1.1 - The aim of the study**

The first and most important issue when designing a study is the choice of subject matter (Morton-Williams, 1985). It was decided that the graphic novel was to be the primary focus of the research. Without the study and presentation of any existing knowledge on the topic, it is difficult to identify whether information offered by a new piece of research is new or of any use (Walker, 1985). For this reason it was decided that it was important to perform a thorough investigation into any existing research that had been performed with graphic novels as the focus. Once the related literature had been thoroughly studied, it was noticed that some detailed and well-structured research had been performed in the area of comic books and graphic novels. However, it was interesting to see that most of this had been performed with librarians' attitudes, young children's preferences and educational values in mind. Graphic novels and comics are at the centre of a culture that features heavily in the lives of young adult males. They are often seen as the main audience for the medium and it was decided that the research study would be performed with this group in mind. Therefore it was decided that the sample used to gather the results for the study would consist of young adult males between the age of 18 and 25 years old.

#### **3.1.2 - Choosing a method**

According to both Kvale (1996) and Walker (1985), qualitative research is more sensitive to the study of human situations. Forms of qualitative research involve the study of empathic dialogue and can be a powerful method of capturing the experiences of individuals as well as identifying the reasons behind their actions (Kvale, 1996). It is claimed that qualitative research lends itself well to the study of the thoughts and feelings of participants, and in particular, interviews can be used to allow subjects to convey to the researcher their own perspective, using their own words (Kvale, 1996). The purpose of this study was to research the thoughts and feelings of young males, so it was decided that the use of qualitative research was the most suitable means of doing so. Interviews of a semi-structured nature were chosen to be the exact method that would be used. Structured interviews lend themselves well to the analysis of information gathered from a number of subjects. This is because they ensure that all participants experience the same form of interview. The effecting

variables that would be experienced by performing interviews of a different nature on several participants would affect the validity and generalisability of the research results (Kvale, 1996). However, structured interviews lack any spontaneity. Individual human beings differ greatly, and they often act differently in interview situations and reply differently to certain questions. Therefore, it was decided that the interviews should be of a semi-structured nature, as they will maintain their validity, yet at the same time, will offer the potential for spontaneity and variance if it is deemed necessary during the actual interview process (Walker, 1985).

### **3.1.3 - Selecting a Sample**

A common concern when designing an interview-based study comes from the sample selection process, particularly the size of the sample. A noticeable critique of qualitative interviews is that their findings are not generalisable because they feature too few subjects (Kvale, 1996). However, qualitatively speaking, the focus on smaller groups and even single cases make it possible to investigate in detail a variety of specific behaviours and the relationship they share with the human context they are featured in. They allow the researcher to work out the logic of the relationship between the individual and the situation (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale (1996), a common defensive over-reaction when performing an interview-based study is to include a sample which is too large. This is often done with a quantitative presupposition under the impression that a larger sample will make the findings more scientific. However, more often than not, this presupposition works to reduce the quality of the study and its results by reducing the time available for preparation and analysis during the research (Kvale, 1996). As this research is an illuminatory study into the attitudes of a particular group of people, it was identified early-on that the sample would not be large. The aim of the study was not to test any hypothesis, as no assumptions were made about the potential findings. Nor did the study aim to supply a large body of information that could be generalised to a majority of western society. Rather, the results only intended to represent a smaller group within western society, that being young adult males. It was decided that 10 interview participants would suffice for the study, and the detailed qualitative data gained from them could be used effectively in illuminating the attitudes of the specific group. Participants were chosen based on their age. All subjects were between the age of 18 and 24 years old. The age of 18 years is commonly associated with the first year of adulthood,

whereas the age of 25 years acted as a cut-off point. The mid-twenties have commonly been associated with the transition into complete adulthood and the acceptance of a large number of responsibilities shared by a larger number of members of society. The purpose of the research was to interview ‘young’ adult males, so it was decided that any males over the age of 25 years would possess views that may represent the attitudes of purely adult males more. The participants all came from ‘working-class’ and ‘new middle-class’ backgrounds in Yorkshire. ‘New’ middle-class refers to those families that are first generation middle-class because of the achieved status of the parents (those families where the parents have moved on from their own working class backgrounds through higher education and occupational promotion).

### **3.1.4 - Designing the Interview**

The semi-structured nature of the qualitative interviews required a particular design. Firstly, an interview guide was developed (see Appendix 3). An interview guide indicates the topics of the interview and the order in which they are to be covered. The guide can be in the form of a rough list of topics or consist of actual questions intended for use during the interview. It was decided that the semi-structured nature of the interviews used here would require the guide to consist of actual questions. A base list of questions was developed covering all the topics that were of interest to the study.

There are a variety of different types of questions that can be used in an interview study, all of which will be of benefit to the researcher and the dynamics of the interview process. The interview guide used here was created using ‘Introducing Questions’ (see appendix 3). These opening questions often act as the main body of an interview and can yield spontaneous and rich descriptions where the subjects provide what they experience as their answers (Kvale, 1996). However, introducing questions, although allowing the construction of an effective interview guide and possessing the ability to gather detailed qualitative, cannot always be relied upon to act as the whole of the interview. Several other types of questions not featured on the guide may be required to ensure the interviews are effective. This is a testament to the semi-structured nature of the interviews. Structure is present in the interview guide and the premeditated topics that lie behind the introductory questions. However, the use of spontaneous and improvised questions that are not part of the

structured guide will often allow more detail to be gained from interviewees. 'Follow-up Questions' are used when the subjects' answers may be extended as the researcher adopts a curious, persistent and critical attitude. This is done through the direct questioning of what has just been said by the participant. Also, physically nodding or the repeating of specific words used by the subject can be enough to get them to elaborate on their answers for the sake of effective qualitative analysis (Kvale, 1996). Similarly 'probing questions', 'specifying questions' and 'interpreting questions' are used. These also refer to the interviewers attempts to develop on the answers given by either directly questioning answers (probing), by operationalising any general statements that are given (specifying) and by rephrasing answers into related questions to be sure they have been understood properly (interpreting).

The interview began with a series of 'foundation' questions that were used to quickly develop an understanding of what type of reader each participant was. These questions (four in total) were simple in nature but worked effectively to quickly identify the general reading habits of the subjects. The four topics covered by these foundation questions were; reader enjoyment, the amount of reading each participant does, whether they received encouragement in their early years and finally how familiar they are with the medium of drawn literature. Once this had been done, the interview moved on to the primary focus of graphic novels/comic books in libraries and the attitudes that the young males had towards the topic.

The exact nature and direction of the questions was decided by basing them on some of the previous research that was studied, and in turn, featured in the literature review. All the previous research done on the topic of drawn literature offers some very useful findings for anyone involved in the study of graphic novels and comic books. However, as mentioned earlier, none of these studies featured the involvement of young adult males. It was felt that by basing some of the questions featured in this study on the research topics of previous studies, the results would offer some insightful comparisons to any findings based on the behaviours and attitudes of a different sample. For example, the work of Schwarz (2006) focused primarily on the educational potential of drawn literature. In this study, young adult males were asked, "Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value?" The findings of this question will offer results based on a similar field to the work of Schwarz (2006), but will focus directly on the beliefs of young adult males. Similarly, the work of

Horner (2006) investigated the attitudes of librarians in the debate over the place of pulp fiction and graphic novels in the library setting. In this study the young adult males were asked, “Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?” This was also done in an attempt to identify the attitudes of young males, as opposed to librarians, when discussing a similar topic featured in Horner’s (2006) work. Another example of this technique can be seen in the inclusion of the question “What are the main differences between reading ‘normal’ written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?” As discussed earlier, Arlin and Roth (1978) were concerned with children’s use of time while reading, the difference in the way comics and ‘normal’ books are read, and any affects that this may have on readers. It was felt that the inclusion of a question asking participants to define any differences between comics and written literature would harvest closely related results, but from the specific perspective of the young adult males.

### **3.1.5 - Analysis of the Findings**

In order to offer a coherent analysis of the results gathered during the interviews, the answers given by the young adult males were studied in detail. All the interview recordings were converted into transcript form to allow a close study of their exact content (see Appendix 4 for the complete Interview Transcripts). Consideration was given to qualitative nature of the answers and the language that was used by the participants to convey their thoughts and feelings when discussing the research topic. As well as this, any emergent themes and similarities in the answers were noted, if they were discovered during the comparisons of the different transcripts. It was further felt that it would also be useful to feature some subtle quantitative elements in the analysis, if appropriate. For example, a numerical figure was offered for the sake of effective analysis when identifying the numbers of participants who answered either positively or negatively to certain questions. A good example of this is the first question, “Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?” An analysis of the answers given here would benefit from the use of numbers to quickly identify who claimed they did and who claimed they did not enjoy reading.

### **3.1.6 - Ethical Considerations**

When dealing with humans beings and the thoughts and feeling that they posses, the matter of ethics must be given great consideration. Informed consent is a matter that must be addressed first. It is important to ensure that all participants are made fully aware of the research topic and their involvement in the study. Before taking part in the study, all participants were given an Information Sheet documenting all the details of the study (see Appendix 1). The sheet included information on the projects purpose, why they had been approached to be included, their freedom to withdraw and any withdrawal procedures, any potential risks (of which there were none), any benefits from taking part and finally, the contact details of both the lead researcher and the dissertation supervisor. Once the participants had thoroughly read the information sheet, they were then offered the opportunity to sign an Ethics Consent Form, if they wished to continue and take part in the study (see Appendix 2). Here participants signed to confirm that they had studied the information sheet, that they had understood that their answers were anonymous, that they could withdraw at any time, and that they were giving their permission to be included in the research project. The issue of anonymity was also taken into account. No personal data was to be used in the study. It was also ensured that all information gathered from the interviews was to be kept entirely confidential and no names will be associated with any of the answers given. Finally, the issues of safety and well-being were also considered. It was decided that in order to avoid any harm or stress, the participants were to be interviewed in an environment that was comfortable for them. In all cases, the interviews were performed in the homes of the participants to ensure that they felt safe and comfortable (as well as having the bonus of ensuring that their answers were not affected by any extraneous variables that may be caused by distress).

## **Chapter 4**

### **4.1 - Results**

#### **4.1.1 - The 'Foundation' Questions**

When asked whether they enjoyed reading, almost all of the subjects answered positively, with only one participant claiming that they didn't read. The single participant who did not like to read (Interview 3) was given a probing question to uncover why this is the case. The reason given was that the participant felt that he lost concentration when attempting to read. Despite this, all other subjects claimed that they enjoyed reading. However, it must be mentioned that some of the answers were not as simple as a case of yes or no (as is to be expected in a qualitative study). There were complications associated with some answers. Unlike the participant who claimed to not enjoy reading, one of the participants (Interview 8) stated that he enjoyed reading and noted that he was referring to newspapers, magazines and the internet. Another similar complication arose from the answer given in Interview 6. Here we are told:

*"I never really pick up a book that often, but when I do pick up a book it's literally read in like a couple of hours or a day or two. So yeah, I suppose when I do read, I do enjoy reading."*

These two answers are quite similar in nature. It would seem that both participants wished to express that they enjoy reading; however they also felt the need to verify that their behaviour may not be seen as conventional.

The next question in the interview is closely linked to the first, as it continues to attempt to develop a picture of what sort of readers the participants are. The second question dealt with how often the participants read. Here the answers were very varied, but all participants claimed to read rather regularly on either a daily or weekly basis (apart from the subject who claimed not to read, accompanying his answer that he only read "once a year" with a laugh). Interestingly, there were a few topics that some of the participants felt were worth mentioning as having a governing affect on their reading habits. The work environment was mentioned twice. In interview 8, the participant said that he liked to read a newspaper everyday at work, mainly because it was something that he should not be doing. In interview 2 we are told by the interviewee that he likes to read on his breaks during his work placement

(part of his university course) as it is a means of avoiding talking to colleagues. In both these examples, reading is almost referred to as a useful tool for avoiding something undesirable, whether it be talkative colleagues, or work in general. The answers to this second question also saw two other participants mention newspapers or forms of reading other than conventional books. Interviewees 9 and 7 both include newspapers or magazines in their answers. It would seem that this type of reading is viewed as valid by the young adult males, but they still feel the need to mention specifically that what they are reading is not by any means a novel or prose literature.

Participants were then asked if they were encouraged to read by their parents. The inclusion of this question was really just to offer a brief literature-orientated insight into the up-bringing they received and if their Primary Socialisation (the early socialisation received at the intimate family level) offered them any literature awareness. Almost all of the participants said they were encouraged to some extent. Only one subject (interviewees 7) stated that he received no encouragement to read. Interviewee 7 states that he was encouraged to be active and play outside with his friends instead. To be honest, without wishing to generalise or stereotype, more answers like this were expected from a group of young men, but this was not the case. Interestingly, the participant who claimed to not enjoy reading (interview 3) was encouraged to read as a child. However, he mentions that he lost interest when at Comprehensive School. A specifying question was then offered to verify if this was caused by the development of other interests. The subject confirmed this by stating that a taste in music had developed. The answers offered here by participant 7 and participant 3 are rather interesting, considering that the one, who was encouraged to read (Interview 3) ended up with little interest in reading, and the one who was encouraged to be active instead (Interview 7) now considers himself to be someone who enjoys reading (albeit mostly newspapers and magazines). There were two cases where the participants claimed to have received conflicting encouragement from parents. In interview 5 the subject claims not to have been “massively” encouraged due to the conflicting natures of his parents. He states that although his mother read a lot, his father did not. This gave him with the impression that he was neither encouraged nor discouraged. In interview 6 we can see a similar answer. We are told:

*“Yes and No. My Dad was really into it. He’s got like hundreds of books and he always used to say “Look, read a book, rather than go out”, but my Mum was a bit indifferent about it. She didn’t really care like.”*

However, despite the difference in opinion of the parents in both these cases, the participants still received some level of encouragement to read and did in fact develop into young men who enjoy reading. So it remains that only one participant received no encouragement to read at all.

The final foundation question was used to introduce the topic of drawn literature (the main purpose of the study) to the interviews, as well as to establish whether the participants were familiar with the medium. Participants were asked if they had ever read a comic book, a graphic novel or a manga. All of the participants said they had experienced them, but the extent to which they had differed greatly. Some participants (Interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10) showed enthusiasm and claimed to have read quite a lot of either comics, graphic novels and (in one case) manga. In interviews 3, 8 and 9, however, the answers were rather different. These participants were not particularly familiar with the medium. Both interviewees 3 and 8 mentioned that they had encountered them, but only when younger, and neither of them had owned their own copies. Participant 3 had only read three comics as a child and in interview 8 the participant stated that his experience with comic came mainly from his father’s large collection of issues of ‘The Beano’. Participant 9 claimed to have only “glanced at them for a little while”. Interestingly, two of the participants who implied that they were very familiar with comics also made sure to note that this was when they were younger. At this stage, with four participants making reference to youth when first questioned about drawn literature, it would seem that there may be some age-associated implications when discussing comics and graphic novels. However, this issue will be dealt with more specifically by the next interview question. All in all, a majority of the participants (seven in total) showed some degree of enthusiasm for the medium, or made it aware that they were very familiar with comics. A rather humorous quote came from the participant in interview 2 who said:

*“Yeah man. Not loads, but quite a bit. Mostly off the internet, because I’m a tight bastard and can’t be arsed to buy them. (laughs).”*

This is interesting not only because the participant (who is known to be particularly interested in comics) is modest regarding his enthusiasm, but more importantly because it

shows that the participant has found a way to read graphic novels for free. The phenomenon of downloading music is currently well documented in both the media and academia but there is currently no research on the topic of the illegal downloading of drawn literature. If the topic was to be studied, the findings may have some important implications when discussing the potential of the mediums inclusion in a library collection. Libraries supply free literature and the fact that there is a subordinate alternative that may have slipped under the radar of those interested in the field may be worthy of further study.

As can be seen, the four ‘foundation’ questions attempted to establish the nature of the participants reading habits. There were some complications, discrepancies and anomalies seen in some of the answers, but most importantly: of the ten young adult males interviewed, the majority enjoy reading, read regularly, were encouraged to do so, and are familiar with drawn literature. This alone will make their answers regarding drawn literature rather interesting to researchers in the field as it is believed that the nature of their reading habits and deep knowledge of comics will make their answers particularly valid. Even though there were participants who, negatively, either did not enjoy reading, received little encouragement or were not particularly familiar with comics, it was still felt that any thought and beliefs they had regarding drawn literature would be of use to the study. The negatives were not all possessed by single participants and there was some cross-over. For example, those who were not encouraged to read remain to be enthusiastic readers and those who were not familiar with comics still enjoy reading.

#### **4.1.2 - Drawn Literature and Libraries – The Primary Focus**

As mentioned earlier, Lavin (2001) discusses the concerns of Librarians regarding comics. A major feature of these concerns is based upon suitability and appropriate content. There are many genres of comic books with different themes and content. Therefore the question, “What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?” was included in the interview to see if the young adult males had any preconceptions about the target audience of comic books or whether or not they realised that the genres that feature in comics can differ greatly. It was found that all the participants made some reference to the fact that there are different types of comic books aimed at different audiences. In Interview 1, the participant answered;

*“I’m not sure myself. It depends perhaps on the comic itself maybe, and the target audience of certain comics or the producers of comics.”*

Here the participant seems to show that he understands that there can be a variety of different comics. To confirm this view, a specifying question was offered by asking, “So there are different types?” The participant replied;

*“Yeah, there’s lots of different types. I mean, by reading 2000AD and that, you can tell. There are strips that are aimed clearly for kids and that, as well as more adult strips and everything. They cover a broad range of ages.”*

Not only was the participant able to confirm his statement, but he was also able to offer an example of how this can be seen when observing actual publications. A similar opinion was given in Interview 4 when the participant answered;

*“Erm, I’d say it’s more across all ages to be honest with you. There’s different ones like. You can get kids ones and ones that are proper violent or written really detailed for adults.”*

As previously mentioned, all the participants gave this view of diversity in one way or another, but an interesting sub-theme also developed. One participant hinted towards knowing that other people may not realise the extent to which comic book content differs. In Interview 6 we are told;

*“No, I don’t think there is an age range, to be honest with you. A lot of people would say like “Oh, it’s a comic”, but then you’ll read it and it’s got a lot more adult content than what a normal comic should have, if you know what I mean. So, no, there isn’t an age range.”*

Participants were also asked whether they ever actually buy comic books in an attempt to continue the theme of the previous question. It was thought that it would be interesting to see how many of these young men still bought comics having just heard their views on the target age of the medium. Interestingly, despite the wide-spread acceptance that comics appeal to all ages, only half of the participants stated that they did. Of the remaining five, three said that they had bought them when they were younger and two said they had never done so. The two who had never purchased comics were participant 3 (who does not enjoy reading and had little experience with the medium) and 9 (who had no real experience with drawn literature). This was to be expected of them. However, these two, along with the

other three who only bought them when younger, still all realised that there were a variety of genres and target audiences, as identified in the last question.

The next question put forth to the participants was concerned directly with the suitability of drawn literature in libraries. Participants were asked, “Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?” All ten of the participants said that they felt that graphic novels did have a place in the library setting. The most common response was that drawn literature was literature like any other, so therefore should be included in the library collection. For example, in Interview 2 the participant said;

*“Yeah, because it’s reading. It’s books and stuff isn’t it?... So, definitely. If you want to have a pop in and just like have a buzz through them, just chilled out.”*

Likewise, in Interview 6, we see the answer;

*“I think they should, yeah. It’s just like any other reading material, so yeah, they should.”*

Also, in Interview 7, the subject says:

*“I don’t see why not. Fiction is fiction. Why shouldn’t you have comics in there?”*

All of these answers very simply state the opinions of the young male participants and make it clear that they believe drawn literature does have a place in the public library. Two participants even made a reference to the inclusion of drawn literature having a widening affect on the appeal of libraries. In interview 8 the subject said;

*“I reckon they would. They could do because they’ve got like a large appeal, haven’t they? There’s a vast amount and different varieties of people like reading comics and Japanese Manga.”*

Also, in Interview 4, after a probing question to identify why the participant felt that graphic novels had a place in the library, he answered;

*“Just so you can appeal to different people who might visit a library. People who are into it might want to hire them out, but if the library hasn’t got them then they’ll lose people’s interest and that.”*

These two answers are interesting because they seem to show that not only do the participants feel that drawn literature does have a place in the library, but that it may also

work to appeal to a wider audience and attract other users. Further interest can be found when observing the fact that two of the participants, whilst agreeing that graphic novels do have a place in the library, made the point that comics may not. Earlier, it was noted that Lavin (2001) discussed the potential damage of paper- cover comics as being a cause for librarians concerns. Lavin (2001) stated that by treating the comics like other periodical publications and covering them with plastic magazine covers may avoid damage. However, it would seem that the physical properties and the periodical nature of comics was also a concern for two young adult males. One participant noted physical reasons (Interview 5), whereas another claimed that comic books are more of a monthly collection of magazines as opposed to a 'proper' book (Interview 3) and therefore may not be suitable for the library.

The eighth interview question saw the participants being asked to define what would entice them into the library. No assumptions were made here as to whether the participant regularly visited the library or not, as that was not the issue being addressed. Rather, the question functioned to identify what interests the participants had that could be included in a library catalogue, as well as to see if drawn literature featured predominantly in the minds of the young men. The answers to this question were very varied. By far the most interesting comments were made in Interviews 2 and 4. Both of these subjects initially claimed that nothing at all would get them into the library. In Interview 4 the participant said;

*"I'd say probably nothing really. I'm not really bothered about going to be honest with you. I mean they might get some stuff I like, but I'm not bothered about going."*

When asked why this was the case, the subject replied;

*"I'd rather buy something myself, brand new, and then it's mine. Not bothered about borrowing."*

This seems to be a very definite answer with a strong opinion. Despite the participant's enthusiasm for daily reading and his interest in graphic novels, he still felt that the library did not appeal to him as he would rather own the books for himself than borrow them. In Interview 4, the interviewee also said that nothing would entice him into the library, but for a different reason. The participant associated libraries purely with academic work and the need to use a computer. This links in with another participant's answer. Two participants (Interviewees 3 and 7) stated a need to be told more about what libraries had to offer, as they said they did not know. Interviewee 3 said;

*“Stuff like music books. Like how to play guitar or something. Actually they probably have stuff like that I guess. I don’t know”*

He was then asked if he therefore felt that he needed to be made more aware of what a library has on offer. He replied;

*“Yeah, because the libraries I know were just at like school, or academic libraries. That’s all I see them as.”*

Not only does this answer share a similarity with that of Interview 7, where both participants claimed to require more library collection information, but it also links in with the answer in Interview 4 because they both felt that libraries functioned to enable school work as opposed to fulfilling any recreational requirements. The remaining participants all gave varying answers. Interviewees 1, 6 and 10 were similar. All three noted that a larger inclusion of their own ‘pulp’ interests, such as graphic novels (Interviews 1 and 6) and Fantasy-themed books (Interview 10) would get them into the library. Interviewees 8 and 9 both mentioned that their opportunities or needs to get to the library are governed by their jobs. Interviewee 8 stated that the shift-based nature of his job left him with little time for the library, whereas Interviewees 9 stated that his job gave him little need to go. It is intriguing that the participant in Interview 9 seemed to associate the library with his job as opposed to any recreational activities. For this reason, his answer could be seen as being similar to the answers given in Interviews 3 and 4, who did not associate libraries with recreation.

The participants were then asked what they felt were the main differences between drawn literature and ‘normal’ written literature. A common theme emerged immediately. It was mentioned by five of the participants (Interviewees 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10) that the inclusion of pictures in comics has a positive effect on the imagination. As opposed to having to read a large body of text, as is done with written literature, comic books offer the reader the ability to instantly see what is happening in the story. A good example of this view is found in the answer given in Interview 7;

*“Comics give you an occasional break from normal reading. I don’t know. They help you visualise the story more in your head. It gives you a bit more imagination because you can see something that somebody else has imagined and extend it a little bit. It puts a different storyline in your head to ones that you just imagine yourself from reading a book without pictures.”*

Here the participant also hints towards the presence of the pictures creating a more definite image in the readers head without having to rely on ones imagination. He claims that the pictures can “help” the reader imagine as well as allowing the reader to have a break from a large amount of written text. This is comparable to the answer given in Interview 5, where the subject said;

*“I think with the drawn it has an added advantage straight away. There’s a picture there. If a novel’s written poorly you have to build a picture yourself, but whereas you don’t have to build a picture yourself with manga and graphic novels. It’s also not as heavy going. There are heavy ones, but the way it’s broken up is a lot more user friendly I’d say.”*

He too claims that drawn literature has the advantage of aiding the readers’ ability to see exactly what is happening in the story as well as enabling the reader to take a break from the demanding nature of a large amount of written words. Further similarity is found in the answer of Interviewee 8;

*“For me it’s a lot easier to read graphic novels because it’s just like pictures and descriptions of what is happening through it, instead of like, well, you can see the situation. With a book you have to read it through, and I haven’t got the longest of attention spans. You read and your eyes start going and you have to read it all before you can get the picture in your head of what’s going on.”*

This participant also notes that the reader can understand and become involved with the story very quickly due to the presence of the visual element, without having to read a large body of text.

The next question was closely linked to this theme. Participants were asked if they thought graphic novels were easier or harder to reader. Only two said they were easier, with the largest amount of the participants (five in total) claiming that drawn literature was different, as opposed to being easier or harder. One answer in particular stood out from the others. This was given in Interview 9.

*“The text is a lot easier, simpler, short, snappy, but you are looking at the pictures and making sense of them, applying the language to them. It sets you of thinking a bit more. I’ve found the few times I’ve read comics, I spend a lot of time reading very little, if you know what I mean?”*

Although the participant notes that the amount of text is shorter and easier to read, he still notices a difference that links directly to the work of Arlin and Roth (1978). As mentioned earlier, their study found that children (given the task of reading during a set time) were undoubtedly more interested in comics and spent more time-on-task with them, yet at the same time they were more likely to spend less time actually reading. This seems to be exactly what the participant is saying here. More time can be spent analysing the pictures in comics and linking them to the small amounts of text. This results in less time being spent on the actual reading of the words.

The subjects were then asked, “Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to ‘normal’ books?” Almost all of the participants said that they believed graphic novels to be of equal value. Only one participant (Interview 5) said otherwise, believing that the value of graphic novels is a matter of personal opinion. The most interesting quote comes from the answer given in interview 4.

*“Well, I think it obviously depends on the content of the graphic novel. It’s like anything really. You get good ones and bad ones like you do with normal books. I think they should be equally valued as, like, literature, you know, but you will get crap books and crap graphic novels. I class them as equal though, yeah.”*

It is clear that this participant sees both graphic novels and written books as having equal literary worth, but at the same time he notes that either of the two mediums can have weaknesses.

The next question dealt with what participants thought would be the affects of having a large graphic novel collection in a library. All answers were positive and seemed to approve the hypothetical scenario. The most common answer (given by eight of the subjects) was that the inclusion of a large graphic novel collection would increase the libraries patronage and attract more users. They all felt that more graphic novels would attract the people who are already interested in the medium and get them into the library. However, in both Interview 1 and Interview 7 the point was made that users should be notified about what is going on in the library. Both participants saw the importance of ensuring that the public are kept informed about any changes to the collection if the library is to benefit from the positive effects of attracting more young users and graphic novel readers. Interestingly, in Interview 2 the subject claimed to believe that the inclusion of more graphic novels in the library may in

fact get more current library users interested in the medium. Similarly, Interviewee 3 stated that more graphic novels would expand the choice on offer for library users. It would seem that all the participants endorsed the inclusion of a large graphic novel collection in the library setting.

As discussed in the Literature Review, there have been a number of studies conducted on comic books with a focus on the educational potential of the medium. For example, Ujiie and Krashen (1996) were interested in the reading habits of seventh grade boys and Millard and Marsh (2001) focused on the effects of making comic books more available in the school library. Schwarz (2006) studied the educational potential of drawn literature and went on to claim that graphic novels are able to offer English teachers the opportunity to involve all their students in the exploration of a medium that offers more than traditional literary sources. It was felt that because of this, it would be appropriate to discover what young adult males said when they were asked if they thought graphic novels had any academic value. Impressively, all the participants (in one way or another) said that they felt the medium does have academic value. Albeit, two of them (Participants 2 and 6) said they were unsure how it could be used to teach, yet they remained in support of the suggestion. Four of the responses noted that the art work featured in comics will probably be of use in art classes. In particular, Interviewee 1, an art student, was able to give an exact example about how comics are currently being used in his classes. He said;

*“.... Also in art work, because looking through graphic novels and that, the amount of art work that’s needed. I’ve studied it. They are renowned for their use of fore-shortening they’re usually used to teach that in A Level Art. You don’t usually get fine arts that incorporate that. Super hero comics always come in close and it is used a lot in the study of the human form.”*

Another common theme in the answers was concerned with the moral message of comics and graphic novels. Four of the participants (Interviews 5, 7, 9 and 10) felt that the stories most likely to be included in the medium often featured overt moral meanings which could be used to teach children. We can see a simple and direct example of this in the answer of Interview 10;

*“Yeah, definitely. All the classic comics have all got like a moral story to them. It’s always good versus evil, isn’t it? Which is certainly lacking in today’s society.”*

This links in closely with the claims of Lavin (2001), who (as discussed earlier) states how comics deal with certain moral themes and story arcs that may be considered to be very important by teenagers and young adults (such as issues of acceptance, non-conformity, coming of age, prejudice and triumph over adversity). As well as this, a very intriguing answer was offered in Interview 8. Here the last sentence of the participants answer was;

*“Because of all the computer generation and that, they get to see lots of pictures as well.”*

This also links in directly with the work of Schwarz (2006) who discussed the unique word and visual arrangement of graphic novels and how they can act as the ideal educational medium for the teaching of the multi-media skills required by young people in the age of the World Wide Web.

In the literature review we saw the belief of Millard and Marsh (2001), that school library books are part of a canon of established upper-class children’s literature and that comics are located much more firmly in the world experienced by working class children. It was decided that the views of young adult males when considering this matter should be taken into account. The question asked was “Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?” Seven of the ten participants said that they felt class was not an issue and that comic books have the ability to appeal to everyone. One participant (Interview 5) did not know if the medium appealed to any particular class. More interestingly, two participants, however, felt that comics were more of an upper-class (Interview 9) and middle-class (Interview 6) area of interest. These answers can be seen to directly contradict the views of Millard and Marsh (2001).

The next interview question was concerned with the topic of gender appeal and comic books. Participants were asked, “Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?” The majority of the answers here stated that males would probably be more likely to be interested in the medium. Seven participants said, undoubtedly, that it would be mostly males. The remaining three noted that there are a variety of comics that would appeal to females, but they still agreed that the majority of comic book readers would be males. The most interesting answer came from Interview 5, where the participant noted a difference in gender appeal between the Japanese culture of Manga and western graphic novels by saying;

*“The thing that’s different with manga, whereas comics are socially assumed to be a teenager’s/young man’s thing, a manga is for everybody. You know, in Japan, I know the*

*culture doesn't translate fully, but there's manga for everybody. Everybody reads it. There's girls ones, boys ones and so on."*

Participants were also asked if they had ever seen someone being treated differently because they read comics. This question was included to briefly identify whether the young men thought there were any prejudices associated with the medium. Interestingly, seven of the ten participants felt that they had witnessed or experienced people being treated differently, but none of these cases were very serious. One answer, (Interview 9) was that although he had not experienced this himself, the stereotype 'geek' in films made him aware that prejudice can be associated with drawn literature.

The final interview question was "What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?" This question functioned to just briefly explore how the young males saw librarians as well as see if they felt whether drawn literature was respected by in traditional librarianship. Again, the majority view was shared by seven participants, who all simply said that opinions towards graphic novels were simply a result of personal interests and tastes. A good example of this was the Interview 8 answer;

*"I'm not too sure. Well, everyone's got their own personal view, so every librarian's going to have a different view."*

The answer given in Interview 1 is different though, and is worth paying some particular attention to. Here the participant said;

*"Well, from what I can tell, from talking to the school librarian, which is the only one I know, she's quite open to it. She's gets in the old DC Annuals and that. But, I said to her, "Miss, why don't you get some good graphic novels in like some Judge Dredd?" and she'd say, "But we've got some graphic novels in" so she doesn't quite understand, but she's quite open to it and everything..."*

It is clear that the subject felt that although the librarian was open to the inclusion of the medium, she could not fully cater to his tastes because she did not have any grounded knowledge in the area. However, this is still a lot more positive than the view expressed by the remaining three participants (Interviews 3, 4 and 10) who all felt that there may be some professional prejudices towards the medium on account of them not being 'proper' books.

## **Chapter 5**

### **5.1 - Conclusion**

The results of this study offer some interesting points when considering the role of graphic novels in the library, as well as the thoughts and opinions of the young men themselves. The participants seemed to show great enthusiasm and knowledge when questioned about the topics discussed here, including their thoughts on their own reading habits, libraries, graphic novels and the roles that drawn literature could potentially play in both libraries and education. Many of the answers did vary and there were a number of questions where single participants (or a minority) disagreed with the majority, but despite this, a rather detailed picture of the attitudes of young men can be drawn.

Reading seemed to be quite popular among the sample group. Most of them had been encouraged to read when growing up and admitted to reading regularly (albeit a variety of texts, including magazines and newspapers). It would seem that despite the difficulties experienced by libraries in attracting young males, there is a market there and young men are interested in reading. The majority of the young men questioned were very familiar with graphic novels and comic books, either reading them currently or having read them in their youth. All of the participants recognised that there is a wide range of drawn literature available, with an equally wide range of audiences. This could work to make the medium more appealing to librarians, as graphic novels could work to attract a wide range of potential users who are not already using the libraries. It is also clear that the young men felt that socio-economic class was not an issue when considering graphic novels, contrary to the views expressed by Millard and Marsh (2001). The majority felt that drawn literature would appeal to anyone, despite their economic position. However, many did recognise that gender may be an issue. Despite all agreeing that there is a wide range of comics (for both males and females) the majority view was that males would probably make up most of the comic book audience. However, this is not particularly surprising, as the common view of comic books supports the image of a predominantly male fan-base. Interestingly, several of the participants did hint towards the existence of prejudices surrounding comic book culture when asked if they had witnessed any difference in treatment due to the reading of comics. These are both factors that the library could work towards changing. By accepting drawn literature on a large scale and marketing it effectively to all potential target audiences, libraries could make people aware that there are titles that will appeal to them, whatever their gender. The small

issues of prejudice may also be tackled by such acceptance as it could ensure that more readers and library users become familiar with drawn literature. However, it is important that the libraries make their motives and actions known. Some of the participants noted that libraries must keep their communities informed about updating their collections, and that they themselves knew little about what was going on in their local libraries.

We can further see that only half of the participants questioned claimed to actually buy comics and graphic novels. This is despite their initial interest and enthusiasm for the medium. It could therefore be said that by developing good graphic novel collections, the libraries may be able to supply reading materials to interested young men as well as fulfilling their own needs of widening their user-base. In fact, this matter of graphic novels working to widen the libraries user-base is something directly expressed by the participants. All of the subjects believed that graphic novels did have a place in the public library as well as claiming that the inclusion of a large graphic novel collection would have a positive effect of the library, whether it is the attraction of more young male readers to the library or the attraction of current library users to drawn literature. The final question saw the participants express their views on Librarians and what they may think about drawn literature. Despite a few suggesting a lack of understanding or prejudice on the part of the librarians, most of the young men felt that personal tastes and choices were legitimate. They recognised that librarians are welcome to have their own preferences, but this did not contradict the wide spread belief that drawn literature did have a definite place in the library.

The results show that the young males regarded graphic novels as having an equal literary worth to 'normal' written literature. Even when this view was not directly expressed, it was still suggested by the mention of the importance of personal tastes and choices. The participants were also able to recognise the differences between written and drawn literature and discussed these with understanding and without prejudice. The academic value of drawn literature was also discussed. All of the participants showed the belief that the medium can be used for educational purposes as well as for recreational reading. This can be seen to support the beliefs and findings of a number of researchers such as Millard and Marsh (2001), Schwarz (2006) and Worthy (1998) who focused on the educational potential of comics and pulp fiction.

Finally, the study seemed to highlight some areas where further study may be useful in uncovering more interesting information. The mention of the illegal downloading comics

may be an example of this. Currently no studies have been performed in this area and it may be very interesting to see what effects free downloading may have on a library collection of graphic novels. As well as this, a gender related study may be intriguing. All the participants noted that there were a range of comics for all sexes and ages, yet they still believed the medium appealed mainly to males. It may be of academic worth to attempt to uncover why they felt this was the case. Ultimately, the most important point to make about the potential for further study comes as a result of the sample size used in this study. This was an illuminatory study. A reasonably large amount of qualitative information has been gained here, offering a degree of unique information; however, the sample size can still be seen to be relatively small. The potential for a further study with a much larger sample, but still based on the aims of this research, is definitely worth considering.

**18,836 words**

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# **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1 –**

### **Example of The Research Information Sheet**

Graphic Novels – The Young Man’s Superhero or the Library’s Contemporary Villain: An Illuminatory study into the thoughts and feelings of Young Men when discussing the suitability of Graphic Novels in the Library

**You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.**

#### **What is the project’s purpose?**

The project aims to identify whether or not it is true that young males feel they don’t belong in the library and why this may be so. The study also aims to see if Graphic Novel collections in the Library may be of any use in attracting young male Library users. In order to study this, the project will use interviews with young males to explore their thoughts, beliefs and prejudices towards Graphic Novels.

#### **Why have you been chosen?**

You have been chosen because you are a suitable candidate. As you are **young male**, it is believed that the information, thoughts and views that you offer on the research topic may be useful.

#### **Do you have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time, with no consequences. You do not have to give a reason.

#### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be asked to take part in a short interview. The interview itself should last no more than twenty minutes and will be conducted in an environment comfortable to yourself. This will only happen once and then you will no longer be required to take part in any further research. You will be expected to answer questions about your library use and in particular, Graphic Novels. No sensitive information will be required from you and all information given will be anonymous.

#### **What do I have to do?**

All that is asked is that you answer the questions truthfully and honestly. Nothing more will be required.

#### **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Interviews will be comfortable and friendly and will deal with no harmful subject matter. I don't believe any of the questions to be included in this study will be harmful aside from a minor degree of inconvenience, as a short time must be taken out of your day to partake in the interview.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will enable Libraries to better understand the needs of young males and work towards making them feel more comfortable in the Library setting. It is also hoped that Libraries will gain more understanding of the Graphic Novel genre and be able to make more informed decisions about what they make available to the public.

### **What if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely case that you should wish to raise a complaint, you should contact the Dissertation Supervisor:

**Sheila Webber**

**s.webber@sheffield.ac.uk**

**0114 2222644**

However, if you feel your complaint has not been dealt with appropriately, you may contact the Registrar and Secretary of The University of Sheffield. For contact details, see: **www.shef.ac.uk**

### **Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

### **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results will be used for analysis in a dissertation produced by the researcher. You will not be identified in any report or publication. However, the data collected during the course of the project might be used for additional or subsequent research.

### **Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Information Studies Department's ethics review procedure (every academic department either administers the University's Ethics Review Procedure itself, internally within the department). The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

### **Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

The audio recordings of your answers given during the research interviews will be used only for analysis and for illustration in the dissertation results and maybe in lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

**Contact Details for further information;**

**Researcher:** Matthew Neill  
**Address:** 36 Kestrel Avenue  
Thorpe Hesley  
Rotherham  
S61 2TT  
**Tel:** (0114) 2451 299  
**Email:** matthew\_p\_neill@hotmail.co.uk

**You, the participant, will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.**

Finally, I would like to thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this research study. The information you give will be of great value to the progress of the study. It is greatly appreciated.

**Yours,**

**Matthew Neill (BA)**

**DATE:**

**PARTICIPANT NAME:**

**RESEARCHER:**



### **Appendix 3 –**

#### **The Interview Questions Guide Sheet**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

Do you ever buy Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga?

Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

What would you say would entice you into the library?

What are the main differences between reading ‘normal’ written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

Are comics easier/harder to read?

Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to ‘normal’ books?

What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

**Appendix 4 –**

**The Interview Transcripts**

**Interview 1**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Yes*

-----

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*Like at least once a day. Like everyday and that.*

-----

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Yes, it was encouraged by both parents.*

-----

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*Yes.*

Have you read many would you say?

*Yeah, I've read a lot of them. Comics mainly, like 2000AD. Yeh, mainly that.*

-----

What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*I'm not sure myself. It depends perhaps on the comic itself maybe, and the target audience of certain comics or the producers of comics.*

So there are different types?

*Yeah, there's lots of different types. I mean, by reading 2000AD and that, you can tell. There are strips that are aimed clearly for kids and that, as well as more adult strips and everything. They cover a broad range of ages.*

-----

Do you ever buy Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga?

*Yes, all the time.*

Quite regularly or not?

*Yeah, regularly. At least once a week, I'd say. If not more.*

---

Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*I think they would, because we're already seeing it happening in most libraries and, well, I think people who go to libraries would probably read graphic novels anyway because of their wide audience and that. So, yeah, I imagine they do.*

---

What would you say would entice you into the library?

*I'm not sure. Just the need for a specific book I imagine.*

Is there anything of particular interest to you that would get you in the library more?

*Yeah, especially graphic novels, because of the price and that. You'd be able to rent them out and read them over a bit. Perhaps not so much with comic books, maybe.*

---

What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*A lot of people would say that written literature is of a higher standard, but it depends on the graphic novel. With some graphic novels you have a lot of description, like old style comics. But then again, with graphic novels, it's for people who like the images as well. Fans of art work or particular artists. So, it's difficult to define the differences other than the obvious thing of looking at the art work as well.*

---

Are comics easier or harder to read?

*It depends probably whether you're used to reading comics. I mean, I can't read Mangas, the Japanese one because they go backwards. I don't know how the frames follow on from each other.*

Would you say that the way the frames flow is important?

*Yeah, because if the frames are in different places, or if the speech and words are in different places in the frame, it can confuse the comic book and that. You've got to have structure in there and everything. I guess, if you're used to reading just normal literature you might find it more difficult to read a comic book because you'd be thrown off by the art work maybe.*

---

Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*Equal value, because you can really say it's higher or lower. You can really define it on each thing because there will be some graphic novels that are really bad.*

-----

What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*I think if it was well known it'd probably draw in more people who are interested in the graphic novels. So, those audiences who want to rent out graphic novels as well as those who want normal books would go.*

So you think it has to be well known?

*Yeah, because, it's alright just getting in the graphic novels, but if no one knows then....*

Do you think the people who are likely to read graphic novels will know what is going on in their local library?

*I doubt it, unless they are also fans of literature. In which case they may just buy their books, like they buy their graphic novels.*

-----

Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*I think they definitely do. I mean, for younger kids, you look at a younger kids text book and they're filled with strips or cartoons and that. Also in art work, because looking through graphic novels and that, the amount of art work that's needed. I've studied it. They are renowned for their use of fore-shortening they're usually used to teach that in A Level Art. You don't usually get fine arts that incorporate that. Super hero comics always come in close and it is used a lot in the study of the human form.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*Perhaps not class, because everyone knows about comic books and that.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*People would probably say men and lads and that. I think probably males because you don't seem to get that many girls reading comics and everything.*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*Yes. Reading 2000AD in the common room, got a bit of remarks, yeah. But, you know some people.*

-----  
What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*Well, from what I can tell, from talking to the school librarian, which is the only one I know, she's quite open to it. She's gets in the old DC Annuals and that. But, I said to her, "Miss, why don't you get some good graphic novels in like some Judge Dredd?" and she say, "But we've got some graphic novels in" so she doesn't quite understand, but she's quite open to it and everything. Actually they're starting to get loads of Mangas in the school library now, what with the big influx of children who love manga. So, yeah, I think they're open to it. At the end of the day, it's just another type of book.*

## **Interview 2**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Yeah man, I enjoy reading. If it's something I'm into, if it's something you like and kind of interests you then yeah, I read.*

-----  
How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*It's weird because I kind of... it's really random, you know what I mean. I don't like read all the time, but I go through bouts. You know what I mean. I'll pick it up and get really into it, but, kind of, when I'm, you know, on placement and stuff I'll kind of read a lot during my breaks and shit because I can't be arsed to speak to loads of people. (laughs). On the bus as well, you know, travelling about. It's something to pass the time.*

-----  
Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Oh yeah. Yeah, definitely. You know my Dad and my brother, they proper love it. They took the piss because they said I never used to read enough. So every time I got a book they were like, "You're reading!" (laughs).*

-----  
Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*Yeah man. Not loads, but quite a bit. Mostly off the internet, because I'm a tight bastard and cant be arsed to buy them. (laughs).*

-----  
What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*I don't know really, because people like you have been well into them for ages. You know what I mean, since you were a kid. I think it's like there's such a different variety. Depends what you're looking for doesn't it?*

-----  
Do you ever buy Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga?

*I do. I'm just getting into it.*

What do you think about the prices of them?

*Erm, they're not too bad. I was expecting that Johnny the Homicidal Maniac one that I bought to be more expensive, but they're mint aren't they?*

-----  
Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*Yeah, because it's reading. It's books and stuff isn't it? I know Barnsley have got them once because I went to a thing with school to Barnsley Library because we were doing a thing about Chartists and I got there early and they had a stand with loads of Judge Dredd ones on. I sat just there and read them for ages. So, definitely. If you want to have a pop in and just like have a buzz through them, just chilled out.*

-----  
What would you say would entice you into the library?

*Nothing really because really I only use it, you know, for Uni. and stuff. To do work because the computer has died. (laughs).*

-----  
What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*You spend age looking at each picture, you know what I mean? With a book, you just read through it, but when you're reading a comic, it's like art isn't it? You take extra time to look at all the pictures and that. Checking for stuff you've missed and stuff.*

-----  
Are comics easier or harder to read?

*I don't know, because some comics are quite hard, because trying to read the writing, sometimes it's hard trying to make out what they are saying.*

Are you referring to the flow of the text?

*Yeah, yeah. Some are easier, some are harder, it depends on the flow of the script.*

-----  
Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*They're equal value, surely. Not ones better than the other. It's what you want out of it. Unless you're a prick and you think otherwise, (laughs), because you've got your head up your own arse. (laughs).*

-----  
What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*Well it would introduce a lot more people to it, you know what I mean? I think a lot of people aren't into it because they've never actually seen it. So, if you're going to go and like pick it up you might think "yeah, this is mint!"*

-----  
Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*Can do. I don't know how you'd do it. I don't know how you'd use them, but it's literature isn't it? Surely. It's something to help out.*

Reader Development?

*Yeah man, that's it.*

-----  
Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*I don't know about class, anyone one can be into them really.*

-----  
Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*Gender probably. But I got some really cool bird into it. They are kind of a male thing though. Definitely.*

Why do you reckon that is?

*Content. A lot of it's about your macho guys, blood and guts and stuff. (laughs).*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*I don't know. I don't think so. But I'm sure if I took one into work and was sat reading it all the tossers would be like "oh, comic books", you know. I've never actually witnessed it first hand, but I'm sure it would go on. They're just arseholes aren't they man. (laughs).*

-----

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*Erm, I'm sure that it's varied, you know what I mean? I'm sure there are some people who see it as just a comic book, so what. There'll be others who aren't that way inclined.*

### **Interview 3**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Not particularly.*

Why is that?

*Erm, I lose concentration when I'm reading to be honest.*

-----

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*I'd say maybe once a year! (laughs).*

-----

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Yeah, definitely. As a kid, we had a big book case with loads of books and kids books on it. I just lost interest as I grew up. Around Comprehensive school age.*

Did you develop other interests?

*Yeah, music.*

---

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*Yeah, I have read a comic book when I was younger.*

Very many?

*No, in total just about three.*

---

What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*I suppose it depends because you can get comic books for older people with violence and that, can't you?*

---

Do you ever buy Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga?

*No, apart from those few that I had as a youth.*

---

Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*Graphic novels and that, yeah. Not comics.*

Why is that?

*Graphic novels are more substantial, like proper books. Comics are small. They're like something you'd build up yourself over time.*

---

What would you say would entice you into the library?

*Stuff like music books. Like how to play guitar or something. Actually they probably have stuff like that I guess. I don't know.*

So do you reckon you need to be told more about what the libraries can offer?

*Yeah, because the libraries I know were just at like school, or academic libraries. That's all I see them as.*

---

What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*Well academic books... you read them because to have to. I guess some people would read books like graphic novels for pleasure.*

-----

Are comics easier/harder to read?

*That's difficult to be honest. My initial reaction would be that comics are easier, but at the same time you have got to look at what's going off. You can't just skim through it. You have to concentrate.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*I'd say they're just equal. They're just books.*

-----

What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*Well, it would increase choice for people, I guess.*

-----

Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*You could analyse them I suppose. Just like you'd look at a film, like a piece of media. You could look at the art work for art class. Maybe at college or even at Uni.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*I don't know, I suppose they could appeal to a variety of people if they are into it.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*Males more than females I'd say. Probably mainly for geeks, but that is just pure stereotyping. (laughs).*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*Not really, apart from a bit of stereotype jive.*

-----

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*I reckon there are some who think they're not worthy as a book.*

-----

Do you reckon that's changing?

*Yeah, the times are changing, you know. They'll be getting them in libraries nowadays I guess.*

#### **Interview 4**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*I would say yes, I am someone who enjoys reading.*

-----

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*Generally every night when I go to bed and that.*

-----

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*I'd say so, yeah. I don't know how much though. Quite a bit, I reckon. My Mum was always wanting me to read books and stuff.*

-----

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*Yes I have. I've read quite a few to be honest with you. I'm into it. (laughs).*

-----

What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*Erm, I'd say it's more across all ages to be honest with you. There's different ones like. You can get kids ones and ones that are proper violent or written really detailed for adults.*

-----

Do you ever buy Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga?

*Occasionally, yeah. I've got a fair few like Spawn and Swamp Thing and that.*

-----

Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*I'd say so, yeah.*

Why do you think that?

*Just so you can appeal to different people who might visit a library. People who are into it might want to hire them out, but if the library hasn't got them then they'll lose people's interest and that.*

-----

What would you say would entice you into the library?

*I'd say probably nothing really. I'm not really bothered about going to be honest with you. I mean they might get some stuff I like, but I'm not bothered about going.*

Why not?

*I'd rather buy something myself, brand new, and then it's mine. Not bothered about borrowing.*

-----

What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*I'm not sure. Graphic novels are longer I think. They have all the cool art work as well. I like looking at really cool drawings and reading at the same time. You can do that with them. Erm, I suppose they also seem to be about stuff that I'm into as well.*

The content appeals to you then?

*Yeah, they're usually about something really cool and bad-ass, as well as the nice art.*

-----

Are comics easier/harder to read?

*I'm not sure. They're the same I think. You can get carried away with a graphic novel though and end up reading the whole thing in one because you get really into it.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*Well, I think it obviously depends on the content of the graphic novel. It's like anything really. You get good ones and bad ones like you do with normal books. I think they should be equally valued as, like, literature, you know, but you will get crap books and crap graphic novels. I class them as equal though, yeah.*

-----

What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*Well, it'd appeal to a whole new audience, like. You'd get a lot more people who'd go down and get to experience the library and see what they have. It might get people who are into graphic novels, like, exploring other things that the library has. Libraries should do it, man.*

-----

Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*Yeah, from an art perspective definitely. English as well. Literature and that. I mean, they're stories aren't they. You can study how they're written and like how to draw that good too.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*Not really, no. I think they're for everybody.*

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*No, both can read them.*

Why do you think this?

*Because there's loads of different types and that. Like normal books really. You can get a graphic novel about anything.*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*Probably back at school at some point, yeah. You know what they're like. (laughs). Not recently though, no.*

-----

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*I don't know. I can imagine it's quite mixed, but I can imagine that quite a lot of them will think that they're not proper books and that. They might just think they are for kids and that.*

### **Interview 5**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Yeah, I do. I read quite often. I read for study, but I read for both study and pleasure.*

-----

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*It's a lot more now than I used to do. Obviously when you're at university you tend to just read for work, but now recreationally I read probably three times a week, maybe four times a week.*

-----

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Not massively encouraged, no. I know it's encouraged at school, but there were always books available. My Mum reads a lot, but my Dad doesn't read. So, not massively encouraged, but not discouraged either.*

-----

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*I have read all three of those.*

Very many, would you say?

*Yeah. Graphic novel-wise, very few, probably five or six. Comic books probably the same. As for Manga I've got a collection of about fifty/sixty books. I've got quite a large collection.*

-----

What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*I don't think there is an age range. I think it's more what you find entertaining. I think for comic books, I suppose if you had to gauge an age range it would be young men, but the spectrum would go from a few years old. I mean, there stuff like the Beano and the Dandy, but it goes right up to more adult ones that have got bigger issues. You could read them into your thirties and forties. I don't see a reason why not.*

-----

So I take it that you buy Manga?

*Yeah I do. I seldom buy the comics, but I regularly buy Manga, yeah.*

---

Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*In a comic book sense, yeah. Especially graphic novels. As for comic books themselves, I'm not sure. Logistics-wise they might be hard to keep, but I don't think any book should be banned from a library because of what genre it is or what it includes. As for Manga, it has come a long way, especially recently. I mean, in the last five years. Now Waterstones have them. A massive section, as big as graphic novels almost, so I think it does belong there, yeah.*

---

What would you say would entice you into the library?

*I think convenience would be a big factor. I mean, I do use the library, but that often, purely because there's not one near us. It is a bus or a car ride away. However, whilst at University I did use it quite regularly, not only for work-base, but I would get books for personal pleasure as well. I think a broader selection of books would help get people in there. Something for everyone is always better than quite a narrow taste.*

---

What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*I think with the drawn it has an added advantage straight away. There's a picture there. If a novel's written poorly you have to build a picture yourself, but whereas you don't have to build a picture yourself with manga and graphic novels. It's also not as heavy going. There are heavy ones, but the way it's broken up is a lot more user friendly I'd say.*

---

Are comics easier/harder to read?

*I think they're easier to read. I also think there is the added bonus of, with a book you have a protagonist or lead character, but whereas with a comic books or with a manga you get into the character more. The character's more easily identifiable and usually is with those sorts of branches. If you identify more with the character, with a book there may be only two or three books, if you like Harry Potter there's only six books, but if you like Captain America there's so much for you to read. If you like that you can explore it. That's what's really good about comics.*

---

Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*I think it's down to personal choice, I really do. That's why I think you should have them in libraries because it gives you that choice. I don't think they're of any less value just because they're drawn, but I don't think they're and more value just because they're edgy or cool. They're all equally valuable, you know. Somebody might rave about Jayne Eyre, but somebody might also rave about Spiderman.*

-----

What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*I think if the library could house one, because often it's more of a niche market than mainstream books, but you know, you're seeing libraries get more and more diverse these days with more and more books. Like, I don't know, maybe teaching books, they didn't always have that. I think if it's there, people will use it. If you have it, people come.*

-----

Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*Yeah, I think they do. With Manga they always have a message. It's like a life message like how to do the right thing, or not doing the right thing and having to deal with that. So, you know, it's life lessons*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*I'm really not sure.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*I think obviously males. It attracts a lot more young males but it's very strange. I mean actually graphic novels and comic books lean more to young males. They do capture women in the early stages when they're young children, like they read magazines that are comic-based, but they tend to leave that. I read mostly manga. The thing that's different with manga, whereas comics are socially assumed to be a teenager's/young man's thing, a manga is for everybody. You know, in Japan, I know the culture doesn't translate fully, but there's manga for everybody. Everybody reads it. There's girls ones, boys ones and so on.*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*Yeah, I've seen it. I mean, people have said to me "What do you read at home?" and I've said "I read Manga", they say "Oh isn't that silly", but it's also the same for Science Fiction books I suppose. But even when I buy manga, they do have it in Waterstones, but you usually go to specific shops, like Science Fiction shops. Even there, where comics and manga are important, they still look down at them sometimes I think.*

-----

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*I think it's down again to personal opinion. I suppose your stereotypical answer would be that they don't like it, because when you think of a librarian you think of somebody just old and you know, "Ssshhh!" (laughs), but I think a librarian who embraces it or embraces any sort of book, you get people in. I think even if you see it purely in a business sense, it's smart to cater for a large market if you can manage it.*

### **Interview 6**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Erm, I never really pick up a book that often, but when I do pick up a book it's literally read in like a couple of hours or a day or two. So, yeah, I suppose when I do read, I do enjoy reading.*

-----

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*Past few weeks, well, I've read like nearly a book a week.*

-----

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Yes and No. My Dad was really into it. He's got like hundreds of books and he always used to say "Look, read a book, rather than go out", but my Mum was a bit indifferent about it. She didn't really care like.*

-----

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

Yeah.

Very many, would you say?

A few.

---

What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*No, I don't think there is an age range, to be honest with you. A lot of people would say like "Oh, it's a comic", but then you'll read it and it's got a lot more adult content than what a normal comic should have, if you know what I mean. So, no there isn't an age range.*

---

Do you ever buy Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga?

*Yeah, I do buy graphic novels now and again, yeah.*

How regularly is this?

*Erm, I've bought a few quite recently, but other than that, the last one I bought was at the start of this year. Fairly regularly I guess.*

---

Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*I think they should, yeah. It's just like any other reading material, so yeah, they should.*

---

What would you say would entice you into the library?

*I don't know. More stuff for our age I think, like graphic novels. If they started stocking loads of graphic novels then I'd probably go to the library a bit more*

---

What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*I think it's probably to do with imagination. If you read a book with no pictures, then you use your imagination. Whereas if you read a graphic novel you've got everything in the picture to tell you what's going on.*

---

Are comics easier/harder to read?

*To be honest with you, I don't think they're any different to normal books. I do know my sister finds them hard. She looks at one and she can't tell what to read first or where to go from there.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*I think they're of equal value, even though they're more expensive in shops. It'd also probably depend on what the graphic novel is about because you get some graphic novels that are just literally cartoony.*

-----

What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*I think it would get a lot more people of our age range into the library, to be honest with you. A lot more people would join to hire them out rather than spending X amount of money buying them.*

-----

Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*It probably depends on what you're teaching. I don't know whether they'd have as much academic value. Maybe in Art classes, I suppose.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*They're more like a middle class type of literature. I think they're more likely to be into things like that.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*I think they're probably to do males more than females and I don't know whether you'd find the upper class reading them, to be honest with you.*

Why do you reckon males would be more interested?

*It's all about the whole thing of growing up with comics. You don't normally find a lot of girls reading them at a young age or carrying on reading them when they get older. So, yeah, probably just males mostly.*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*My Mum and Dad, they poke fun at me sometimes when I tell them I'm buying a graphic novel. They'll turn round and say "Oh, you mean a comic book." So yeah, in that situation they do treat me a bit differently.*

-----

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*I think it depends on what library you go in. You'll probably find a lot of libraries with the older generation running it, who don't think there's any place in that library for them.*

Do you think things are changing at all?

*I think they should change, to be honest with you.*

### **Interview 7**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Yes, occasionally. I haven't always read much, like when I was younger, but I've recently become more aware of books and started reading them more often.*

-----

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*Including magazines and newspapers, I'd say about three or four times a week.*

-----

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Not really. More sort of playing out with my friends, more often. I was told to be active and stuff and not really reading. I read a bit, but not a lot.*

-----

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*Yeah, quite a lot. I own quite a few comics, because I collected them when I was younger. A used to read the Beano loads as well.*

Have you bought any recently, or was it more when you were younger?

*When I was seventeen I last bought some. So about five years ago, I'd say. I mean, I still get one every now and again, just to read one.*

-----  
What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*Not necessarily. I know that there are fans of an older age, but it's still aimed at kids really. There are some different ones, like ones with morals and ones that are a bit of fun.*

Do you think they are any that wouldn't be suitable for younger kids?

*I wouldn't say that there were any that are not suitable. I'd say there are some that are a different read.*

-----  
Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*I don't see why not. Fiction is fiction. Why shouldn't you have comics in there?*

-----  
What would you say would entice you into the library?

*Just being made more aware of where your local library is. You know, some of them have shut down and you don't really know where your library is or how to access it.*

So if you had more information about you library you may be more interested?

*Yeah, if I was told where to go and what they've got in I'd go down.*

-----  
What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*Comics give you an occasional break from normal reading. I don't know. They help you visualise the story more in your head. It gives you a bit more imagination because you can see something that somebody else has imagined and extend it a little bit. It puts a different storyline in your head to ones that you just imagine yourself from reading a book without pictures.*

-----  
Are comics easier/harder to read?

*No difference really.*

Why do you think this?

*Well, why would it be any different because it's got pictures? The content is no different just because of pictures.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*Same value. You can't compare different styles of writing and different approaches to books.*

-----

What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*I think more people, if they knew about it, might appreciate it more and come down, but if you don't know what your library's doing, then you never know do you?*

-----

Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*Well, like I said earlier, some of them do have morals, so there is always that. Some of them can help you imagine, and it's just good that older people like them as well. So, no reason why not.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*No, I can't really see why they would.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*There're different comics and different graphic novels for different genders. You can't mark it.*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*Well yeah. When people see you in a comic book store they automatically imagine you as a certain person, therefore you can be abused for it.*

-----

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*Each to their own, you know. People can like what they want to like, it doesn't make them different.*

### **Interview 8**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Sometimes, if you grasp what I'm saying. Sometimes I read a lot, but it's not really like books as such. It's more like magazines and newspapers or the internet and stuff.*

-----

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*When I'm at work everyday, because it's something I shouldn't be doing. (laughs). It's easy just to grab a newspaper anytime, but I haven't sat down and read a book for a while. It's something I don't mind doing with biography books.*

-----

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Yes, my Mum reads loads. You walk into our house and there's a big bookcase filled with all sorts. Yes. My Dad, he reads. He's into Star Trek, so he's got all the Star Trek Science Fiction books and stuff.*

-----

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*Comic books, when I was younger, definitely. My Dad he's got loads of the Beano from back in the day, up in the attic and that.*

-----

What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*It depends on what type of comic book. You've got like Bob the Builder stuff that are aimed at the young kids to get them into doing activities and reading, then you've got your older ones. You get like Viz and stuff for the adults. A lot of people read comic books. I mean you see all the films at the moment and they're based on comic books.*

---

Do you ever buy Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga?

*Not really. I used to get them when I was younger.*

---

Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*I reckon they would. They could do because they've got like a large appeal, haven't they? There's a vast amount and different varieties of people like reading comics and Japanese Manga.*

---

What would you say would entice you into the library?

*I don't know. I think it would just be having the time for me. I'm working shifts all the time and I don't know what I'm doing from one day to the next. If I had someone to go with as well. I mean, you can still conduct what you're doing as long as there are two of you.*

---

What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*For me it's a lot easier to read graphic novels because it's just like pictures and descriptions of what is happening through it, instead of like, well, you can see the situation. With a book you have to read it through, and I haven't got the longest of attention spans. You read and your eyes start going and you have to read it all before you can get the picture in your head of what's going on.*

---

Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*Equal, or they could actually be worth more because of the art work by a certain artist. It's like having a writer, but you've actually got someone doing all the art for it as well.*

---

What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*Oh, you'd get a lot more younger people in, if you know what I'm saying? If you had a vast collection then all the enthusiasts would come. Such as my Dad or something.*

-----

Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*Could be a bit easier for learning. You know, for younger people because I've not got the best concentration for reading word for word for word, and a lot of younger people haven't. Because of all the computer generation and that, they get to see lots of pictures as well.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*No not really because you can't tell who's into them things unless you start talking to them. It's like you can't tell just by their height. (laughs). It'd just be like stereotyping in a way.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*I'd say mainly male, but I reckon some females actually read comic books as well, but you'd normally associate with boys. Girls would have... erm, well I don't know what they'd have. (laughs).*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*Not really. I've never known of it.*

-----

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*I'm not too sure. Well, everyone's got their own personal view, so every librarian's going to have a different view.*

### **Interview 9**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Yes, I enjoy reading, when I read, which is not particularly often.*

-----  
How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*Maybe once or twice per week. Usually newspapers and short paragraphs on subjects.*

-----  
Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Yes, definitely by my Mum and Dad. School, not so much. That's more of a routine "you shall read this even if you're not particularly bothered about the subject" type thing.*

-----  
Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*I glanced at them for a little while. Never fully read them or read any real quantity.*

-----  
What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*There's a huge age range. Anything from those who are old enough to know what they are looking at, to those who aren't old enough and are just staring at the pictures. Yes, loads of people read comics at all ages. The stories can be quite appealing to anyone because they're quite creative and imaginary.*

-----  
Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*Yeah, I think so. They're supposed to be a wealth of knowledge, so any type of read should be available I think.*

-----  
What would you say would entice you into the library?

*If I had more of a need to go there. My job doesn't particularly require me to go there. It's something I don't give a lot of thought to but I can of like the idea. I spent a bit of time in libraries while I was a college.*

-----  
What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*Applying the language to the pictures, although I know it's often evident what is going on just from the picture. It helps you build up the characters because you can get an attitude from them and be a lot more involved in that sense.*

Because you can see them?

*Yeah, see what they're doing, hear what they're saying.*

-----  
Are comics easier/harder to read?

*The text is a lot easier, simpler, short, snappy, but you are looking at the pictures and making sense of them, applying the language to them. It sets you of thinking a bit more. I've found the few times I've read comics, I spend a lot of time reading very little, if you know what I mean?*

-----  
Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*I think reading for pleasure then they're equal. Everyone has there own opinion of what they find enjoyment in, so reading comics can be as good as any novel.*

-----  
What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*It'd certainly attract more people to the library.*

Any particular type of person?

*I think alternative people, if that's not too broad a term. You know, maybe a certain type of person into a certain type of music.*

-----  
Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*You could certainly find a way. It'd be complicated and take a bit of thinking about. Illustrations are good for getting a message across. Teachers use them all the time, like diagrams. In that sense I suppose a graphic novel is not that different. They're more story-based and the people who are writing them have a story and characters and places and morals. They take humanity into account and that sort of thing, a moral objective, if you know what I mean?*

-----  
Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*Maybe leaning towards middle and upper class. I don't want to make any assumptions about the lower classes, but they sort of have a more limited, lesser range of leisure activities.*

-----

Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*Slightly more male, but still relatively equal.*

-----

Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*Not personally myself, but I know it goes on. It's also a stereotype in films. You get a lot of American films with the nerdy kid who sits on his own and has his own interests. I come across people like that in real life, but I've not seen them get a huge amount of jive over it.*

-----

What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*Depends on the Librarian. I can't say I know that many, but I would imagine there's quite a few who probably frown upon it in the same way that tradition film-makers were frowning upon some of the new films. It's like music and all sorts. I suppose for a lot of people like librarians who take their literature seriously, it's seen as a sort of new wave.*

### **Interview 10**

Would you consider yourself to be someone who enjoys reading?

*Yes.*

-----

How often do you read recreationally (per day or per week)?

*About twice a week I would say.*

-----

Would you say that reading was encouraged by your family as you were growing up?

*Yeah, definitely.*

What was done to encourage you?

*Well, for my Mum, just everything's books to her. That's all she ever does. My sisters are well into it like, so from a young age they were teaching me to read a load of books and that.*

-----

Have you ever read a Comic Book or a Graphic Novel or a Manga?

*Yes, I've read Judge Dredd comics quite a lot.*

-----

What would you say is the age range at which comic books are aimed? Is there an age range at all?

*I don't think there is, you know. I reckon they're just like anything else. It's just like a publication and people buy it.*

-----

Do you ever buy Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga?

*No.*

-----

Do you think that Comic Books / Graphic novels / Manga would have a place in the public library?

*Yes definitely, they should do. They're just books.*

-----

What would you say would entice you into the library?

*More fantasy books and newer copies of those books. More stuff like Lord of the Rings. That's what I'm into.*

-----

What are the main differences between reading 'normal' written literature books and drawn literature like comic books, graphic novels and manga?

*With written literature, you have to have a lot more time and patience I think, but because graphic novels and comics are more visual, it allows lots or other people who wouldn't normally pick up a book to get involved in reading. I think it enables a wider range of people.*

-----

Are comics easier/harder to read?

*I'd just say they're different.*

-----  
Do you believe graphic novels to be of lesser value, higher value or equal value to 'normal' books?

*Equal value. They are normal books.*

-----  
What affects do you think a large graphic novel collection would have on a library?

*Space, because I can't really see a negative about having graphic novels.*

Would there be any positives?

*I think the positives are that you'd get a much wider range of young men going in, in particular, but also young girls as well. You'd encourage more people to go and use the libraries.*

-----  
Do you think graphic novels have any educational academic value? (whether in academic lib. or as a class room tool)

*Yeah, definitely. All the classic comics have all got like a moral story to them. It's always good versus evil, isn't it? Which is certainly lacking in today's society.*

-----  
Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular social class?

*No. I think it goes across the board.*

-----  
Do you believe graphic novels to appeal to any particular gender?

*I think mainly, from my experience, most of my mates who were into it were lads and that. I do know some girls who have read them, but I'd say mainly men.*

-----  
Have you ever witnessed someone being treated differently because they read comic books/graphic novels?

*Yeah, definitely. I've got mates who used to get bullied at school. Like I say me and my mate used to read Judge Dredd a lot and he used to get bullied all the time.*

-----  
What do you think Librarians think of comics/graphic novels?

*In my opinion, I would guess that librarians would consider them not to be books.*

-----