

Collection Development Considerations, Dos and Don'ts

Considerations

Graphic novels are a non-age-specific format whose subjects range nearly as widely as do the subjects of books in general. Images depict the characters and action of the text in a more immediate fashion than does text alone. Text is sparser than in text-only books and therefore, specific words and phrases may be more prominent. For these reasons, some graphic novels, which may feature material very similar to that in a young adult text-only novel, may not be deemed appropriate for a young adult collection. Violence, sexual imagery, nudity and strong language are some of the subjects which may have a similar place in a graphic and text novel but which may place one in a young adult collection and the other in an adult collection. As with movies, the creators determine to what degree these subjects will be depicted if they are part of a story.

Things to do

- a. Gain some familiarity with graphic novels in general.
- b. Gauge how graphic novels will fit your situation
 - a. What will you be comfortable adding?
 - b. What will your community tolerate?
 - c. What does your collection development policy support?
 - d. What will other staff members support?
- c. Decide where graphic novels will be cataloged in your library.
 - a. Separate gn collections are common, as are collections in the 741.5 location (but does this put an adult-level gn next to a Calvin and Hobbes collection?).
 - b. Other options include specific young adult, adult and or children's graphic novel collections or inclusion within regular fiction and non-fiction collections where each title best fits.
 - c. Having multiple locations spreads a collection thinner but makes it possible to put each title where it fits best, such as having a location for adult-level gns that you inadvertently purchase for your teen collection.
- d. Choose a list of "opening day" titles.
- e. Preview each title that you have any doubts about.
 - a. If you aren't able to preview a title, seek out opinions of librarians that you know and trust or
 - b. Consider waiting on that title until you do have a better feel for it or
 - c. Buy it and have an alternate location in mind if it doesn't fit the specific collection.
- f. Read reviews from journals and testimonials from colleagues to continue growing your collection. Again, preview anything that you are interested in purchasing but uncertain of.
- g. Be particularly skeptical of titles from DC's Vertigo, Marvel Knights, Marvel Max, Wildstorm, and Fantagraphics as these are publishers/imprints meant for adults.

Things Not to Assume

- a. Don't assume that any reviewed or discussed graphic novel will work for your library.
- b. Don't assume that every graphic novel that you buy will be appropriate for your young adult or juvenile collection.
- c. Don't assume that no graphic novels will be appropriate for your young adult or juvenile collection.
- d. Don't assume that only boys will read your graphic novels.
- e. Don't assume that graphic novels will disappear any more than any other collection.
- f. Don't assume that graphic novels are only low-quality works about flying people in tights.
- g. Don't assume that all graphic novels will be appropriate or welcome by all graphic novel readers—treat reader's advisory with graphic novels just as you would any other reader's advisory situation.