

**Adult graphic novel readers: Their opinions, awareness
and usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections**

by

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Submitted to the School of Information Management,
Victoria University of Wellington
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Information Studies

June 2017

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Brenda Chawner whose guidance, attention to detail and supervision allowed for me to complete this research project. Secondly I would like to extend my thanks to all the participants who took part in my research, both the interview and questionnaire participants who provided the information for this research to take place. I would like to acknowledge the time and effort spent by staff at the War Memorial Branch of the Hutt City Libraries and the Central Branch of the Porirua public libraries for allowing me to position my flyers and questionnaires around their beautiful libraries. To all the people I have mentioned and to anyone else who has helped during this research project and throughout the completion of the Master of Information Studies I am truly grateful. Finally I would like to thank my partner Rebecca whose patience and understanding were pivotal in helping me complete my research.

Abstract

Research Problem: This study examined adult graphic novel readers and their usage, awareness and opinions on public libraries' graphic novel collections. This study examined the collected data through the theoretical framework of fandom to assess whether fandom influences adults' opinions and usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections.

Methodology: This study used a mixed methods approach to gathering data where both a qualitative interview and a self-completed questionnaire were used. The sample population of the qualitative interviews were any adult graphic novel readers, regardless of whether they borrowed graphic novels from a public library. The quantitative questionnaire was interested in obtaining data from all graphic novel readers.

Results: In total there were 69 responses to the quantitative questionnaires and six face-to-face interviews were conducted with adult graphic novel readers. The results obtained indicated that public libraries' graphic novel collections have a loyal following of users in which adults are the majority users. Overall there was only slight satisfaction towards public libraries' graphic novel collections with many participants indicating various improvements public libraries could make to customer interaction including. These included an increase in titles and improvements to the layout/organisation of the graphic novel collections.

The results indicated that certain traits of fandom were present amongst the participants and this had some effect on their usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections. However, other characteristics relating to fandom were almost non-existent amongst participants.

Implications: This research unearths further information on the New Zealand graphic novel reader demographic. In particular this research examines the role fandom plays for graphic novel readers and how this is linked to graphic novel readers' use and opinions on public libraries' graphic novel collections. This research provides public libraries with a list of

potential improvements they can make to improve their collections and also provides them with a deeper understanding of their graphic novel reader customers. This research also found similarities and differences from previous literature related to graphic novels and public library use which warrants further investigation.

Keywords: Graphic novels, comic books, public libraries, adult graphic novel readers, fandom, cultural economy, user perspectives/opinions.

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Topic Statement

The purpose of this research is to document and understand adult graphic novel readers' usage and opinions on New Zealand public libraries' graphic novel collections. In particular, this research will seek to understand whether the theory of fandom is evident within adult graphic novel readers and whether this affects adults' opinions and usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections.

Existing literature on the topic of graphic novels has largely focused on children or young adult readers and how graphic novels are of educational value to them such as Walker (2009) and Baur and Lee (2012), or on the collection policies and youth marketing of graphic novels in relation to public libraries and school libraries such as Pyles (2012) and Haines (2007). Research involving adult graphic novel readers and libraries is much less common, though some research on this area does exist. Charbonneau (2005) and Priest (2012) both examined usage statistics and satisfaction levels of public libraries' graphic novel collections whilst Schneider (2014) surveyed public libraries throughout America in relation to graphic novel use. However none of these studies were exclusive to adult readers. Leng (2012), Ziolkowska and Howard (2010) and Botzakis (2009 & 2011) have all conducted sociological research on adults' motives for reading graphic novels but this was not directly in relation to the discipline of Library and Information Science.

Recent literature exists from within New Zealand on the topic of graphic novels such as Priest's (2012) research on the graphic novel collection of Auckland public libraries and whether it was meeting customer expectation. Cunningham (2012) also conducted research on the shelving and cataloguing techniques employed by Southland libraries, and Walker (2009) investigated the use of graphic novels as an educational resource in Hamilton schools.

However, within a New Zealand context, no research has been carried out focusing exclusively on adult graphic novel readers and their opinions and attitudes towards public libraries' graphic novel collections and whether the theory of fandom dictates adult graphic novel readers' behaviours towards these collections.

This research will have a multidisciplinary benefit by appealing to both Library and Information Science and Sociological scholarship. This research will benefit library scholarship by helping to understand the usage patterns, attitudes and opinions of adult graphic novel readers within New Zealand. Public libraries could use this information to shape future collection policies and marketing of their graphic novel collections. Furthermore, the results will be of sociological benefit as they will uncover information on an undocumented demographic of New Zealand society. The qualitative responses can be compared to similar research conducted in North America (Botzakis, 2009) to determine what similarities and differences exist between the two regions.

Key Definitions

Adult

The term 'adult' could have different meanings depending on country, culture and society. For clarification, this research will define an adult as any individual who is eighteen years old or over because this is the age that legally parents are no longer responsible for their child (Citizens Advice Bureau, 2016).

Comic Books/Graphic Novels

Traditionally, comic books are publications that appear weekly, bi-weekly or monthly and contain both images and written text. Usually a comic book is part of an ongoing story which when collated can be published as a trade paperback. A graphic novel, similar to a comic book, contains illustrations supported by text but the graphic novel is a self-contained story released in one publication (Pinkley & Casey, 2013). To give an example, the graphic novel 'Watchmen' (Moore, Gibbons, Higgins, 1986) was voted by Time magazine as one of its top 100 English-language novels, however before it was a graphic novel it was a comic book released monthly (Schneider, 2014). This is reaffirmed by Pinkley and Casey (2013) who stated that "Comic books can be bound together to form a complete story, which in turn makes it a graphic novel, but individual comic books are not graphic novels" (pg 2). This research will use the term 'graphic novel' instead of 'comic book' because the vast majority of public libraries within New Zealand only store-trade paperbacks which collect a whole story and, as per Pinkley and Casey's definition, are therefore graphic novels. The term 'comic book' will only be used when describing individual comic book issues such as Superman #1.

Literature Review

History of Graphic Novels in Libraries

From the inception of the comic book format in the late 1930s up until the 1960s, comic books (the term graphic novel was not introduced until 1978 as a marketing ploy for Will Eisner's *'A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories'*) were often viewed negatively by the library community. At this time nearly the entirety of library literature was devoted to children and adolescents and the effects comic books would have on them. Ellis and Highsmith (2000), in their research of comic books in library literature, traced this negativity to a 1940 newspaper article from Sterling North who viewed comic books as America's 'National Disgrace'. Ellis and Highsmith surmise from their study that throughout the 1940s and 1950s comic books were seen as 'ephemeral trash' offering no value to the children who read them. Tilly (2007) comprehensively documents the attitudes of Youth Services librarians towards comic books dating 1939 to 1955, and largely supports the work of Ellis and Highsmith. Tilly found that Youth Service librarians saw it as their duty to promote alternatives to the ever-popular comic books which would be harmful to children through their depiction of violence, sexual content and the fear that comic books would stunt children's imaginations. Tilly also notes that educators, parents, psychologists and legislators all shared this negative opinion towards comic books.

Ellis and Highsmith (2000), Tilly (2007), Nyberg (2010) and Pinkley and Casey (2013) all cite Frederic Wertham's (1954) book, *'The Seduction of the Innocents'*, as promoting the negative impact comic books had on children. Wertham purported that there was a link between comic books and juvenile delinquency, basing his reasoning on the perceived relationship that an increase in juvenile violence corresponded with the increase in

sales of comic books (Pinkley & Casey, 2013). Although Wertham's critique lacked significant evidence it had a strong impact on librarians, educators and parents. This eventually resulting in the formulation of the Comics Code in 1954, in which a highly-regulated comic book industry emerged with limits being placed on everything from violence, language, religion and the attire of female superheroes (Ray, 2010).

The 1960s saw a modicum of acceptance emerge from academic libraries towards comic books. Academic libraries began promoting comic books in their collections in what Ellis and Highsmith (2000) and Nyberg (2010) suggest was due to the growing academic phenomena of popular culture. Although Ellis and Highsmith reiterate that the prevailing view remained that comic books were below that of traditional reading books.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the continued acceptance of comic books and graphic novels in libraries. Ellis and Highsmith (2000) and Nyberg (2010) attribute this to the term 'graphic novel' which helped to remove the stigma which had long been associated with 'comic books' and made them seem more like 'real books'. Nyberg also notes that the 1980s saw comic books gain recognition for their educational benefits of helping children who were reluctant readers.

From the late 1990s to the present day graphic novels have become ubiquitous within libraries. The 1990s saw a significant change occur in the library literature from articles debating whether graphic novels belonged in libraries to articles about graphic novel collection policy (Welch & Brown 2005, Haines 2007, Matz 2004), the issues of shelving graphic novels (Cunningham 2012, Nyberg 2010, Kitzman 2010), and literature designed to improve librarians' knowledge of graphic novels (Pinkley & Casey 2013). Although libraries have come to accept graphic novels there remains a link to the 1940s and 1950s with many librarians still seeing graphic novels as below that of 'good literature'. Some librarians still

merely see them as a gateway to 'real books' as the children eventually 'grow up' (Heaney 2007, Nyberg, 2010).

User Demographics and Satisfaction Levels

The topic of user demographics and satisfaction levels of public library graphic novel readers have played a prominent role in the literature. Charbonneau (2005) used a quantitative questionnaire to examine the demographic usage and satisfaction levels of graphic novel readers in the Montreal Octogone library through the use of the RFM framework (Recent, Frequency, Money (relating to books borrowed)), which served as a highly effective framework for collecting data. Charbonneau's results indicated that the usage of graphic novels was dispersed amongst a large age range from under fifteens to the over 40s with the largest percentage of readers occurring in the under fifteen age group. Charbonneau's results showed that males were the predominant users of the collection, although a substantial 38 percent of readers were female. In regards to usage statistics Charbonneau found that the library's graphic novel collection had a loyal following with 75 percent of respondents indicating they had used the collection for over three years. Charbonneau's research found that the vast majority of participants (89 percent) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the collection. However a lack of clarity around the used Likert scale could have resulted in ambiguity amongst the participants, affecting the validity of the research.

Priest (2012) undertook similar research to Charbonneau involving multiple branches of the Auckland Public library. Priest's results on demographic usage differed to Charbonneau showing that the highest usage of the collection came from the 20-34 age range and that the majority of users had only been borrowing from the collection for six months. Similarly to Charbonneau, Priest found that satisfaction levels of the collection were high

amongst the participants, which Priest attributed to the library's collection policy for both graphic novels and manga (a form of traditional Japanese sequential art mixed with the American comic book style (Masuchika & Boldt, 2010 in Priest 2012)). However, it must be noted that not all of the participating libraries in Priest's research marketed the questionnaire in the same way which could have resulted in a geographic bias in terms of participant responses.

Schneider (2014) compared the usage and impact of graphic novels to video games in public libraries across the United States. Findings showed that libraries consider twelve to fifteen year olds as the primary users of graphic novel collections, with 52 percent of all graphic novel users being below or equal to 18 years of age.

Cunningham (2012), in a study of Southland librarians' opinions on the shelving of graphic novels, discovered that they too saw the collection being of primary use to young adults or teenagers. However, all of the participating librarians indicated that they believed that the graphic novel collection was for all ages. In the same research Cunningham conducted a public survey targeting both graphic novel readers and non-readers asking their opinions on various topics involving graphic novels. Surprisingly, Cunningham's public survey offered differing results to his librarian-only interviews with a slight majority of participants indicating that they thought adults were the primary audience for graphic novels. However it must be noted that participants in this study included graphic novel readers and non-graphic novel readers which may have affected the results.

The majority of library literature suggests that young adults are the target user demographic for public libraries' graphic novel collections (Schneider 2014, Heaney 2007), with young adults being the greatest users of the collections. This is contradictory to research which shows that adults are the main readers of graphic novels. Pyles (2012) cites statistics

from comic book distribution company Diamond Distributors, who in 2003 stated that their average reader was aged twenty-nine. Pyles documents the work of Schenker (n.d. in Pyles, 2012) who used Facebook to gain demographic information on graphic novel readers.

Schenker ascertained that the largest group of graphic novel readers were between eighteen to thirty years old. Kraft (2013) examined the demographic users of Comixology, an Amazon subsidiary selling access to online comics. Kraft found that the average user of the Comixology website were males between twenty-seven and thirty-six years old, something Kraft described as unsurprising. Ray (2010), in her study of comic books in library literature and librarian opinions on graphic novels and comic books, stated that comic books have often been relegated to only being seen as of interest to juvenile audiences. This is something which Ray strongly disagreed with and urged librarians to build graphic novel collections with all ages in mind. The current research will examine why young adults are the biggest readers of graphic novels within libraries even though overall adults are the biggest consumers of graphic novels.

Why Adults Read Graphic Novels

Through the use of face-to-face interviews, Botzakis (2009) investigated why adults choose to read graphic novels and discovered numerous motives such as graphic novels providing a means of escape from daily life and also offering educational value to certain readers. Botzakis suggests adults choose to read graphic novels due to the collectable aspect which they offer. Unfortunately, Botzakis' research suffers from a small sample size where he discusses only four of the twelve participants he collected data on. In a subsequent piece of research Botzakis (2011) focuses on one participant interview, conducted in 2005, on the topic of why adults choose to read comic books. Based on the theory of poaching (De Certeau, 1984; Jenkins, 1992), where readers use the texts they read to influence their actions to enrich their daily lives, Botzakis found that comic books played a significant role in how

the participant lived his life. For example, the participant's moral compass was greatly influenced by the famous Spiderman quote "with great power comes great responsibility" (Marvel Comics, 1962 in Botzakis, 2011).

Ziolkowska and Howard (2010) used face-to-face and internet interviews to uncover why adults choose to read graphic novels, and consistent with Botzakis, discovered that adults used graphic novels as a means of escapism. Ziolkowska and Howard found that adults chose to read graphic novels because they offered control for the reader, a challenging experience and provided instant feedback through the ability to read comics quickly. Adults also found the collectable aspect of graphic novels appealing. Ziolkowska and Howard attributed all of these reasons to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory of flow. Ziolkowska and Howard's research is significant because it involved a large sample size for a qualitative study (9 participants), serving to increase the external validity of the research.

Leng (2012) used a case study approach of documenting the origin stories and key events of Batman and Spiderman to show that empathy towards the characters was the central factor behind adults choosing to read graphic novels. Leng's conclusion of empathy can be extended to De Castro's (2015) work looking at Batman within Mexican culture. De Castro, in an article examining a Batman themed art exhibit, discusses how the people of Mexico look up to a character such as Batman as they can draw parallels between their own country's problems of crime and corruption and the fictional Gotham city where Batman fights to end these injustices. Leng's research would have benefited through analysing more comic book characters to see if his conclusions on empathy were evident throughout a larger content sample, although the work of Botzakis (2011) adds credibility to Leng's analysis.

Organisation - Shelving and Cataloguing of Graphic Novels

The issue of shelving and cataloguing is prominent within the literature as many graphic novels are catalogued for young adults. Several studies have been interested in whether this has an effect on how adults use the public libraries' graphic novel collection. In a case study of Los Angeles public libraries, Kitzmann (2010) noted their use of cataloguing through a Dewey decimal number (741.5 for all Comic book/ Graphic novels), followed by a cutter number attributed to the graphic novel series it comes from, followed by another cutter number for the author. However, Pyles (2012) notes the difficulties libraries face when it comes to cataloguing graphic novels and implores libraries to shelve their collection similarly to that of comic book stores by dividing first by publisher, then by character and then by chronological order. Cunningham's (2012) research found that librarians advocated for a mixture of techniques with no consensus on which way was best. All three works highlight the difficulties libraries face in this regard.

Summary

It is evident that there are numerous topics relating to adult graphic novel readership and public libraries including: the history of graphic novels in public libraries, the demographic information and usage statistics of public library graphic novel collections, the cataloguing and shelving of graphic novels and adult motivations for reading graphic novels. The current research intends to combine and expand upon this literature to identify how adult graphic novel readers interact with public libraries' graphic novel collections in relation to their awareness, opinions and usage of the collections.

Theoretical framework

This research will be based on the theory of Cultural Fandom which will serve as a lens through which to interpret the findings of the research. Fiske (1992) provided a holistic account of Cultural Fandom describing it as a subculture of society celebrating an element of mass distributed popular culture such as graphic novels. Fiske suggests members of the fandom gain their social identity from the type of popular culture they choose to follow. In particular, this research will focus on Fiske's theory of the cultural economy which consists of three distinct areas: Discrimination and Distinction, Productivity and Participation and Capital Accumulation.

Discrimination and Distinction

Discrimination and Distinction involves defining which items and morals are to be regarded in high esteem and thus should be followed as part of the fandom, in essence setting guidelines about who can enter into the fandom. An example could include that to be considered a member of the graphic novel fandom you must follow certain writers or read the graphic novels as opposed to solely watching graphic novel related movies.

Discrimination and Distinction also entails that members of the fandom are aware that their chosen culture is often devalued in the eyes of official culture, such as the opinion held by many that graphic novels do not constitute a high form of literature. It is then necessary for fandom members to defend their chosen culture. The impression that graphic novels are a low form of culture has often resulted in stigmatization for graphic novel readers, a popular sentiment stated by Grossberg (1992), Brown (1997), Raphael (2007) and Lopes (2006). Lopes' research on popular culture and stigmatization has shown that adult graphic novel readers are frequently seen as geeks and juveniles suffering from 'arrested development'. Although as Ramires (2015) notes this has been disputed through the works of Art

Spiegelman and Alan Moore, with Spiegelman winning a Pulitzer Prize for his graphic novel *Maus* in 1992, and the graphic novel *Watchmen*, written by Alan Moore, appearing in *Time* magazine's top 100 novels of all time. Both Raphael (2007) and Cicci (2015) have written that stigmatization is prominent within the graphic novel subculture, for example animosity against cosplayers (people who dress up as their favourite character to attend conventions). This research will examine whether adult graphic novel readers ever feel stigmatized for their fandom and if this has an effect on their use of public libraries' graphic novel collections, of which a significant proportion are catalogued as being for young adults.

Productivity and Participation

Fiske (1992) subcategorizes Productivity and Participation into three sections: Semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity, textual productivity. Semiotic productivity is where members derive their social identity from the fandom they follow. For a graphic novel fan this could manifest itself as users adopting the morals of their favourite characters. Enunciative productivity is when communication exists amongst the fandom such as through the use of internet forums and conventions or through the choice of clothes members choose to wear or other items related to their fandom. Textual productivity is where members of the fandom produce their own versions of the culture and share it around the fandom such as creating your own graphic novel. The current research intends to find out whether adult graphic novel readers exhibit characteristics of Productivity and Participation and whether they can be incorporated into the public library environment to improve adult graphic novel readers' use of the collection.

Capital Accumulation

Unlike in the real economy where goods and money are the central focus, within the cultural economy money is substituted for knowledge where those who possess the most

knowledge are held in highest regard amongst the fandom. This has been related to the fandom of graphic novels through the works of Brown (1997), Raphael (2007), and Cicci (2015) who have all stated the importance of collection to the graphic novel fandom, where members with the largest collections achieve the most prestige. This research will seek to examine whether capital accumulation within the cultural economy has a direct influence on adult graphic novel readers and whether it affects their opinions and usage of the public libraries' collections where the intention is to borrow, not to collect.

Research Questions

Main Question

- What are adult graphic novel readers' opinions, awareness and usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections?

Sub Questions

- What influence, if any, does fandom have on adult graphic novel readers? How does this affect their opinions on public libraries' graphic novel collections?
- In what ways could public libraries make improvements to facilitate greater interaction with adult graphic novel readers?

Project Design

This research will be cross sectional in nature, with an explanatory mixed methods approach to collecting data, entailing both the use of a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative interview. The benefits of using a mixed methods approach, as defined by Gorman and Clayton (2005), include the ability to extend the extent of the research by addressing different parts of the research using different mediums, for example a questionnaire and an interview, enabling triangulation. A mixed method approach allows the researcher to obtain in-depth answers, provided through qualitative interviews without suffering from a small sample size as this can be obtained through the quantitative surveys (Gorman & Clayton, 2005). The questionnaire aims to gather data pertaining to graphic novel readers' demographic information, with questions being based on Charbonneau's (2005) library modified RFM (Recent, Frequency, Monetary) framework. Other questions within the questionnaire will be based on the theory of fandom. The Qualitative interviews will be used to collect in-depth information on adult graphic novel readers, using Fiske's (1992) theory of the cultural economy to assist in the creation of interview questions.

Methodology & Data Analysis

Population and Sample

Quantitative Questionnaire

The target population for the research as a whole was adult graphic novel readers. However for the quantitative questionnaires the targeted population was any graphic novel reader regardless of age as the current research is also interested in comparing different age groups. The objective of the questionnaire was to acquire as many responses as possible from the chosen population, with a minimum sample of thirty participants. A sample of this size will enable significant data analysis, allowing conclusions to be drawn, which will assist the

external validity of the research (Pickard, 2007). Accidental (or convenience) sampling was chosen as it will provide the highest returns of completed surveys. A limitation of this sampling method was that it provides no guarantee that the responses will be representative of the graphic novel reader population (Connaway & Powell, 2010). In an attempt to mitigate this potential bias, the questionnaires were distributed in multiple locations including: The War memorial branch of the Hutt City Libraries, the Central branch of the Porirua city libraries and the Kelburn and Pipitea Campuses of Victoria University. Promotional flyers contained an internet link and a QR code which linked to the questionnaire hosted on the Qualtrics website. A link to the questionnaire was also shared through social media with all respondents remaining anonymous.

Qualitative Interview

For the qualitative interviews the targeted population was adult graphic novel readers, with the researcher intending on gaining a sample size of five to seven participants. The research intended on using purposive sampling where respondents would be chosen to be representative of the population (Connaway & Powell, 2010). However, due to the limited number of responses and the limited time period available the researcher was forced to accept the first six respondents who answered. Participants were gathered using a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling where the researcher's friends and family made participants aware of the research.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval to conduct the current research was granted by the Victoria Human Ethics Committee. It was important that the research followed all ethical considerations such as privacy, informed consent, and a minimization of harm to both participant and researcher (Victoria Human Ethics Policy). The researcher received permission from the War Memorial

branch of Hutt City libraries and the Porirua city libraries to allow the distribution of questionnaires and flyers advertising the qualitative interview section of the research. All participating libraries will receive a copy of the research as was indicated as part of the permission.

Information explaining the purpose of the research, why the information being gathered is necessary for the research, and contact details of the researcher were included in the participant information sheet for the quantitative questionnaire. All qualitative interview participants were informed of how they can obtain a copy of the results through a participant consent form. Questionnaire responses were anonymous to ensure participants' privacy and the researcher will ensure confidentiality for interview participants. All information gathered will be securely kept, with physical copies of data kept in locked storage and digital information password protected.

Data Collection

Quantitative Questionnaire

The first stage of the explanatory mixed methods methodology is the self-completed questionnaire. The self-completed questionnaire was utilized as it allowed for the collection of substantive data on demographic information and usage rates of public libraries' graphic novel collections by providing a time efficient means for participants to provide short answers, whilst at the same time protecting their privacy (Connaway and Powell, 2010).

The researcher utilized a method used by both Charbonneau (2005) and Priest (2012) by seeking approval from Porirua libraries and Hutt Valley libraries to position the questionnaire next to the graphic novel section thereby allowing anyone who visits the collection the opportunity to answer a questionnaire. Flyers were also distributed around the Kelburn and Pipitea campuses of Victoria University, which contained information regarding

the purpose of the research as well as an internet link and QR code to the questionnaire. It was decided to distribute the flyers around University campuses as the quantitative aspect of the research is interested in obtaining data from all graphic novel readers regardless of whether they use the graphic novel collection at a public library. In an effort to increase participant response a link to the questionnaire was posted through social media using the Qualtrics website, whilst Hutt City libraries used their Facebook account to advertise a link to the questionnaire.

Within the War Memorial branch of Hutt Valley libraries and the Central branch of the Porirua public library, participants had the option of placing the completed questionnaire in a return box positioned next to the graphic novel collection or of using the QR code on the cover of the questionnaire to access the questionnaire online through a smart device. All questionnaires were written as simply as possible without jargon in order to avoid miscommunication.

Questions asked in the questionnaire were based on Charbonneau's (2005) approach to the RFM framework which was modified to suit library users. The RFM framework involves questions based around the usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections. These questions were supplemented by user demographic questions, questions on user satisfaction and questions relating to fandom.

Qualitative Interviews

For the qualitative aspect of the research a face-to-face semi-structured interview was chosen as it allows for immediate in-depth answers, whilst allowing the researcher to gather extra information through reading participants' body language and asking supplementary follow-on questions (Gorman & Clayton, 2005). Due to the large amount of time it takes to transcribe and analyse the interviews, coupled with a limited time period, it was decided that

a sample size of between five to seven interviewees would be appropriate to generate significant response from which to draw conclusions. All interviews were recorded and involved the use of both open-ended and closed questions to facilitate flowing conversation, with questions being based on the theoretical concept of fandom. Once the interviews were completed they were transcribed and sent to the participants for them to confirm the accuracy of the data.

In order to attract participants, flyers designed with a graphic novel background were spread across both the Kelburn and Pipitea campuses of Victoria University containing a participant information sheet and contact details of the researcher. The same flyers were also distributed around the War Memorial branch of the Hutt City libraries and the central branch of the Porirua city libraries.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Questionnaire

The researcher utilized the Qualtrics website to generate descriptive statistics from the data. All handwritten completed questionnaires were added manually by the researcher into the Qualtrics website to ensure that all data was in the one place. Descriptive statistics involved the collating of demographic and usage statistics of public libraries' graphic novel collections which were used to formulate information into easily understandable graphs and tables as well as helping to establish information on the mean and mode for the data when applicable (Connaway & Powell, 2010). The Qualtrics website enabled the research to obtain descriptive data across two or more questions by generating a cross tabulation table, for example to find out how many respondents were male and read superhero graphic novels. Through the use of cross tabulations the research was able to examine whether patterns existed amongst the data. All calculated statistics were analysed to understand the usage and

awareness of public libraries' graphic novel collections and whether the role of fandom plays a factor in how graphic novel readers use public libraries' graphic novel collections. All collated information was obtained in theory to assist in tailoring future library service to those readers.

Qualitative Interviews

Data obtained from the face-to-face interviews was analysed using thematic analysis, where all the interviews were transcribed and then coded to identify any similarities, differences, or relationships which exist amongst the data. The researcher used a version of La Pelle's (2004) methodology of using Microsoft word tables to help categorize and code the data contained in the transcripts. The researcher first transcribed all the interviews and sent a completed version to the participant to check the accuracy of the transcriptions. The researcher then applied a code (sometimes more than one) to each statement from the participant, all statements with the same code were then grouped together. This method permitted the researcher to simply sort through the information, allowing effective analysis. As a starting point the researcher created a code book based on the theory of fandom. This codebook was modified during the analysis process due to qualitative analysis being an iterative process which required the researcher to continually move back and forth amongst analysis and collection as new phenomena arose from the interviews (Leedy & Ormond, 2015).

Limitations

The main limitation of this research was that the researcher was unable to recruit as many participants as he would have liked, affecting the external validity of the research. It was initially hoped at the start of the research that the questionnaire would be able to be placed at the Central Branch of the Wellington Public library but, after initial contact,

correspondence ceased. This can be seen a detrimental as not only is the Central branch of the Wellington public library the largest of all libraries in the Wellington region, it also has a vast graphic novel collection. It was also hoped that the questionnaire could be distributed at the Graphic Comic book store in Wellington, as the quantitative section of the research was focused on all graphic novel readers, even those readers who do not use the public library. However after making contact with them the researcher received no response.

A further potential bias is that the researcher himself is a reader of graphic novels and therefore had preconceived thoughts over what the research outcomes will be. It was therefore necessary for the researcher to remain objective throughout the whole research process to ensure the reliability of the study.

Results: Qualitative interviews

Data for the interviews was collected during the period March-April 2017. In total six interviews were conducted. Five of the interviews were carried out through face-to-face semi—structured interviews with participants based in the Wellington region, whilst one interview was conducted via email. A set of interview questions were emailed to this participant because they lived in Christchurch and a face-to-face interview was therefore untenable. The face-to-face interviews ranged between 18 minutes and 28 minutes with questions relating to demographic information, library usage, opinions on public libraries’ graphic novel collections, and the theoretical framework of fandom. Demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Participant information.

Participant Identifier	Age	Gender	Occupation
Participant 1	19	Male	Student
Participant 2	23	Female	Student/theatre technician
Participant 3	38	Female	Student – past employment in the NZ Animation industry
Participant 4	27	Female	Assistant Librarian
Participant 5	35	Female	Free-lance Writer
Participant 6	27	Female	Recreational Officer at a Rest Home

Graphic Novel Readership

Introduction to Graphic Novels

All of the participants shared a similarity in that they were all introduced to graphic novels or a form of Art-work dominated literature, such as MAD Magazine, from a young age, either as children or as teenagers. Three of the participants have been continuous readers of graphic novels since their youth. The other three participants were early readers of graphic novels but only became in-depth readers at a later age, with one noting that she was re-introduced to graphic novels by a friend working at the library. Another participant stated that graphic novel readership, especially Manga and Anime, was high amongst the film animation industry which led her more into the graphic novel scene.

One common theme shared by three of the participants was that they became accustomed to graphic novels from a young age through family. One participant spoke of collecting the Horrible History comic books and spoke of their father collecting comic books and therefore those were the graphic novels which they grew up reading. Two participants spoke of how reading graphic novels was entrenched in their family, with both participants noting their early readership of the Asterix and Obelisk graphic novel. One participant explained that she was introduced to graphic novels not through family but through school where graphic novel adaptations of classic fiction books were used to help improve student reading.

Genres

Each of the participants read a number of different genres of graphic novels including superhero, comedy, the Macabre (dark and gritty graphic novels), childish (Asterix and Obelisk), Science fiction, fantasy, adult themed graphic novels, and paranormal and adventure, with many participants reading more than one genre. What became clear over the

course of the interviews was that the format of graphic novels encapsulates such a large body of work that simply defining them all as graphic novels is inadmissible. As one participant noted:

“It’s bizarre to me how they have a collection of graphic novels and there’s 7 volumes about a young boy post Hiroshima, in post Hiroshima Japan next to like an intense story about someone’s mum dying of cancer, next to a really jokey thing about people having sex. These are not the same thing.”

Graphic Novel Intended Audience

Perhaps somewhat contradictory, as five of the six interview participants were female, the majority of the participants to some degree believed that young to teenager boys were the main audience for graphic novels. One participant stated how historically young boys were the target audience and provided the example of Spiderman being the classic “nerdy kid who could be a superhero.” Another participant spoke of seeing graphic novels as a ‘boys club’ and that this had a negative effect of pushing them away from superhero graphic novels. A different participant believed graphic novels were aimed mainly at males based on the male centric collection they had in the public library and the overall themes of the graphic novels. One participant wrote of her disappointment with DC superhero comics:

“DCU comics: I think the superhero comic industry is stuck in the past, and not really aware how to deal with the fact that it has fans that aren’t white males in their young twenties. To be honest, I stopped reading DCU because I was sick of female characters being constantly sexualised or trivialised.”

Although most of the participants believed that graphic novels were male orientated, it was encouraging to hear that many of them believed the graphic novel industry was making strides to becoming more diverse. Three participants noted that in recent years there seems to

have been a move to be more inclusive of female graphic novel readers with participants giving the example of the Superhero Ms Marvel (Kamal Khan), a young Muslim girl, not your quintessential superhero. One interviewee also described how they had many female friends who were passionate about certain graphic novels.

A further theme which emerged was that the intended audience was dependant on the genre of graphic novel. This theme was apparent when participants discussed the intended age of graphic novel readers. One participant spoke of the difference between an Archie comic, which everyone could read, as opposed to titles such as ‘The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen’ which often involved graphic scenes of violence and should only be read by adults. This idea was mimicked by a further participant who said that she was aware of a lot of graphic novels which children were not allowed to read. Another participant spoke of how different genres of graphic novels had different audiences and used the example of the graphic novel ‘Elfquest’ being for mid-teens to adults and evidenced this by saying that ‘Elfquest’ was adopted as part of the school curriculum in the United States of America. The participant continued on to say:

“Everyone in Japan reads manga, from elementary school students to teenagers to salarymen to retirees. There is literally manga for every different group in society.”

Level of Fandom

All participants were current readers of graphic novels, although somewhat surprisingly only two of the participants described themselves as avid graphic novel fans. With one acknowledging herself as a huge fan of graphic novels, in particular the DC universe as well as being a big fan of the graphic novel ‘Elfquest’, another showed signs of being a fanatic. That is, she stated that she was a ‘hardcore’ fan of the works of Hayao Mayazaki as well as the works of Neil Gaiman, but also stated that she did not do other things

attributed to fanatics such as collect memorabilia or participate in cosplay, where individuals where costumes related to popular culture such as graphic novel characters.

All other participants used a litany of different criteria to justify themselves as moderate fans. For example, one participant noted that they a moderate fan because they “wouldn’t dedicate his whole life” to graphic novels and that they made up just one portion of his many hobbies including reading other books. This sentiment was shared by two other participants who spoke of being keen readers and reading other books besides graphic novels. One of these participants described them self as a moderate fan and similarly to the other participant spoke of how graphic novels were not the focus of their life and also highlighted the fact that she owned no graphic novel related memorabilia such as posters or T-shirts. One of the interviewees described their level of fandom as moderate because they believed that a person who reads the series but stops short of collecting is a moderate fan; when you start collecting that is when you become a fanatic. One participant rated their level of fandom as just less than moderate and spoke of how they didn’t read the more complex graphic novels and that they read only graphic novels which were fun and easy to read. These results seem to suggest that there is no set criteria for when it comes to establishing levels of fandom with each participant having formed their own opinion on the matter.

Library Usage

Borrowing from the Public Library

Five of the six participants borrowed graphic novels from a public library. The one exception stated that during the 1990s, when they were getting into graphic novels, there were no graphic novels available from public libraries. This participant also stated that even now they were not aware of graphic novels being in libraries even though they were a semi-frequent visitor to public libraries.

All of the other participants were users, or had been users, of public libraries' graphic novels collections. One participant, in particular, was a frequent user of the public library graphic novel collection and spoke of how they would often take out 40 books (the maximum) at a time and how they would cap the limit of graphic novels you were allowed to reserve. It was common for many of the participants to borrow from both the adult and young adult collection of graphic novels, with only one participant saying they borrowed exclusively from the young adult collection. Only one participant mentioned borrowing from the Manga collection.

Satisfaction Level

There were differing levels of satisfaction amongst the participants for the public library graphic novel collections that they had used. One participant was extremely complimentary of the centralisation of the Auckland public libraries which provided access to a wider population of graphic novels. This same participant was also complimentary of the way the central branch of the Wellington public library shelved their superhero graphic novels by separating between the two major publishers, DC and Marvel, and then having a separate section for other superhero graphic novels. This participant thought that public libraries were doing the best they could in terms of cataloguing and shelving graphic novels and highlighted the difficulty of shelving superhero graphic novels due to the problems of continuity. However this view was not shared by another participant who stated:

“They (graphic novels) tend to not be organized by genre, they tend to be organized by author’s name so unless you know a particular author, or a particular series, unless you know what you’re looking for it can be really hard to find new material.”

The other participants expressed dis-satisfaction at the graphic novel collections with missing titles being a central concern to two of the participants, with one providing the

example of a library having volume 7 of the graphic novel ‘Sandman’ but having none of the previous volumes. This sentiment was shared by another participant, but they acknowledged that this may not be the library’s fault as they are tied to specific vendor agreements.

Two of the participants openly expressed their dissatisfaction at librarian knowledge regarding graphic novels. With one participant implying that public libraries see graphic novels as below that of other reading books:

“The librarians I know that I’ve talked to are all middle aged and have no knowledge whatsoever on comic books.... and that becomes difficult when you’re dealing customers, (e.g) what would I recommend to me if I was interested in this this and that. But the library is not serviced for comic books, it’s serviced for other books, just books in general and I understand that.”

The other participant spoke of an unwillingness amongst librarians to learn new things:

“Because each staff member has their own interests and the collections they like they will be a specialist within that but they don’t go forth and have an effort to learn about and promote other collections. Kind of a knowledge loss.”

Library Improvements

When asked about possible improvements public libraries could make to improve their interactions with adult graphic novel readers, the interview participants provided a mixture of responses. Two participants spoke of increasing the size of the collection, whilst another thought adding more titles which appealed to females would be an improvement.

When asked whether they would be interested in attending public library hosted graphic novel events, the majority of participants stated they would be interested but this

interest would be dependent on what the event was, with no consensus existing amongst the participants. One participant thought it would be a good idea for the library to host learning to draw classes whilst another spoke of how they would rather have a discussion, or book group, as opposed to any physical activities. Other improvements proposed by the participants included themed events, such as a celebration of women in graphic novels or having a specific graphic novel book club. However, one of the participants was sceptical about the book club idea.

“...having a discussion would be great, a book group I’d be interested but I find in my experience the comic book crowd, a big part of it is that they’re anti-social.”

Of potential concern to public libraries is that a number of the participants did not think that libraries were doing enough to promote their graphic novel collections. This is especially highlighted by the fact that one participant didn’t even know that their library had graphic novels. . This sentiment was shared by other participants who said they had only ever seen promotion of the young adult graphic novel collection, but not of the adult graphic novel collection. One participant noted that they thought libraries saw graphic novels as sub-par literature:

“Yes I think its (graphic novels) pushed behind other literature. I think the adult collection is just moved to the wall and kept there. The children’s display we just keep it on the shelf with no promotion. The teens, however, we have had a graphic novel display where we try and promote the new items of the collection.”

Only one participant was positive about public libraries’ promotion of graphic novels, noting that most of the libraries they had recently visited did indeed have a prominent promotional display for their graphic novels.

Fandom

From the interviews it was apparent that certain aspects of fandom, mainly discrimination and distinction and productivity and participation, were common amongst the participants. However the participants showed very few, if any, signs that capital accumulation played a role in their opinions and usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections.

Discrimination and Distinction

Graphic Novel Fandom Parameters

One of the key aspects of discrimination and distinction as described by Fiske (1992) is that members of the fandom have strict parameters about who can become a member of the fandom. For example you could only consider yourself a member of the graphic novel fandom if you read certain authors or participated in certain graphic novel related events. The majority of the participants felt that there were no parameters around being a member of the graphic novel fandom with two participants having the mind-set that anyone could be considered a member if they read graphic novels. However one participant attributed this to the fact that they have never attended a graphic novel themed convention where individuals are placed into a group which could be defined as a certain parameter, something the participants had witnessed at Doctor Who conventions. Another participant did not believe that parameters existed around the graphic novel fandom and stressed the fact that many graphic novels (superhero graphic novels excluded) were one-off titles requiring no previous understanding to be able to read it. A third participant also wrote of there not being any parameters around the graphic novel fandom and, unlike all other participants, spoke of how accepting the current members of the graphic novel fandom were:

“As soon as I expressed an interest in a series, I was generally made to feel welcome no matter what level of awareness I had of that particular series. Often, talking to other fans would make me aware of what I wanted to read next, and what I had no interest in.”

The exception to the thought process that no parameters existed around the graphic novel fandom was superhero graphic novels. One participant spoke of how it was necessary to have at least a basic understanding of who the characters were, such as Superman and Batman, to be considered part of the superhero graphic novel fandom. The participant continued on to say that there are different levels within the fandom and that you could “go deeper into it” by reading/writing on forums, researching past events and watching the television shows. Another participant expressed the opinion that parameters existed around superhero graphic novels and spoke of defending their reading of the ‘Superman’ comic book, insinuating that defending your fandom was a form of parameter. According to two participants, collecting graphic novels could also be considered a parameter around the graphic novel fandom, but they themselves did not collect graphic novels.

Stigmatization

A further characteristic of the discrimination and distinction section of fandom is that members of the fandom are aware that their fandom is seen as a sub-culture by those outside the fandom, resulting in stigmatization. It is then necessary for members of the fandom to defend their chosen culture. All of the participants at stages during the interviews expressed views that graphic novel readers are often looked upon negatively by non-graphic novel readers. A common theme was that many felt that outsiders perceived graphic novels as stupid, nerdy or childish:

“Cos I can understand why there is a something against them (graphic novels) cos they’re just pictures of men in their underwear with speech bubbles...it can look stupid”

” I mean there is obviously stereotypes around people who read superhero novels like that you know the people are geeks who spend all their time in doors and go to conventions, there is definitely a whole stereotype.”

“Yes, I have. I felt very defensive, as if the comments were an implied criticism of my maturity and intelligence (there was an assumption that graphic novels were for kids). I was unable to convince the people I was talking to that graphic novels were not for kids, so felt clumsy and alienated. “

Whilst one participant responded that they thought graphic novels were not ‘good literature’ for adults:

“For adults not so much because you kind of have an expectation of adults to read more fiction to increase their intelligence, but mind you that’s just my opinion”.

Another believed that the negative opinions of outsiders to the fandom was based on their own past experiences and that those were what shaped their negative opinions:

“How people perceive graphic novel readers probably is influenced by what graphic novels they themselves have encountered. If you’ve only ever read Garfield, you’re going to assume that any other book with pictures is that sort of book, and you’re going to be bemused by people insisting that this series is the best thing ever.

The majority of participants showed characteristics of discrimination and distinction by defending their chosen fandom, a key theme of this was that participants believed graphic novels to be ‘good literature’. Two participants emphasized that a number of graphic novels had won literary awards and that these were more likely to be accepted as ‘good literature’ from those outside the fandom. However they both agreed that an award was not necessary

for a graphic novel to be good literature. One participant spoke of how she would react defensively when questioned on reading graphic novels:

“ I definitely feel like I have to explain it more if someone’s like ‘what are you reading’ and if I’m reading a proper book I can be like this this and this, whereas if I’m reading a graphic novel or a comic it immediately starts more defensive. I have to like prove that it’s a proper book.”

Many of the participants suggested that ‘good literature’ was dependant on the genre of graphic novels, with one suggesting that ‘Elfquest’ could be considered ‘good literature’ whilst DC comics could not. Another participant acknowledged that the more childish graphic novels they read were not ‘good literature’ but that the more adult-themed graphic novels could be considered ‘good literature’. Graphic novels with more serious content were more likely to be considered by the participants as ‘good literature.’ For example, two participants referred to graphic novels they had read in relation to the situation in Israel and Palestine as ‘good literature’.

Stigmatization and Library Usage

Although the participants did show signs of discrimination and distinction it was not an overwhelming factor that would affect their use of public libraries’ graphic novel collections. Two participants spoke of feeling embarrassment as children but now that they were older this embarrassment had faded. One of these participants cited the change in attitude of becoming an adult whilst the other spoke of how there was a changing cultural shift to where the Marvel superhero movies had “made geekdom kind of cool”. A different participant spoke directly about not being embarrassed and not hiding that she is a graphic novel fan, whilst another stated that although she has been stigmatized in general for being a

graphic novel fan, she has not felt stigmatized when borrowing graphic novels from the public library.

The exception to this was that half of the participants spoke of varying degrees of embarrassment when borrowing from the young adult graphic novel collections:

“Actually thinking about it. If the collection only had the one item and that item was in the young adult or kids section and I’m 38 I probably would feel a bit weird about it, so I think that could, if there’s only one edition and it’s in the kid’s space you’re probably not going to get people above, let’s face, 16 go in there.”

“.... it’s true I’m slightly conscious of being a slightly older person looking in the young adult section. Yeah I think I’m conscious of it. Not enough to put me off.”

Productivity and Participation

Of the three types of productivity and participation defined by Fiske (1992), only Enunciative productivity (where communication exists within the fandom) seemed to be present amongst all interview participants. None of the participants exhibited characteristics of semiotic productivity, where members of the fandom derive their social identity through their fandom. In fact quite the opposite occurred for many participants who clearly stated that graphic novels were not the central focus of their lives. Textual productivity, where members of the fandom produce their own version of their chosen culture and share it amongst the fandom, was shown by two participants. One of those participants spoke of producing fanfiction whilst the other spoke of drawing anime during her time in the New Zealand animation industry.

Enunciative productivity amongst the participants took many forms but a recurring theme was that many of the participants had attended (or intended to go to) graphic novel themed conventions. One participant spoke of a future plan to attend San Diego Comic-con,

generally regarded as the mecca of all comic book/graphic novel conventions. More locally, another participant spoke of attending the Armageddon convention based in Wellington. One of the participants noted their frustration at not being able to attend conventions but instead would compensate by reading friends' accounts of conventions. Interestingly a sole participant said she had not previously attended conventions as she thought her level of fandom did not qualify her to attend, saying it was for the 'fans'.

Another form of Enunciative productivity related to the graphic novel fandom is members communicating (meeting) through a specialized comic book/graphic novel store (Cicci, 2015). This was mentioned by three participants who (on the occasions that they bought graphic novels) would purchase graphic novels from a specific graphic novel or comic book store. One participant said that they purchased graphic novels from a specialized graphic novel or comic book store because they loved the 'feel' of being in a comic book store and being able to see what they liked. Another participant spoke of how, on the rare occasions that they bought graphic novels, they would purchase from a graphic novel store because she would prefer to help New Zealand businesses. Even though half of the participants spoke of using specialized graphic novel/comic book stores, they all noted that there was very little communication amongst members of the fandom there. One participant believed that people in comic book stores were simply anti-social:

{when asked about communication in the comic book store} *“No. they're pretty much an anti-social crowd. The only time they come out of their shell is at conventions.”*

Two other participants believed that they were often seen as outsiders whenever they entered a comic book store because of their gender:

“Because being female and going into a comic book shop in the late 90s the people would never talk to me even though I was in every couple of weeks.”

“Again I often think it tends to be quite male. I’ve never been in a comic book store with a woman behind the counter and often I’m the only woman in the shop.”

However, one of the participants did follow up their statement by noting that now she has more money and is able to purchase more books people in the comic book/graphic novel store are more likely to talk to her.

Capital Accumulation

The final trait of fandom as discussed by Fiske’s (1992) cultural economy is capital accumulation, where monetary items are replaced by knowledge, with those with the most knowledge being the most respected within the fandom. The current thesis chose to focus on the collection of graphic novels as the basis for capital accumulation, as Brown (1997), Raphael (2007), and Cicci (2015) have all stated the importance of collection to graphic novel fandom, where members with the largest collections achieve the most prestige. None of the participants personally thought that collection was a pre-requisite to be a part of the graphic novel fandom, although many participants still acknowledged that it could be seen as a requirement by other people:

“Diehard fans, those who consider themselves diehard fans will collect everything, all the memorabilia. I don’t consider myself a diehard fan, I’m just someone who keeps up with the story.”

One participant used the example of their husband:

“He (her husband) also got really into the collectable aspect of it. So you know every month you’ve got to be at the comic book shop to buy the next edition and then the collection grows and grows and now we have nowhere to live because our house is full of comic books.”

The participants had various other reasons as to why they chose to purchase graphic novels as opposed to borrowing them from the public library. One theme evident in three of the participants is that they would choose to purchase graphic novels, not for the collectible aspect, but simply because of their love of reading them and their ability to read them whenever they wanted. Two participants also stated that they would choose to purchase graphic novels so that they could share them with friends:

“For me if I buy a book it’s because either I want to read it multiple times or I want to lend to people.”

“I do enjoy having a run of a series because that’s more about reading than collecting. It’s more about if I wanted to I could read 1-6 in one go and that would be great. I’m not really a collector.”

“...some books are so good that you have to have them.”

Another theme evident amongst the participants was that they chose to purchase graphic novels due to circumstances around graphic novels in the public library. Two participants noted the physical conditions of the library books as a reason for purchasing your own, whilst other participants spoke of public libraries having gaps in their collections:

“If you get a comic from a public library you will always run into a problem, if it’s a popular comic it will have tares, food marks. All the comic books feel oily because everyone has been touching it, so you buy a book for yourself.”

“You get your comics/graphic novels faster than you do through the library, you get them in the order you want, and you can reread them whenever you want.”

One theme evident in two of the participants was that they wanted to purchase graphic novels but due to their financial situation were unable to do so:

“I do have the good classic ones, I do have the ‘Killing Joke’, and ‘Death in the Family’ and ‘Watchmen’. I wish I had a lot more money to buy a lot more.”

“I tend to go in knowing what I want to buy because there’s always more graphic novels I want to read than money I have to buy.”

Results: Quantitative questionnaire

Data for the quantitative questionnaires was collected from March 20th 2017 to April 22nd 2017. The questionnaires were distributed in a number of different locations including the Hutt City War memorial Library and the central branch of the Porirua libraries. Information sheets about the research with a QR code to an online version of the questionnaire were distributed around the Kelburn and Pipitea campuses of Victoria University. Social media was also used to distribute the survey as Hutt City libraries placed a link to the online survey on their library Facebook page. The researcher himself also promoted the questionnaire via social media. In total 69 questionnaires were returned, but not all of them were fully completed resulting in some of the questions not being answered by every participant. The researcher added the data from all hand-written questionnaires into the Qualtrics website so that all data were in the same place to enable ease of analysis.

Demographic Information

In order to understand adult graphic novel readers’ awareness, usage, and opinions on public libraries’ graphic novel collections, it was important to firstly investigate how many adult graphic novel readers currently borrow from public libraries’ graphic novel collections compared to other age groups. In total 68 of the respondents answered questions relating to age and gender. The results of the questionnaire showed that both males and females are

readers of graphic novels with slightly more men (36) responding to the survey compared to the 32 females who responded. The questionnaire results revealed that graphic novels encapsulate all age groups from readers under the age of 12 to over the age of 45. The majority of respondents were from the 26-35 age range, followed by the 19-26 age range. Interestingly, 52 out of the 68 respondents (76 percent) would be considered adults (aged 19 and over) compared to the 12 respondents who would be classified as children or young adults (24 percent).

Library Usage

The questionnaire results showed that the majority of respondents (57) borrowed graphic novels from a public library, with only 11 saying that they did not. When broken down by gender the majority of both males and females borrowed graphic novels from the public library (see Table 2). When analysed by age the results indicate that for all the respondents not considered adults (18 and under) 100 percent of them borrowed from the public library's graphic novel collection, compared to the adults where only 78.85 percent did (see Table 3).

Table 2.

Gender and Usage of public libraries graphic novel collections

		Do you borrow Graphic Novels/Comic Books from the public library?		
		Yes	No	
		Male	31	Total
What Gender do you identify as?	Female	26	5	36
	Total	57	6	32

Table 3.

Age groups and usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections.

		Do you borrow Graphic Novels/Comic Books from the public library?		
		Yes	No	Total
What is your current age?	Under 12	6	0	6
	12-15	6	0	6
	16-18	4	0	4
	19-25	14	1	15
	26-35	14	7	21
	36-45	4	2	6
	45+	9	1	10
	Total	57	11	68

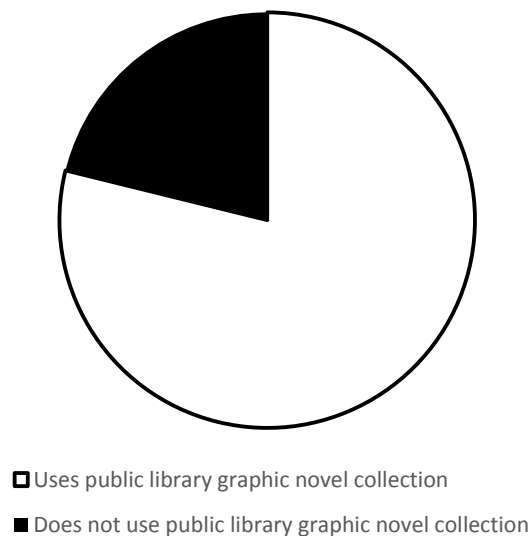


Figure 3. Pie chart showing adult (19 years and over) usage of public library graphic novel collections.

When analysing the length of time the respondents had been borrowing graphic novels from public libraries it was evident that the majority of the respondents had been using

the library collections for a long period of time. Specifically, 69 percent of the respondents indicated that they had been borrowing for over 3 years. The second most common time span was between 6 months and one year with only 12.73 percent (see figure 4). These results suggest that over time public libraries have developed a loyal following of graphic novel fans. However perhaps somewhat concerning for libraries is that there were very few new readers to the collection as evidenced by the small number of respondents who had started to use the collection in the past year.

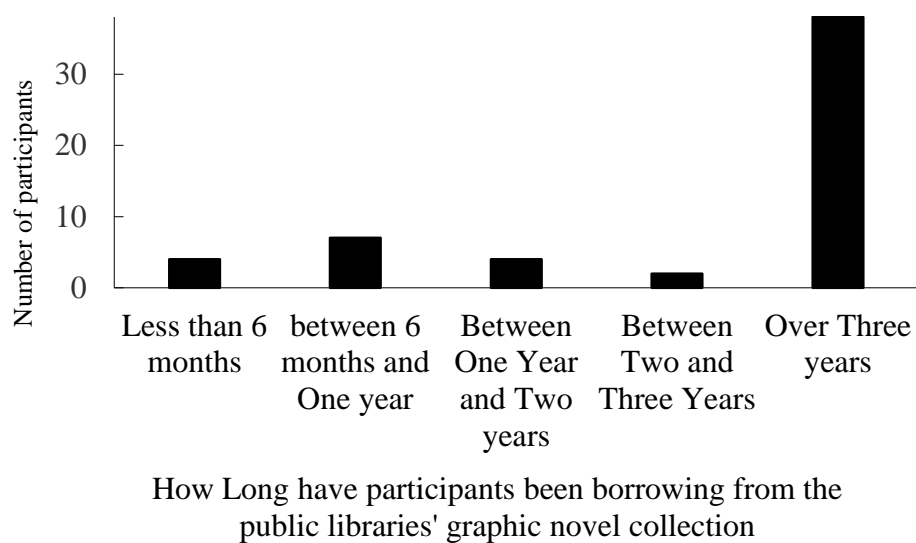


Figure 4. Length of time participants have been borrowing from public libraries' graphic novel collections.

When participants were asked how often they used public libraries' graphic novel collections, there were a variety of responses. However the most common response (13 out of 55 participants) was that participants used the collection sparsely (only once every 6 months). The least common response was 'more than once a week', which only four participants selected. The results showed an emerging trend in which the shorter the time period for borrowing from the graphic novel collection the lower the number of participants (see Figure 5).

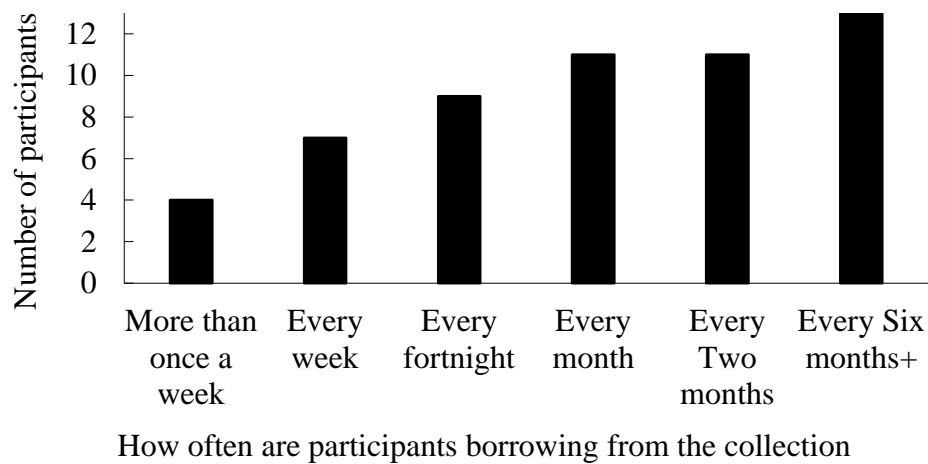


Figure 5. Frequency of graphic novel usage from public libraries.

When participants did borrow from a public library's graphic novel collection they were more likely to only borrow one to two copies at a time than any other amount, with a trend emerging that the higher the amount of borrowed books the smaller the number of participants. Interestingly this trend stopped when the number of borrowed graphic novels reached more than eight, with more participants borrowing this amount than both the '5 to 6' and '7 to 8' categories (see Figure 6).

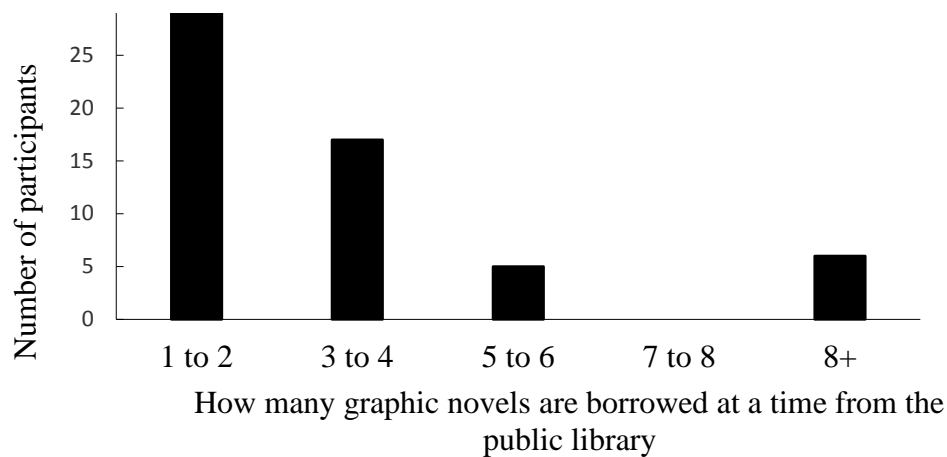


Figure 6. Number of graphic novels borrowed from each public library visit.

The questionnaire also asked participants to identify which graphic novel collections they borrowed from. The results indicated that more of the participants borrowed from the adult graphic novel collection compared to the young adult collection (see Figure 8). When analysed by age it is apparent that adults (19 and over) are nearly just as likely to borrow from the adult collection as from the young adult collection with only slightly more adults choosing to borrow exclusively from the adult graphic novel collection (see Table 4).

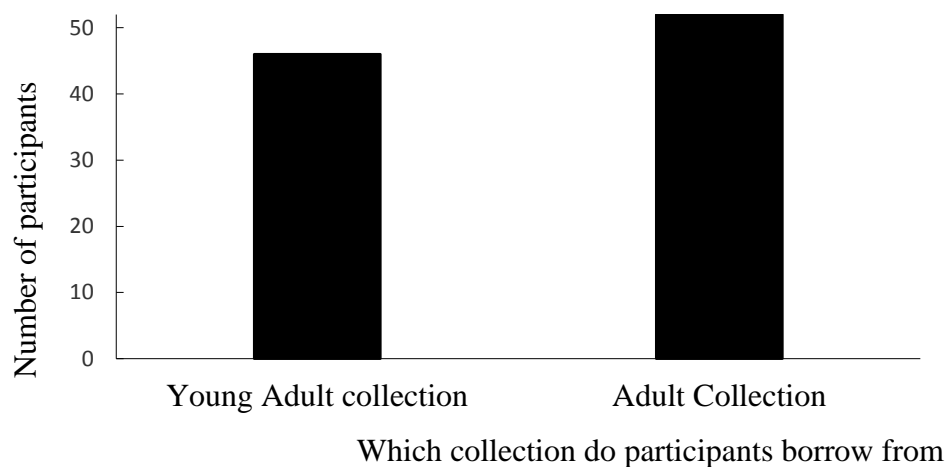


Figure 7. Number of participants borrowing from young adult versus adult graphic novel collections from public libraries.

Table 4.

Number of participants borrowing from each type of graphic novel collection for each age group.

		What is your current age?							Total
		Under 12	12-15	16-18	19-25	26-35	36-45	45+	
If you borrow graphic novels from the public library which collections do you use?	Young Adult collection	5	5	1	12	14	4	5	46
	Adult Collection	1	5	3	13	17	5	8	52
	Total	5	6	4	14	19	5	9	62

When examining which genres of graphic novels library users choose to read it was apparent that every genre had a following of a certain amount of participants. Overall the superhero genre was the most widely read by the participants (70.18 percent). This was closely followed by science fiction at 66.66 percent. The lowest response attained by the Western genre of 21.1 percent indicated that all genres of graphic novels within public libraries are widely read (see Figure 9). Participants who selected ‘other’ stated that they read fantasy and/or comedy. Some of these participants also identified certain authors they read including Neil Gaiman and Doug Tennanpal. When analysed by gender, regardless of whether they borrowed from a library collection or not, it was apparent that males were the

biggest readers of all graphic novels with the exception of the ‘other’ category (see Figure 10). This may indicate that female graphic novel readers are more into niche titles that are not part of the common graphic novel genres. In particular males dominated the readership of both ‘superhero’ and ‘science fiction’ graphic novel genres. However this may be contributed to the fact that more males responded to the questionnaire.

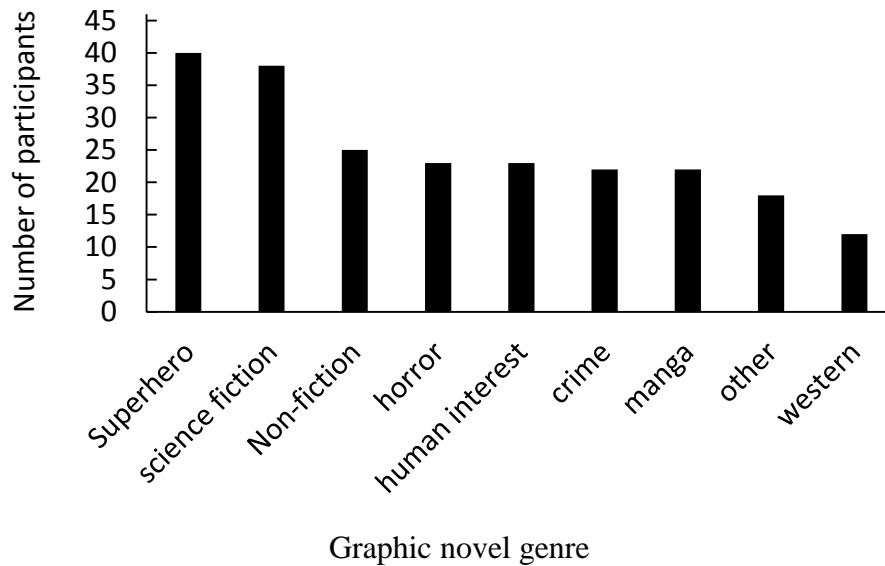


Figure 9. Number of library using participants who read each graphic novel genre.

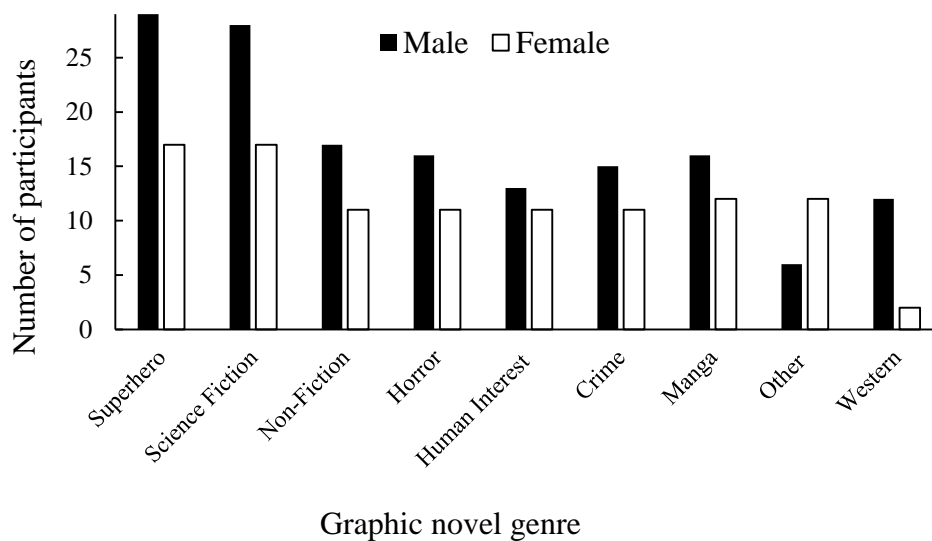


Figure 10. Number of male and female participants who read each graphic novel genre.

Satisfaction Levels

One of the central aims of the current research is to understand graphic novel readers' opinions on public libraries' graphic novel collections. As a result of this participants were asked a number of questions relating to their satisfaction levels of using public library graphic novel collections.

Participants were first asked to rate their opinion on how organised the public library graphic novel collections they use are from one to ten. Overall the responses indicated that the majority of participants were only moderately satisfied with the organisation of public libraries' graphic novel collections with the mean answer only being 5.5 out of 10. Although the most common response was 7 out of 10, this was still only selected by 17 out of 59 participants (see Figure 11).

As a follow up participants were asked how often were they able to find what they were looking for when searching public libraries' graphic novel collections. The most common response from participants was that they could find what they were looking for "most of the time", however this only consisted of 45% of the participants (27/59). This was closely followed by 35% of the participants noting that they could only sometimes find what they were looking for. There was no strong response suggesting that participants could 'Always' find what they were looking for or could 'Never' find what they were looking for, with each category only receiving one participant response (see Figure 12).

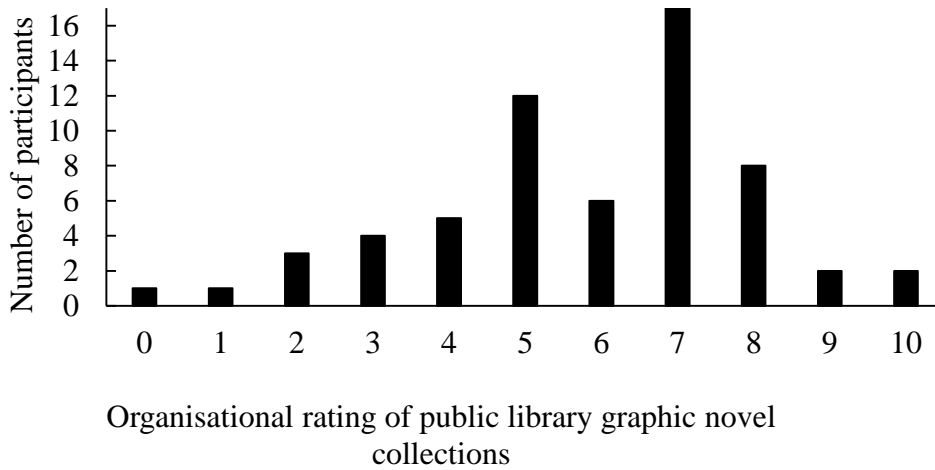


Figure 11. Participant ratings of how organised they think public libraries' graphic novel collections are.

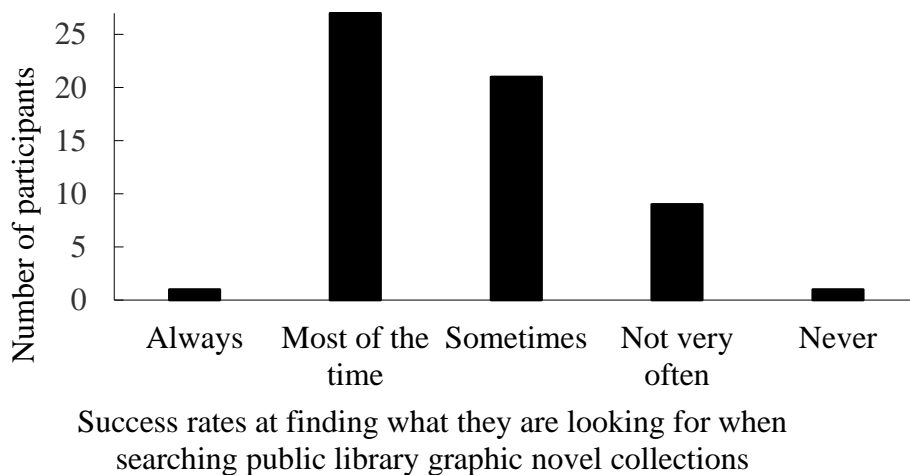


Figure 12. Participants' success rates when searching public libraries' graphic novel collections.

When asked about their overall satisfaction levels of public libraries' graphic novel collections, participants showed a lukewarm response. The most common answer was that participants were 'moderately satisfied', although this only consisted of 48% (29 out of 60) of the respondents. Very few participants indicated that they were either 'Extremely Satisfied'

or 'Not Satisfied at all.' That is, the participants avoided the more extreme limits (see Figure 13). When analysed exclusively for adults the results are very similar, although it can be seen that all of the 'Not at all satisfied' responses were answered by adults, with no adults being 'Extremely Satisfied' with public libraries' graphic novel collections (see Figure 14).

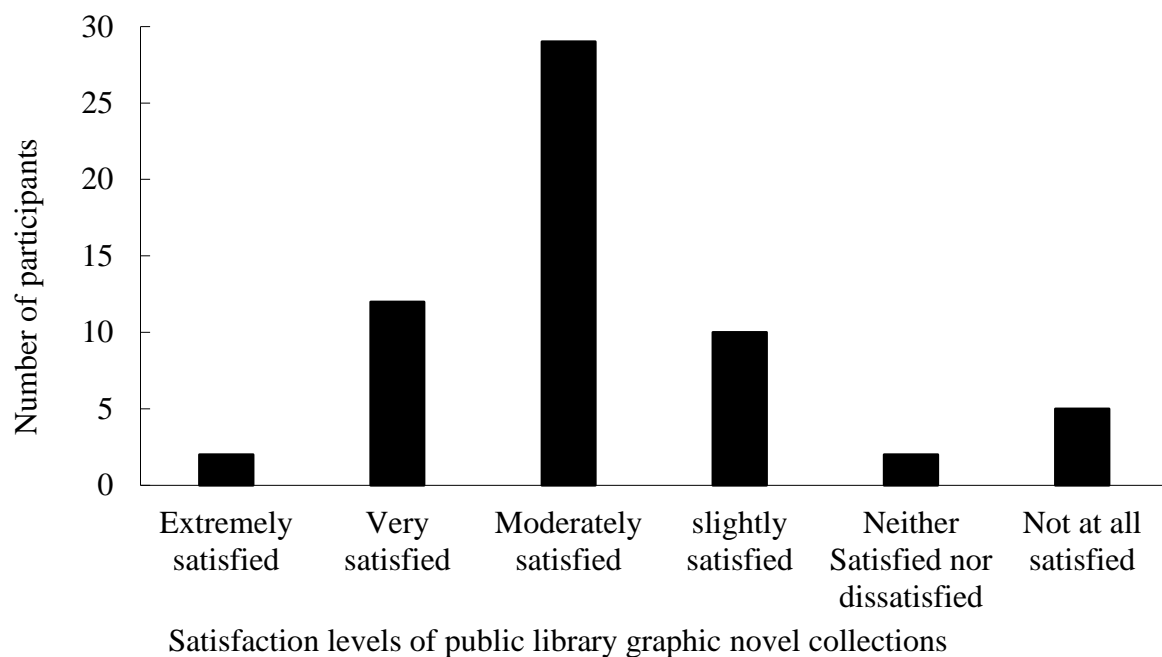


Figure 13. Participant satisfaction levels of public libraries' graphic novel collections.

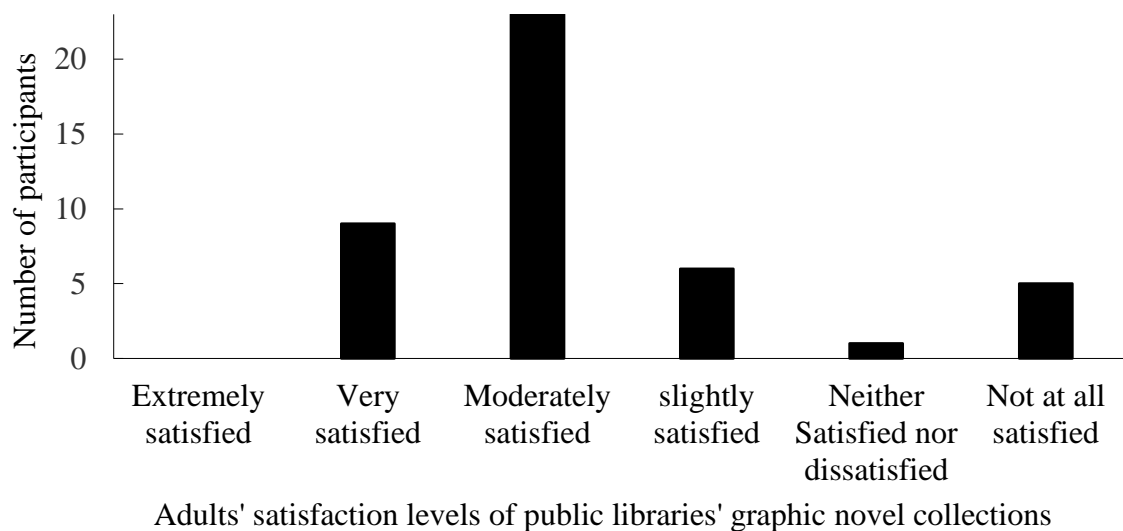


Figure 14. Adult participants' satisfaction levels of public libraries' graphic novel collections.

Library Improvements

Participants were first asked whether they would be interested in attending graphic novel related events orchestrated by the public library. Most participants stated their interest in such events, with only a small number saying that they wouldn't be interested, all other participants responded that they were unsure about attending such events (see Figure 15).

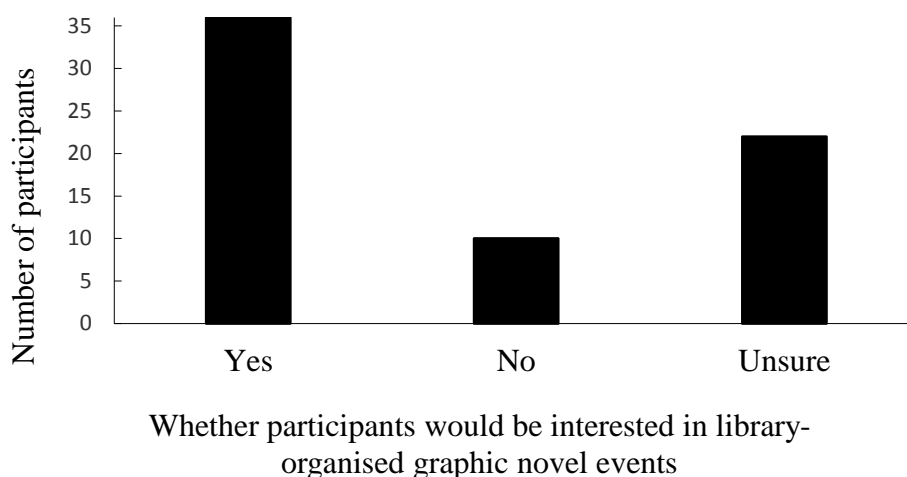


Figure 15. Participant interest in public libraries' graphic novel events.

Participants were then given multiple options, of which they could select more than one, for types of library improvements and were asked to add any other improvements they could think of which resulted in a small sample of qualitative data. The most common improvement response by a large margin (72 percent of participants) was for public libraries to increase the number of graphic novel titles in their collections. Other improvements which

received a fair number of responses included participants wanting improvements to the layout of the collection (39 percent) and participants wanting public library graphic novel events (35 percent). Just over a quarter of the participants thought that increased staff knowledge on graphic novels would be an improvement. Somewhat less popular was the idea of a specific library-run graphic novel forum which only 16.67 percent of participants thought would be an improvement whilst only 3.03 percent believed that there was no improvement necessary.

(See Figure 16).

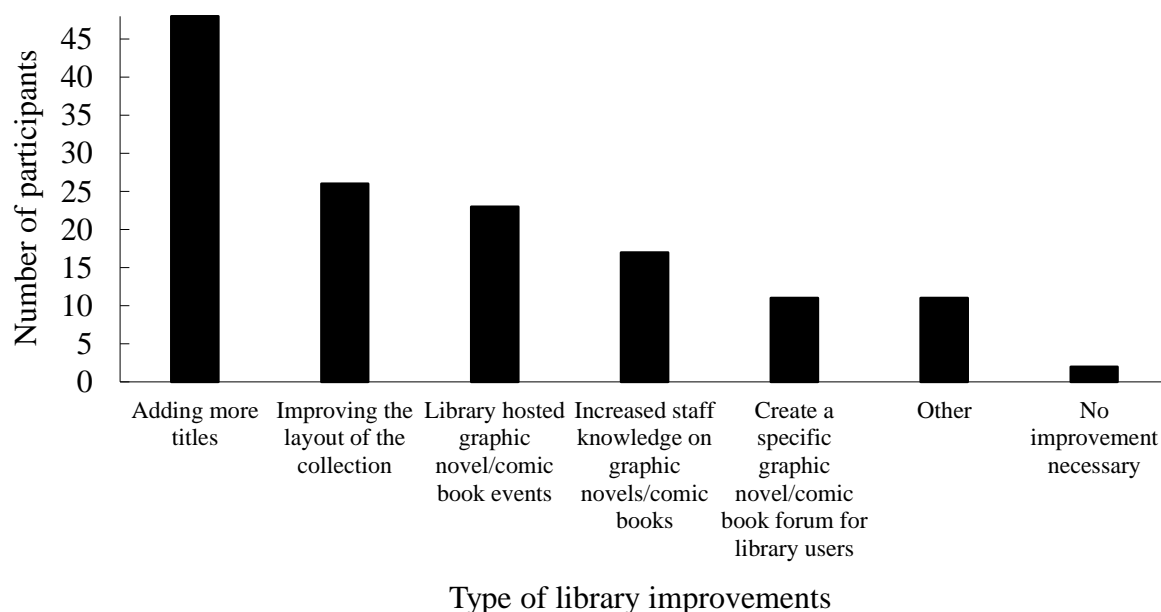


Figure 16. Participant responses to library improvements for graphic novel collections.

The qualitative data provided by some of the participants added more depth to the improvements categories provided by the researcher and also offered other improvements that public libraries could take under consideration. Five respondents expanded on the need for more titles within graphic novel collections. Specifically, the need to maintain the continuity of a graphic novel series, offering more manga and a focus on indigenous graphic novels were all seen as improvements:

“Not waiting years for them. Getting them in order, don’t start with a random number in a series.”

“Having titles in a more continuous manner - sometimes they are missing an issue from a series, which is annoying. Also, making it free to request books from other Wellington libraries would improve accessibility”

“Explore more indigenous or cultural comics. Specifically Aotearoa created Comics. Also taking some of our Te Reo Maori books from the children’s section and adding them amongst the mainstream collections.”

“More varied types of manga, not just the more popular shonen and shoujo. More adult genres would be good too.”

“I think they need some old and new ones. Just lots more books would be good. More bad guy books.”

One participant also wrote of the need for the libraries to better promote their graphic novel collections. Another participant believed that libraries could improve by offering recommendation services for newer fans and those wanting to experience new graphic novels:

“Creating resources for 'if you liked this....try this' for newer fans or people who are wanting to expand their interest.”

Fandom

A number of questions were asked in relation to whether the participants purchased graphic novels outside of borrowing them from the public library as the research was interested to see if collection was prominent amongst the respondents. When asked where the participants purchased graphic novels, 21 of the 66 respondents indicated that they did not

purchase graphic novels at all. Most participants stated that they purchased graphic novels via a specialist comic book/graphic novel store (31 out of the 45 people who purchase graphic novels). A smaller number of participants also advised that they purchased graphic novels online and/or from ordinary book stores (see Figure 17).

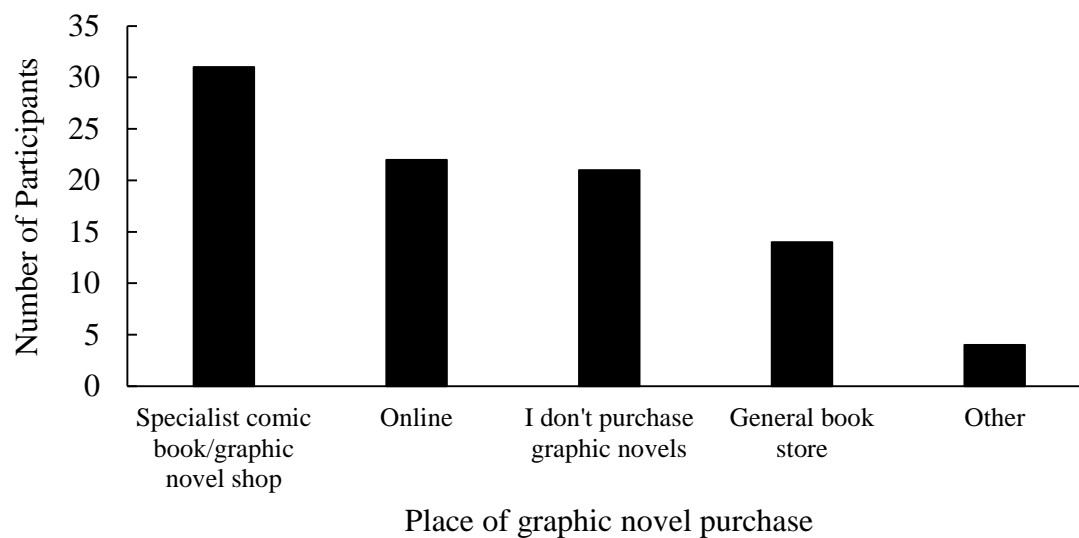


Figure 17. Number of participants that purchase graphic novels at each place.

A subsequent question was aimed directly at the participants who did purchase graphic novels and involved researching their motives behind purchasing graphic novels instead of borrowing from the public library (see Figure 18). For this question there was no consensus with participants selecting a multiple of reasons. The two most common results were that participants enjoyed the collectible aspect and that the library did not have the titles that the participants wanted. This question also gave participants the option of selecting ‘other’, with many participants choosing to leave comments to further elaborate. Three participants stated that they purchased graphic novels because “*they love the idea of owning a book.*” One participant spoke of purchasing graphic novels because they like lending them to friends, whilst another commented that due to his financial situation he was unable to

purchase graphic novels. A potential cause for concern for public libraries is that two participants stated that up until this questionnaire they were unaware that public libraries even had graphic novels.

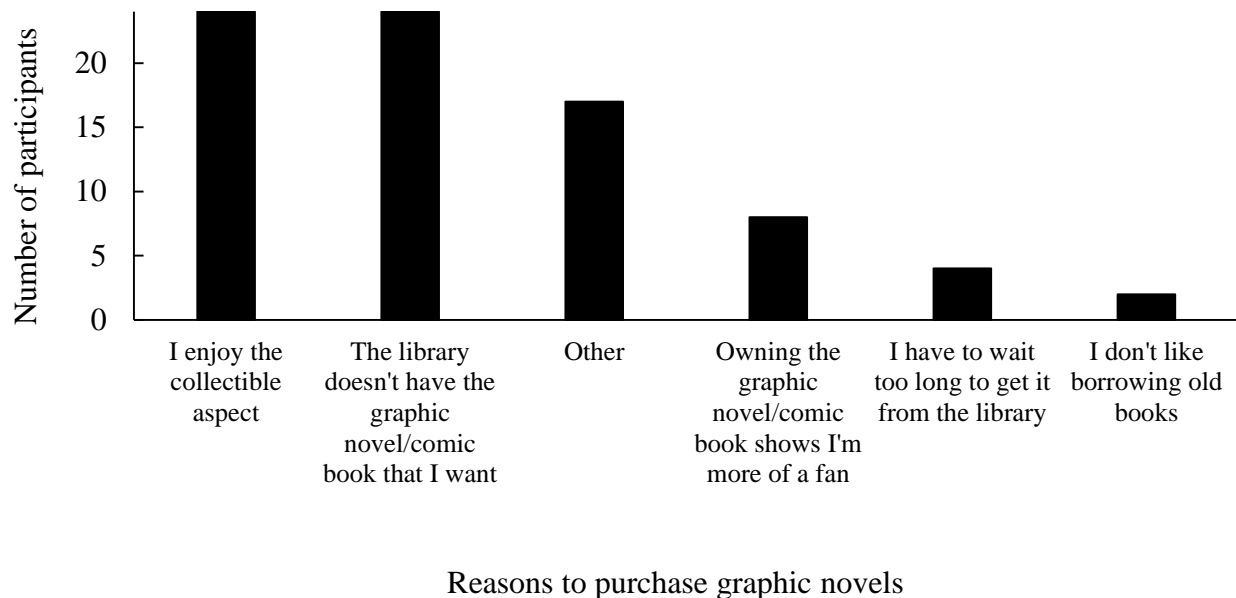


Figure 18. Reasons why graphic novel readers choose to purchase graphic novels.

The questionnaire also asked respondents to answer questions based on stigmatization which is linked to Fiske's (1992) theory of distinction and discrimination. Participants were asked to select which age groups they thought graphic novels were aimed at, with participants given the option of selecting more than one answer. The results showed that participants believed that graphic novels were for all ages. However the age bracket '12 and under' received the smallest number of responses by far compared to the other age brackets (see Figure 19).

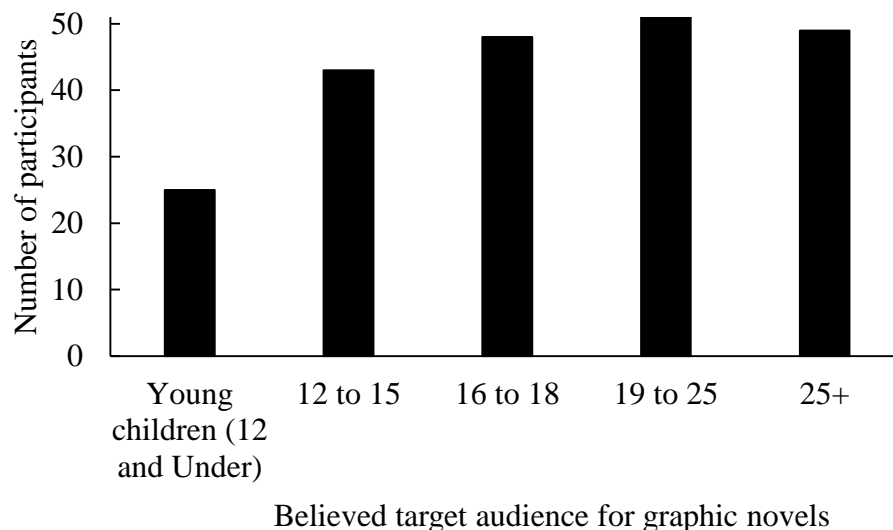


Figure 19. Graph showing who participants believed to be the target audience for graphic novel readers.

When asked if they ever felt, or how often did they feel, embarrassed when borrowing from the libraries' graphic novel collections, the majority of respondents unequivocally answered that they never felt embarrassed when borrowing from the collection. All of the other available answers received minimal responses in comparison. A small number of participants answered 'not applicable' as they did not borrow from a public library's graphic novel collection (see Figure 20).

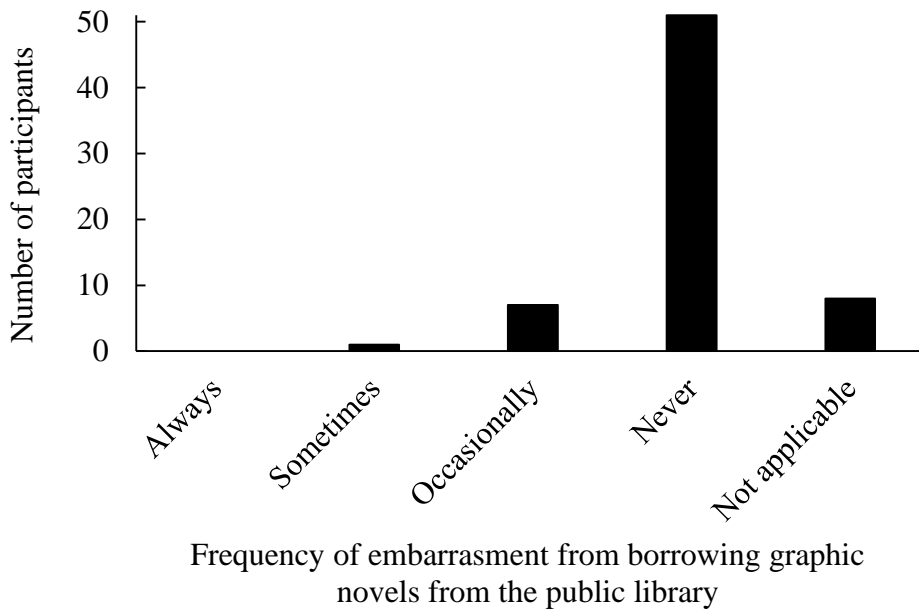


Figure 20. Graph showing participants' responses to whether (or how often) they felt embarrassed borrowing from public libraries' graphic novel collections.

Forty-two percent of the participants stated that they occasionally had to defend their reading of graphic novels to others. A similar percent (41 percent) of participants stated that they never had to defend their reading of graphic novels to others. Only 16 percent of respondents indicated that they either sometimes had to defend their reading of graphic novels or always had to defend their reading of graphic novels (see Figure 21).

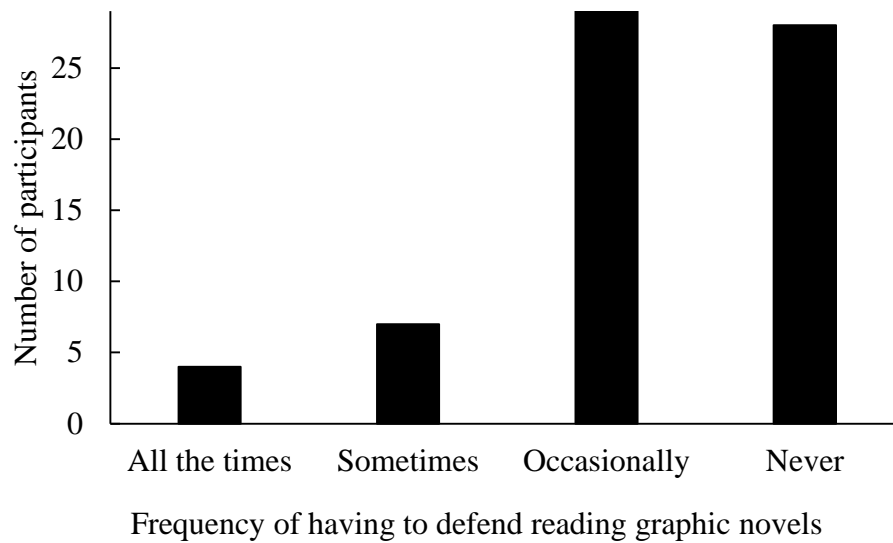
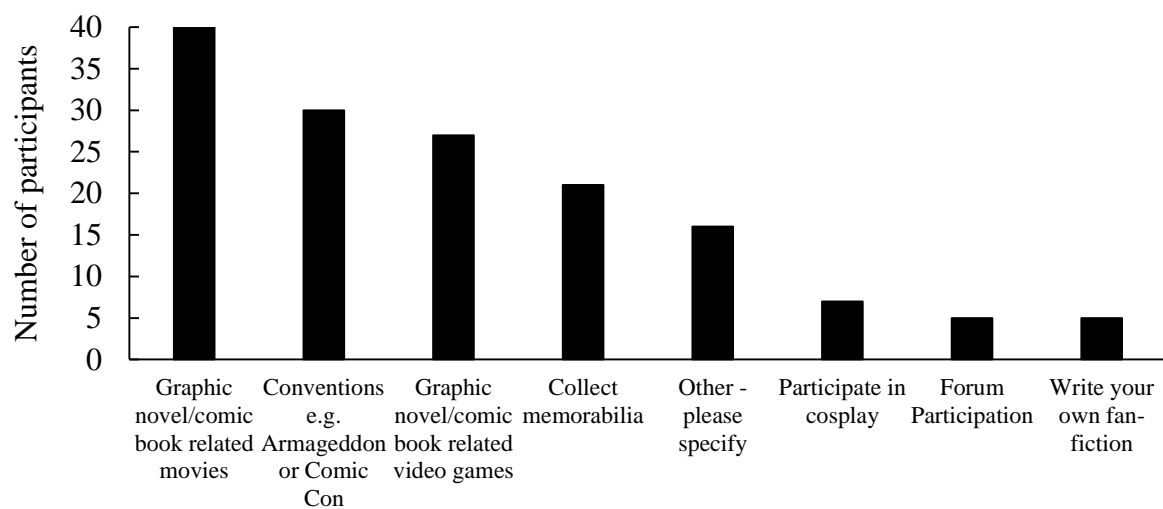


Figure 21. Number of participants falling under each frequency category of having to defend reading graphic novels.

The most popular graphic novel-related activity selected by the participants was watching graphic novel movies (67.8 percent). Conventions were also popular with the participants with 50.85 percent of the participants attending conventions, whilst a small minority of participants indicated that they participated in cosplay, collected memorabilia and wrote their own fan fiction (see Figure 22). Of the participants who selected 'other', three of them advised that they were readers of graphic novel fan fiction.



Graphic novel related activities participants take part in

Figure 22. Number of participants falling under each category of graphic novel-related activities.

Discussion

This research set out with the intention of answering three central research questions. The first research question was: What are adult graphic novel readers' opinions, awareness and usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections? The second research question was in relation to how the theory of fandom impacted graphic novel readers' use and opinions of libraries' graphic novel collections. The third research question focused on what libraries could do to improve their interactions with adult graphic novel readers. Through the use of both the quantitative questionnaires and qualitative surveys, the researcher was able to collect data to help answer these questions.

Opinions, Awareness and Usage of Public Library Graphic Novel Collections

Demographic Information

The results suggest that the large majority of graphic novel readers are also users of public libraries' graphic novel collections with a total of 83.8 percent of questionnaire respondents borrowing from public libraries' graphic novel collections. However this may not be a true representation of all graphic novel readers as the distribution of the questionnaires and interview participant information sheets were distributed from within public libraries and also the research project is for the information studies course which may have attracted more library users than non-users.

Interestingly, there was only a small difference between the amount of men and women who were graphic novel readers, with 52.9 percent of respondents identifying as male and 47.1 percent who identified themselves as female. These results are somewhat consistent with the work of numerous researchers who have all shown that males are the primary readers of graphic novels (Kraft 2013, Schenker n.d in Pyles 2012). When solely examining library users the results showed a similar outcome with slightly more questionnaire

respondents who borrowed from the public library collection being male (54 percent) than female (45 percent). These results shows a higher percentage of females using public libraries' graphic novel collections compared to previous literature. Charbonneau's (2005) study reported only 38 percent female usage, and Priest's (2012) study of Auckland libraries found that only 33.3 percent of users were female. The fact that five of the six interview participants were female suggests that perhaps public libraries' graphic novel collections are becoming more popular to the female population.

The results showed that adults are the primary users of public library graphic novel collections with 71.9 percent of library graphic novel users being over the age of 18 with the highest amount of users coming from both the 19-25 and 26-35 age brackets. These results are similar to that of Priest (2012) whose results also showed that the 20-34 age bracket were the largest users of Auckland public libraries' graphic novel collections. However, these result are inconsistent with the works of Charbonneau (2005) and Schneider (2014) who in their research found that those under the age of 18 were the biggest users of public libraries' graphic novel collections. One difference between the current research and research by Charbonneau and Schneider is geography. Both Charbonneau's and Schneider's research occurred in North America whilst the current research (and Priest's research) took place in New Zealand. It would be interesting for future research to examine whether similar results can be obtained in other regions of New Zealand.

Usage

Similar to Charbonneau's (2005) results, public libraries have developed a loyal following with the majority of questionnaire participants indicating they had been borrowing from a public library's graphic novel collection for over three years. A potential reason for this result could be that the majority of respondents were adults and hence have had more

time to be borrowing from the collections. This theory is evidenced through the face-to-face interviews in which all of the participants spoke of reading graphic novels/comic books when they were younger (18 and under) and that they continued to be adult graphic novel readers.

Other usage results showed that close to a quarter of participants stated that they only borrowed from the collection every 6 months. This is similar to Priest (2012) who also found that participants borrowed intermittently (once every 1-2 months, the highest time range given). This could be construed in various ways, including that because the majority of participants are adults they may simply not have the time due to other commitments to borrow from the collection. Another possibility, raised by participants during the face-to-face interviews, is that for many adult graphic novel readers, reading graphic novels is “not their entire life.” These participants also reported enjoying “normal reading books” which may explain why they only use the collection between such long intervals.

Satisfaction Levels

Questionnaire respondents were overall only mildly satisfied with the public libraries' graphic novels collections that they had used, with very few participants strongly indicating their 'extreme satisfaction'. Looking exclusively at adult graphic novel library users the results suggest that they too are underwhelmed, as all of the 'not at all satisfied' responses emerged from adult participants. This result differs from the works of Charbonneau (2005) and Priest (2012), who found that, for the specific libraries they researched (Charbonneau Montreal Octogone, Priest Auckland public libraries), the overall satisfaction level amongst participants was high. A possible reason as to why participants were only mildly satisfied can be attributed to previous questions in the research questionnaire pertaining to organisation. When asked to rate how organised the collection was from 0-10, with 10 being the highest, the mean was only 5.5. The issue of organization was also raised by an interview participant

who voiced their dissatisfaction at how graphic novels were organized by author name as opposed to genre which impacted browse-ability. However this is not to say that every participant thought that public libraries' graphic novel collections are disorganized, as 48% of the questionnaire participants stated that they could 'most of the time 'find what they were looking for'. One interview participant was especially satisfied with how Wellington public library organised their graphic novels. These corresponding views are indicative of the works of Pyles (2012) and Kitzman (2010), who have noted how difficult it is for public libraries to catalogue and shelve graphic novels.

The satisfaction level results obtained from the questionnaire could potentially also be explained through an issue raised during the face-to-face interviews. That is, participants were dissatisfied with the fact that public libraries had missing issues of certain graphic novels. This sentiment was also shared by participants who completed the questionnaire who also wrote of their dissatisfaction at missing titles and not having titles in a continuous manner.

Fandom

One of the central aims of this research was to understand if the theory of fandom was prevalent amongst graphic novel readers, specifically adult graphic novel readers, and whether fandom played a role in adult graphic novel readers' usage of and opinions on public libraries' graphic novel collections. Using Fiske's (1992) 'Cultural Economy' as a theoretical framework, it is apparent that certain facets of fandom are present within adult graphic novel readers. Whilst some aspects of Fiske's 'Cultural Economy' are widely seen throughout the participants, such as enunciative productivity and discrimination and distinction, other areas of fandom, such as semiotic productivity, are almost non-existent.

Discrimination and Distinction

Stigmatization

Discrimination and Distinction as described in Fiske's (1992) theory of cultural economy identifies that members of a fandom are aware that their chosen culture (fandom) is often devalued by those outside the fandom. This idea of discrimination and distinction was highly apparent amongst the interviewees, with multiple participants speaking of how graphic novels are often seen as childish and nerdy with some suggesting that they weren't 'good literature'. The idea that graphic novel readers are stigmatized for their choice of fandom is discussed heavily in the literature by Lopes (2006), Raphael (2007), Brown (1993) and Grossberg (1992). Also discussed in the literature is how certain graphic novels have avoided stigmatization by being recognized as 'good literature', such as the graphic novels 'Maus' and 'Watchmen' (Ramires, 2015). This idea was displayed by two of the six interview participants who stated that graphic novels that have won critical acclaim are more likely to be accepted by those outside the graphic novel fandom. However the participants were also quick to state that this does not mean that graphic novels which have not been critically acclaimed cannot be viewed as 'good literature'.

Another facet of Fiske's theory involving stigmatization was that it was up to members of the fandom to defend their chosen culture. This theory was somewhat evident amongst the participants. The majority of interviewees stated that this perceived stigmatization would not affect their readership of graphic novels or their usage of public libraries' graphic novel collections. The one exception was that three of the interviewees noted that they would be apprehensive about borrowing graphic novels from a young adult section of a public library. When questionnaire participants were asked if they were ever embarrassed about being a graphic novel reader the answer was an overwhelming 'Never'.

This could be interpreted a number of ways either suggesting that the participants were aware of a perceived stigmatization around graphic novels and simply did not let it embarrass them, or they may have believed that no such stigmatization existed so there was no need to feel embarrassed. This could be linked to the substantive increase of comic book/graphic novel material in mainstream media such as television shows and movies which have resulted in an expanding fan base (Cicci, 2015). This could be the next step of the continuation of acceptance of graphic novels in public libraries which has been building since the 1980s (Nyberg, 2010). This same reasoning may explain why a combined 83 percent of the questionnaire participants stated that they only occasionally or never had to defend their reading of graphic novels.

Parameters

Fiske's (1992) theory of discrimination and distinction also established that members of the fandom create their own parameters around who can become a member of the fandom. Overall the results suggested that this aspect of fandom had very little impact on participants' usage and opinions of public libraries' graphic novel collections. This notion of parameters was discussed during the face-to-face interviews where many of the participants spoke of how there were no parameters and that anyone could join the fandom simply by reading the product. Two of the interview participants raised an exception to this stating that specifically for superhero graphic novels it was necessary to have parameters such as knowing the backstories of the characters involved or that you must be prepared to defend your choice of reading a certain character. Thus, excluding superhero graphic novels, the results suggest that this part of discrimination and distinction is not apparent. Reasons for this could be that non-superhero graphic novels are often one-off stories which require no backstory and hence no prior knowledge is required. Perhaps one-off graphic novels do not warrant any parameters because there is no significant fan base around the characters.

Participation and Productivity

Fiske (1992) breaks down his theory of 'participation and productivity' into three distinct sections: semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity and textual productivity. From the obtained results it was apparent that semiotic productivity was close to non-existent amongst participants, compared to enunciative productivity which was shown to be high amongst the participants, whilst textual productivity was only exuded by a small percentage of the respondents.

Semiotic Productivity

Semiotic productivity involves members of a fandom (in this case graphic novel fandom) deriving their social identity through the fandom they choose to follow, such as exhibiting characteristics of their favourite graphic novel themed character. Throughout the conduction of the face-to-face interviews, where participants were asked their reasons for choosing to read graphic novels, none of the participants mentioned anything in relation to semiotic productivity. Instead, almost the opposite occurred as at least half of the participants stated that graphic novels were not their whole life. The same applied for the questionnaire as when participants were asked why they purchase graphic novels, none of the participants who selected 'other' provided a response based on semiotic productivity. The fact that none of the participants showed signs of semiotic productivity is inconsistent with the work of Botzakis (2009) who found that adults showed signs of Fiske's semiotic productivity, such as following their favourite character's moral compass. However it was an oversight for the current research not to include questions more directly related to semiotic productivity, as this could have provided a better understanding of whether semiotic productivity is prevalent among graphic novel readers.

Enunciative productivity

Enunciative productivity is when communication exists amongst the fandom.

Enunciative productivity was shown throughout both the interviews and questionnaires, with common examples including attending graphic novel/comic book-related movies, forum participation and graphic novel conventions. Conventions, described by Brown (1997) as the ‘major focal point of modern fan culture’, were popular with both the interview and questionnaire participants, with the majority of interview participants speaking of conventions that they had attended or conventions they intended to go to. Furthermore, over half of the questionnaire participants spoke of attending graphic novel conventions. The 52 percent of questionnaire participants who were open to the idea of attending graphic novel events held by the public library is also a sign of enunciative productivity.

One area of enunciative productivity discussed in the literature (Raphael, 2007; Cicci, 2015) is the social community (fandom) meeting at the comic book/graphic novel store, allowing fandom members a chance to communicate with one another. Participants in both the interviews and questionnaires showed signs of enunciative productivity by purchasing graphic novels from specific graphic novel comic book stores, with close to 47 percent of participants in the questionnaire stating that they purchase from one of these stores. However, the face-to-face interviews provided an interesting insight into this idea of communication amongst the fandom at the local comic book store. Three of the interviewees spoke of purchasing graphic novels from comic book stores but none spoke of communicating with fellow fandom members when they did this. The sole male participant attributed this to graphic novel readers being generally anti-social and so it was expected that no communication would exist. However the other two participants, both female, suggested that it was their gender which caused no one to speak with them when purchasing a graphic novel. This idea is supported by Cicci (2015) in his study of comic book fandom, who wrote that the

comic shop still tends to be presented as a male centric place due to the majority of the purchasers being males and that stereotypically the demographic of your average superhero graphic novel reader is male. This thesis' results showed that indeed males are more likely to read superhero graphic novels (63 percent were males), and that males are more likely to purchase graphic novels from a specialist graphic novel store than females (61% were males).

Textual Productivity

The final section of Fiske's Participation and Productivity is textual productivity where members of the fandom take part in producing their own version of their fandom. Amongst the participants only a small percentage showed any characteristics of textual productivity. The most common form of textual productivity shown by participants was participants writing their own fan fiction. This was exemplified by only one of the interview participants. Less than ten percent of questionnaire respondents indicated that they wrote their own fan fiction, although three participants stated that they read fan fiction.

Capital Accumulation

Fiske (1992) stated that capital accumulation within the cultural economy is similar to the normal economy except that the accumulation of capital is done through the accumulation of knowledge not wealth. This has been linked to graphic novel fandom through the idea of collection where those with the biggest collection have the greater prestige (Brown 1997; Raphael 2007; Cicci 2015). The results obtained were inconclusive on whether capital accumulation was apparent amongst the fandom as different results were obtained from the face-to-face interviews and the questionnaires. All of the interview participants stated that collection was not behind their reasons for reading graphic novels. Instead, many of the interviewees stated that they did not purchase graphic novels at all and if they did it was due to the love of reading them or so that they could be shared with friends. Whereas for

participants who completed the questionnaire and of those participants who did purchase graphic novels, close to 54 percent admitted that the collectible aspect was why they chose to purchase. However this is far from conclusive evidence of capital accumulation as it excludes those participants who don't purchase graphic novels at all which was a substantial percentage of respondents (close to 32 percent). Future research may benefit from positioning questionnaires at a specific graphic novel/comic book shop as well as the library to reach participants who may solely purchase graphic novels as opposed to borrowing them from the library. This would help to increase the external validity of the results by reaching a greater audience of graphic novel readers.

Library Improvements

The current research was also interested in finding out what improvements (if any) public libraries could make to increase interaction with graphic novel readers. The current research focused on two main sections: 1) awareness and promotion, and 2) library improvements.

Promotion and Awareness

An aim of the current research was to discover graphic novel fans' awareness of public libraries' graphic novel collections. Overall, both the face-to-face interviews and the questionnaire indicated that the participants were aware that public libraries had specific graphic novel collections. Only one interview participant and two questionnaire respondents were unaware that public libraries stocked graphic novels. Although participants were aware of their existence, a common theme throughout the interviews was that libraries were failing to effectively promote their graphic novel collections. Specifically, many of the interviewees thought that libraries put more effort into promoting young adult graphic novel collections as opposed to adult graphic novel collections. A potential improvement may therefore be for

public libraries to actively promote their own adult graphic novel collections which could result in an increase in use because of it.

Potential Library Improvements

Due to the relatively low satisfaction levels of the participants in the questionnaire it was unsurprising that many of the participants stated that they would like improvements to be made to public libraries' graphic novel collections. The most popular improvement signified by the questionnaire respondents was the need to add more titles. Participants in both the face-to-face interviews and questionnaires voiced their dissatisfaction with libraries which had missing volumes of certain graphic novels and also which did not have graphic novels in continuous order. The finding that 'adding more titles' was the most popular response is perhaps unsurprising given that people always want a larger collection to choose from. Two interviewees openly expressed that if they had the means to purchase more graphic novels they would do so, perhaps indicating the vivacious appetite readers have for graphic novels. This shows that libraries are still very important to graphic novel readers, as not everyone can afford to purchase the graphic novels for themselves.

Participants mainly accepted the idea of public library orientated graphic novel events, though a significant proportion of the participants also selected the 'unsure' option. This is understandable given the fact that the term graphic novel events is quite ambiguous and could involve many different things which may not be to the liking of many of the participants. Still as participants were mainly accepting of the idea it may benefit future libraries in researching such ventures.

Other improvements suggested by the participants included the need to improve the organisation of graphic novel collections, whilst the idea of a specific graphic novel forum hosted by the library was not widely seen as a necessary improvement.

Of potential future concern for public libraries is that just over 25 percent of questionnaire respondents believed that libraries could make improvements through an increase in staff knowledge about graphic novels, a sentiment shared by two of the interview participants. One of the interview participants, in particular, noted that they thought that graphic novels were behind other books in library hierarchy, hence why librarians still didn't feel the need to learn about graphic novels. This idea is supported by Heaney (2007) and Nyberg (2010). It may prove vital for public libraries to increase the prestige of their collections through an increase in titles and to provide staff with graphic novel training opportunities to help increase satisfaction levels of their customers.

Conclusion/Future Research

Two prominent findings emerged from both the face-to-face interviews and the questionnaire. The first finding was that customers are only partly satisfied with the services they are being offered and have cited many improvements which public libraries can install to make a difference to their graphic novel reader customers. Participants were vocal about the need for public libraries to retain high quality graphic novels in continuous order. However this may be a problem for libraries going forward as due to budget limitations and vendor agreements public libraries may need to get innovative in ways to increase satisfaction for their graphic novel collections.

Another prominent conclusion which can be drawn from this research is that fandom does not play a prolific role in graphic novel readers' usage and opinions of public libraries' graphic novel collections. This is because not all aspects of Fiske's theory of cultural economy are present amongst the participants of the current research.

During the qualitative interviews section of this research process it became apparent that encapsulating all graphic novel readers, regardless of which genre or style of graphic

novel they read, under the heading of 'graphic novel reader' was detrimental to this research. Due to the ever evolving genres and styles of graphic novels it is impossible to simply place all graphic novel readers under one banner, similar to if someone was to conduct research involving 'all book readers'. Future research related to fandom in particular, would benefit from identifying a certain strand of graphic novel readers based on the genre or style (e.g. superhero, human interest or Manga) to see whether fandom characteristics were apparent for readers who prefer certain genres and not others.

It would also be interesting for future research to identify whether geography has an impact on the users of public libraries' graphic novel collections. The current research along with the work of Priest (2012) suggests that adults are the primary users of public libraries' graphic novel collections. Comparatively, similar studies in North America (Charbonneau, 2005; Schneider, 2014) have found that teenagers and young adults (below the age of 18) are the biggest users. It would be interesting to see whether this trend exists through continued research. Alternatively, if the current research, or similar research on the topic of graphic novel readers, was to be conducted again it would be beneficial to attempt to incorporate all graphic novel readers by reaching them through numerous outlets including social media, public libraries and specialist comic book stores. This would increase the external validity of the research and also provide a more accurate presentation of all graphic novel readers.

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Appendix 1

Research Timetable

Week	Activity to be Completed
19 th December 2016 – 25 th December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish Literature Review section of proposal • Update reference list for proposal • Email Public library to ask for permission to distribute surveys at the Central Branch of Wellington public library
26 th December 2016 – 01 January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design quantitative questionnaire on qualtrics website to distribute survey via email and social media
02 January – 08 January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work on research proposal • Test questionnaire distribution method on qualtrics website
09 January – 15 January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish editing/proof reading Research proposal
16 January – 22 January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Research Proposal – due 20th January
23 January – 29 January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit ethical approval form when research proposal mark is returned
30 January – 05 February 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make adjustments to ethical proposal and resubmit to the Human Ethics Committee (if necessary) • When ethical approval confirmed begin to position quantitative questionnaires around the Graphic Novel sections of the public library • At the same time begin distribution of advertisements/flyers seeking participants for qualitative interviews
06 February – 12 February 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to collect data for quantitative questionnaires. • Continue to seek responses for qualitative interviews • Complete writing a codebook based on the theory of fandom to assist with the coding of data from the qualitative interviews
13 February – 19 February 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to collect data for quantitative questionnaires • Begin interviews for the qualitative part of mixed methods methodology
20 February – 26 th February 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final week of collecting data from quantitative questionnaires • Continue interviews for the qualitative part of mixed methods methodology
27 th February – 05 th March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin data analysis for quantitative questionnaires – finding the mean, median and mode (descriptive statistics)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish collecting data from the qualitative interviews
06 th March – 12 th March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allotted time given to collecting more responses for questionnaire (if necessary) • Continue data analysis for quantitative questionnaires – (inferential statistics – if time allows) to see what relationships exist • Begin to transcribe qualitative interviews
13 th March – 19 th March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue transcribing qualitative interviews • Begin to code some of the completed transcriptions of the qualitative questionnaires
20 th March – 26 th March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue transcribing and coding qualitative interviews
27 th March – 02 nd April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish transcribing and coding qualitative interviews • Begin writing up the results of the quantitative questionnaires – using graphs when appropriate to document the statistics
03 rd April – 09 April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish writing up results for quantitative questionnaires • Begin writing up results of qualitative interviews • Revise methodology and data analysis sections of the research project
10 th April - 16 th April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin discussion section of the research project (quantitative section) • Finish writing up results of qualitative interviews • Update terminology from my proposal (e.g. from what I wanted to happen to what did happen)
17 th April – 23 rd April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue/Finish discussion section of the research project (quantitative results) • Begin discussion section for the qualitative interviews
24 th April – 30 th April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish discussion sections of research proposal
01 st May – 07 th May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write conclusion section of research project • Update references • Send initial draft to supervisor for checking and feedback
08 th May – 14 th May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make changes to research project based on supervisor's feedback.
15 th May – 21 st May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to edit final research project
22 nd May – 28 th May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send edited version to supervisor for final feedback
29 th May – 02 nd June 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Proofread of all documents
03 rd June – 09 th June 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Research Project by 9th June 2017

Appendix 2

Questions for Quantitative Questionnaire

Question 1: Do you read Graphic Novels?

- Yes
- No

If you answered no, thank you for your time you do not need to answer the rest of the survey.

Question 2: What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female

Question 3: What is your current Age?

- Under 12
- 12-18
- 19-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 45>

Question 4: Do you borrow Graphic Novels/Comic Books from the public library?

- Yes
- No

Question 5: How long have you been borrowing from the graphic novel/public library collection?

- Less than 6 months
- Between 6 months and One year
- Between One year and Two years
- Between Two Years and Three years
- Over three years
- Not applicable

Question 6: How regularly do you borrow from the graphic novel/comic book collection?

- More than once a week
- Every week

- Every fortnight
- Every month
- Every Two months
- Every Six months +
- Not applicable

Question 7: How many graphic novels/comic books do you borrow at a time?

- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 8>
- Not applicable

Question 8: Do you borrow from both the Young adult graphic novel collection and the adult graphic novel selection?

- Yes Both
- Just the Young Adult collection
- Just the Adult collection
- Not applicable

Question 9: How organised do you think the public library's graphic novel/comic book collection is?

- 0 – Extremely disorganised
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Average
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 – Extremely Organized

Question 10: When searching the graphic novel/comic book collection are you able to find what you are looking for?

- Yes - Always
- Yes – Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Not very often
- Never
- Not applicable

Question 11: How satisfied are you with the libraries graphic novel collection?

- Extremely satisfied
- Very Satisfied
- Moderately Satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Not at all satisfied
- Not satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Not applicable

Question 12: What Genre of Graphic Novel/Comic Book do you choose to read? (Choose all that apply)

- Superhero
- Non-fiction
- Western
- Crime
- Horror
- Manga
- Human Interest
- Science Fiction
- Other

If you selected 'other' could you please provide a brief description of your genre..

Fandom

Question 13: Where do you purchase graphic novels from? (Choose all that apply)

- Online
- General book store
- Specialist comic book/graphic novel store
- I don't purchase graphic novels/comic books
- Other – please specify

Question 14: Why do you choose to purchase graphic novels/comic books? (Choose all that apply)

- I enjoy the collectible aspect
- I don't like borrowing old books
- Owning the graphic novel/comic book shows I'm more of a fan
- The library doesn't have the graphic novel/comic book that I want
- I have to wait too long to get it from the library
- Not applicable
- Other

If you selected other could you please provide your reason for why you choose to buy graphic novels/comic books?

Question 15: Who do you think is the target audience for graphic novels? (Choose all that apply)

- Young children (12 and under)
- 12-15
- 16-18
- 18-25
- 25+

Question 16: How often do you feel embarrassed from borrowing graphic novels/comic books from the public library?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Not really
- Never
- Not applicable

Question 17: How often have you had to defend your reading of graphic novels/comic books to other individuals?

- All the time
- Sometimes
- Occasionally
- Never

Question 18: Do you participate in any other graphic novel/comic book related activity outside of reading them? (Choose all that apply)

- Forum participation
- Conventions e.g. Armageddon or comic con
- Graphic novel/comic book related movies
- Graphic novel/comic book related video games
- Participate in cosplay
- Collect memorabilia e.g. clothes, objects, action figures, tattoos etc
- Write your own fan fiction
- Other

If you selected other could you, please provide an example.

Question 19: Would you be interested in attending library orientated events based on graphic novels/comic books? (if you have any events in mind feel free to write them down)

- Yes
- No

- Unsure

Question 20: What (if any) improvements could be made to public libraries graphic novel/comic book collection? (Choose all that apply)

- Adding more titles
- Improving the layout of the collection
- Create a specific graphic novel/comic book forum for library users
- Library hosted graphic novel/comic book events
- Increased staff knowledge on graphic novels/comic books
- No improvement necessary
- Other

If you selected other could you please provide an example?

Appendix 3

Question framework for Qualitative Interview

Demographic and general information

Question: What is your current age?

Question: What is your current occupation?

Question: How long have you been reading graphic novels?

Question: Which genre of graphic novels do you read?

Fandom

Question: How would you describe your level of fandom towards graphic novels e.g. fanatical, moderate etc and why?

Question: Are there any parameters around being a graphic novel fan e.g. are you only considered a fan if you've read this or watched this etc – does this relate to collecting graphic novels as well?

Question: Who do you think graphic novels are predominantly aimed at?

Question: Would you consider graphic novels as 'good literature'? Do you think this has an effect on how graphic novel readers are perceived by non-graphic novel readers?

Library Usage

Question: Do you, or have you ever borrowed graphic novels from the public library? If yes which collection do you borrow from? How frequently do you use it? How many titles do you borrow from it?

Question: If you do borrow graphic novels from the public library how would you rate your satisfaction level of the collection? Did they have the titles you wanted? Were the staff well informed? Was it easy finding the books you wanted?

Or Question: If you don't borrow from the public library graphic novel collection, why not?

Question: Do you think the library does a good job at promoting its graphic novel collection

Or Question: Were you aware public libraries had graphic novel collections?

Stigma

Question: Have you ever felt embarrassed or stigmatized about borrowing graphic novels from public libraries? Or from being a graphic novel reader in general?

Question: Have you ever had to defend your reading of graphic novels to others? How did that make you feel?

Question: How do you feel about certain graphic novels being given young adult classification when it is adults who have statistically proven to be the biggest readers of graphic novels? Do you think this has an effect on adult graphic novel readers.

Capital Accumulation

Question: Do you buy comics as well as borrow them from the public library?

Question: Why do you or why do you think people tend to purchase comic books as opposed to borrowing them from the public library?

Participation and Productivity

Question: Do you take part in any other graphic novel related activity outside of reading them?

Question: Would you be interested in participating in any graphic novel events held by the public library? Why/why not?

Library Improvements

Question: With this in mind are there any improvements you think the public library could make to improve interaction of the graphic novel collection for adults? E.g. collection policy, marketing, conventions, movie shows, facebook page forums

Question: Any other thoughts you would like to express?

Appendix 4

Code Book for Qualitative Analysis

Code Number	Code Title
1	Fandom
1.1	Fandom: Discrimination and distinction
1.11	Social Hierarchy (e.g. to be a fan you must...)
1.12	Stigma or embarrassment
1.13	Defending your fandom – anything related to good literature
1.14	Agreeing with the stigma e.g. graphic novels are juvenile
1.2	Fandom – Productivity and Participation
1.21	Enunciative Productivity
1.211	Forum participation
1.212	Attending conventions
1.213	Cosplay
1.22	Semiotic Productivity – e.g. social identity through fandom
1.221	Following graphic novel/comic book characters morals and actions
1.23	Textual Productivity

1.231	Creating your own graphic novel/comic book
1.3	Capital accumulation
1.31	Collectible aspect of graphic novels
1.32	Comments on buying over borrowing
1.33	The cultural economy and the public library
2	Demographic Information
2.1	Gender (either male or female)
2.2	Age (what age are the participants)
3	Library graphic novel collection
3.1	Times visited the collection
3.2	Comments on the shelving/cataloguing of the collection
3.21	Comments on the adult/young adult split
3.22	Comments relating to the finding of graphic novels/comic books
3.23	Comments relating to improvements of shelving of graphic novels/comic books
3.3	Number of books borrowed
3.4	Improvements to be made to the graphic novel collection

4	Satisfaction Levels of the public libraries graphic novel collection
4.1	Positive comments about the collection
4.2	Negative comments about the collection
4.3	Improvements to the collection
4.31	Extra titles
4.32	Greater social interaction e.g. forums etc
4.33	Library run graphic novel/comic book events
4.34	Increased staff knowledge
4.35	Other mentioned improvements
5	Library run events
5.1	Positive reaction
5.2	Negative reaction

Appendix 5

Participant Information sheet for qualitative interviews



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Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Adult Graphic Novel Readers: Their Opinions, Awareness and Usage of Public Libraries' Graphic Novel Collections.

Researcher: Thomas William Fletcher, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

As part of the completion of my Master of Information Studies, this study is designed to investigate adult graphic novel readers and their usage, awareness and opinions on graphic novel collections within public libraries. In particular, this research project will seek to find out whether the theory of fandom plays a role in how adult graphic novel readers interact with public libraries' graphic novel collections.

This research project intends to research the demographics of public libraries' graphic novel collection users and gain insight into who is using the graphic novel collections, how often they are being used, user satisfaction levels with the collections, and whether any improvements could be made to the graphic novel collections. This research will also endeavour to determine whether the theory of fandom is present when documenting adult graphic novel readers' interactions with graphic novels and public libraries' graphic novel collections.

This research project will be of benefit to New Zealand public libraries by providing them with information about adult graphic novel readers and how/if they can improve their services for them. This project will also be of sociological benefit by discovering information on a demographic (adult graphic novel readers) which has not been researched extensively within New Zealand.

Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval from the School's Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting any adult graphic novel readers of eighteen years of age or over, regardless of whether you borrow graphic novels from public libraries, to participate in this research. Participants will be asked to take part in a short half hour semi-structured interview at a place and time convenient to them. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to participants for checking.

Participation is voluntary, and you will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research, including possible publication in academic conferences and journals. All material collected will be kept confidential, and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor (Brenda Chawner, Senior Lecturer in the School of Information Management). The final report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. If you wish to withdraw from the project, you may do so until April 30th 2017 and the data collected up to that point will be destroyed. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within two years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at fletchthom@myvuw.ac.nz or telephone 0211001873. Alternatively you may contact my supervisor Brenda Chawner, Senior Lecturer in the School of Information Management, at Brenda.Chawner@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 463-04 4635780.

Thomas Fletcher

Appendix 6

Participant Information sheet for quantitative questionnaire



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Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Adult Graphic Novel Readers: Their Opinions, Awareness and Usage of Public Libraries Graphic Novel Collections.

Researcher: Thomas William Fletcher, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

As part of the completion of my Master of Information Studies, this study is designed to unearth data and information on adult graphic novel readers and their usage, awareness and opinions on graphic novel collections within public libraries. In particular, this research project will seek to find out whether the theory of fandom plays a role in how adult graphic novel readers interact with public libraries graphic novel collections.

This research project intends to research the user demographics of the collection and gain insight into who is using the public libraries graphic novel collection, how often it is used, user satisfaction levels of the collection and whether any improvements could be made to graphic novel collection.

This research project will be of benefit to New Zealand public libraries by assisting them with information about adult graphic novel readers and how/if they can improve their services for them. This project will also be of sociological benefit by discovering information on a demographic (adult graphic novel readers) which has not been researched extensively within New Zealand.

Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval from the School's Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting any graphic novel readers, regardless of age and whether you borrow from the public libraries graphic novel collection to participate in this research. Participants will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire of no more than ten minutes. This survey is anonymous and no data will be attributed to individual participants. Your consent to participate is implied in your completion and return of the questionnaire, so please do not write your name on the questionnaire to ensure anonymity.

Participation is voluntary, and you will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research, including possible publication in academic conferences and journals. All material collected will be anonymous, and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor Senior Lecturer in the School of Information Management Brenda Chawner. The final report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within two years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at fletchthom@myvuw.ac.nz or telephone 0211001873 or you may contact my supervisor Brenda Chawner, Senior Lecturer in the School of Information Management at Brenda.Chawner@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 463-04 4635780

Thomas Fletcher