Manga Comes to the Library

» This literature medium adds a unique learning opportunity for students and a compelling way for librarians to connect with their young adult patrons.

BY AMY SEIPKE

Manga is visual literature, either from Japan or in the Japanese style. To call manga "Japanese graphic novels," is to underplay the massive cultural impact it has in Japan **(see Exhibit 1)**. A more apt comparison is to say that it is akin to paperback books here in the U.S., as manga is not so much a genre as it is a medium used to convey any number of stories and information.

Unlike Western graphic novels, which generally follow the narrative tradition found in prose literature, manga stories are written because the authors (or Manga-ka) have a targeted audience they would like to reach and some specific characters they would like to present. In manga, the characters are created first for a specific audience. Those characters are then used to tell stories which, the Manga-ka hopes, are of interest to the targeted audience. Therefore, a good way to divide the broad world of manga into manageable genres is to first determine the audience type, and then to establish the theme of the stories or the special characteristics of the protagonists.

Because of this focus on the intended audience, the most common launching platform for manga stories is in periodicals intended for specific audiences. These periodicals have huge audiences and very large circulation numbers. The stories are originally published serially, a chapter at a time in magazines, with each magazine featuring many different stories in each issue. The more popular stories that have gained enough of a following to take on a life of their own are then published as stand-alone (often serialized) works called a "tankobon." Some stories are also published to be a stand-alone monograph, which are referred to as "one-shot manga."

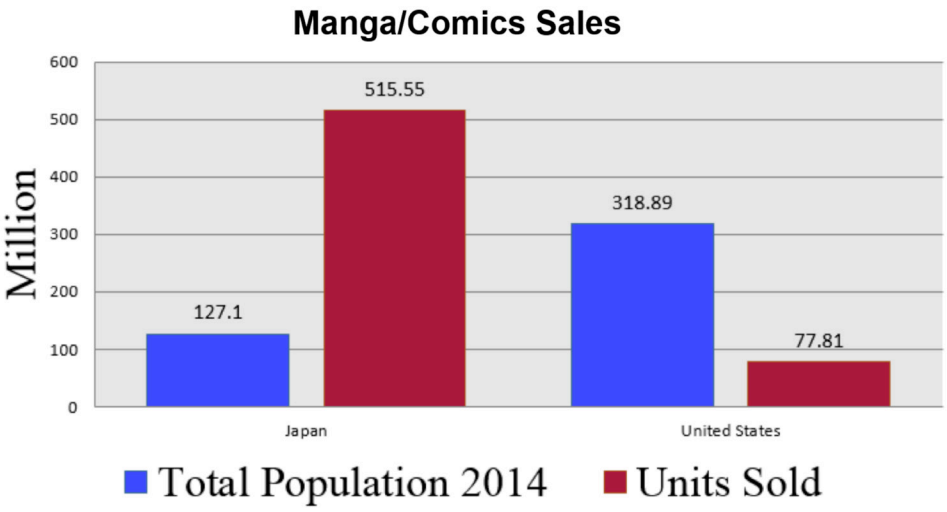


Exhibit 1

WHY DO LIBRARIES WANT MANGA?

The purpose of the library is to meet the information and resource needs of the community that it serves, and having manga in the collection can help do that.

Many theories of learning postulate that there are some people who learn best through visual stimuli. Manga can be used to help these visual learners gain access to ideas and information, which would not appeal to them presented in other forms. The Manga Shakespeare series by Paw Prints Press in Paradise, CA, is one example of manga that could be used to expose readers to complex ideas and story structure in a way that is less intimating.

Because of the visual nature of the medium and the close relationship between the images and the text, manga also helps English language learners to access information and stories that may otherwise prove too challenging to be appreciated.

Additionally, because of the popularity of manga in Japan, and increasingly in the U.S., it is a familiar form of literature for many people who use libraries. Overlooking manga in library collection policies would create a void in the resources offered.

Finally, manga is cool! As manga gains popularity, reluctant readers may not be averse to picking up these books because they are trendy among their peers. People who may not consider themselves to be "readers" may feel less hesitant to pick up a manga book because it does not contradict their self-schema; the visual nature of the medium allows them to think of it as something different than reading a book. Overcoming resistance to the act of reading is, of course, the first step in developing engagement with the material presented.

WHAT DO LIBRARIANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MANGA?

The following five concepts help define the intricacies of manga.

Manga is a medium, not a genre. Just about every story imaginable (even non-fiction stories) can be told using the manga style. Manga is often based more on the development of characters and the natural actions and reactions of those characters rather than being plot driven with the author striving to get to a certain outcome. The manga-ka, or manga artist, creates a character and allows things to simply happen to his characters rather than thinking of a story he wants to tell and creating characters and situations through which to tell that particular story. Therefore, the way

of intellectually organizing manga, which most closely matches the way it is written and created, is to begin by dividing it into groups based on the intended audience.

The four major audiences for which manga is written are:
Shonen – Boy's Manga
Shojo – Girl's Manga
Sienen – Men's Manga
Josei – Women's Manga
There is also a category for young children where their youth, not their gender, is the focus; the term used for that is "Kodomomuke."

The category of sexually explicit material for adults only is called "Seijin." Within the Seijin category is "Hentai," which refers to materials that are not only explicit but also include specialized or bizarre fetishes.

Of course, within these large groupings there are also other characteristics which the writers focus on and can help to attract an audience that will identify with the characters. Subcategories such as "magical girl manga," "robot manga," "naughty manga," and many others can be considered as genres within each audience (see this blog post for a more complete list of the most common genres within manga **https://aseip.wordpress.com/2015/05/13/manga-is-a-medium-not-a-genre/**).

Manga is not exactly the same as Anime. This confusion is understandable since they are visually very similar: both art forms are from Japan (often presented in the Japanese language even), and they even often feature the same characters and titles. The major difference is easy to remember: anime is animated...it moves!

There are, however, other differences between the two art forms that can often be seen most clearly when the same characters or even the same titles are converted from the static printed manga form into the dynamic moving anime form (which is usually the order of production, though sometimes an original anime series may be made into printed manga after the fact.)

Because Anime usually involves the efforts of a whole team of creators, there are creative compromises that inevitably take place in the story line. This can cause the plot to take very different turns from what happened to the characters in the original manga version of the story.

Anime	Manga
Many people involved in the creative process: Possibly working on several titles at once, less invested Creative compromises	Single manga-ka or small team: Work on a small number of stories, very invested in their title
More outlandish, risky, attention seeking plot lines	More carefully tended or "realistic" plot lines
Images moving by at 24 frames per second, each image is only meant to be seen a fraction of a second	Static images meant to have each one studied
Lower quality images, less detail (especially in background)	Highly detailed
Almost always colored	Sometimes in black and white

Exhibit 2

Manga, on the other hand, is often created by only a pair or even one lone "manga-ka." This usually results in the creators becoming more attached to the characters since they have spent a long time and much energy creating and directing them. Manga also usually follows a less risky plot line because the creators (and hopefully the readers) become much more invested in the lives of the characters in the relatively few series they read than a production team (and the TV viewers) do in one of the many shows with which they are engaged **(see Exhibit 2)**.

The quality of the art work is often different as well. Anime is drawn to be shown at 24 frames per second, whereas manga is drawn to have each picture static on the page to be examined by readers for as long as they like. Part of what makes anime different and interesting for many viewers is that the 24 frames-per-second speed of anime is slower than they are used to watching, making the picture a bit choppier and giving it a unique visual appearance. However, even at this slow rate, it is still going by much quicker than the images on the page in a printed book of manga and is therefore able to be of lower quality or less detailed. These less-detailed images are often preferred for use in anime because they take less time and energy to draw and can help keep a production on schedule and on budget.

Some examples of how the same characters are drawn differently in the same scene of the anime adaptation juxtaposed with the original manga version images can be found in **Exhibits 3 and 4**. (I am not the creator of the images in this section!)

Some techniques used by anime artists help demonstrate that it is a distinct art form, since they give the desired appearance when moving but would appear strange if drawn in a manga. When played together, these images can make the characters look as though they are moving very quickly but when viewed alone or out of sequence they simply appear bizarre. Through time, this feature has actually become part of the quirky appeal of anime and for some viewers is considered integral to the style. As a result, many shows are still made using

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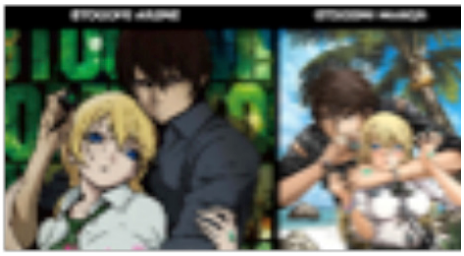


Exhibit 3



Exhibit 4

these tricks even though, through technology and digital animation, they no longer need to be.

The image in **Exhibit 5** shows a technique used in anime called "blur" used to show fast movement. The image in **Exhibit 6** shows a technique called "multiples," which is also used to show very fast movement in anime.

The Japanese language uses a different set of characters from those used in English. Sometimes there is not an exact "one-to-one" translation of syllables from Japanese to English. This fact requires people who wish to use the English alphabet to portray Japanese words to use a type of transcription called Hepburn Romanization. This system uses the letters of the English language to portray the sounds one would hear listening to a speaker who is speaking in Japanese. So when the reader "sounds it out" in English, they will (hopefully) pronounce it close to the way it would be pronounced by a speaker of Japanese.

Inevitably, while there are official rules for this system, not everybody who transcribes anything into English sticks to those uniform rules. This problem can lead to multiple English spellings for the same Japanese word. And, because languages are living entities that are always growing and adapting, these different transcriptions can take on new meanings with a context different from each other.

Think of the way authors sometimes indicate a character's accent in their writing. If they use a Southern accent, what does that say about that character? If they use a Boston accent, what does that say? Think of how authors portray that accent on the page. They might switch a vowel, add a



Exhibit 5



Exhibit 6

repetitive vowel, or drop letters. Are some of the anomalies in the transcriptions of Japanese terms meant to portray the same kind of things?

Maybe when a word spelled with an "a" in place of an "e" it is simply a mistake; but maybe it is intentional to try to convey a particular context. Or maybe it becomes another word altogether. Dessert vs. desert; through vs. though—to a non-native English speaker these words would be awful tricky.

English-speaking readers and the librarians who cater to them are faced with this problem everywhere they turn in learning about manga.

Japanese is read from right to left instead of left to right. This arrangement is not necessarily a huge problem, but it is something librarians and readers need to know. There is no better way to ruin a book than to pick it up and immediately see a visual image of the ending scene. Also, it is a fact that may need to be considered when making shelving decisions. In a Japanese bookstore or library, the books would be shelved from right to left as well **(see Exhibit 7)**.

Manga has a huge Internet community of fans. One of the major activities that fans engage in online is a type of forum referred to as a "scanlation" page. These sites are used to discuss, recommend, and even provide access to manga.

Fans will scan their original Japanese language copies of their favorite stories and work together with other fans to translate them and to even redraw and fix up the

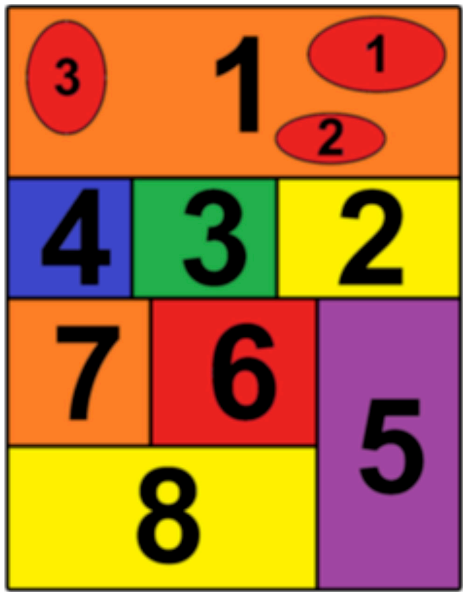


Exhibit 7

images when needed to allow them to be better understood by English-speaking audiences. These sites often take their translations down once the title is picked up by an English publisher, allowing them to have a sort of symbiotic relationship with publishers. They help English publishers decide which titles are worth the money and effort to publish, and help Japanese publishers increase their fan-base without losing sales because English speakers would not be buying their product anyway.

For librarians, these sites can be very helpful when providing reader advisory since they have lots of good suggestions for further reading. For fans, these sites provide quick access to the newest issues of their favorite series; single chapters are generally available to download for free or a small fee.

HOW CAN LIBRARIES ACCESS MANGA?

By following this link, librarians can download an annotated bibliography containing several examples from each major genre to help get their collecting started: **http://www.lib.collegeforcreativestudies.edu/screens/Manga_Bibliography.pdf**

The magazines, which are the original format, are not generally translated or published in English. There are a few English-language manga magazines. But they different from their Japanese counterparts because they contain different material; they are not direct translations of the Japanese magazines.

However, several English language publishers purchased the rights to manga and have them translated and published in English. For the most part, these translations

TITLE AND AUTHOR	OLD CALL NUMBER	NEW CALL NUMBER
"Black Jack" by Osamu Tezuka	PN6790 .J34 .T4 1998	Manga .B53 .J33 Vol. 1
"Black Blizzard" by Yoshihiro Tatsumi	PN6790 .J34 .T3 2010	Manga .B53 .B55
"Black Bird" by Kanoko Sakurakouji	PN6790 .J34 .S2 2009	Manga .B53 .B57 Vol. 1
"Crimson Hero" by Mitsuba Takanashi	PN6790 .J34 .T3 2005	Manga .C75 .H47 Vol. 1
"Crimson Spell" by Ayano Yamane	PN6790 .J34 .Y3 2005	Manga .C75 .S64 Vol. 1

Exhibit 8: Revised Call System for Manga.

are available for full tankobons or omnibus editions of manga stories.

The tankobons and omnibuses are easy to source and are available from most major book sellers. A few of the major publishers of English language translations (some of which specialize in only certain types of manga) are: Drawn and Quarterly, Dark Horse Manga, Fantagraphics, No Starch Press, Kondasha USA, Seven Seas Entertainment, SuBLime, Vertical Inc, VIZ Media, Yaoi Press, and Yen Press.

In addition to being available in print, manga also has a large digital audience. It is becoming increasingly available through some of the larger providers of digital books such as Oyster, Amazon's Kindle Unlimited, and Overdrive. Currently, though, the selection of manga available through these large sites is not very robust. As a result, the best place to access digital manga now is from the publishers themselves. Most of the major manga publishers have digital versions available through their websites, and two of the major publishers, TokyoPop and Crunchyroll, are publishing almost exclusively in digital form.

WHERE SHOULD LIBRARIES PUT MANGA?

A manga collection can be shelved in several ways. If a library has a small collection, it is usually not a problem to simply shelve it using the current system. In a library using the Library of Congress system, most of the manga collection would be found under PN6790 .J34 with a second Cutter number added based on the author. Non-fiction manga can also be shelved in the same way as any other monograph on a given subject.

But problems arise with larger collections. Adding a second or third Cutter number and even year and volume designations does not always leave the books with unique identifiers, or does not allow consecutive volumes to be shelved together, and provides a challenge for the staff members who are doing the shelving.

It seems that the solution will have to include using Cutter numbers based on the title rather than on the author's name. Many Japanese authors have similar surnames; when they write different series and they publish them contemporaneously, it causes the titles to be intermingled on the shelves. Also the same series may be written by different authors over the course of its publication, resulting in the series being shelved in very different locations, affecting access and retrieval.

The solution for this challenge is to develop a local call number system within the library. A local call number system might include ideas such as dropping the "PN6790 .J34" and replacing it with the word "Manga" or using a Cutter number to represent each word in the title followed by the author, and volume number when needed **(see Exhibit 8).**

A library with a very large manga collection may even consider separating the "Manga" heading into subsets based on audience and have sections designated "Shonen Manga," "Shojo Manga," "Sienen Manga," and "Josei Manga." Most titles have a clear audience, which can be found by the imprint the publisher uses for it. However, occasionally the audience may not be explicitly stated. This type of classification may also prove troublesome because it may not be familiar to American library patrons and may give the appearance of being sexist or reinforcing gender stereotypes.

MANGA AS A RESOURCE

Since the College for Creative Studies is an art school, many of our students are visual learners. In our library, we have found the non-fiction manga to be most helpful in assisting students in learning about complex subjects. In addition, the non-fiction manga is useful for students beginning research or for getting students engaged with a subject. The fiction manga brings joy to their library visits and helps them to become familiar with popular stories.

Many of our students are very enthusiastic about manga and have been excited to help grow our collection, even donating their own old tankobons so that others may enjoy them.

Despite the challenges of adding this new type of resource to our collections, I have found it to be a very rewarding experience. It has been an excellent topic for collaborating with students and has facilitated many conversations around the subject of manga, reading, art, and culture. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Amy Elizabeth Pell Seipke is librarian and archivist at the College of Creative Studies, Detroit, MI. The college offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts in such creative pursuits as advertising, design, and photography, as well as a Master of Fine Arts in various design specialties. She can be reached at amy.pell@gmail.com.

