

Call For Papers

Fifth International Graphic Novel and Comics conference

at The British Library, London
17-19 July 2014

After a series of successful, conferences in Manchester, Bournemouth, Glasgow and Dundee, we are pleased to announce that the Fifth International Graphic Novel and Comics conference (17th-19th July, 2014) will be held at the British Library to coincide with a major exhibition, curated by Paul Gravett, which will utilise the vast collection of comics material held in the library, 'The conference will concentrate on two main themes: 'Comics production and institution' and 'Comics: Sedition and anarchy' and is organised jointly by David Huxley & Joan Ormrod (Manchester Metropolitan University), Julia Round (Bournemouth University) and Chris Murray (Dundee University) and the British Library.

Comics: production and institution

Despite many dire predictions about the fate of the comics industry, it continues to prosper and has increasing cultural influence, particularly in the fields of film and the games industry. National boundaries are increasingly less important for example with the spectacular international rise of manga. However, national production and distribution practices have historically been important in the narratives, audiences and cultural capital attached to comics (eg: European comics, *Bande Dessinée* compared with American comics). In academic terms it has never been more important with the two new journals, *The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (Routledge) and *Studies in Comics* (Intellect), adding to the burgeoning interest in comics from a huge and varied range of perspectives.

The theme of this conference incorporates comics production as part of but also outside of institution. Comics are unique in the mass media because the individuals who produce and distribute the products are usually fans: from creators to comics shops owners and comicon organisers. So we are inviting papers on all aspects of production: from the multinationals and media conglomerations to small scale production such as fanzines and independent presses. Related aspects of the industry are also of interest, for instance censorship and copyright issues, promotional practices (comicons, comics distribution, historical practices eg: the change in distribution from newsagents to comics shops to collecting and comics promotion).

This call for papers might include, but is not limited to the following topics:

- Advertising and sponsorship
- Cultural impact of comics
- Comics conventions & conferences
- Comics agencies and studios
- International influences, collaborations

Creators rights, copyright, unionisation
Graphic design and graphic novels building narrative
Editing, distribution
Changing position of women in the industry
New technologies, digital vs special printing
Comics shops and distribution
Fans: comic collections, fans as industry producers, small press, alternative production
Historical aspects of the comics industry, eg. distribution, censorship
National and international production
Awards and recognition
Fandom and academia

Comics: Sedition and anarchy

It has long been argued that comics are a medium with the potential for anarchy, whose narratives often push against cultural boundaries and whose graphic nature can render them a target for moral panics and political objections. Although the exhibition will clearly concentrate on the collections of British-published comics held in the library, we welcome contributions in this section which deal with the following (and related) themes across any national culture or period:

Mirth and mayhem: irreverence, magic, children's comics, the carnivalesque

From slapstick to violence: war comics, humour,

Moral panics: Penny Dreadfuls, underground comix, sex, drugs and psychedelia

Horror comics: violence, terror, archetypes and subversion, the grotesque

Politics; (society, class, etc);

Women's comics, sexualities, marginalised voices

Breakdowns (mental states, dreams, drugs, etc);

Heroes and anti-heroes (including parodies and deconstructions of icons like Superman etc.).

Media cross-pollination and new digital forms

We also welcome proposals for specific panel topics.

Send a 300 word abstract to: d.huxley@mmu.ac.uk, j.ormrod@mmu.ac.uk

Deadline: 24th January 2014