
Although the term 'graphic novel' has been part of the popular vernacular for the better part of three decades, the acceptance of the genre as being far more than lengthy 'comic books' has been determinedly slow. Yet its status as both an art form and a popular publication can no longer be denied, and although librarians may be loathe to accept the fact, graphic novels are here to stay, and a public library would be missing a good bet by ignoring them.

Libraries Unlimited understands this, and also understands that many librarians may be befuddled by the astonishingly wide range of choices now available. In a new addition to their ongoing Genreflecting Advisory Series, Michael Pawuk has collected a vast amount of information and detail for the long-overdue (and necessary) readers' advisory tool *Graphic Novels: A Genre Guide to Comic Books, Manga, and More.*

Starting with an explanation of the importance of graphic novels to the public library (presented, appropriately enough, as a cartoon), Pawuk makes an admirable attempt at cataloguing and organizing more than 2,400 original graphic novels by genre and subgenre. While he admits, with "over 2,600 titles published in the span of just one year, there are many titles that could not be listed," *Graphic Novels* should prove to be an invaluable tool for a librarian overwhelmed by where to start.

Categorizing the hundreds of examples through genres such as Super-Heroes, Science Fiction, Horror, Contemporary Life, and Nonfiction, Pawuk describes each novel's plot, providing details such as the length of the series, the authors and illustrators, awards won, movies adapted from, and so forth. Both librarians and patrons will find a wealth of material to peruse, and newcomers to graphic novels will definitely discover something to pique their interest.

It would have been a welcome addition, however, if some overview and history of the genre had been provided. While the appendices provide both print and Internet resources for unearthing such information, those unfamiliar with graphic novels might find themselves somewhat bewildered.

For example, terms such as 'manga' and 'anime', the fashionable Japanese subset of graphic novels classically presented in reverse right-to-left format rather than the North American left-to-right, are left unexplained.

Furthermore, discussing the importance of graphic novels is well-nigh ineffectual without laying out some of the high points of the genre. Some mention of the major
breakthroughs by talents such as Alan Moore, Art Spiegelman, and Will Eisner would have been appreciated.

Nevertheless, Graphic Novels should prove to be an invaluable tool for the librarian seeking to increase a library's patronage through the addition of a neglected literary form. While there are quibbles to be had with the overall organization – it is somewhat discouraging to find a collection of the seminal 1970's comic book Howard the Duck classified by Pawuk not as 'satire' or 'genreblends' but instead under the unarguably accurate yet badly chosen category 'funny animals' – it's heartening to see graphic novels finally receiving their due.

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