Comics in Education

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Scope of this workshop

- During this tutorial we will discuss about the new medium of Web comics.
- We will demonstrate **tools** which allow a creator easily compose his/her web comics creations and publish them online.
  - Some **standalone tools** (freeware or proprietary) for Macintosh and/or MS Windows operating systems will also be shown. Among the tools that will be demonstrated will be the Comic Book Creator, the Comic Life and the Garfield Comic Creator.
- We will also present our own online tool for creating online comics strips, called the ComicStripCreator [http://www.comicstripcreator.org/]
- Moreover, the attendees will have the opportunity to express their opinions, make suggestions about the current state of the art of these tools as well as propose new features.
Let's see what we will see...

- About Comics
  - Definitions
  - History of comics
  - Strengths of comics
  - Digital comics- web comics
  - Comics in Education

- Authoring Tools for Web Comics
  - Digital Comic Book Readers
  - Educational Comic Book Tools
  - Web Comic Strip Creators
  - Web Comic Book Creators

- Web comic creator
  - An Innovative Tool

- Topics for discussion
“A comic book or comicbook is a magazine or book containing sequential art in the form of a narrative. Comic books are often called comics for short. Although the term implies otherwise, the subject matter in comic books is not necessarily humorous, and in fact its dramatic seriousness varies widely.”

- Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia
Master comics artist Will Eisner uses the term sequential art when describing comics.

However, when part of a sequence, even a sequence of only two, the art of the image is transformed into something more: the art of comics!

Notice that this definition is strictly neutral on matters of style, quality or subject matter.

Taken individually, the pictures below are merely that--pictures.
Scott McCloud, Understanding Comics

Comics (noun) — plural in form, takes a singular verb. Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.
Comic Strips

PEOPLE WHO READ GRAPHIC NOVELS SHOULD BE ASHAMED!

OKAY, HOW ABOUT THIS:

WHENEVER ANYONE GOES NEAR THE GRAPHIC NOVELS A GIANT FOGHORN WILL SOUND, A BANK OF SPOTLIGHTS WILL TRAIN UPON THEM, AND A LOUDSPEAKER WILL SHOUT THEIR NAME, WHICH WILL ALSO BE POSTED ON OUR WEBSITE.

PERFECT!

DARN IT, MY MOTION DETECTOR BUDGET FOR THIS YEAR IS TOTALLY SHOT.
Graphic Novels

- Comic book longer in format than the usual “pamphlet,” and typically contains a complete story unto itself.
- Examples are: Bone or Fashion Kitty
Manga ...

- The Japanese view of the world in Comics.
- Different from the American view
- **Content**: NUDITY and VIOLENCE

Source: “Mang-huh? Comics in your library” presentated by Cathy Kyle, Parma Public Library
Educational Comic Books!

Kids can learn about history, maths, etc. and have fun doing it
Comic Books are wildly popular!

- From 2001-2006, comic books have grown from a $75 million to a $330 million industry.
- Movies and novels are now being made into comic books specifically aimed at children.
- Many popular writers, musicians and creative designers are working with comics.
- Google Chrome presented by Scott McCloud.
From the early 40’s many educators in USA such as W. W. D. Sones (1944) and others conducted a series of studies on using comic books in education, providing data for its usefulness.

Comics-supported curriculum appeared, while the Journal of Educational Sociology devoted the 1944's Volume 18, Issue 4 to the topic.

Others regarded comics harmful (F. Wertham, 1954) for literacy and eventually the impetus of pro-comics educators stopped.

In the 1970's teachers dared to use comic books again such as R. W. Campbell, R. Schoof (Koenke, 1981), B. Brocka (1979).
The milestone was set in 1992, when Art Spiegelman's comic book "Maus" about Holocaust experience won a Pulitzer Prize (Sturm, 2001).


Today, educators at all levels are designing new ways of teaching through comics.

Establishment of both undergraduate and graduate programs in American universities.

Librarians in the new millennium find comic books useful in luring teenagers away from their televisions and video games (Bacon, 2002).
**Strengths Of Comics (1/2)**

- **a) Motivating.** Due to human’s natural attraction to pictures, comics can capture and maintain the learner’s interest;

- **b) Visual.** Pictures and text mutually tell a story. This "interplay of the written and visual" comics "put a human face on a given subject" → emotional connection between user and characters of a comic’s story, Versaci (2001)

- **c) Permanent.** “Visual permanence" is unique to comics, while time … progresses at the pace of a reader, in contrast to film and animation Williams (1995). Text medium is permanent but not "pictorial"
Strengths Of Comics (2/2)

- d) *Intermediary*. Scaffold to difficult disciplines and concepts, give reluctant readers the non-threatening practice and to experienced ones inspiration and confidence.

- e) *Popular*. "there should be harmony between the user's on-going life activities and his experiences in the school" Hutchinson (1949)

  - Comic books promote media literacy, encouraging students to "become critical consumers of media messages" (Morrison, Bryan, & Chilcoat, 2002).
  
  - In social aspects students may examine "contemporary lifestyles, myths, and values" (Brocka, 1979).

- f) *Development of thinking skills*: Analytical and critical thinking skills can be developed, uncovering the deeper meaning of a work and offering a profound insight.
Digital Comics - Web Comics

- Computer technology has drastically changed teaching. All media such as text, picture, video, sound can be easily created, reproduced and ported.

- Web comics can be a vital tool for a digital future integrating:
  - imagery from photography and video featuring audio soundtracks, animation,
  - interactivity.
Comics In Education

- Berkowitz & Packer (2001) believe that can be used in a variety of teaching and training settings.
- They employ a language that apparently is almost universally understood (Sones, 1944).
- Their use in education is based on the Clark’s & Paivio’s (1991) dual coding theory:
  - recall/recognition is enhanced by presenting information in both visual and verbal form.
- A new challenge: digitised comics and digital hypermedia comic books or web comics.
Greek & European Committee Publications

- "Adventures of Asterix" in ancient Greek language (Mamuthcomics), Syntax of ancient Greek in comics (Δίαυλος, 2004), Aristophanes’ comedies, or Sophocles’ tragedies in comic format (Metaihmio), Greek mythology etc.

- European Committee published some series of comics in all official languages of European Union (E.U.),
  - to inform students about the E.U. "The war of berry ice cream"
  - to fight against discriminations and racism. "Me the Racist"
Creating a Comic Book

Source: “L’atelier de la bande dessinée avec Hergé”
Digital Comic Book Viewers/Readers

- In order to archive scanned - digitised comic books new compressed file types came up for comics. The well-known .cbr (for rar archives) and .cbz (for zip archives). These archives are nothing more than a compressed list of scanned images.

- Digital Comic Viewers are used to open and navigate through these digital comics

Comic Strip Creators

- Comic strip creators allow the design of sort web comic strips by importing pictures and dialogues.

  - Garfield Comic Strip Creator (http://www.garfield.com/fungames/comiccreator.html)
  - Cosy Comic Strip Creator (http://www.comicstripcreator.org)
Viewers of educational comic books, KABAM by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention U.S.A. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) which presents stories with dialogues and asks the student to express their opinion.

Tools for self-assessment, such as the Concept Cartoons, http://www.conceptcartoons.com designed to provoke discussion and stimulate scientific thinking. Children are asked to answer a multiple-choice test in form of unfinished dialogues among the cartoon characters.
Comic Book Creators

- Comic creators allow the design of digitised comic books by importing pictures and dialogues and by giving the potential of storage, management, sharing the produced material.

- Comic Book Creator
  http://www.mycomicbookcreator.com

- Comic Life
  http://plasq.com/comiclife
Comic Book Creator

Source: PlanetWide - http://www.mycomicbookcreator.com
Comic Life

Source: Plasq - http://plasq.com/comiclife
Communities such as Hyper Comics (http://www.hypercomics.com/) and Comic Life (http://plasq.com/) exist where developers & comic artists discuss and exchange opinions.
## Comic Creator Tools Function Review

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<th>Feature</th>
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<td>User Friendly Environment (drag and drop)</td>
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ComicLab An Innovative Tool

Source: ITisART.Ltd - http://www.webcomicbookcreator.com
Awards

- YALSA’s Great Graphic Novels List
  www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/booklistsawards/greatgraphicnovelsforteens/nominations.htm

- Eisner Awards
  www.comic-con.org/cci/cci_eisners_main.shtml

- Harvey Awards
  www.harveyawards.org

- Comic Book Awards Almanac
  http://users.rcn.com/aardy/comics/awards
Events

- **Free comic book day (next event will be on May 2, 2009)** [www.freecomicbookday.com](http://www.freecomicbookday.com)
  - Free Comic Book Day is a single day when participating comic book shops across North America and around the world give away comic books absolutely free* to anyone who comes into their stores.

- **Comics conventions**
  - **comic-con**: The biggest convention on Comics. [www.comic-con.org](http://www.comic-con.org)
  - **CAPE (Comic and Pop-culture Expo)** is a completely free 3-day event [http://www.capeday.com/](http://www.capeday.com/)
According to ‘The Secret Origin of Good Readers’
Reading comic books may help to:

- Develop an increased interest in reading.
- Increase literacy in the broad sense of the word.
- Develop language skills and a rich and varied vocabulary.
- Foster interest in a variety of literary genres.
- Foster interest in a broad range of topics.
- Stimulate a creative imagination.
- Develop an appreciation of art.
- Develop the ability to discuss and critique art and writing.
- Increase understanding of how meaning is found in visual phenomena.
- Enhance understanding of popular culture.

Source: Graphic Novels for Kids, Tweens and Teens presented by Julie Bartel, Utah
Topics for discussion

- Web comics are here to stay or not?
- New functionality for web comics authoring tools?
  - User perspectives…

EduComics
Using web comics in education
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Graphic Novels for Kids, Tweens and Teens presented by Julie Bartel, Utah


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Hergé, L'atelier de la bande dessinée


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http://www.educomics.org

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