



Drawn to the Form

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Comics and the Dewey Decimal Classification System

I belong to a Yahoo Group called Graphic Novels for Libraries (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/gn4lib/>). I lurk more than I post, but it's a fantastic resource for librarians of all stripes with all levels of experience with graphic novels. There is a perennial question that constantly appears in the forums. Marcela Peres encapsulated the latest version of this most common request:

It's the simplest question, and yet, so headache-inducing: how do you shelve your graphic novel collection (assuming like us, you give it its own section)?

Currently, we have our manga separated out (though differentiating between manga and some graphic novels has been annoying for our shelvees), and organized by series name alphabetically. Easy enough.

*The graphic novels are another story. They're alphabetical either by title, OR by character (so, *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Ultimate Spider-Man* are both shelved under an "S" spine label). This system is less than ideal and things get mis-shelved all the time. I also worry that patrons are getting hopelessly confused.*

Does anyone have a better way to do this? I've toyed with the idea of

separating series vs. single volume graphic novels, but I'm not sure if that would actually improve things. (gn4lib@yahoo.com - June 6, 2013)

When Melville Dewey first invented his classification system, 741.5 was the section devoted to comic books, graphic novels, cartoons, and caricatures. The subcategories can get pretty complicated if you insisted on filing all our comics and graphic novels via Dewey's system: for instance, on http://ddc.typepad.com/025431/2006/02/comicbook_conun.html (a Dewey Decimal Classification System blog), the spine label for a Tintin comic would be 741.59493 and Garry Trudeau's *Doonsbury* series would be filed under 741.56973.

Most public and school libraries tend to give graphic novels their own unique section. This move doesn't always simplify things. Does your non-fiction graphic novel go with its non-fiction brothers or graphic novel sisters? Where do hybrid books, like the fantastic *Frankie Pickle* series by Eric Wight, belong? If the *Frankie Pickle and the Closet of Doom* book belongs in the comic section, does that mean Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever* should join it? Or