

ICLA Research Committee Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative

Statement of Purpose

The research committee Comics Studies and Graphic Narrative seeks to advance the study of the medium of comics in the field of comparative literature. The committee aims to facilitate opportunities for discussion, to present research in joint sessions at the AILC/ICLA congresses and other major meetings, to encourage and enable the publication of the results in journals and anthologies, and to support young and emerging scholars in the field. The main research foci of this committee are:

- the history of the medium, in particular of specific genres (the superhero, the graphic novel, *bande dessinée*, manga, autobiography and other nonfiction genres);
- the history of the comics industry, and future developments in the production of comics including, for example, digital comics;
- narrative studies in comics (the forms and conventions of graphic storytelling, the development and adaptation of narrative theory in analyzing comics);
- the relationship between text and image;
- the culture of comics and fandom;
- media studies of comics, in particular the study of adaptation and translation, (transmedial relations between comics and other media, such as screen media;, comics and the history of literature and the visual arts);
- Cultural studies of comics, for example the study of gender, race, politics, disabilities, place and the environment;
- The teaching of comics, and the pedagogical uses of comics;
- comparative approaches to these studies from different traditions, cultures and language areas;

All research committee members share a strong commitment to developing methods of analysis and comics' theory as well as trans- and intermedial relations.

Comics studies is an interdisciplinary field that builds on a variety of disciplinary approaches from art history and media studies to literary studies, narratology, history and sociology, and thus offers

a platform for discussion and interaction across research areas that have traditionally stood apart. Interdisciplinarity is an inbuilt feature in this research field also for the fact that the study of comics must be attentive to the hybrid word-and-image form in which two narrative tracks, the verbal and the visual, interact in this medium.

Comics' studies have been going through a period of growth and diversification in the last decade. The burgeoning of the research field is apparent in:

- various new peer-reviewed journals, for example *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (rated Q1, the highest value, by SCImago in 2013 in the categories of "Literature and Literary Theory" and "Visual Arts and Performing Arts");
- the ever growing number of monographs on comics history, analysis and theory, and the establishment of several new academic publication series in comics studies,
- new research networks, for example The Nordic Network of Comics Research (NNCORE);
- various special issues dedicated to the study of comics in literary studies journals;
- the organization of international conferences and seminars;
- new academic posts in Comics Studies.

The present research interest in comics and graphic storytelling is, in part, a reflection of the creativity and innovation in the medium and, in part, a consequence of the serious attention that both fiction and nonfiction comic books and graphic novels have recently received as literature and art or as significant expressions of historical and cultural realities.

In the past decade, having grown from its origins in the margins of literary and art studies, comics' studies has contributed new perspectives and posed important challenges to the definition of the concept of "literature." In this respect, comics studies can contribute to the ongoing general discussion around the concept of literature in the field of comparative literature. Furthermore, the close ties that comics studies has had with the culture of fandom gives this research field a unique character as literature and art as well as cultural production and practice.