Comic Studies

## Within and Beyond Borders

ICOR, September 19, 2018

Rikk Mulligan

Thank you for the invitation you extended to my colleague on the Latin American Comics archive, Felipe Gomez, and myself to share our research as part of the Informal Conversations on Research series hosted by THe Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences here at CMU. Comics scholarship is a huge topic, but one that I engage in my continuing research on popular culture and as part of my work in the University Libraries promoting digital research and publishing. Part of my role in the Libraries is to provide consultations for digital humanities projects, sometimes these lead to collaborations. This is how I met Felipe and became involved in his *Latin American Comics Archive*, a project that had just received an Andrew W. Mellon Digital Humanities Seed Grant. Felipe wanted to combine the page-scans of Spanish-language comic strips and comics books with the transcriptions he was training his students to produce using XML using the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) standard and incorporating the Comic Book Markup Language (CBML) subset. Although I was a relative newcomer to TEI, in particular CBML, I had worked on multiple projects using the Omeka digital exhibit platform and comic books and graphic novels are an important area of my research.

Visual Narratives

- Iron Man
- The X-Men
- Captain America
- The Man of Steel
- Marvel's Agents of SHIELD
- Sandman
- The Walking Dead

Comics, graphic novels, film, & TV
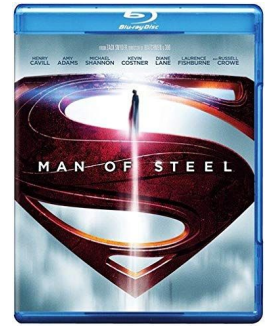
My Master's thesis focused on the Marvel Comics' character, Iron Man, and my dissertation briefly surveyed the apocalypse in comic books from the 1970s through the early 2000s. I have also published chapters in collections on Iron Man, DC Comics' The Sandman, and others, as well as presenting conference papers on *Captain America*, *Superman*, *SHIELD*, and *the Avengers*.

That said, my previous comics scholarship has been fairly traditional. My work with the superhero and horror genres uses close reading and genre studies methods to analyze these texts as social and political criticism within an American Studies interdisciplinary framework.

Speaking of Graphic Novels

Hillary Chute. *Why Comics? From Underground to Everywhere* (2017)
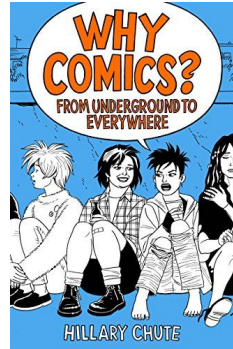
- Art Spiegelman. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986)
    - Serialized from 1980 - 1991.
    - MOMA exhibit 1991-1992
   - Pulitzer Prize 1992
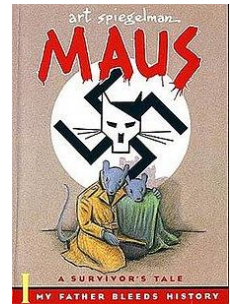
For too many, comic books are dismissed as simple action stories, works of mass media unworthy of serious literary or cultural study...unlike the growing canon of graphic novels.

Dan Cohen, the Dean of Libraries at Northeastern University, host of the "What's New" podcast, interviewed Hillary Chute, Professor of English and Art & Design at Northeastern, on her recent monograph: *Why Comics? From Underground to Everywhere*. Chute offers one explanation for the surge in popularity of comic books over the past thirty years. She believes graphic novels have become much better regarded as cultural artifacts of quality and as an alternative medium for storytelling.

As with many before her, Chute turned to Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* to help define the watershed moment of the late 1980s and early 1990s when graphic novels helped visual storytelling to be taken more seriously both socially and academically. Serialized between 1986 and 1991, the combined volumes of Maus were given a Special Award in Letters by the Pulitzer prize committee in 1992. Today it remains the only graphic narrative to have earned a Pulitzer. The New York Museum of Modern Art also staged an exhibition from 1991-1992 that displayed portions of its serialization. Yet *Maus is far* from the entire story.

Graphic Novels: more than *Maus*

- Will Eisner. *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* (1978)
- Art Spiegelman. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986)
- Joe Sacco. *Palestine* (1996)
- Marjane Satrapi. *Persepolis* (2003)
  - French (2000-2003)
  - English (2003, 2004)
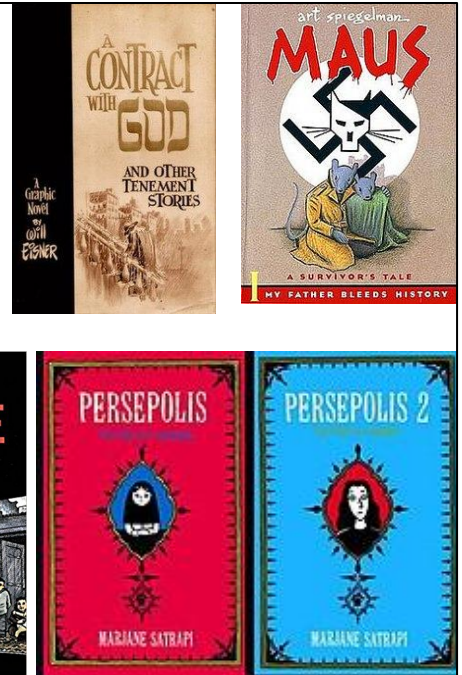
Will Eisner, known for his work on the crime fighter comic book, The Spirit, had coined the term "graphic novel" for his 1978 collection: *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*. Although Chute and others tend to point to Maus, Eisner had long been using the comic as a medium for non-superhero stories that focus on New York ethnic neighborhoods, urban living, and offered loosely biographical tales that we would now recognize as Creative Nonfiction. Eisner's focus on format and content, and his growing reputation as a teacher of the comic narrative helped his graphic novels gain market traction.

By the mid-1980s, the graphic novels of Eisner and Spiegelman were able to get around the impediments of newsstand distribution through direct sales to specialty comic shops and hobby stores. Their books were also sold as literature on end caps in chain bookstores including Waldenbooks and B Dalton. That graphic novels were becoming regarded as literature marked them as separate from comic books, which most academics continued to view as mass entertainment of low artistic value.

Over time more nonfiction stories--histories, biographies, and documentaries--entered the market thanks to the opening created by Eisner and Spiegelman. Many of these were published by small, independent presses and distributed via direct sales and later Amazon.com, avoiding the comic distributors as gatekeepers.

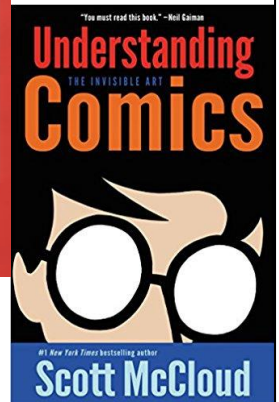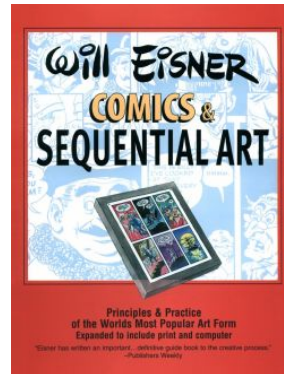# Rise of the Comic Book: Creating & Studying them

College, University, Art School Courses

Artists' Studios (1970s and 1980s)

- Neal Adams, Joe Kubert

Guides to Writing, Drawing, Reading Comics

- Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985)
- Scott McCloud. *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art* (1993)

But even before *Maus* won a Pulitzer, comic books had started to gain more critical recognition. In parallel with the creation of graphic novels and the new direct sales market, several comic illustrators had started to teach the creation of visual narratives. Industry veterans Neal Adams and Joe Kubert opened private studios to teach comic illustration, plotting, and writing. Eisner taught classes at New York University during the late 1970s. These classes became the basis for his book *Comics & Sequential Art*, first published in 1985. In it he uses panels from his work on *The Spirit* to not only explain how to write and visualize a story by planning for the interaction of art and text, but also the implied actions or events that occur outside the panels. Eisner's book was updated and republished in 1990 with an additional section on computers. He still wondered if graphic novels would "last."

In 1993, Scott McCloud, another writer/artist, published *Understanding Comics*, to build on Eisner's practical guide by providing additional social and cultural contexts. McCloud created a visual history of graphic narrative from cave art and hieroglyphics through the Bayeux tapestry to illustrate precursors to the recent evolution of contemporary comic books from political cartoons and newspaper comic strips.

Unfortunately, the study of comics and graphic novels in art schools and universities was not yet as comprehensive or holistic. Design and Art courses tended to focus on form, style, and visual content. Newer courses in English, Literature, or Cultural Studies tended to rely on close reading and theoretical frameworks such as deconstruction to delve into representations of ethnicity, racism, gender, and sexuality. In higher education many of these classes initially suffered a backlash from public attention, but could now use the new classification of "graphic novel" as a "figleaf" of legitimacy.

Comic Books as Graphic Novels

- Testing the Comics Code Authority (1971)
  - Spiderman #96, May 1971
  - Green Lantern/Green Arrow #85, Aug/Sept. 1971
- Adult: Heavy Metal Magazine (1977-1992)
- Adult: Epic Illustrated (1980-1986)
- The Marvel Graphic Novel series began with Jim Starlin's *The Death of Captain Marvel* in 1982.
- Independent publishers (Fantagraphics Books)
- Format:
  - Not Comics Code
  - Magazines now in color
  - Prestige Baxter Process Format: Glossy, slick & high gloss
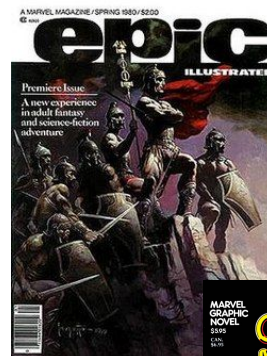
Graphic novels were cast as more "adult" than mainstream comic books. However, even this division was murky. By the early 1970s both major publishers had realized their demographic had shifted from boys to college-age (and older) males. Although it generated a lot of controversy, both DC and Marvel began to experiment with stories that tested or outright avoided the **Comics Code Authority** by incorporating adult themes such as drug addiction. By the early 1980s, both publishers were creating more edgy and adult content in new ways: DC started producing specific titles using the Baxter Process Prestige format (ex: *The New Teen Titans*); Marvel created *Epic Illustrated* magazine and a new graphic novel series. These were more expensive formats that typically incorporated mature themes: implicit or explicit sexual content, alternative sexualities, and complicated, nuanced characters who strayed from the heroic (and wholesome) stereotypes to attract adult buyers. These publications tended to be self-contained stories or short story arcs to emphasize storytelling while also testing the sales market.

These experiments became possible in part because of the rise of independent presses and the direct sales market to comic shops and hobby stores. On the newsstand, the magazines *Epic* and *Heavy Metal* were often placed beside or even labelled as pornography, limiting their audience.

At the same time publishers were also trying to capitalize on the novelty of these new formats and increase their appeal to the speculation market who were also driven by the resale of back-issues through mail order and specialty stores.
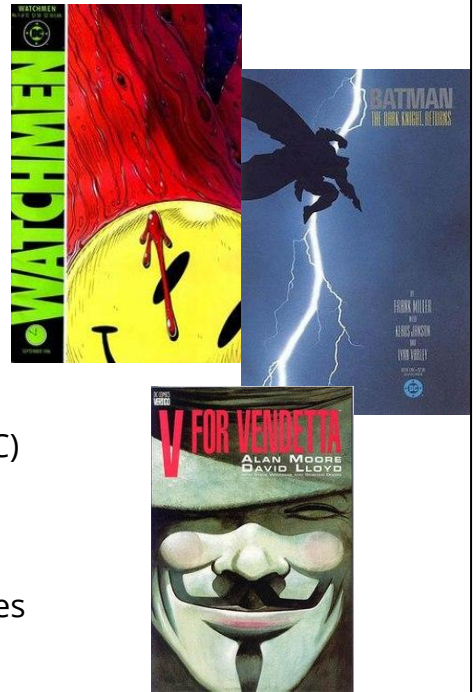
Critically Acclaimed Comics

"Comics is an art form; superheroes are a genre"
-- Len Hatfield

- *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*,
  Frank Miller and Klaus Jansen (1986) (DC)
- *Watchmen*,
  Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons (1986-1987) (DC)
- *V for Vendetta*,
  Alan Moore and David Lloyd (1988-1989) (DC)

Alternate universe or timeline; self-contained stories

Hillary Chute and Dan Cohen both mention in the podcast that they did not read comics until beginning their undergraduate studies. In her scholarship Chute emphasizes Maus and similar biography or documentary works as nonfiction graphic novels that have become more accepted as not just "literary" texts, but also a canon for teaching the visual narrative. Such a focus continues to allow most comic books to be ignored, especially the superhero, horror, and science fiction genres.

In literature and media, the science fiction, fantasy, and horror genres have been in a similar fight for critical recognition for decades. Since the 1950s academics and critics have cherry-picked specific texts and then dissected them with little regard for their place in the genre history and megatext. But comics began to slip this path as the new formats and direct-sales pipeline allowed greater experimentation. DC used the new formats to present socially critical and award winning stories that were added to comics studies by the mid-1990s.

Fan and Industry Acclaim

Eagle Awards (1977-2012)

Kirby Awards (1985-1987)

Eisner Awards (1988 >)

- X-Men: Dark Phoenix Saga (Marvel)
- X-Men: Days of Future Past (Marvel)
- Black Orchid (DC)
- Elektra: Assassin (Marvel)
- Sandman (DC)
- Swamp Thing (DC)

For fans and those who tracked the comics industry, *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), *Watchmen* (1986-1987), and *V for Vendetta* (DC version of 1988-1989) were only the latest of a number of intensely popular and successful stories aimed toward a discerning and adult market. By the late 1980s both Marvel and DC regularly published mini- and maxi-series created by award-winning authors and artists.

Beginning in 1977, fans in the UK began voting on the Eagle Awards, given to significant comic titles and creators. The Eagles helped direct new readers and could help drive sales of a current title and the resale of its back issues. The Eagles quickly shifted from a "buzz" about specific works to a critical discourse. In the mid-1980s the Kirby was awarded for three years before the Eisner Award was first given in 1988. Today the Eisner is part of the San Diego Comic Con, with its ceremonies well-attended as well as watched online.

Using DH Methods to Study Comics

- Goal: Prepare comics for distant reading.
- Tool: Human transcription using the Comic Book Markup Language (CBML) schema of the Text Encoding Initiative Extensible Markup Language (TEI-XML)
- The Promise:
  - Data: Machine readable transcriptions that are considered transformations of the content, permitting their sharing and reuse for research and teaching.
  - Once encoded these transcriptions can be shared as datasets.

One approach to studying comics is to use the Comic Book Markup Language. CBML is a Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)-based XML vocabulary for encoding and analyzing comic books, comic strips, and graphic novels. Encoding in CBML has the advantage of requiring very close reading of the text, which can ensure high quality transcriptions.

One of the goals of this method of transcription is to help generate and share a large corpus of digitized comics and graphic novels, with descriptive metadata and transcriptions encoded using CBML. Such a corpus would allow scholars to search for keywords related to characters, locations, and the works of particular writers and artists. By sharing this standard methodology, the transcriptions of different publishers around the globe could be shared and compared.

CBML also allows transcribers to add interpretations of events within the panel and that take place across multiple panels. Perhaps more importantly, transcribers can also add interpretations for implied actions, reactions, and events that occur "in the gutter" outside the panels and off page, outside the scope of OCR or automated analysis. Moreover, transcriptions can be made in multiple languages to increase access and allow multilingual comparison and analysis.

Challenges for DH Methods to Study Comics

- Each text must be hand-encoded;
- OCR does not handle comic pages well;
- Natural Language Processing is limited, and
- Humans must be trained to understand the conventions of graphic narrative and to interpret these in transcriptions.

Unfortunately, even if we discount the issues of intellectual property and copyright, there are a number of challenges to using CBML-TEI. Each comic must be hand-coded because current OCR applications such as ABBYY Finereader do not handle text outside of standard print well. Even though the object recognition is high for most hand-lettered and all computer-generated text, the panel-based layout, nonstandard texts such as sound effects, and captions will be scrambled by the software, requiring human intervention. At this time the use of Natural Language Processing also remains very limited. Last, reading comics requires some familiarity and training to follow some narratives, especially those in more experimental formats.

Beyond the TEI Challenge: Volume

- *Action Comics* (1938)
  -- Superman
- *Detective Comics* (1937)
  -- Batman appears in #27 (May 1939)
- *Captain America Comics* (March 1941)
- *All Star Comics* (1940)
  -- Wonder Woman appears in #8 (October 1941)
- Library of Congress comic collection: 120,000 (2013)
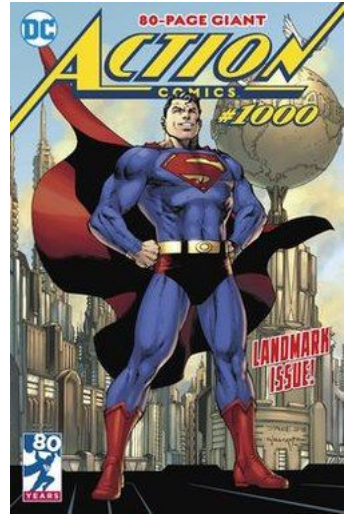
Aye, but here's the rub--while a large corpus of digitized and transcribed comic books and graphics novels would be a tremendous treasury of cultural resources. There remain several critical challenges to developing comics scholarship. It might be fair to say that so many scholars and critics focus on graphic novels, miniseries, or particular story arcs to help define a more manageable set of texts to focus upon.

Just to give you a sense of the enormity of the challenge, take the first modern superhero: Superman became 80 years old this year. Originally published in 1938, Action Comics #1000 was just released in April 2018. Batman hits 80 next year, when Detective Comics #1000 is expected. Captain America was first published in 1940 by Timely Comics, which later the become part of Marvel Comics...but Cap is only in his #700, in part due to reboots, which I'll return to later.

Beyond the number of the oldest, there is also the issue of sheer volume: in 1993 distributors were shipping upwards of 600 individual titles a month; in 2015 the average had dropped to about 450. One industry expert estimates something in the range of 1.5 million individual comic stories have been printed, with the number growing by 5-6,000 a year if Japanese manga translations are not taken into account.

Even the most passionate comics scholar can only read a fraction of these each month.

Other Challenges beyond TEI

- Continuity:
    - Ret-Con" or Retroactive Continuity
    - Crossover storylines between titles
    - Crossover storylines between publishers
    - Reboots of a title or character
    - Publisher-wide Resets

For those whose primary research focus is the visual narrative beyond the evolving "canon" of well-regarded graphic novels, genre studies offer an approach that takes into account many of the challenges involved in the mass market, particularly superhero, comics scholarship. Genre studies tends to step back to consider several components of the megatext including industry history, publisher culture, the evolving work processes of creators, and the interconnection of titles within one publisher and properties that crossover into the titles or worlds of another publisher.

The study of comics is enhanced by also considering distribution, advertising, and editorial practices that promoted money makers as a means to open space for innovation and experimentation with edgier, adult content, as well as re-envisioning classic characters and rebooting titles with new protagonists and origins. However, those best versed in comics scholarship tend to be the "aca-Fans" - academics who are fans, a phrase coined by Henry Jenkins, then at MIT, regarding scholars with deep, personal investment in not just the texts, but also the fandom community surrounding portions of popular culture.

Beyond aca-fans and gene specialists, these aspects of comics challenge scholars new to the broad field.

Challenges beyond TEI: Continuity

- Publisher Crossovers (typically one- or two-shot)
    - Superman vs. Spider-Man (1976), (1981)
    - Batman vs Incredible Hulk (1981)
    - Uncanny X-Men and The New Teen Titans (1982)
    - Batman vs Predator (1991), Batman/Grendel (1993), Batman/Punisher (1994), [eruption in 1995-1996]
- In-house multi-title crossover storylines
    - Crisis on Infinite Earths (DC)
    - Mutant Massacre (Marvel)
    - X-Tinction Agenda (Marvel)
    - Darkest Night (DC)
    - House of M (Marvel)
    - Civil War and Civil War II (Marvel)

When superhero and other genre comics were first published in the late 1930s, stories were self-contained within an issue. These early stories drew their inspiration from film and radio, leading toward cliffhanger endings that would continue the story into the next issue. By the 1950s some stories crossed titles: Superman would appear in Batman for a team-up, for instance.

In the 1960s as storytelling became more sophisticated for an increasingly adult audience, subplots began to appear. Most foreshadows future storylines within a single title, but eventually subplots hinting at major events within a publisher's "universe" began to appear and became the multi-title crossover storyline. In many instances these were more about sales and marketing than quality storytelling. Still, they required more than a single editor, often involving coordination across the production and distribution calendars to keep readers interested.

The 1970s and 1980s also opened up the potential of one-off or limited publisher crossover stories. These are typically seen as out of canon and as alternate worlds called "elseworlds" or "What If" stories.

The in-house multi-title crossovers became so long, convoluted, and interconnected across so many titles that they substantially contributed to the comic speculator bubble implosion of 1997.
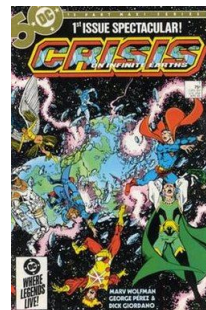
Challenges beyond TEI: Reboots and Resets

Ret-Con: Retroactive Continuity

DC Comics

- The Silver Age Flash appears in 1956, with Earth-One & Earth-Two: *The Flash* #123 (1961)
- *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (DC, 1985)
- *Zero Hour* (DC, 1994)
- *Infinite Crisis* (DC, 2005-2006),
- *Final Crisis* (DC, 2008-2009)
- *Flashpoint* (DC, 2010)
- The *New 52* (DC 2011-2012)

The Silver Age of comics dawned in 1956 with the new origin of The Flash began the very first Ret-Con as a publisher reboot of the Golden Age heroes and titles. The October issue of Showcase presented Barry Allen as the Flash in a one-shot story, *The Flash: Iron Heights*, leading to his own comic, in which both the Golden Age Jay Garrick Flash (now identified on Earth-Two) and Barry Allen (of Earth-One) meet in 1961, issue #123. Heroes and villains of both worlds shared names, often origins, and then began to cross over into each other's worlds. At this point the 20-25 year history of comics, particularly for Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman could be confusing for casual readers, but it could also be a problem for maintaining continuity and fresh ideas from new writers. Editors were expected to maintain continuity, but by the late 1960s this also began to change as Marvel Comics became competitive with DC Comics..

Because the heroes and villains traveled between worlds so often DC eventually turned to a publisher-wide reboot with the 12-part Crisis on Infinite Earths storyline. The result was to merge the worlds (DC's properties) including killing off major and minor characters (the Earth-2 Flash and Supergirl). DC merged its golden age Earth 2, silver age Earth 1, the future world of the Legion of Superheroes, as well as a variety of dystopian and post-apocalyptic comics such as Kommandi and OMAC. The goal was one coherent and comprehensive cosmology that...needed to be cleaned up again 20 years later.

Challenges beyond TEI: Reboot and Resets

Marvel Comics

- First ret-con: Captain America "reviving" from suspended animation in *The Avengers* #4 (1963).
- Age of Apocalypse (1995-1996),
- Heroes Reborn (Marvel, 1996-1998)
- Ultimate Marvel Universe (2000-2011)
- House of M (alternate universe, Earth-58613)
- Secret Wars: Battleworld (2015)
- Civil War II (2016) launches "Marvel Now!"
- "A Fresh Start" (2018) -- bringing in more of a MCU-focus
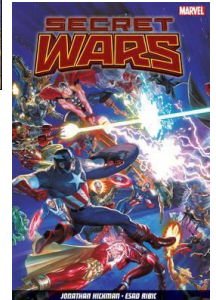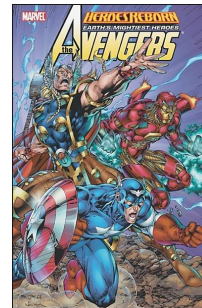
Technically, Marvel Comics starts its continuity with the introduction of the Fantastic Four in *The Fantastic Four* #1 (cover date Nov. 1961), but continuity is hacked soon thereafter, when "the original" Captain America, frozen in suspended animation since 1945, is discovered and revived by *The Avengers* (#4, cover date March 1963). The death of Bucky is one of the next ret-cons of the 1960s, later rewritten to introduce the Winter Soldier in 2005, before restoring Bucky and his becoming Captain America after the apparent assassination of Steve Rogers at the end of the first Civil War storyline in 2007.

But during the 1970s Marvel had to deal with the legacy of Captain America stories from the 1950s. Using the logic that Steve Rogers was missing and presumed dead at the end of WW II, Marvel created a series of substitutes to set up the ret-con of the character of the 1950s as a failed replacement-- mentally unstable, a racist, and a vehement anti-communist. Most recently, Marvel used the cosmic cube (the tesseract in the MCU) to remake "reality," casting Steve Rogers as a Nazi and member of Hydra, before yet another reset several months later. As an aside--this cost them a lot of readers and attracted new readers they probably had not hoped to get.

Marvel also attempted several company-wide reboots, beginning with the Heroes Reborn titles of the late-1990s.. The intent was to refresh them and make them accessible to new readers who could be overwhelmed by the weight of history and canon. One example is Iron Man whose origin was shifted from Vietnam to an industrial accident involving revolutionary space travel and artificial intelligence technology. In the 2004 relaunch of Iron Man, Vietnam is replaced by Afghanistan to reflect a more contemporary context. Finally, in 2015 the *Secret Wars: Battleworld* storyline pulled together something more akin to DC Comics "Crisis" crossovers to bring in popular heroes from alternate Marvel universes as a form of "fresh blood," such as the Afro-Latino Spider-Man, Miles Morales.

Beyond the TEI Challenge

Marvel Cinematic Universe
- 20 movies + *Marvel's Agents of SHIELD* (ABC)
- Netflix: *Daredevil*, *Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage*, *Iron Fist*, *The Defenders*, *Punisher*
- (Alternate Marvel) Fox: *The Gifted* and *Legion*
- Hulu: Marvel's *The Runaways*

DC Extended Universe (5 films 2018)
- *Batman* (4 previous), *Superman* (5 previous)
- Nolan's *Batman* trilogy (2005-2012)
- CW: *The Arrow, Legends of Tomorrow, Supergirl*
- *Man of Steel* (2013), *Batman v Superman* (2016), *Suicide Squad* (2016), *Wonder Woman* (2017)
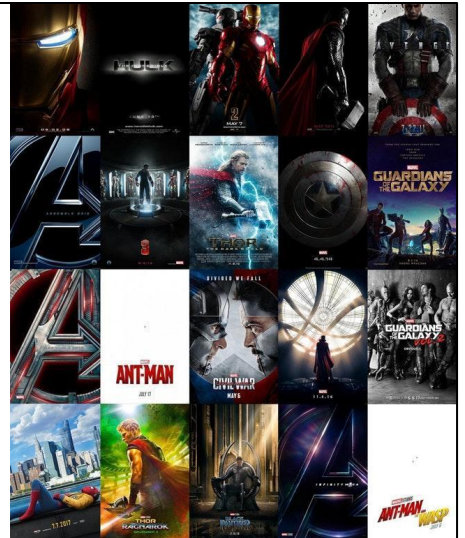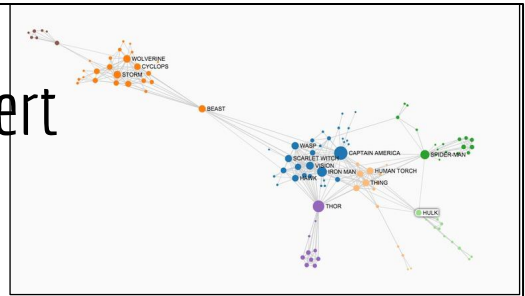
Another challenge for those studying comic books, particularly the Marvel subset of the superhero genre, is the manner in which the films are feeding back into the stories in print. DC has a similar issue on a much smaller scale with its handful of television shows.

The most recent publisher-wide reboots by Marvel and DC are attempting to capitalize on the popularity of their films and draw the cinematic audience into their print properties. This will require editors in the future to track and differentiate between the various print and cinematic continuities.
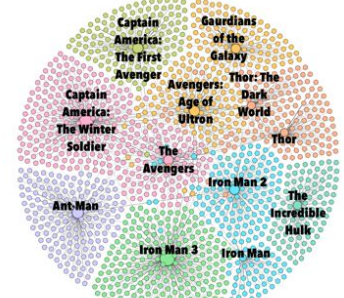
Beyond the Subject Matter Expert

Problem: How to choose what to read
if new to the character, the publisher,
or possibly even the genre?

- Network Analysis
  - Marvel Social Graph (2015)
    https://blog.dataiku.com/2015/05/19/marvel-social-graph-analysis
  - MCU Network Analysis (2016)
    https://datacolumn.wordpress.ncsu.edu/blog/2016/03/27/
    marvel-cinema-universe-network-analysis/
- Chronology
  - Marvel Chronology Project
    http://www.chronologyproject.com/
- Database
  - http://www.comicbookdb.com/

Pierre Gutierrez, May 19, 2015.
https://blog.dataiku.com/2015/05/19/marvel-social-graph-analysis

Blog: Institute for Advanced Analytics, March 27, 2016.
https://datacolumn.wordpress.ncsu.edu/blog/2016/03/27/marvel-cinema-universe-network-analysis/

I've explained this history to set up why TEI is a necessary tool to help encourage distant reading of comic books as a vast set of corpora, but to also make it clear it is an insufficient tool. For new readers and researchers these challenges can be daunting. Beginners can take a deep dive into a number of comics databases, fan-edited wikis, and now, "official" publisher/creator wikis. The thing is, some of these materials are inaccurate, for example, those prepared by Disney staff without the deep knowledge or awareness of Marvel Bullpen traditions, something the deepest fans know instead.

On the other hand, these complexities are exactly what scholars like me thrive on -- they are part of establishing ourselves as ACAFEN, rather than an academic intruder, is our knowledge of the minutia and ability to argue illustrator, inker, or perhaps most importantly, EDITOR.

Yet beyond fan sites, this is a difficult environment to enter. There are currently few tools to allow one to begin a project that reaches beyond a single title or character and a restricted subset of storylines. This network analysis began with an initial 2011 dataset of comic book issues. It has been shared multiple times and now resides in a GitHub repository. This data has been the basis for several network visualizations, using a variety of tools including GEPHI. The problem is that most of these focus on the characters as their primary nodes and edges.

Aiding the Outsider

Limitations of Current Network Analysis: superheroes as edges

Hypothesis: the editor holds or tries to hold it all together. We need method that improves our ability to map storylines by writer, artist, **and editor** as nodes within the creators.

Possible Approaches:
Sean Petiya, Kent State University: *Building a Semantic Web of Comics:: Publishing Linked Data in HTML/RDFa Using a Comic Book Ontology and Metadata Application Profiles* (Dec, 2014)

Stepping back to the TEI issue--only a fraction of comics have been transcribed. Building the corpus will be a Sisyphean task with the continued publication of new comics and movie or media-tie-ins.

We will need a tool to help direct where this work should be done. Such a tool should draw on the methods of topic modeling, but should also be informed by the continuing work of comics scholars who are defining a taxonomy of themes and topics.

I'm only in the very early stages of researchers, but I've already come across some concepts that might help focus such an effort. One of these is "Building a Semantic Web of Comics: Publishing Linked Data in HTML/RDFa Using a Comic Book Ontology and Metadata Application Profiles" Sean Petiya of Kent State University and my discussions with our recently hired DH Developer here in Dietrich, Matt Lincoln, who comes to us from the Getty.

Rather than just being able to focus on characters and titles, I want to also be able to look at writers, illustrators, and inkers, but more importantly, I believe, editors. Most editors come from the ranks, have extensive knowledge of the genre, and have often worked on several titles for multiple publishers. Editors are the first to support a daring and innovative storyline that shakes off the layers of time and continuity deposited on a character. Identifying editors and tracking their work by connecting it to tropes, themes, and specific ret-cons can help reveal themes and significant storylines, particularly when they intersect a node, such as the Editor, well, when they are not part of a massive media tie-in or marketing and sales campaign.