

# Graphic Novels in DDC: Discussion Paper

After preliminary discussions and inquiries, the Dewey editors have reached some tentative conclusions about how to improve treatment of graphic novels in the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC). This discussion paper will explain those tentative conclusions and ask for advice.

## 1. Cartoons, caricatures, comics, graphic novels all together in 741.5

We have tentatively decided to keep graphic novels in 741.5 and its subdivisions, where we have been classing them with cartoons, caricatures, and comics. Our proposal is to improve the development at 741.5 rather than to relocate graphic novels to another set of numbers. First, the DDC puts works that combine graphic arts and literature in the 700s with the arts, not in the 800s with literature; hence graphic novels belong somewhere in the DDC 700s, not with strictly textual novels in the 800s. Second, graphic novels share so many characteristics with comic books and collections of comic strips that separating graphic novels would be difficult for classifiers to do consistently. We also believe it would not be helpful for most end users. Many discussions of graphic novels, even though they may acknowledge a narrow definition of the term, go on to use a broad definition that includes not only stand-alone stories in comics form published as books but also collections of stories initially published serially in comic books and collections of newspaper comic strips reprinted in book form. We have tentatively decided to treat everything from single-frame caricatures to three-frame newspaper comic strips to comic books to graphic novels all in the same way. Although this is a broad range of material, we have found no good places to break the continuum so as to separate the material usefully into different categories. We propose to change the notes and captions at 741.5 and its subdivisions to make clear that all these kinds of materials are being treated the same way.

## 2. Adaptations of works of literature, film, television, stage production

We consistently class adaptations of an artistic or literary work in the number appropriate for the adaptation, not the number for the original work. The following paragraph from the Dewey Manual note for literature at 800 gives the rule for classifying adaptations in literature:

"An adaptation may alter the form of a work or modify the content to such an extent in language, scope, or level of presentation that it can no longer be considered a version of the original. Class an adaptation in the number appropriate to the adaptation, e.g., *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare* 823.7."

Similarly, a film adaptation of a novel is classed as a film, not in the literature number for the original novel.

Graphic novels that are versions of works of literature, film, television, or stage production are treated as adaptations and classed as graphic novels in 741.5 and its subdivisions, not in the numbers appropriate for the original works.

## 3. Single works and collections of cartoons, caricatures, comics, graphic novels in 741.59

We propose to class single works and collections of cartoons, caricatures, comics, graphic novels alike in 741.59. We have been doing that for a long time, but we need to make the schedule more clearly indicate that that is how the material is being classed.

## 4. Works in 741.59 subarranged by country of artist or writer

In subdivisions of 741.59, we have been subarranging by country of the artist or writer (the person chiefly responsible for the work). For example, a work by a French artist or writer is classed in 741.5944, a work by a Belgian artist or writer in 741.59493, a work by a Japanese artist or writer in 741.5952, a work by a U.S. artist or writer in 741.5973. If a work by one of these people is translated into another language and published in another country, the translation is still classed in the same number as the original, e.g., a Japanese work translated into English and published in the United States 741.5952 (not 741.5973). Only if a work is changed so much that it should be considered an adaptation rather than a translation would we change to the DDC number for a work by an artist or writer in the second country.

We considered changing to subarrangement by the language in which a work was originally written instead of country, so that a work written in French by a Belgian would be classed in the same number as a work written in French by a French writer; however, when we learned that there are graphic novels with no text, we decided to stay with subarrangement by country.

## 5. History and criticism; biographies and critical appraisal

We plan to keep general history and criticism of cartoons, caricatures, comics, and graphic novels (not limited geographically) in 741.509.

We have been classing general geographic treatment in 741.5093-741.5099, e.g., history and criticism of British comic art 741.50941. We would like advice on whether to:

- a. continue this practice or
- b. relocate general geographic treatment to 741.59, so that history and criticism of British comic art would be classed with British cartoons, caricatures, comics, graphic novels themselves in 741.5941.

If the alternative **b** is chosen, should notation (perhaps 09) be added after the area notation to separate general history and criticism, so that general history and criticism of British comic art would be classed in 741.594109?

While single works and collections of works by individual artists and writers have been classed in 741.59, biographies and critical appraisal of individual artists and writers have been classed in 741.5092. We would like advice on whether to continue this practice or to relocate biographies and critical appraisal of individual artists and writers to 741.59 with their works.

## 6. New subdivisions of 741.5 for techniques, for genres, special qualities and themes

First, we propose to provide a general techniques subdivision of 741.5 for works on how to draw cartoons, caricatures, comics, graphic novels.

Second, we propose to provide subdivisions of 741.5 that allow addition of notation from Table 3C to express genres, special qualities and themes, e.g., horror, science fiction, superheroes, crime, animals. (These provisions would be similar to the provisions for special aspects of films at 791.436.) Works on how to draw cartoons, caricatures, comics, graphic novels with special qualities or themes would be classed in these numbers, e.g., works on how to draw cartoon animals.

General history and criticism of comics with special aspects would also be classed in these numbers, e.g., a general history of horror in comics or a general history of superhero comics. If alternative **c** in section 5 above is chosen, notation (perhaps 09) would be added at the end to specify history and criticism.

Single cartoons, caricatures, comics, graphic novels themselves, and collections by single artists (or single writers or single teams of artists and writers), would not be classed in these new numbers; they would remain in 741.59. After the end of the DDC number (e.g., 741.5973), we expect libraries to subarrange the works alphabetically by author (artist or writer), title, or series; precisely how to subarrange alphabetically is a local option.

For collections by multiple artists (or multiple writers or multiple teams of writers and artists) of the same country, should there be provision to allow adding notation from Table 3C for genres, special qualities and themes after the area notation, e.g., notation to specify horror to be added to 741.5973 for a collection of U.S. horror comics?

Should similar notation be provided for history and criticism of works by multiple artists (or multiple writers or multiple teams of writers and artists) of the same country, e.g., notation to specify horror added to 741.5973 for history and criticism of U.S. horror comics? If alternative **c** in section 5 above is chosen, notation (perhaps 09) would be added at the end to specify history and criticism.

## 7. Cartoons, caricatures, comics, graphic novels whose purpose is to inform or persuade

The following note appears at 741.5: "Class cartoons or caricatures whose purpose is to inform or persuade with the subject of the cartoon or caricature, e.g., political cartoons 320.0207." There are similar notes elsewhere in the Dewey 700s, for example, at 791.43 Films: "Class subject-oriented films themselves with the subject, e.g., films on flower gardening 635.9." The choice between classing with an art form and a subject is often difficult, and experienced classifiers may not agree about the best placement of a particular work.

A similar problem exists with respect to literature. The Dewey Manual note for literature at 800 has an extended discussion of "Choice between literature and nonliterary subject" that elaborates on the basic rule: "Class works of the imagination intended to delight in 800, but class works that are essentially informational with the subject in other disciplines, regardless of their literary form." The following paragraph from the Dewey Manual note for literature at 800 gives the rule for classifying nonfiction novels:

"Class nonfiction novels that use the techniques of fiction writing to tell the story of actual people and actual events as follows. Class an account of a true event or series of events using the names of the people involved, not inventing characters or distorting facts to enhance an intended artistic effect, and not going beyond the information available to the author from investigation and interviews, in the discipline appropriate to the facts described. For example, class Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, a true account of a multiple murder, in 364.1523. If, however, the author goes beyond what is learned from investigation and interviews in describing conversations, feelings, thoughts, or states of mind of the people depicted in the book, class the work as

fiction, e.g., Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* 813.54. If in doubt, class as fiction."

Nonfiction novels are always difficult to classify, but this rule has worked reasonably well in literature.

We have no similar rule in the Dewey Manual for nonfiction graphic novels, but one is needed. If the literature rule is applied to the text only of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, then *Maus* should be classed with the subject in history, not with graphic novels in 741.5973. We have, however, regarded significant artistic license in the graphics part of nonfiction graphics novels as a reason for classing in 741.5 rather than with the subject. Because *Maus* depicts human beings as animals, we have classed it in 741.5973. We think it would be odd to have a rule for nonfiction graphic novels that says explicitly to consider the text only and ignore the graphics. We are still unsure just how the rule should read. In any case, we believe that the rule must end with the instruction: "If in doubt, prefer 741.5."

Unlike nonfiction graphic novels, we have classed political cartoons with the subject, without worrying about artistic license in either the text or the graphics; we have regarded political cartoons as primarily intended to persuade, not to give factual accounts of actual people and events.

## 8. Fotonovelas (photo novels)

Fotonovelas are mentioned in an including note at 741.5, but not many fotonovelas have been classed in 741.5. Since 741.5 falls under drawing and drawings in the Dewey schedule, only works based on drawing should be classed in 741.5. We propose that fotonovelas, which are based on photographs, be relocated to the photography portion of the Dewey schedule. Since fotonovelas are a form of graphic novel, 741.5 could be specified as the comprehensive number for all kinds of graphic novels, with a see reference to a new number for fotonovelas.

## 9. Request for Advice

We welcome your advice on the overall proposed approach and the specific issues raised in sections 5 and 6. Please send comments and suggestions by August 16, 2004, to:

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