Graphic Choices
Developing Collections of Digital Comics

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Big Questions

• What is the role of the library when it comes to digital comics? Preservation? Access? Curation? Reference?

• What models do publishers offer now? What will they offer in future? What do libraries need them to offer?
My background

• 15 years in academic publishing, including *Science*, *Nature*, and Alexander Street Press, before starting UPG Media in late 2014.

• Developed *Underground and Independent Comics, Comix, and Graphic Novels (COMX)*, the first and only library resource of its kind.
Basics of comix collection

• 75,000 pages of comic books and graphic novels from the 60’s to today

• 25,000 pages of secondary texts, including *The Comics Journal*

• Developed specifically for academic libraries

• Currently available at over 200 universities around the world

• Named Best Digital Arts Resource of 2012 by *Library Journal*
The model

- Content licensed from artists, agents, and/or publishers.
- Collection offered as subscription or 1x purchase of perpetual rights. No subsets or individual titles offered, it’s all or nothing.
- Royalties based on artist’s % of total pages in the collection, not usage.
Benefits and Shortcomings

• Purchase model appeals to specific academic libraries who have one-time funds
• Subscriptions are potentially problematic, as it’s a “closed” collection, rather than a periodical.
• Inability to choose piece by piece
• Relatively narrow scope
What’s Needed by Libraries?

• New Models
  – PDA
  – EBA
  – Collections
  – Crowd-sourcing?
Who will decide?
Discussion Questions

• Where does Comixology Submit fit in?
• Are we outsourcing collection development to publishers? Are libraries systematically downloading DRM-free PDFs and cataloging them in any meaningful way?
• What is the role of curation? Will librarians play that role? Publishers/editors? Reader reviews? Critical sites like Ain’t it Cool?