Revising the Adult Graphic Novel Collection in VPL Central Branch

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MANAGEMENT REPORT

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SUBJECT: Revising the Adult Graphic Novel collection in Central Branch

SUMMARY

This report analyzes the Adult Graphic Novel collection in the Vancouver Public Library Central Branch, highlights areas for improvement, and suggests strategies and changes that can be used to enhance it. Implementing these changes would provide a better physical space for the material (prolonging the lives of the physical books), simplify and improve upon current genre divisions, upgrade and enhance the metadata for the books in our collection, and redesign spine labels and other stickers. Taken as a whole, these changes will allow patrons to more easily browse the collection and allow both patrons and librarians to find specific material more quickly, both physically on the shelves and digitally in our catalogue.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report it to highlight areas for improvement within the Central Branch's Adult Graphic Novel collection and suggest strategies, techniques, and ideas for developing this collection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Purchase new shelving for the collection.
2. Consolidate graphic novels from the various genres into "fiction" and "non-fiction."
3. Incorporate graphic novels that are currently, for historical or accidental reasons, currently housed within the Dewey run.
4. Create metadata standards that work better for graphic novels.
5. Recatalogue material so that patrons will find graphic novels in places that make sense.
6. Redesign spine labels so that they provide information, such as volume numbers, relevant to patrons.

POLICY

These recommendations are related to policies of improving patron access to library collections.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

This recommendations within this report focus on VPL's Foundational Element of "diverse and accessible collections and programs." By implementing these recommendations, the library will greatly improve access to the Adult Graphic Novel collection, both physically in how the books are placed on the shelves, and digitally in how they can be found in our catalogue. This will mean that patrons will find what they want more easily, circulation numbers may increase, and librarians will be able to spend less time finding specific titles.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Graphic novels are still a relatively new collection for many libraries, and this is evident in the ways which they are purchased, catalogued, and presented. Many librarians are unfamiliar with

the medium as a whole and may struggle with choosing items to order, giving recommendations to patrons, cataloguing, and other tasks related to graphic novels.

The physical size of graphic novels are different enough from traditionally published books to cause problems. While we split off our mass market paperbacks from our hardcover and larger paperback books, in our adult graphic novel collections we shelve all sizes on the same shelves. This means that books ranging from as small as 10cm tall up to over 30cm talls end up sharing the same shelf space. The shelving units currently in place are split into four shelves. While the top three are the same size, the bottom shelf is much shorter, and the vast majority of books placed on these shelves are placed spine up with the spine covered by the above shelf. This reduces the visibility of the books, makes them less accessible to users with mobility issues (as patrons have to physically remove each book them from the bottom shelf in order to see the title) and can cause increased physical wear and tear.

New shelving for this collection is essential to allow patrons to actually be able to browse what is on the shelf, allow patrons and librarians to more easily find material, and prevent unnecessary damage to material.

At some point the decision was made to physically split up the Adult Graphic Novel collection in Central Branch into a number of different genres. These include general fiction, non-fiction, fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and short stories. However, these have been inconsistently applied and lead to problems for patrons trying to find series that can be found in different graphic novel sections in the library.

Examples:
>   *Miss Don't Touch Me Vol. 1* can be found in the general fiction
>   *Miss Don't Touch Me Vol. 2* can be found in the mystery section
>
>   Various volumes of the *Hellboy* series by Mike Mignola can be found under H (for Hellboy) and M (for Mignola), and within the general fiction, short story, and young adult collections.

The proposed solution is to eliminate all subsections except fiction and non-fiction. This will simplify where material should be placed on the shelf.

Due to the relatively recent development of graphic novel collections within VPL there are graphic novels which have, either due to age (e.g. before we had a dedicated graphic novel section) or error, not been placed within a graphic novel collection. These books can be found

within the Dewey run and are seen by far fewer patrons than those within the general Adult Graphic Novel collection; as a result, they circulate less often.

Example:
> *Hark! A Vagrant* by Kate Beaton is found in Adult Non-fiction (under 741.59)

This title, and other graphic novels, will benefit from being housed in the Adult Graphic Novel section as, due to increased visibility, they will circulate more.

Library cataloguing techniques were not developed to work for the ongoing serialized nature of many graphic novels, nor for the many different authors that a work may feature. Books are frequently catalogued as isolated items without regards to other related works, which can lead to different books in the same series being found in completely different sections. Creating metadata standards will allow us consistently catalogue books within the same series, know which authors we should credit, and provide other information that patrons will be looking for. This problem is endemic to all of our graphic novel collections and is not just limited to the Adult Graphic Novel collection.

Examples:

> The collection *Avengers vs. X-men* is catalogued as *A vs. X* and lists only one creator (Jason Aaron), when this book collects comics written by Jason Aaron, Brian Michael Bendis, Ed Brubaker, Jonathan Hickman and Matt Fraction, and features art by John Romita, Jr., Olivier Coipel, and Adam Kubert amongst others.

The first volume of comics based on the Firefly TV show is catalogued as:
> *Serenity [1], Those Left Behind*

The third volume is catalogued as:
> *Serenity, Firefly Class 03-K64 [3], The Shepherd's Tale*

Various books feature volume numbers in the following forms (and more):
- Volume 1
- [Volume 1]
- Vol. 1
- [Vol. 1]
- V. 1
- [V. 1]

- 1
- [1]
- Volume One
- [Volume One]
- Vol. One
- One

These are inconsistently applied across series:

The Massive Vol. 1, Black Pacific
The Massive [2], Subcontinental
MASSIVE VOLUME 3
The Massive 4, Sahara

In addition, there are other terms such as "Book" used instead of "Volume."

These mistakes indicate a lack of knowledge about the medium as a whole and about the specific needs of patrons. A patron looking for works by Ed Brubaker or Adam Kubert would not be able to find a specific work that they contributed to. Incorrectly labeling volumes, like the third volume of *Serenity*, can lead to confusion.

Finally, library spine labels are generally placed in the same place on all of our material, including graphic novels. This location, at the bottom of the spine, generally doesn't cover up relevant material for books, but many graphic novel series feature volume numbers in that location. As series can go on for dozens of volumes and may feature no additional or easily accessible information concerning volume number, it makes sense to place this information on the spine label. This way, we can keep a consistent look to our books and not have spine labels placed on different places on different books.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Physical costs

Physical costs are fairly limited, but important. The shelves will need to be large enough to fit all of the material but also fit within the design of the Central Branch as a whole. Future spine label stickers should already be included in budgets, and exactly how many will be needed as replacements for the current collection is unknown.

Labour Costs

Labour costs include time spent researching requirements of the collection, ordering new material and shelving, creating metadata standards, physically moving and reorganizing collections, and recataloguing and labeling material. This does not need to be done by a dedicated individual, and it can be done in addition to other duties by one or more librarians.

Shelving	$5000
Spine Labels	$1000
Labour	$8000
Total	$14,000

NEXT STEPS

Replace shelving
- Doing this first will allow easier access to the collection as a whole, and allow other steps to go more smoothly.
- Measure graphic novels and decide upon needed shelf height.
- Find shelving that fits within the look of the Central Branch's collection as a whole.
- Order and install shelving.

Consolidate graphic novels
- Physically moving the books can be done in a relatively short amount of time. The fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and short story collections are not very large.
- Newly returned material can be reshelved easily.

Create spine label standards, **purchase new spine labels**
- Decide how volumes numbers will be placed on spine labels.
- Ensure that future spine labels will fit this format.
- Examine material to see which volumes need to be relabled.
- Relabel material.
    - Books currently on the shelves should be relabled first.
    - Newly returned material should be checked to see if they need to be relabled.

Incorporate graphic novels from the Dewey run

- Physically moving the books will not take much time.
- Books will be recatalogued.
  - Newly returned material should be checked to see if they need to be relabeled.
  - Set up automated system to remove books from 741.59 (and related sections) as they are returned.
- Follow up on the physical section in six months to catch any stragglers.

Create metadata and cataloguing standards

- Consult with other librarians and libraries.
- Answer the following questions (among others):
  - Will series be catalogued under series or author?
  - Who can be the primary access point for material? (Can the artist be the key author of a work?)
  - Who is the primary access point for books featuring multiple writers and artists?
  - What is the standard format for titles with volume numbers?
- Ensure that new purchases meet these standards.

Recatalogue material

- This will take the most amount of time.
- Possibly easiest to work on it in chunks (by shelf, series, or author, as material is returned, etc.)
- Not all material will need to be recatalogued, but all material should be checked to ensure it fulfills new metadata standards.
- Doing a full inventory will also allow us to remove missing books from our catalogue. Many books from the graphic novel section go missing, and these phantom listings cause frustration for our patrons.

FINAL REMARKS

Due to staff's lack of familiarity with the medium, the Adult Graphic Novel collection has reached a state that represents the library in a poor light. If we want patrons to come to us when they are looking for graphic novels, or be a place where we can introduce patrons to graphic novels, we need to improve both the physical and digital spaces related to graphic novels in our collection.

New shelving and spine labels will improve the general physical appearance of this collection, make it more visually appealing, and make it easier for patrons and librarians to find what they are looking for. Creating metadata standards will allow employees unfamiliar with the medium to properly catalogue the items in this collection, allowing them to be found by patrons or librarians looking for them. Without following the recommendations in this report we risk losing patrons who think we do not have what they are looking for because they cannot find it either online or in our catalogue. We will be failing to provide accurate and relevant information, and thus failing our purpose as a library. We hope that the readers of this report agree and will follow the outlined recommendations.

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