Webcomic Distribution:
Distribution Methods, Monetization and Niche Markets

A Master’s Project
Presented to
School of Arts and Science
State University of New York
Institute of Technology

Utica, New York

In Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
Information Design and Technology

By Kevin Volo
Abstract

The purpose of this project was to examine what happens when it is time to distribute a webcomic and how webcomic distribution can be compared to the music industry and journalism blogger. Both industries have undergone a change in how they interact and deliver product to consumers and readers. To do this I examined three areas that make up webcomic distribution: community, monetization and niche genres. My project will also examine three challenges of how a webcomic can be used to present scholarly research. The challenges that will be covered are: how to use citations, how to provide references for another artist's work and how to present data such as charts, timelines and graphs. To do this I constructed a webcomic and created a website to detail my findings. It can be viewed at: www.webcomicdistribution.com.
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. 2
Introduction & Research Questions ................................................................. 4
Literature Review ............................................................................................. 6
Using a webcomic to present scholarly research .............................................. 13
  How to use citations ....................................................................................... 13
  How to provide references for another artists work ..................................... 15
  Displaying proper copyright notices ............................................................ 16
  Citing the actual comic book the art is taken from ........................................ 16
  How to present data such as charts, timelines and graphs ......................... 19
Project Design, Implementation and Evaluation Plan ........................................ 19
  Webcomic ..................................................................................................... 20
  Website ......................................................................................................... 21
  Mobile/Digital Distribution .......................................................................... 21
Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 22
Reference .......................................................................................................... 23
Appendix I: Art and Copyright Reference ....................................................... 24
Appendix II: Project Script ............................................................................... 27
  Webcomic Distribution – Introduction Script Section ................................. 27
  Webcomic Distribution – Scholarly Script Section ....................................... 28
  Webcomic Distribution – Community Script Section .................................... 31
  Webcomic Distribution – Monetization Script Section ................................. 34
  Webcomic Distribution – Niche Genres Script Section ................................. 36
Appendix III: The Webcomic ........................................................................... 39
  Introduction ................................................................................................. 39
  Citing Scholarly Work .................................................................................. 45
  Community Building ..................................................................................... 54
  Monetization ................................................................................................. 63
  Niche Genres ............................................................................................... 70
Appendix IV: Reflection Paper ......................................................................... 77
Table Of Figures

Figure 1: Citing sources in comic form.................................................................15
Figure 2: Use of copyright..................................................................................16
Figure 3: Images and illustration combined.....................................................19
Introduction & Research Questions

Comic books and comic strips have been making a move from the printed page where pen and ink are the primary tools of creation to the computer where traditional techniques are combined with more modern tools. Not only has the process in which comics are created changed since computers were introduced, but their method of distribution has also changed dramatically. From web comic communities such as modern tales and keenspot, which host multiple artists’ work, to more mobile methods such as iphones and ipad apps; a creator can distribute their creation virtually free and to an enormous audience.

Creating comics for the web and print consist of many of the same steps: the artist draws the comic, it is inked, the colorist adds color to the lineart, and finally the words are added by the letterer. It is in distribution that things take a fork in the road. My project examined what happens when it is time to distribute a webcomic and how webcomic distribution can be compared to the music industry and journalism. To do this I examined three areas that make up webcomic distribution:

- Community
- Monetization
- Niche Genres

My project also examined three challenges of how a webcomic can be used to present scholarly research. The challenges that were covered were:

- How to use citations
- How to provide references for another artist's work
- How to present data such as charts, timelines and graphs

**Literature Review**

What is a webcomic? The answer is fairly simple, they are comics that can be single panel or multi-page in format, displayed on the web for viewers to enjoy. This makes them a medium rather than a genre. They are a means of publishing, not a subsection of comics.

Webcomics are not a genre. They are a medium. To put it in the simplest equation, Webcomics are comics + Web. They’re everything you loved about long-form comics, short-form comics, sequential strips and single panels – transposed to a new means of distribution. Webcomics are no different from other forms of comics – they’re just transmitted differently (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008, p.13).

Another facet of webcomics that make them attractive to creators is the artistic freedom they offer. Comics created especially for the web, by a creator or creative team, who are not limited editorially by a publisher, because they are the publisher. They are also “unfettered by the rules of syndication and censorship”, and can depict whatever the creator wants to present to his or her viewers (Fenty, Houp, & Taylor, 2004, p.3). By cutting out a publisher and simply uploading their webcomics, artists bypass the large hurdle of printing their comic, which can be extremely expensive.

Distribution channels for webcomics vary, and have kept pace with the expanding opportunities within Internet and digital publishing. To garner a wider audience and possibly earn a living from their webcomics, an artist must diversify the manner in which they distribute to their audience. The methods that many artists employ include:
1. Personal web site distribution.

2. Webcomic communities.

3. Webcomic list sites (aggregators).

4. RSS feeds.

5. Mobile distribution: Apple iPod, iPhone, iPad and other smart phones.

6. Print-on-demand publishing.

These are all very different methods of distribution, and like artist-as-businessperson, here the artist needs to wear the hats of artist/publisher. Each method of distribution involves a specialized knowledge set. Formatting a comic for print-on-demand is much different than formatting it for the web or for mobile distribution. But all these distribution methods are necessary to maximize reader potential and audience size.

In the case of more famous webcomics, such as PVP, all of the distribution methods listed above are employed (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008). They began as part of a webcomic community, built an audience, then moved to a site of their own. Through clever marketing, promotion, and fan interaction, they built a digital publishing company that revolved around their webcomic. They then branched out into print, securing a relationship with a print comic company that would print and publish their titles. The publisher knew it was not taking chances on printing PVP’s title, since the creators could give the publisher data on the number of page views PVP comics received monthly and how much merchandise it sold through its stores. I would also compare this to the ability to listen to a small sampling of a song on iTunes before a user decides to purchase it. Users are able to sample the music, see if its something they like, then decide whether or not to spend money on it.
This is similar to the efforts of Indie musicians in how they attract a fan base to disseminate their music through the social networking site MySpace.com. A study by Juniper Research in 2006 reported that MySpace generates more community related activity than any other music site. (Shklovski, 2006) The technology behind the site, make it ideal for bands to create virtual fans that translate to a solid distribution base. Early, in it’s development stage, MySpace.com added tools to specifically aid bands, such as calendar, separate listings, and music distribution tools. (Shklovski, 2006) Artists are able to interact with user and personally build an intimate relationship with their fans. They can broadcast a message about a new CD or a concert they are performing at, and then have a dialogue with a fan, perhaps, as to why they decided to become a musician. It all becomes a very personal experience.

Building communities is also a tenet of the do-it-yourself journalist. Grassroots journalism through blogging has allowed citizens to interact with their communities and the world. Many point to September 11th, 2001 and the bombing of the Twin Towers as the true birth of the DIY journalist (Halavais, 2002) Bloggers posted what they saw, their feeling, pictures, and anything that came to them in the months that followed 9/11. Over time the acceptance of this medium of news dissemination has gained a wider audience. A Pew Internet and American Life Project study indicated that, “typical blog readership (persons likely to read a blog in a given day) increased by 33 percent in 2008 (Jones, & Himelboim, 2007). A bloggers ability to build relationships with their readers is one of the major reasons some have been tapped to work for, or have their blogs hosted, on traditional newspapers. The English newspaper The Guardian created a new addition to their newspapers site that focuses on local news and interest and posted an add seeking:
The successful candidates, who will work from home or “anywhere with wifi”, will know their “tweets from their yelps”. The posts will be “properly paid positions” and not quasi-voluntary blogging positions, “bloggers interested in creating and cultivating local multimedia content (text, photographs, audio and video) for their city” (Smith, 2009)

In using bloggers to bring a community together and report the news and events that interest their readers, newspapers expand their readership by distributing this information through digital formats.

Creating a webcomic is the first step in a long, but enjoyable process for creators. From developing the plot, characters and style, to monetization, to publishing, an artist must wear many hats to attract an audience. It is through the community the artist is able to build around their webcomics that their success will be determined. An artist must engage with his or her readers in a way no print author or cartoonist does. An artist with a following uploads their webcomic, and hundreds of people read it, comment on it, and critique it for the world to see. It is for this reason that webcomics are driven by communities, not unlike the areas of DIY journalism, blogging and indie music promotion.

It is the immediacy of the medium and the personal connection an artist can have with readers that makes or breaks a webcomic. In the economy of free, it is easy to attract readers to a site, but it is another thing to get them to come back again and again. A webcomic artist is an entrepreneur. They reside over a small company that is their webcomic. To earn even a meager sum from it, they need to be “DIY” businessmen and -women. It isn’t like the “days when newspapers were king…a cartoonist could submit their strip or panel to a syndicate, and if accepted, was given the professional, marketing, sales, and legal services of a major corporation” (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008,
p.120). An artist or their team are by necessity all those things wrapped into one; they
must be artist and businessperson – two hats that are rarely worn on the same head.

Webcomics revolve around a different business model than that of newspapers or
traditional print publishers. Although now that many newspapers have an online presence
these lines are also starting to blur. It is a model that very much mirrors other web-based
content business models, in that “the essential model is to offer free-to-the-consumer, ad-
subsidized content, which then trades on audience loyalty by selling books, T-shirts,
merchandise and original art” (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008, p.121). But here is
the benefit, when the webcomic creator does it all, there is no middle man. Since he is the
creator, publisher and promoter he receive all the revenue the comic earns. This is not
unlike artists in the music business. Distributing music content online dramatically
reduces distribution costs and for a performer, allowing him to garner a larger audience by
promoting his work on MySpace.com or other social networking sites, bypassing
traditional brick and mortar stores. Some bands that may have never gotten distributed
through a traditional outlet, can now reach a larger audience due to online distribution.
And in doing so, niche bands can reportabley turn a profit with sales of 25,000 albums
compared to the break-even point of 500,000 through a major label (Brynjolfsson, 2006).
Similar to record companies, newspapers severed as the gatekeepers to cartoonists,
printing only a handful of artists that were lucky enough to be syndicated. But by posting
their comics online themselves, they are able to possibly earn some money from their
creations.

In addition to publishing their own creation on blogs or personal sites a webcomic
artist also has the option of joining a site that hosts his work and charges users to view it
using a subscription service. With this, a wall is put up in front of the majority of a site’s comics and people pay a set fee each month to view its content. This was first tried by Moderntales.com in the late 1990s and proved to be a viable approach to distribute comics online. However, the trend in webcomics has now moved to the subsidized ad-based approach as Internet users have become more accustomed to free content. There are still subscription-based webcomic sites on the Internet, but they have also begun to offer many free comics to attract readers.

There are more choices for consumers, and people are looking for entertainment elsewhere. The webcomic revenue market was a creation of the modern era of web sales, a market that caters to a niche of readers and enthusiasts. Small titles sell at the far (or “long tail”) end of the sales spectrum. Sixty percent of Amazon.com’s book sales are for obscure, small-selling titles that appeal to specialized subgroups and niche fandom’s (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008, p.121). The “long-tail” effect, as coined by Chris Anderson of Wired magazine, was a phenomenon he discovered when talking to a digital music executive about sales. Anderson was amazed to find that in the new age of internet sales and digital content sales were not driven by the most popular titles, but by purchases of niche products all the way down to the tail end. As the digital music executive put it, “In a world of almost zero packaging costs and instant access to almost all content in this format [digital music], consumers exhibit a consistent behavior. They look at almost everything. I believe this requires a major change by content producers” (Anderson, 2006, p.8).

This is the economics of webcomics: hundreds of single panel, long- and short-form niche comics in as many genres, all of which are vying for an audience and their
money. It is interesting that the majority of comic books that are found on the selves of local comic shops are superhero based. But online, the majority of webcomics are quite the opposite (Campbell, 2006). They are stories of everyday life, fantasy, gaming, etc., but not men in tights defeating evil. Webcomics cater to comic readers looking for something different, and there are as many webcomics as there are interests. There are webcomics for every niche comic consumer online. And as Anderson has show, with the low cost of digital distribution consumers can have nearly anything they want a click away.

One of the main problems sited by journalistic bloggers with traditional newspapers is there size and need for ever increasing amounts of revenue. This need for revenue, mostly through ads, drives them to pander to the widest audience, thus watering down coverage. (Lowrey, 2006) As stated by Lowery, “The need for large audiences has tamed mainstream journalists’ self expression and has made strident partisanship largely taboo, thus partly relinquishing journalism’s jurisdiction over partisan coverage and strongly expressive content. These forms of expression are therefore vulnerable to poaching from beyond journalism (Lowrey, 2006).” The more niche genres webcomic artists can accommodate the greater the audience they can attract, without compromising their artist ideals.

To distribute their webcomics, artists have had to learn about marketing, promotion, and sales. In doing this, they can remove the middleman, and instead of sharing any money made with others, they reap 100% of the revenues. By distributing their work online and promoting their work through the webcomic community artists are able to build an audience. The people who see their work, click on a Google Adsense link,
buy a print version of the webcomic, or buy a plush toy or T-shirt, all contribute to the artist’s income. It is for this reason that distribution and promotion are key to the prospect of a webcomic artist’s success in monetizing their creation.

**Using a webcomic to present scholarly research**

Using the visual narrative style of comics to present scholarly research poses some challenges in incorporating the following:

- How to use citations
- How to provide references for another artist's work
- How to present data such as charts, timelines and graphs

In standard publications there are set formats that the above abide to, however, when presenting these materials in a scholarly comic, there are no set rules. There are, however, some guidelines that can be examined for the above challenges.

**How to use citations**

It is standard to cite a work you are quoting or drawing a fact from in a scholarly publication. There are several styles to use some of which are: APA, MLA and Chicago. These citations are placed at the end of the sentence using quotes to denote a direct passage taken from the source material, and no quotation marks if it is not taken word-for-word. For my project the standard type of inclusion presented a serious problem. Each page of my comic has multiple panels, within each panel there is finite space in the word balloons to add text. Using citations within the word balloons would have taken an
excessive amount of space and also break the readers concentration, taking them out of the story.

In his books, *Understanding Comics*, *Reinventing Comics* and *Making Comics*, Scott McCloud uses sequential comic art to explain his ideas of how and why comics work as a visual medium. McClouds method is similar to the approach I took in my project, therefore, his method of citing work was a good template for me to follow. McCloud uses quotes and facts that must be cited in his books, but he does not include the cited work inside the word balloons. Instead he uses an asterisk at the end of the text in the word balloon. Then, at the bottom of the page he includes the cited material. If there are multiple sources cited he uses multiple asterisks and then references the asterisk at the bottom of the page. This is how I referenced source material in my project. See Figure 1.
How to provide references for another artist's work

There were two challenges in how to cite actual images created by other artists in my project. They are as follows:

1. Displaying proper copyright notices.

2. Citing the actual comic book the art is taken from.
**Displaying proper copyright notices**

To display the copyright notice for art not my own, I employed another technique that Scott McCloud used in his books. When McCloud uses art from another artist or company he places the copyright information next to the panel where the art is present. He runs it vertically up the side of the panel. He then has a section in his titles called, “Copyright and Art Credits” where he adds all the copyrights he set next to the panels. In this section he cites which page in his book the art is on, the panel (p) in his book, the copyright symbol and artist or company who holds the copyright. (McCloud, 2006) This is the method I also used for citing copyright holders my project. See Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Use of copyright](image)

**Citing the actual comic book the art is taken from**

Due to the increase in scholarly analysis of comics as a medium in pop culture, and the fact that comics are now a multi-million dollar industry a standard in properly
citing sources has become necessary. (Ellis, 1998) For this project I combined the styles proposed by Allen Ellis the chair of the Comic Citations Committee and guidelines from Britton Payne taken from the Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Law Journal. (Payne, 2006)

For the most part I followed the guidelines from the Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Law Journal since it is most current and because, as the article points out, it has legal precedent behind it. I felt however, that there was one item that needed to be added that is found in Ellis’s guidelines that is not in the Payne guidelines. The Payne guidelines do not include panel designations in their citation. I believed that it needed to be added to the citation to better clarify what part of the page is being cited.

The citation style will list the following:

1. **Creative Contributors** – This was defined by Judge Posner in the case of Gaiman v. McFarlene 360 F.3d 644 (7th Cir. 2004). This format follows his lead. "The contents of a comic book are typically the joint work of four artists -- the writer, the penciler who creates the art work, the inker who makes a black and white plate of the art work, and the colorist who colorist." So all creators will be included in the citation in the order that Posner indicated, they will be separated by comma an ampersand. (Payne, 2006)

2. **Story Title** – The story title of the issue cited.

3. **Comic Book Title** – The title of the issue cited.
4. **Volume Number** – Comics sometimes re-launch a title, or the title sells out and the publisher makes another printing, this reprint has a different volume number than the original.

5. **Page Number** – Placed after the issue number separated by a comma and “at”. (Payne, 2006)

6. **Panel Number** – If a specific panel is referenced it should also be included in the citation. This is not in the Payne guidelines, but was added from the Ellis guidelines as I believe it is important to be specific in referencing art on the page. There are times when different artists are responsible for different panels on a page. Panels are read from right to left.

7. **Publisher** – The company who published the cited issue.

8. **Cover Date** – Date the cited comic was printed.

9. **Parenthetical Information** – This might include information such as, “first appearance”, or “introducing” a new character. (Payne, 2006)

The basic template I used for my project when citing comics was as follows:

Creative Contributors, *Story Title*, COMIC BOOK TITLE (VOLUME IF APPROPRIATE) [Issue Number], at [Page Number], panel [Panel Number] (Publisher Cover Date Month and Year). (Payne, 2006)

**Example**
Bill Finger & Bob Kane, *The Case of the Chemical Syndicate*, DETECTIVE COMICS 27, at 2 (DC Comics May 1939) (first appearance of Batman)
How to present data such as charts, timelines and graphs

The challenge of presenting data such as charts, timelines and graphs were guided and set by the aesthetics of the project pages themselves. For my project I used photographs of myself as the narrator, but information may also need to be incorporated in the forms listed above. If this is necessary I will integrate illustrations with the photography so that it looks as if the graphic is part of the image and I am interacting with it. This would help tie the information graphics to the photography being used. See Figure 3.

![Figure 3: Images and illustration combined](image)

Project Design, Implementation and Evaluation Plan

The project consisted of the creation of a webcomic, using the medium of comics to answer the questions outlined in my thesis. The webcomic was in the vein of the books
by Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics, Reinventing Comics*, and *Making Comics*. In them, he uses graphic storytelling to explain his beliefs and ideas about the comic industry. Using sequential art and text to explore the questions raised in this paper, I utilized the artistic style known as Fumetti. This is where photographic images are used in lieu of illustrations to tell the story.

My project can be broken down into these sections:

**Webcomic**

a. **Script** – The webcomic was written out in script form, breaking down the dialog for each panel per page in standard comic form.

b. **Design layout** – The webcomic was laid out in standard comic book page size so as to easily create a print version if desired.

c. **Photography** – Many of the images are of the narrator, myself, in different poses that correspond to the script. Images were taken with a digital camera against a blue backdrop.

d. **Photo-manipulation and illustrations** – After the images were taken, they were cross-referenced with the script to see which poses need to be used for specific panels. When illustrations need to be added to the images to facilitate understanding, the images were exported from Adobe Photoshop to Adobe Illustrator and inserted as appropriate.

e. **Final Layout** – The final images were brought into Adobe Illustrator and placed in the correct panels per the script. Any additional design and layout work such as page numbering and titling was done at this stage.

f. **Lettering** – The copy from the script was added using Adobe Illustrator.
g. **Processing** – From Adobe Illustrator, the final pages were compressed and exported in a format that is optimal for viewing online.

**Website**

a. **Site design** – This is the early stage in the web design process where a basic structure, color scheme, and navigation will be sketched out.

b. **Build site** – In this stage the design was taken from the design stage to Adobe Dreamweaver where the site was built using CSS and HTML. The blogging software Wordpress was used as a shell and the Comicpress theme used to organize the content.

c. **Domain registration** – I then registered a domain for the project. The domain will be: http://www.webcomicdistribution.com for the project. It is hosted on GoDaddy.com.

d. **Posting webcomic** – When the site was completed, the webcomic was uploaded and tested.

**Mobile/Digital Distribution**

e. **iPod, iPhone and iPad** – The webcomic files were then processed per the specifications from Apple so that the webcomic project can be viewed on their devices. This export will be done in Adobe Illustrator. When completed, it was posted to the website, along with information on popular mobile comic reader software.
Conclusion

In creating a webcomic using the above method and applications, I constructed my project, built a website to distribute it, and made the webcomic available for download in portable digital formats.

The project consisted of the creation of a web comic, using the medium of comics to answer the questions in my thesis. It consisted of 38 standard comic sized pages (6.875 x 10.5) and has 4 panels per page. The webcomic is in the vein of the books by Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* and *Reinventing Comics*. In them he uses graphic storytelling to explain his beliefs and ideas about the comic industry. Using sequential art and text to explore the thesis ideas I utilized a style known as Fumetti. This is where photographic images are used in lieu of illustrations to tell the story. I created the art and the final project was posted to a website which hosts my multi-page webcomic project. It is also available for download on the iphone and ipad.
Reference


http://www.PVPonlne.com

http://www.penny-arcade.com/

http://pixelstrips.com/

http://www.moderntales.com/comics/pewfell.php

http://www.nin.com

http://www.th3rdworld.com/web-comic/The-SuperFogeys
Appendix I: Art and Copyright Reference

PAGE 1
PANELS 1-4
Joe Quesada, Paolo Rivera, One Moment in Time, THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 638, Cover (DC Comics July 2010)

PAGE 2
PANELS 1-4
Kevin Volo, Uriel A. Duran, The Long Goodnight, BIG IRON, 1, at 12, p1, (Pixelstrips.com December 2005)

PAGE 3
PANEL 1
Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 1, Cover (Marvel Comics March 1963)

PAGE 8
PANELS 1,2
Peter Milligan, Giuseppe Camuncoli, Stefano Landini, Trish Mulvihill, Sal Cipriano, Simon Bisley, HELLBLAZER 268, Cover (DC Comics, Vertigo June 2010)

PANEL 3
Peter Milligan, Giuseppe Camuncoli, Stefano Landini, Trish Mulvihill, Sal Cipriano, Simon Bisley, HELLBLAZER 268, at 1 p1 (DC Comics, Vertigo June 2010)

PANEL 4
Peter Milligan, Giuseppe Camuncoli, Stefano Landini, Trish Mulvihill, Sal Cipriano, Simon Bisley, HELLBLAZER 268, at 3 p1-5 (DC Comics, Vertigo June 2010)

PAGE 13
PANEL 4
Art – Superman copyright DC Comic, Artist Gary Frank, Jon Sibal.

PAGE 16
PANEL 2
Héctor Germán, Uriel A. Durán, NOR PRODIGIES NOR DREAMS, 1, at 7, p1-4, (Pixelstrips.com January 2006)
Lee Post, Patches, YOUR SQUARE LIFE, 29, p1, (Pixelstrips.com June 2006)

PAGE 18
PANEL 1
Ramon Perez, Rob Coughler, Love is the Key, BUTTERNUT SQUASH, (Butternut
Brock Heasley, Lee Cherolis, “BOOM”, *SUPER FOGEYS*, 7 (Thirdworld Studios 2010)
Website Art – Penny Arcade

PANEL 2
Photo copyright Carmen Russel

PANEL 3
Scott R. Kurtz, *My Two Dads*, PVP-PLAYER VS. PLAYER (Scott Kurtz October 12 2010)

PANEL 4
Scott R. Kurtz, *My Charles Christopher*, PVP-PLAYER VS. PLAYER (Scott Kurtz October 13 2010)

PAGE 19
PANEL 1-4
Scott R. Kurtz, *My Charles Christopher*, PVP-PLAYER VS. PLAYER (Scott Kurtz October 13 2010)

PAGE 20
PANEL 1-4
Scott R. Kurtz, *My Charles Christopher*, PVP-PLAYER VS. PLAYER (Scott Kurtz October 13 2010)

PAGE 21
PANEL 1
Scott R. Kurtz, *My Charles Christopher*, PVP-PLAYER VS. PLAYER (Scott Kurtz October 13 2010)

PANEL 2-4

PAGE 26
PANEL 1
Website Art – Penny Arcade

PAGE 28
PANELS 2-4
Website Art – copyright NIN.com

PAGE 31
PANEL 1
Héctor Germán, Uriel A. Durán, *NOR PRODIGIES NOR DREAMS*, 1, at 7, p1-4,
(Pixelstrips.com January 2006)

PANEL 4
Website Art – copyright NIN.com

**PAGE 32**
Website Art – copyright Wired.com

**PAGE 33**
PANEL 4
Kevin Volo, *Alpha and Omega*, HUSK, 1, at 4, (Pixelstrips.com February 2006)

**Page 34**
PANEL 4
Bill Finger, Bob Kane, Jerry Robinson, George Roussos, *Stone Walls Do Not A Prison Make*, BATMAN, cover (DC Comic 1940)
Appendix II: Project Script

Webcomic Distribution – Introduction Script Section

PAGE 1
PANEL 1
Comics, like many sources of entertainment, have gone digital.
PANEL 2
Traditional means of comic creation have been combined with modern tools.
PANEL 3
Not only has the process by which comics are created changed, but so has their method of distribution.
PANEL 4
It is at the point of distribution that traditional comics and webcomics differ dramatically.

PAGE 2
PANEL 1
Creating comics for the web and for print consist of many of the same steps. The artist draws a comic…
PANEL 2
It’s inked, giving the art shading…
PANEL 3
Color is added to separate objects, giving them depth…
PANEL 4
Finally the words are added… but what happens next?

PAGE 3
PANEL 1
It is at this point, where distribution takes place, that we will be concentrating on. That fork in the road where a webcomic is published not on paper, but via the internet.

PAGE 4
PANEL 1
What happens when it’s time to distribute a webcomic?
PANEL 2
That’s what we will examine in this webcomic.
PANEL 3
This project will explore how webcomic distribution compares to other industries undergoing change due to digital distribution.
PANEL 4
The other industries we will focus on are music and journalism.

PAGE 5
PANEL 1
To do this, I’ll examine three areas of webcomic distribution.
PANEL 2
Holding Sign. These are… Community, Monetization and Niche Markets.
This will help to focus the project keep it from getting too large or going off track.

I’m forgetting something…oh yeah, there’s one more thing I’ll be covering.

As you may have noticed, information for this project will be presented in comic book form. But it is also a piece of scholarly work. There are just a few little problems I’ll have to solve to present my project.

What are they, you ask?

Webcomic Distribution – Scholarly Script Section

There are three challenges that need to be addressed when citing sources in this project.

1. How to cite an actual comic book properly, being sure to credit all creators and the copyright holder.
2. How to provide references for another artist’s work.
3. How to present data like charts, timelines and graphs.

Wait. I just don’t feel the part of the scholar, something’s missing here. Oh wait…

So now that I look the part, how am I going to cite comics in this project?

Challenge no.1, citing this. A comic book. It’s a bit different than a magazine or journal or book. Hence the challenge.

Some of the differences are in the structure of a comic and some are in the number of creators involved. There are a minimum of 3 people who work on a comic title. These people need to be credited in the citation.

Narrative text. There’s typically a writer, inker, colorist, letterer and cover artist. These people need to be properly credited. And there’s more…

Comics are broken down into panels. Sometimes an individual panel may be referenced. So the panel reference needs to be added to the citation.
Panels are read right to left. On this page there are five panels. Citing individual panels is a precise way to cite comics.

**PAGE 9**
**PANEL 1**
Another way comics are different is that they don’t number the pages ads are on. So in citing them, pages need to be counted properly for the citation.

**PANEL 2**
So what will the citation look like? What form will it take?

**PANEL 3**
Creative Contributors, Story Title, COMIC BOOK TITLE (VOLUME IF APPROPRIATE) [Issue Number], at [Page Number], panel [Panel Number] (Publisher Cover Date Month and Year).

**PANEL 4**
And then I need a way to reference it on the page. Panels are read right to left. On this page there are five panels.
Citing individual panels is a precise way to cite comics.

**PAGE 10**
**PANEL 1**
I’m going to use this. It’s how Scott McCloud did it. Should be good enough for me.

**PANEL 2**
Yep, it’s an asterisk.

**PANEL 3**
Well not this one, it’s a little too large, I think. But I will use an asterisk to reference cited comic titles.

**PANEL 4**
But how?

**PAGE 11**
**PANEL 1**
Now where did that thing go? Oh well… In Scott McCloud’s book understanding comics, he explored what comics are.
Why they interest us. Why sequential images speak to us.
To do this he referenced comics and art.

**PANEL 2**
Where the heck is that thing?
So I’ll be using his procedure in citing sources. He did write the book on it so to speak.

**PANEL 3**
Oh wait… there it is. Just like in Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud. Page 56 I believe. *

**PANEL 4**
This is how I’ll handle citations.
Ok. So that’s how comics will be cited in my project. But how will credit be given when I use content from another artist? The copyright holder needs to be cited.

And again I’ve taken a cue from Scott McCloud.

Well, the first part is easy.

I’ll be using a copyright symbol.

So that on a page…

…in a panel…

…where I admit for all to know…

I’m superman! You can find the copyright holder of yours truly to the right of the panel.

Citation- Art © DC Comics, inc

Ok. I’m not Superman. Shoot.

So that’s two of the challenges covered. How to cite comics and how to add copyright notices to the project. Lastly I need to figure out how to present data like charts, timelines and graphs. I think I’ll use Photoshop and add the graphics to the pictures.

Like this.

And this.

So That’s all of them.

These are the steps I’ll be taking to present scholarly research in comic book form.

Sounds like a lot of work…true.

But a whole lot of fun.
OK, At this point you may be asking yourself…what are webcomics anyway?

The answer is fairly simple. They can be single-panel of multi-page comics that are displayed on the web for people to enjoy.

Webcomics are no different from any other form of comics; they are just distributed differently.

Distribution methods for webcomics vary, and for an artist to garner a large audience, a number of avenues need to be examined.

These methods include distribution through personal websites, webcomic communities, list aggregators, RSS feeds, Mobile devices (smart phones), and print-on-demand publishing.

All these avenues of distribution require a specialized knowledge base, requiring the artist to also function as the publisher.

But exploiting as many of these distribution methods as possible is necessary to attract the largest possible readership.

Let’s take a quick look at each method so we can understand how they fit into the digital distribution of webcomics.

Narration. Show a series of websites overlapping each other of various private webcomic sites. Everyone can have a website, and most webcomic artists do.

Narration. Show PVP site with an image of Kurtz with characters. One of the most successful webcomics online is PVP, (Player vs. Player). The founder and creator of PVP Scott Kurtz, started posting PVP in 1998 and never looked back.

Narration. PVP.com slices overlapped. His site is a great example of the various methods webcomic artists use to build communities.

Narration. Show PVP site. PVP.com employs many methods of distribution and
community building, all directly on their homepage.
Citation- http://www.pvponline.com

PAGE 19
PANEL 1
Narration. PVP.com homepage share/twitter. From Kurtz’s homepage, you can notify friends and other social networking sites about a new comic strip.
Citation- http://www.pvponline.com
PANEL 2
Narration. PVP.com homepage RSS feed. You can subscribe to be automatically notified when a new strip is posted by subscribing to his RSS feed.
Citation- http://www.pvponline.com
PANEL 3
Narration. PVP.com iPod image. Want to read his comic strips on your phone? Click on the link to the Apple Store.
Citation- http://www.pvponline.com
PANEL 4
Narration. PVP.com Buy a Print. You can even order a print of that day’s comic strip or any previous ones. He also has a store where you can buy print editions of PVP.
Citation- http://www.pvponline.com

PAGE 20
PANEL 1
PVP.com homepage in the background slightly blurred, me in front. PVPonline.com is a perfect example of a webcomic artist wearing many hats to help build a readership through online communities.
PANEL 2
PVP.com homepage in the background slightly blurred, me in front. By providing his comic strip for free, Kurtz built a fan base of around 100,000 unique visitors per day as of August 2005.
Citation – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pvp_online
PANEL 3
PVP.com homepage in the background slightly blurred, me in front. This is not unlike indie bands using social networking sites such as Myspace.com to reach a wider audience.
PANEL 4
PVP.com homepage in the background slightly blurred, me in front. The technology behind MySpace.com allows artists to interact with users and personally build an intimate relationship with their fans.

PAGE 21
PANEL 1
PVP.com homepage in the background slightly blurred, me in front. I snap my fingers. Wait a minute…this doesn’t seem right.
PANEL 2
I now have a KISS mask on. This is more like it. Now where were we? Oh right,
Myspace.com and music distribution.

Citation – KISS Mask Site

I now have a KISS mask on. A study by Juniper Research in 2006 reported that MySpace generates more community-related activity than any other music site. (Shklovski, 2006)


I now have a KISS mask on. Musicians can upload free content, broadcast a message about a new CD or a concert where they are performing and then have a dialogue with all their fans at once.

PAGE 22

Just me, maybe a fedora with PRESS in it. Many point to September 11th, 2001 and the bombing of the Twin Towers as the true birth of the DIY journalist. (Halavais, 2002)

Citation-

Just me, maybe a fedora with PRESS in it. Bloggers posted what they saw, their feelings, pictures, and anything that came to them in the months that followed 9/11. (Halavais, 2002)

Just me, maybe a fedora with PRESS in it. And since then, the acceptance of blogs has only increased.

PAGE 23

Just me, maybe a fedora with PRESS in it. A Pew Internet and American Life Project study indicated that “typical blog readership (persons likely to read a blog in a given day) increased by 33 percent in 2008.


Screen Shot of Blog Headers. Now there are thousands of DIY journalists blogging about everything from current events to making beer.

Just me, maybe a fedora with PRESS in it. And since bloggers are all about building communities and therefore attracting readers, newspapers have begun to hire bloggers.


Narration Text. Pic of a typewriter blurred. “The largest mainstream news sites, such as
Washingtonpost.com and MSNBC.com, are brimming with blogs, usually run by reporters, editors and producers who now write more frequently and with a more personal style than in a typical news report. Simultaneously, independent blogs are doing more reporting, breaking more news and hiring former journalists to staff their publications.”


Webcomic creators, musicians, and journalists who blog all use various Internet technologies to build communities.

These communities spread the word and therefore increase a comic, band, or blogger’s audience, and hopefully help monetize their work.

The ability to deliver creative content in digital form has changed all three industries.

Artists, musicians and bloggers must also be DIY businessmen in addition to publishers.

Webcomic Distribution – Monetization Script Section

The primary revenue model for webcomics is to offer free-to-the-consumer, ad-subsidized content, which then trades on audience loyalty by selling books, T-shirts, merchandise and original art.


The webcomic artist is responsible for quite a bit. Getting a new comic out weekly, dealing with artists and advertisers, and site maintenance.

But the benefit of this model is the creators receives 100% of any profits made.

Since they are the creator, publisher and promoter they receive all the revenue the comic earns.

Penny Arcade, like PVP, is another popular webcomic site that caters to the gamer market.

Their reported CPM (Cost Per Thousand) of $5-$9 for two banners on their site and the 55 million page views they receive make them a multi-million dollar company.
And that’s just the revenue brought in by their advertising stream.

True, not all webcomic artists enjoy this much success, but the fact remains the same; the artist keeps all the profits.

Delivering free digital content is also a method indie and even mainstream bands are trying.

Distributing music content online dramatically reduces distribution costs, allowing performers to garner a larger audience by promoting their work on MySpace.com or other social networking sites thus bypassing traditional brick-and-mortar stores.

In doing so, niche bands can reportably turn a profit with sales of 25,000 albums compared to the break-even point of 500,000 through a major label.

Some bands that may never have gotten distributed through a traditional outlet can now reach a larger audience due to online distribution.

Even established musicians have adopted giving away content in the hopes of enticing fans to buy more.

Show graphics from NIN site. In March 2008, Trent Rezner of Nine Inch Nails offered fans the opportunity to download some songs from his new album, Ghosts I-IV, for free. He also offered packages beginning at $5 and ending at $300 for an ultra-deluxe edition. That brought the band more than $1.6 million and crashed the band’s Web site. The top-priced edition sold out within three days.

Rezner then went on to release The Slip online for free several months later. He left a simple post on his site.

Blogging is very similar to webcomic publishing.
A professional or armature journalist conducts research, secures sources, and spends time writing, editing and posting their work.

To just give it away. Free.

Bloggers employ many of the same methods to monetize their sites as webcomic artists.

Through ad services such as Google’s Adsense, BlogAds, Fast Click, and affiliate programs where bloggers link to sites such as Amazon.com, they can draw on many different revenue sources.

Social media sites and web technologies such as RSS Feeds, bloggers are able to build a community that feeds their revenue stream.

Blogs, by design, can demand high advertising rates because they usually cater to a very targeted market.

This is because “the more distinct the demographic, the higher your potential advertisers.” Citation- The economics of webcomics. Page 67.

Many, if not all, Webcomics, Blogs, and indie bands cater to niche audiences. These audiences have many choices in today’s digital landscape. People are looking for entertainment and are finding that there is something for everyone out there.

The webcomic revenue market was a creation of the modern era of web sales, it is a market that caters to a niche of readers and enthusiasts.

Small titles sell at the far (or “long tail”) end of the sales spectrum. Sixty percent of Amazon.com’s book sales are for obscure, small-selling titles that appeal to specialized subgroups and niche fandom’s.


Narrative Text. Book and Wired Logo. The “long-tail” effect, as coined by Chris Anderson of Wired magazine, was a phenomenon he discovered when talking to a digital music executive about sales.
Anderson was amazed to find that in the new age of internet sales and digital content, sales were not driven by the most popular titles, but by purchases of niche products all the way down to the tail end.

Narrative Text Box. Digital board. Or mixing board. As the digital music executive put it, “In a world of almost zero packaging costs and instant access to almost all content in this format [digital music], consumers exhibit a consistent behavior. They look at almost everything. I believe this requires a major change by content producers.”


Niche genres are something that webcomics excel in. In fact, it’s interesting that the majority of webcomics are not superhero-based as the majority of print comics are.

Image of popular webcomics. They are stories of everyday life, fantasy, gaming, etc., but not men in tights defeating evil.

Creators may be freer to not just work in popular genres because of the low cost of distribution.

And consumers are definitely more willing to try something new if it’s free.

With print comics costing on average three dollars, consumers are less likely to spend their money on a character, creator, or title they have never heard of.

Image of Batman Pages. But another Batman spinoff has an audience, and will sell.

So the freedom of low cost distribution is a great catalyst in the creation of webcomics and the explosion in sales at the fringes of creative content.

Everyone likes Batman, but how many people are willing to pay $3.00 for a comic about a hedgehog that has self-esteem problems?

Looking off to the side. Hey that’s not a bad idea…have to write that down.

Print comics pander to the widest possible market, while webcomics are diverse and varied.
Page 36
Panel 1
It’s this popularization of content that made journalist bloggers question traditional print newspapers coverage.
Panel 2
One of the main problems cited by journalist bloggers with traditional newspapers is their size and need of forever increasing amounts of revenue.
Panel 3
This need for revenue, mostly through ads, drives them to pander to the widest audience, thus watering down coverage.
Panel 4
Narrative text box over blurred newsprint. As stated by Lowery, “The need for large audiences has tamed mainstream journalists’ self expression and has made strident partisanship largely taboo, thus partly relinquishing journalism’s jurisdiction over partisan coverage and strongly expressive content. These forms of expression are therefore vulnerable to poaching from beyond journalism.”
Citation- Mapping the journalism–blogging relationship (Lowrey, 2006)
Webcomic Distribution – Closing Script Section

Page 37
Panel 1
The more niche genres webcomic artists can fill, the larger the audience they can attract, without compromising their artistic ideals.
Panel 2
To distribute their webcomics, artists have had to learn about marketing, promotion, and sales.
Panel 3
In doing this, they can remove the middleman, and instead of sharing any money made with others, they reap 100% of the revenues.
Panel 4
By distributing their work online and promoting their work through the webcomic community, artists are able to build an audience.

Page 38
Panel 1
The people who see their work, click on a Google Adsense link, buy a print version of the webcomic, or buy a plush toy or T-shirt, all contribute to the artist’s income.
Panel 2
It is for this reason that distribution and promotion are key to a webcomic artist’s success in monetizing and building an audience for their creation.
Panel 3
But in the end, webcomics are there for enthusiasts to enjoy, and share with friends.
Panel 4
And some of those fans will be inspired enough to go out and create a webcomic of their own for people to enjoy.
Appendix III: The Webcomic

Introduction

Comics, like many sources of entertainment, have gone digital.

Traditional means of comic book creation have been combined with modern tools.

It is at the point of distribution that traditional comics and webcomics express dramatically.

Not only has the process by which comics are created changed, so has the method of distribution.
Creating comics for the web and print involves many of the same steps.

The artist draws a comic...

It's inked, giving the art shading...

Color is added to separate objects, giving them depth...

Finally, the words are added... but what happens next?

You're insane.
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT'S TIME TO DISTRIBUTE A WEBSMII?

THAT'S WHAT WE WILL EXAMINE IN THIS WEBSMII.

THE PROJECT WILL EXAMINE HOW WEBMII DISTRIBUTION COMPARES TO OTHER INDUSTRIES UNDERGOING CHANGE DUE TO DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION.

THE OTHER INDUSTRIES WE WILL FOCUS ON ARE MUSIC AND GOLIFF.
These are...

Community
Monetization
Niche Markets

This will help to focus the project and keep it from getting too large.

I'm forgetting something...

Oh yeah, there's one more thing...
As you may have noticed, information for this project will be presented in comic form.

There are just a few little problems I'll have to solve to present my project.

What are they, you ask?
Citing Scholarly Work

There are three challenges that need to be addressed when citing sources in this project:

1. How to cite an actual comic book properly, being able to credit all creators and the copyright holder.

2. How to provide references for another artist's work.

3. How to present data like charts, timelines, and graphs.

Wait, I just don't feel the part of the scholar, something's missing here. Oh wait...

So now that I look the part, how do I signing to cite comics in this project?
CHALLENGE

NO! CITING THEM AS A COMIC BOOK IS A BIT DIFFERENT THAN A MAGAZINE OR JOURNAL OR BOOK, HENCE THE CHALLENGE.

SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES ARE IN THE STRUCTURE OF A COMIC, AND SOME ARE IN THE NUMBER OF CREATORS INVOLVED.

THERE ARE A MINIMUM OF 3 PEOPLE WHO WORK ON A COMIC TITLE.

THESE PEOPLE NEED TO BE CREDITED IN THE CITATION.

There's typically a writer, inker, colorist, letterer, and cover artist, these people need to be properly credited, and there's more...

COMICS ARE BROKEN DOWN INTO PANELS. EACH PANEL MAY BE REFERENCED. SO THE PANEL REFERENCE NEEDS TO BE ADDED TO THE CITATION.

PANELS ARE畫 RIGHT TO LEFT ON THIS PAGE. THERE ARE FIVE PANELS.

OTHER INDIVIDUAL PANELS IS A PRECISE WAY TO CITE COMICS.
Another way comics are different is that they don't number the pages as we are on. So in citing them, pages need to be properly referenced in the citation.

**Example**

I'm going to use this, it's non-Scott ACG, but should be good enough for me.

Yep. To an asterisk.

Well, not this one. It's a little too large, I think, but I will use an asterisk to reference cited comic titles.

But how?
NOW WRITE. DID THAT THINK NOT OR WELL, IN SCOTT MCCLOUD'S BOOK, UNDERSTANDING COMICS, HE EXPLAINED WHAT COMICS ARE.

WHAT THEY INTERACT WITH, WHY RESIDENTIAL IMAGES SPEAK TO US.

TO DO THIS, HE REFERENCED COMICS AND ART.

WHERE THE HECK IS THAT THING?

SO I'LL BE DOING THIS PROCESS IN CITING SOURCES. WE GO WRITE THE BOOK ON IT, SO TO SPEAK.

OH WAIT... THIS IS NOT JUST LIKE IN UNDERSTANDING COMICS BY SCOTT MCCLOUD. PAGE 54, I BELIEVE.

SO THAT'S NOW I'LL HANDLING CITATIONS.
OK, so that's how COMICS will be cited in my project. But now will credit be given when I use content from another artist?

The copyright holder needs to be cited.

WELL, THE FIRST PART IS EASY.

AND again we've taken a cue from Scott McCloud.

I'll be using a copyright symbol.
SO THAT ON A PAGE...

IF A PANEL...

I'M SUPERMAN!

WHERE I AIN'T FOR ALL TO KNOW...

YOU CAN FIND THE COPYRIGHT HOLDERS OF YOUNG'S TRUTH THE RIGHT ON THE PANEL.
OK. I'M NOT SUPPOSED to shoot.

So that's two of the challenges combined. How to cite comics and how to add copyright notices to the product.

Lastly, I need to figure out how to present data like graphs and tables.

I think I'll use Photoshop and add the graphs to the pictures.

Like this.

And this.
There are the steps I’ll be taking to present scholarly research in comic form.

That’s all of them.

They sound like a lot of work... true.

But a whole lot of fun.
Community Building

WEB COMICS: AN EXPLORATION IN DISTRIBUTION

THE ANSWER IS FAIRLY SIMPLE. THEY CAN BE SINGLE-PANEL OR MULTI-PAGE COMICS THAT ARE DISPLAYED ON THE WEB FOR PEOPLE TO ENJOY.

WEB COMICS ARE NO DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER FORM OF COMIC. THEY ARE JUST DISTRIBUTED DIFFERENTLY.

DISTRIBUTION METHODS FOR WEB COMICS VARY AND FOR AN ARTIST TO GARNER A LARGE AUDIENCE, A NUMBER OF AVENUES NEED TO BE EXAMINED.
These methods include distribution through personal websites, webcomics communities, lists, aggregators, RSS feeds, mobile devices (smartphones), and sponsored demand publishers. All these avenues of distribution require a specialized knowledge base, requiring the artist to also function as the publisher.

But exploiting as many of these distribution methods as possible is necessary to attract the largest possible readership. Let’s take a quick look at each method so we can understand how they fit into the digital distribution of webcomics.
EVERYONE CAN HAVE A WEBSITE, AND MOST WEBCOMIC ARTISTS DO.

ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL WEBCOMICS ONLINE IS PVP (PLAYERS VS. PLAYERS), THE FOUNDER AND CREATOR OF PVP, SCOTT KUBITZ, STARTED POSTING PVP IN 1999 AND NEVER LOOKED BACK.

His site is a great example of the various methods webcomic artists use to build communities.

PVP.COM EMPLOYS MANY METHODS OF DISTRIBUTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING, ALL DIRECTLY ON THEIR HOMEPAGE.

From Kustr's homepage, you can notify friends and other social networking sites about a new comic strip.

You can subscribe to be notified when a new strip is posted by subscribing to his RSS feed.

You can even order a print of past days' comic strips or any previous ones. He also has a store where you can buy print editions of Puff.
This is not unlike the bands' using social networking sites such as MySpace.com to reach a wider audience.

The technology behind MySpace allows artists to interact with their fans and build a private relationship with them.

By providing his comic series for free, Kurtis built a fan base of around 100,000 unique visitors per day as of August 2005.

Fryonline.com is a perfect example of a Webcomic artist leveraging any way to help build a readership through online communities.
WAIT A MINUTE, THIS DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT.

THIS IS BETTER. NOW WHERE WERE WE? ON RIGHT. INTERFACE.COM AND MUSIC DISTRIBUTION.

A STUDY BY JUNIPER RESEARCH IN 2008 REPORTED THAT INTERACTING GENERATES MORE COMMUNITY-RELATED ACTIVITY THAN IN-STORE MUSCLE SITE. *

MUSICIANS CAN UPLOAD THEIR CONTENT, TALK ABOUT A NEW CD, ANNOUNCE A CONCERT WHERE THEY ARE PERFORMING AT AND THEN HAVE A DIALOGUE WITH ALL THEIR FANS AT ONCE.
Moving on... Building community is also a tenet of the do-it-yourself journalist.

Many feel that September 11, 2001, and the bombing off the Twin Towers in the building on the day of the event, was.

Blogging allowed what they saw, pictures, and stories that came to them in the months that followed 9/11.

And these then, the acceptance of blogging has only increased.

DOI: 2021-04-14-0000
"The largest mainstream news sites, such as WashPost.com and NYTimes.com, are bloggers, usually run by reporters, editors, and producers who now write more frequently and with a more personal style than in a typical news report. Similarly, some independent blogs are doing more reporting, breaking more news and hiring former journalists to start their publications." **


A Pew Internet and American Life Project/Study indicated that "typical blogs, read by nearly 1 in 5 (22%), are likely to be found on a blog on which a user can limit a visit to reading." 5

And since bloggers are already attracting communities and therefore attracting readers, newspapers have begun to hire bloggers. **

These communities spread the word and therefore increase a comic, band, or blogger’s audience, and hopefully monetize their work.

Webcomic creators, musicians, and bloggers use various Internet technologies to build communities.

The ability to deliver creative content in digital form has changed all three industries.

Artists, musicians, and bloggers must also be DIY entrepreneurs in addition to publishers.
Monetization

The primary revenue model for webcomics is often a direct-to-consumer, ad-subsidized content, which then depends on audience loyalty in selling books, t-shirts, merchandise, and original art.

But the benefit of this model is the greater revenue pool of any profits made.

Since they are the creators, publishers and promoters, they receive all the revenue the comic earns.

* (Giubar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Striker, 2008). (Giubar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Striker, 2008, p.121).
Penny Arcade, like Pop, is another popular webcomic that caters to the gaming market. As a result, they have been able to generate a significant amount of revenue through advertising. This has allowed them to maintain a stable income and operate as a multi-million dollar company.

The definition of CPA (Cost Per Action) is an acronym for Cost Per Action. Many online ads are priced on a CPA basis, in which the cost is expressed for 1,000 impressions. For example, if a banner advertisement is placed at the price of \$0.20 per thousand impressions, then the CPA is \$0.20 per 1,000 impressions.
In doing so, niche bands can reportedly turn a profit with sales of 25,000 albums compared to the break-even point of $500,000 through a major label.*

Some bands that may never have gotten distributed through a traditional outlet can now reach a larger audience due to online distribution.

In March 2005, Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails offered fans the opportunity to download some songs from his new album, GHOSTS I-IV, for free. He also offered packaging beginning at $5 and ending at $19.92 for an ultra-deluxe edition that brought the band more than $1.6 million and crashed the band's Web site. The top-price edition sold out within three days.

"This one's on me."
Blogging is very similar to webcomic publishing.

A professional or amateur journalist conducts research, draws sketches, and spends time writing, editing, and posting their work.

To just give it away, pass.

Bloggers employ many of the same methods to increase their Webcomic Artists.
THROUGH AD SERVICES SUCH AS GOOGLE'S ADSENSE, BLOGGERS, FAST CLICKS AND AFFILIATE PROGRAMS WHERE BLOGGERS LINK TO SITES SUCH AS AMAZON.COM, THEY CAN DRAW ON MANY DIFFERENT REVENUE SOURCES.

BLOGS, BY DESIGN, CAN DEMAND HIGH ADVERTISING RATES BECAUSE THEY USUALLY COME TO A VERY TARGETED MARKET.

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES AND WEB TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS BLOGS ENABLE BLOGGERS TO BECOME ENTREPRENEURS THAT FEED THEIR REVENUE STREAM.

THIS IS BECAUSE THE MORE DISTINCT THE DEMOGRAPHIC, THE HIGHER YOUR ADVERTISERS.

Many, if not all, webcomics, blogs, and indie bands cater to niche audiences. These audiences have many choices in today's digital landscape. People are looking for entertainment and are finding that there is something for everyone out there.
Niche Genres

The "Long-Tail" Effect, as coined by Chris Anderson of Wired Magazine, was a phenomenon he discovered when talking to a digital music executive about sales.

Anderson was amazed to find that in the new age of Internet sales and digital content, sales were not driven by the most popular titles, but by the purchases of niche products. All the way down the tail end.

* Susara, Kellett, Korte, & Stroem, 2009

Wired

ANATOMY OF THE LONG TAIL

END OF THE SELLER'S SPECTRUM. SIXTY PERCENT OF AMAZON.COM'S BOOK SALES ARE FOR OBSCURE, SMALL-TITLED TITLES THAT APPEAL TO SPECIALIZED INTERESTS AND NICHE FANS.
As the digital music executive put it, "in a world of almost zero packaging costs and instant access to almost all content in this format, digital music consumers expect a lot. It's not about making or losing money. It's about the experience." He went on to say, "we're at a point where music fans can have it all if they're willing to pay for it."

In fact, it's interesting that the audience for Webcomics are not necessarily the same as the audience for print comics are. Webcomics are a new medium, and they're WHOSE VISIONS ARE SOMETHING THAT WEB COMICS CAN DO.

They are stories of everyday life, fantasy, science fiction, etc., but are they even considered mainstream?"
Due to the low cost of distribution, creators feel free to develop characters and stories. And consumers are definitely more willing to try something new if it's free.

But another Batman spin-off has an audience, and will sell.

With print comics costing on average of these dollars, consumers are less likely to buy titles featuring characters created or titles they have never heard of.
GO THE FREEDOM OF LOW COST SELF-PUBLICATION AND THE ABILITY TO CREATE AND SHARE CONTENT.

EVERYONE LIKES COMICS, BUT HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO PAY $10 FOR A COMIC ABOUT A WEIRDO WITH SELF-ESTEEM PROBLEMS?

HEY THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA. HOW TO WRITE THAT DOWN?

PRINT COMICS WILLED TO THE MARKET. WHERE WEBCOMICS ARE DORMANT AND WORN.
IT'S THE POPULARIZATION OF CONTENT THAT MADE JOURNALIST BLOGGERS QUESTION TRADITIONAL PULT NEWSPAPER COVERAGE.

ONE OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF JOURNALIST BLOGGERS WITH TRADITIONAL NEWSPAPERS IS THEIR SIZE AND NEED OF FOREVER INCREASING AMOUNTS OF REVENUE.

AS STATED BY LOWERY, "THE NEED FOR LARGE AUDIENCES HAS TENDED AWAY FROM SELF-EXPRESSION AND WAS A VITAL PARTNERSHIP FOR LARGE MAJOR NEWSPAPERS. NOW, BLOGGERS WHO ARE USING THE NEWSPAPER AS A PLATFORM ARE BEING VOICED OUT OF PARISH COVERAGE AND STRONGLY EXPRESSING CONTENT." THIS IS NOT A NEW TRENDS AND THESE NEW TRENDS ARE VULNERABLE TO PUBLISHING FROM BEYOND JOURNALISM."*

THE MORE NICE SERIOUS WEIRDONS ARTISTS CAN PULL THE LARGEST THE AUDIENCE WITHOUT COMPROMISING THEIR ARTISTIC IDEALS.

TO Distribute these weirdos artists have to learn about marketing, promotion, and sales.

By distributing their work online and promoting these works through the weirdos community, artists are able to build an audience.

In doing this, they can remain true to themselves and instead of chasing any money more with others, they reap doomed of the rewards.
The people who see this work, click on a donation address link, or buy a print version of the webcomic, or buy a plush toy or t-shirt, all contribute to the creator's income.

This season that distribution and promotion are key to a webcomic artist's success in crowdfunding and building an audience for their creation.

And some of those fans will be inspired enough to go out and create their own for people to enjoy and share with friends.

But in the end, webcomics are there for people to enjoy and share with friends.
Appendix IV: Reflection Paper

Introduction

Comic books like many other forms of entertainment have made their way to the web and are being delivered to viewers not only on the printed page, but also via the Internet. Comic creators must go through many of the same steps to create a comic for web delivery as they do for a printed comic. The artist draws the comic, it is inked, the colorist adds color, and finally the words are added by the letterer. It is when the comic is distributed via the Internet that a substantial break occurs with print comics. How creators use the web to disseminate their creation is what my project examined.

My project looked at what happens when it is time to distribute a webcomic and how webcomic distribution can be compared to the music industry and journalism blogger. Both industries have undergone a change in how they interact and deliver product to consumers and readers. To do this I will examine three areas that make up webcomic distribution:

- Community
- Monetization
- Niche Genres
Literature Review

Webcomics are simply comics that are posted to websites for viewers to enjoy. They are a way for creators to publish comics inexpensively and quickly to a wide audience. A webcomic creator does not have to, “rely on a publisher, a syndicate or a distributor – they deal directly with their audience (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008, p.11).” For this reason creators can bypass the expensive cost of printing their comic. Another large benefit of creator as publisher is that artists, “are not limited by content, word choice or editorial filtering – they can write exactly what they want, for an audience as broad or as niche-oriented as they want (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008, p.11).”

This is also true of indie bands that circumvent major labels and use social media sites such as MySpace.com to reach their audience. A study by Juniper Research in 2006 reported that MySpace.com generates more community related activity than any other music site. (Shklovski, 2006) The technology behind the site, make it ideal for bands to create virtual fans that translate to a solid distribution base. Using digital means of distribution is not limited to indie bands. Many mainstream musicians have begun to adopt web distribution as a way to reach their fans. The lead singer of NIN (Nine Inch Nails), Trent Rezner has released several albums on the bands website in digital formats only. In March 2008, “Trent Rezner of Nine Inch Nails offered fans the opportunity to download some songs from his new album, Ghosts I-IV, for free. He also offered packages beginning at $5 and ending at $300 for an ultra-deluxe edition. That brought the band more than $1.6 million and crashed the band's Web site. The top-priced edition sold out within three days (Jones, 2008).”
Building a community is the stock and trade for journalist bloggers. A Pew Internet and American Life Project study indicated that “typical blog readership (persons likely to read a blog in a given day) increased by 33 percent in 2008 (Jones, & Himelboim, 2007). With online journalists attracting ever increasing readerships newspapers have begun to hire bloggers adding their blogs to the newspapers site (Glaser, 2008).

The business model for webcomics very much mirrors other web-based content business models, in that “the essential model is to offer free-to-the-consumer, ad-subsidized content, which then trades on audience loyalty by selling books, T-shirts, merchandise and original art (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008, p.121). ” Some of the most popular sites, such as the webcomic PVPonline.com, that centers around gamers, boast a fan base of around 100,000 unique visitors per day as of August 2005 (Wikipedia, 2010). Another popular webcomic site that caters to gamers is Penny-arcade.com. Due to the targeted nature of their demographic they are able to demand high advertising rates. Their reported CPM (Cost Per Thousand) of $5-$9 for two banners on their site and the 55 million page views they receive make them a multi-million dollar company (Allen, 2007). And these profits are funneled not to middlemen, but to the artists themselves. Yes, a webcomic artist has to wear many hats: publisher, cartoonist, marketer, and promoter, but they also reap all the rewards of their labors.

With the development of nearly free distribution costs, webcomic artists, musician and journalism bloggers have been able to disseminate their work not just to the masses, but to a targeted section, building a community around their comic, song, or blog. Small titles sell at the far (or “long tail”) end of the sales spectrum. Sixty percent of
Amazon.com’s book sales are for obscure, small-selling titles that appeal to specialized subgroups and niche fandom (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008, p.121). The “long-tail” effect, as coined by Chris Anderson of Wired magazine, was a phenomenon he discovered when talking to a digital music executive about sales. In the interview the music executive stated that in an era of virtually zero publishing costs consumers will try almost anything once as long as it is not too expensive (Anderson, 2006).

Webcomics artists build communities around their creation. Many webcomics revolve around targeted audiences such as gamers, movies, or geek culture. Whether it is a broad-based or niche community, the larger the audience the more revenue a webcomic site can earn for its creator.

Methods

My project consisted of exploring webcomic distribution and how it related to the music industry and journalism bloggers, in comic book form. My project was created in the same vein as Understanding Comics, Reinventing Comics, and Making Comics, by the cartoonist and author, Scott McCloud. In his books he used comics as the medium to tell his stories and explain his theories. I utilized the artistic style known as Fumetti for the project. This is where photographic images are used in lieu of illustrations to tell the story. The process itself was very much like creating a standard comic, but using images, instead of illustrations, did introduce problems that needed to be addressed. The first step in creating the webcomic for this project consisted of organizing my sources. Some of these sources came from books and publications that I drew upon for my project proposal. But to get into more detail on some of the subjects, such as how musicians use
the internet to distribute music, I needed to secure additional resources. Many of these were web-based articles due to the timely nature of the medium.

After I completed a rough outline that mapped out where my sources would be used and how I would organize my topics, I began writing the script. The script contained all the research conducted for the project. The script also contained notes for me as to what images I would be using for individual panels. For example, on one page I am talking about the singer Trent Rezner of Nine Inch Nails. Before the text that was to appear in word bubble I made the note, “Image of Rezner at microphone singing.” This way, doing the page layout portion I would know what images I needed and where they were to go. On completion of the script I was able to begin shooting the images for the comics. After choosing a background and what I was to wear, I set my camera on a tripod, connected it to my iMac and used the remote shooting software that was supplied with the camera.

Sitting in front of the camera I positioned myself so that on the monitor I could see the script, so I would know what type of expression to have. Seeing the script during shooting ensured I was not taking more images than necessary. That being said, I did take approximately 200 pictures for the project to be sure I had enough images to work with incase there were changes in the script. The images were then processed using Adobe Photoshop where they were color corrected and adjusted so they would have a consistent look. I took care in deciding the colors I would use the images, from the background to what I was wearing. I decided on a basic blue background, it was not an essential part of the project so if there were individuals with color issues they would not be
inconvenienced by the color choice. I chose to wear a simple grey dress shirt that would also not interfere or distract the viewer while they read the piece.

The pages themselves were then laid out in Adobe Illustrator where the word balloons and copy were then added. Once the copy was added the files were spell checked and exported as JPEG’s. After being exported they were renamed so they were in sequential order for uploading to my website.

The website itself is a Wordpress blog that allows the user to organize posts and easily update the sites content. Wordpress allows you to use themes to change the look of your site easily. After doing some research I found the Wordpress theme, Comicpress, which was created specifically to display and organize Webcomics. After registering the domain wecomicdistribution.com I uploaded Wordpress with the Comicpress theme and configured the site to display my project. When the site was fully operational the webcomic project was uploaded along with the supporting documents which include the:

- Webcomic distribution project script
- Webcomic distribution project proposal
- Webcomic distribution reflection paper
- Digital editions of the project in CBR (comic book reader) and the digital book format, ePUB.

Lastly I added several social networking plug-ins to my site that would allow me to connect with many online communities. They include:

- Facebook – Allowing posts from webcomicdistribution.com to show on my Facebook page so that my “friends” could read updates on my project’s status.
• Twitter – Each post and blog entry can be Tweeted about and viewed by people who follow my newly created webcomicdistrib account.

• Amazon.com – This plug-in allows me to incorporate an affiliate program that will list the sources I used that are on sale at Amazon.com. When the link is clicked I earn money, if a title is purchased I earn additional revenue.

Reflections

Webcomic artists need to wear many hats when creating a webcomics. In examining webcomic distribution I became aware of how much a webcomic creator is tied to his audience. The community that the artist builds around his webcomics drives every aspect of his business. If an artist plans on making a living from their creation they need high page views from a large fan base to drive their advertising, and a dedicated base to buy merchandise when it is introduced. In a way they are building more than just “customers”, a webcomic artist wants fans that love their creation as much as they do. In building an enthusiastic fan base, “you want to remove every barrier to fandom and create evangelists for your webcomic…you don’t just want fans, you want folks who will actively go out and spread word of your site to all corners of the web (Guigar, Kellet, Kurtz, & Straub, 2008, p.105).” It was also interesting to see the relationship between webcomic distribution and other industries that are beginning to distribute content online. Musicians and bloggers are using the web in very similar ways to disseminate their work and they also base much of there revenue potential on building communities and turning their fans into evangelists, spreading their message throughout the Internet.
I have experience in publishing webcomics on my site Pixelstrips.com, working on webcomics as a colorist, and creating several webcomics myself. But this project offered many challenges that are usually not associated with the webcomics I have worked on. My project used photographs instead of illustrations, this was very different process for me.

Instead of adding notes for the artist for what I needed drawn in a specific panel, I was leaving notes for myself, on what type of expression or mannerism was most appropriate. I then also needed to develop ideas for panels where I would not be the “narrator” of the story. These would be images created in Adobe Photoshop. It was interesting to be the sole creator of the webcomic, I was the writer, artist, letterer and did all the page layout for the project.

The use of a webcomic to present scholarly work posed a number of challenges that would need to be addressed if someone continued to research this topic. A webcomic is by its design a linear story. This works well when reading it from beginning to end, but what if you wanted to pinpoint a specific topic, reference, or citation within the work. In a printed copy you could add a table of contents, art citation and index so individuals could find specific items. This is more difficult to do on a website, where most webcomics are displayed. For example, if you were looking for a specific citation in my project you would have to leave the comic and go to the “Art Reference Page”, find the specific citation and its corresponding page, then return to the comic and use the dropdown menu to go to the correct page. This is not the most elegant of solutions, but it enables the user to find information. If, however, the user was looking for a specific topic they could only go to pages in a section and go page-by-page until they found what they
were looking for. So for example if you wanted to find out what CD Trent Rezner of NIN
distributed online for free you would have to take an educated guess and say that the
answer could possibly be in the “Monetization Section.” But that is not an efficient way
to locate information. The current dropdowns allow for some control over how you read
the piece and find information, but to use of other navigational aids may be beneficial to
the user.

One possible solution to solve these navigation problems could be tagging. Each
panel on every page could be tagged with important keywords or information. These tags
could then be displayed in dropdown form at the top of the page along with any other
form of navigation present. The use of tags on important topics would allow user to drill
down to every major point in the project as quickly as an index does when using a
standard reference book.

Another challenge was using myself as the model. I chose to use myself as the
model for purely practical reasons. I knew I would need to take a minimum 100
photographs, and maybe do re-shoots, if I made changes in the script. If I were to use
someone else and I needed them, they might not be available over the three months it
took to complete the project. For this reason I believed it would be easier for me to be the
narrator. The problem with using myself as the model was that I could not see what
expression I was making when I was taking the pictures using the remote software. This
cost me time due to the fact I needed to take multiple images to be sure I had the proper
expression for a specific panel.
My project has contributed in what we know about webcomics by asking question such as:

- How does audience participation affect revenue?
- What is the relationship between sales and the low cost of digital distribution of webcomics?
- How is webcomic distribution compare to the digital distribution of music and blogging.

Through my research I have shown that community building is key to monetizing a webcomic and that many webcomics cater to niche markets. Due to the almost zero cost of distribution webcomics creator’s work on a different model, they give away their product, this allows viewers to try many webcomics. Webcomics distribution is also closely related to how other industries, such as musicians and bloggers, distribute their creations via the web.

**Conclusion**

Webcomics are no longer relegated to the printed page. They are being created on paper, then scanned and uploaded to websites, or created entirely in the computer. Once their creation is online, webcomic creators become publisher, marketer, and accountant. Although their workload has increase, the benefit of controlling all aspects of their business, is that they receive all the revenue.

Through community building webcomic creators are able to create more than just fans, but “evangelists” that spread the word about their site. The more fans a site attracts,
the more page views it receives. A site's page views are used to set its advertising rate.

The more advertisers they can attract, the more money they can earn.

The digital distribution of webcomics can be compared to other industries that are beginning to distribute their work online. Both the music industry and journalism bloggers also use the near zero cost of digital distribution to build communities throughout niche markets to monetize their site and drive both viewers and revenue to their sites.
Reference


http://www.PVPonline.com

http://www.penny-arcade.com/