Comics as Data North America: Recovering Michigan Comic Narratives

Lesson Plan for ENG 319 and

Graphic Possibilities/Data Visualization Summer Institute 2020

Designed by Dr. Julian Chambliss and Justin Wigard

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

ENG 319: Readings in Michigan Literature is an annual upper level English course that features extensive readings of texts by Michigan writers across genres, historical periods, media, and/or different regions of the state.This is an Introductory module intended for use in courses like ENG 319 to get students to think through the role of Michigan creators in comics using the Comics as Data North America (CADNA) dataset.

In this lesson, students will be introduced to the CADNA project, and more specifically, work with the Michigan creators subset of data in order to understand Michiganians' role in shaping the comics industry.

This lesson will prepare students for more intensive learning by offering a cursory foundation of the intersections of Michigan history and culture, regional comics production, and space as a critical framework, priming student learning for later intensive theoretical and critical readings.

OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate an understanding of narratives in comics and the comics industry
2. Analyze the Michigan subset of Comics as Data using Flourish, a web-based visualization tool.
3. Evaluate the technological and visual affordances of Flourish
4. Investigate the possible narratives of the Michigan Comics as Data subset through a Flourish visualization.
5. Investigate the narrative of one Michigan creator from the Comics as Data subset.

MATERIALS/PROGRAMS NEEDED

1. Access to computer/internet
2. Flourish Account
3. Access to Comics as Data subset CSV file

ACTIVITY

Describe the activity that will reinforce the lesson

For this exercise students will be divided into working groups. Each group will be given access to the Michigan Creators subset from Comics as Data North America dataset. Students will be given a prompt directing them to use the Hierarchy templates in Flourish. The five templates allow for data in subset to be group and organized easily. Each group will be asked to consider two different templates and think about what the visualization suggests about themes in comics linked to Michigan creators, particularly in regards to what spaces are expected and which are surprising. Upon completion of this learning activity, students will submit an individual reflection based on their group's Flourish visualization, and begin working on an individual StoryMap related to one Michigan comics creator from the data subset

VERIFICATION/ASSESSMENT

Steps to check for student understanding

1. Each working group will submit two visualizations. Each visualization should be in a common image format (JPG, PNG), and should implement one Hierarchy template from Flourish. (Group Formative Assessment)
2. Individual reflection on possible narratives around the visualization. The goal of the narrative is to prompt student learners to consider the scope and complexity of comics narratives beyond their assumptions. Narrative should be between 300 and 500 words and incorporate some consideration of the comics listed in the dataset. (Individual Formative Assessment)
3. Begin developing an individual StoryMap centered around the narrative of one Michigan comics creator from the Comics as Data subset to be collected later in the semester. (Individual Summative Assessment)

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

External technologies to be utilized

1. Flourish [https://flourish.studio], a visualization program that affords quick, simple, and effective visualizations
2. Storymap JS [https://storymap.knightlab.com], a free tool to help you tell stories on the web that highlight the locations of a series of events.

PORTABLE PEDAGOGY PLAN

This lesson plan is intended for a virtual classroom in an online, synchronous environment. However, multiple adaptations can be made to ensure this activity can be accommodated in a number of different ways and environments.

1. Face-to-Face:
    a. In a face-to-face course, students may be able to make content for and physically attend the Science on a Sphere exhibit in the MSU Museum.
2. No access to Flourish
    a. In the event that Flourish is unable to be effectively utilized or accessed, alternative programs like *plot.ly* or *Tableau* may be implemented.
3. No access to StoryMap
    a. In the unlikely event that StoryMap is unable to be effectively utilized or accessed, alternative programs like PowerPoint or Prezi may be implemented.