

Annual Report of the Graphic Narrative and Comics Studies Standing Research Committee of the ICLA - 2023-2024

Chairs: Tracy Lassiter (University of New Mexico at Gallup), Angelo Piepoli (Independent scholar), Stefan Buchenberger (Kanagawa University)

Secretary: Umberto Rossi (Sapienza University of Rome)

Summary: Our Standing Research Committee was officially formed in 2014 (first as a Research Group, then as a Committee) and achieved the status of Standing Committee in 2022. It has been a globally active and expanding committee since its early formation in 2004; as an RC and then an SRC, we regularly meet and publish in the growing area of graphic narrative research. Since our SRC status and with the addition of new roles to our leadership like web designer and social media communicator, we continue to revisit and update our administrative roles, responsibilities, and membership terms.

Our members actively engage in various areas of graphic narrative research: semiotics, gender studies, war literature studies, narratology, science-fiction studies, linguistics, and comparative studies. In fact, two members of this SRC have submitted manuscripts to the forthcoming issue of *Recherche Littéraire/Literary Research*. Members speak in public forums and also routinely use graphic narratives in their teaching, bringing this research to new generations of scholars and thinkers. In collaboration with Università Ca' Foscari in Venice, we will be hosting a conference entitled "Framing the Unreal: Exploring Graphic/Visual Science Fiction and Fantasy." During this conference, we will host a celebration to recognize the formation of this group twenty years ago at the ICLA Congress held in Hong Kong. The small group that formed then has grown significantly in the intervening years.

The executive group holds regular business meetings via Zoom and maintains an active Facebook Group, *Comics Studies & Graphic Narrative* at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/graphicnarrativeresearch>. We also launched an official website with profiles of our many members, our recent and forthcoming activities, a blog, and a resource repository. It is still in something of a nascent state, but we update it regularly. It is located at: <https://www.comics-studies.com/>.

Given our long history, consistent academic accomplishment, and international growth, we ask the EC for financial assistance to support us in two endeavors: awards for promising graduate students, and support for the Comics Studies website. Details of the request follow this report of our many activities; please note this report lists our accomplishments for one year alone. Previous reports detail our earlier academic work which is similar to this one in nature, number, and breadth:

Key Activities July 2023-June 2024:

Books and Edited Collections published by our members:

- Halsall, Alison, *Growing Up Graphic: The Comics of Children in Crisis*, The Ohio State University Press, 2023.

- Halsall, Alison, co-ed., *The LGBTQ+ Comics Studies Reader: Critical Interventions, Future Directions*, 2022, which received an Eisner Award for Best Scholarly Publication.
- Ahmed, Maaheen, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Comics*. Cambridge University Press, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009255653>.
- Arioli, Mattia, *Buone, sporche e dimenticate. Guerre a stelle e strisce*, Sarzana-Lugano, Agorà & Co, 2024, pp. 320.
- A volume of the World Science Fiction Studies series (Peter Lang) will collect the best presentations from the oncoming *Framing the Unreal* conference and the panels sponsored by our SRC at the 2023 and 2024 SFRA conferences in Dresden, Germany and Tartu, Estonia.
- The Indian Peter Lang representative expressed interest in a volume of the CLAI panel in Delhi (see below).

Conferences, Seminars, and Panels Organized:

- “Disrupting the Frame(s): Ruptures in Science-Fiction/Fantasy Comics” panel at the *Disruptive Imaginations* SFRA/GfF joint conference, August 15-19, 2023, Dresden, Germany - Chairs: Lisa DeTora, Umberto Rossi
- Marek Paryż, "The Weird Western in Poland," *Warsaw Science Festival*, Warsaw, 21 September 2023.
- “Ekphrasis and ‘the Speaking Image’: Interrogating Forms of Sequential Art” - A Two-Day International Conference at RV University, Bengaluru, November 8-9, 2023 - with a keynote address by Stefan Buchenberger.
- *The Queer Comics Symposium*, April 2023, York University, co-organized by Alison Halsall.
- 2024 SFRA Conference in Tartu, Estonia, May 7-11, panel “OUT OF FRAME: THE GLOBAL SOUTH IN SF COMICS” – Chairs: Marco Petrelli and Umberto Rossi
- Panel on Comparative Comics Studies and World Literature at the CLAI XVII Biennial International Conference at the University of Delhi in Delhi, India, September 2024 - chair: Buchenberger & Chatterjee
- *Framing the Unreal* international conference at Ca’ Foscari University in Venice, Italy, November 11-15, 2024, with more than 120 anticipated presenters from all over the world – Organizers: Angelo Piepoli, Umberto Rossi, Davide Carnevale

Invited Speaking Engagements, Podcasts, and Webinars

- Alison Halsall, 1-hour podcast on the New Books Network, 10 October 2023. <https://newbooksnetwork.com/growing-up-graphic>
- Alison Halsall, 1-hour podcast on Podcast or Perish, 22 January 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rflb39sezFU>
- Alison Halsall, Guest Lecture for York University's *Scholars' Hub @ Home Lecture Series* about Representation in Queer Comics and Graphic Novels, 12 June 2024.

Highlights

Due to the large volume of individual publications and presentations, we have not listed individual conference presentations, book chapters, peer-reviewed articles and other publications (e.g., blog posts); instead we highlight a few particularly relevant contributions:

- Ahmed, Maaheen. 2023. "Popular Culture." In *The Edinburgh Companion to First World War Periodicals*, edited by Marysa Demoor, Cedric Van Dijck, and Birgit Van Puymbroeck, 95-112. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ahmed, Maaheen. 2023. "Reading Childly : Riki Fermier and Cascao." In Ilan Manouach in Review : *Critical Approaches to His Conceptual Comics*, edited by Pedro Moura, 97-111. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003374961-9>.
- Ahmed, Maaheen. 2023. "Tracing the Invisible : Lynda Barry's Comics." *MEDIASCAPES JOURNAL* 22 (2): 35-51.
- Arioli, Mattia, "Indigenous comics against settler time", «FROM THE EUROPEAN SOUTH», 2024, 14, pp. 12 - 27
- Arioli, Mattia, "War, Gender, and Diaspora in Clément Baloup's Memoires de Viet Kieu", «INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF COMIC ART», 2023, 25, pp. 300 - 318.
- De Tora, Lisa. "The Mythology You Built: After Forever's Narrative of Visual Desire." *Envisioning Embodiment in the Health Humanities: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Literature, Culture, and Media*. Switzerland: Springer. 2024. 165-180.
- Rossi, Umberto. "Moi, René Tardi, Prisonnier de guerre au Stalag IIB: Postmemory and Anachronistic Narration in Tardi's Graphic Post-Memoir". Cristina Pividori-Gurgo and David Owen (eds.), (Re)writing War in Contemporary Literature and Culture: Beyond Post-Memory. Oxon: Routledge, 2025. 38-47

Financial Request:

As you can see, our committee is consistently contributing to the discipline through our publications, speaking engagements, teaching, and conferencing. Now that we are a Standing Research Committee and our membership has grown globally, we use our Comics Studies website as a hub that allows us to stay connected and informed of upcoming conferences and related CFPs. Moreover, the site allows our members to have a professional profile attesting to their graphic narrative academic work. Our membership grows after each conference or CFP; we expect it to grow further following the CLAI EC in Delhi and the "Framing the Unreal" conference in Venice this November.

Our first financial request is for the latter: **two stipends of €300 each for graduate student awards**. In order to support young scholars, and as part of our 20th anniversary celebration, we would like to offer two awards for the best conference presentations given during our "Framing the Unreal" conference in November. We plan to prepare certificates we can award with the stipends so the graduate students have evidence of their accomplishment.

Our second financial request seeks support for our website and web designer. To date, the web hosting and domain registration fees have been paid for by Professor Stefan Buchenberger's research budget from the Department of Cross-Cultural Studies, Kanagawa University. However, this support cannot go on indefinitely since that is a specific university's budget supporting an academic community's project. Since many of the SRC's members profiled on the site are also ICLA members, **we would like to ask the ICLA to support the page hosting in the amount of €204.24 per year.**

Commented [LB1]: €300 x 2 = €600, = \$664

Commented [LB2]: This seems quite expensive...

Not sure about this being a legitimate expenditure under RDC rules?
AND: It would come to €612.72 (c \$677) every 3 years, in itself within the \$1000 within a 3-year term, though leaving little for other expenses.
HOWEVER, as the Cttee is already asking for \$664 for the awards, this is getting close and to overtake the \$1,000 limit within a year or 2 max.

At the same time, our SRC leadership also plans to ask our members to support the web site and designer. We are organizing a membership vote on our bylaws, which includes a fee equivalent to \$10/€10/¥1500. We hope, with support for the site from both the ICLA and our membership, that we can have a young scholar with web design experience help to maintain the page. The 32 members who submitted profile information for the page represent only a portion of our larger comics studies community .

Submitted: 12 August 2024

Commented [LB3]: I'm a bit concerned about this - the idea that a Cttee of the ICLA becomes a kind of separate groups to which people pay membership. donations can be invited (maybe as supplement to the registration fee of events?) perhaps, but asking members to pay when the membership of the ICLA already confers the right to take part in the activities of the ICLA seems illegitimate to me