

HOSTING COMICS & MANGA BOOK CLUBS

Comics and manga's ongoing popularity with readers of all ages is no longer a surprise to anyone paying attention, but serving those readers well requires more than simply having a well-stocked collection. From book clubs and summer reading programs, to community reads and curriculum alignment — there are myriad ways to integrate comics and manga into your library's programming.

The traditional book club has been an essential fixture of library programming in communities of all sizes, while opportunities for social interaction around shared interests are becoming more fragmented — especially online.

A good book club can introduce readers to new topics, ideas, and points of view they may have never considered before, while providing a welcoming space to connect with other readers and share insights and recommendations.



- 1 PREPARE:** What you'll need to do before scheduling your first book club event.
- 2 PROMOTE:** How to get the word out about your book club event.
- 3 PARTICIPATE:** How to ensure your book club members have a great experience.

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Despite having hosted book clubs previously, it wasn't until I initiated a comics-specific book club that I realized the power these groups have to form deep, lasting bonds. Suddenly, we had more non-traditional library users (adults in their thirties who hadn't previously engaged) enthusiastic to visit our library and discover more comics.”

—MONI BARRETTE, MLIS, LIBRARYPASS



Even if you're already comfortable with hosting book clubs, you'll find our Reader's Guides helpful for selecting titles that might be of interest to you and your community.

1. PREPARE

Comics and manga cover every genre you can think of — for readers of all ages and interests. From genre fiction to poignant memoirs and everything in between, the medium has something for readers of all levels, languages, and cultural backgrounds. Some are better-suited for book clubs than others, so before you start selecting titles and dates, you first need to figure out what you want your book club to accomplish.

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Comic book clubs are a great way to build a sense of community, get into new genres and creators, explore indie or lesser-known comics, and practice critical thinking when analyzing what we read. Plus, it opens up conversations about different perspectives that might not have been considered before.”

—DAN WOOD, ESCONDIDO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Why host a Book Club?

Whether it's introducing readers to new books and/or creators, or revisiting classics; nurturing conversations related to timely topics; running a community read; or simply providing a safe space to enjoy comics of all kinds — it's important to establish clear goals for your book club so potential members know what to expect. Be sure to choose a name that fits the tone you're aiming for, too.

Who is your Book Club for?

Comics and manga are for everyone, but a single book club can't serve every potential reader. A book club for younger readers is unlikely to satisfy Teens or Adults' interests, while genre-specific book clubs can potentially appeal to readers of overlapping ages. Alternatively, community reads are typically intended to engage readers of all ages.

Knowing who you're trying to serve will not only affect which titles you select and how you approach the discussions, it will also ensure you're meeting your readers' expectations.

What will your Book Club read and discuss?

The titles you select will depend on who your book club is intended to serve, and can vary greatly by genre, art style, and complexity. Many standalone comics are less than 200 pages long, while some series have dozens of volumes, each one more than 200 pages. Some stories are pretty straightforward and don't lend themselves to deep conversation, while others feature detailed artwork that could be the primary focus of discussion without getting into the plot or characters at all.

Picking your first few titles is just the starting point, though. You'll want to build deeper engagement at each book club meeting by asking for recommendations for future selections, and offer a few options members can vote on in advance. Making the selection process as collaborative as the discussions themselves is an excellent way to discover creators and titles that your members are already interested in, and can drive readers' advisory, too.

How will your Book Club provide access to selected titles?

Selecting titles is the easy part, but ensuring all of your readers can access each title simultaneously might be tougher. If you don't have enough physical copies in your collection to support a book club, and don't have a local comics shop who can help with discounted purchases, a digital solution might work better.

With **Comics Plus**, you can provide unlimited, simultaneous digital access to all of your members; no holds, no wait lists, no borrowing limits.

Where will your Book Club meet?

There are pros and cons to hosting physical and virtual book clubs, and one approach may serve some readers better than others. If you have the resources, a hybrid approach can maximize engagement by making it accessible to more of your community.

Important factors for hosting in-person book clubs include creating a safe and welcoming space for book club discussions. This isn't just limited to making sure chairs are comfortable, space is ample, and everyone can be seen and heard without disrupting other library operations. It also means reviewing and practicing your moderating skills to ensure effective guidance of discussions and interactions. Lay basic ground rules out at the beginning, such as potential time limits on responses and consequences for abuse, per your library policies. Make sure you



are comfortable enforcing these rules, and you will quickly build trust with your club members and each other.

A bonus consideration for in-person book clubs is refreshments: Depending on your library's food policy, it can be fun and comforting to allow book club members to bring snacks to share or for the library to provide light refreshments if your budget allows it.

When hosting a virtual book club, your ability to successfully moderate discussions is perhaps even more important than in-person book clubs. Ground rules should be communicated and followed through, and you will also need to be current on your virtual platform's features in case the need to mute or remove members arises.

"An absolute game changer."

— SLJ

READ ALL
THE COMICS!

COMICSPLUS

2. PROMOTE

Online Channels

Leverage your website, social media accounts, and email newsletters to regularly promote your book club and the titles you've selected. Share book covers and links to relevant reviews and interviews to drive awareness and engagement.

Host previews and follow-up discussions on platforms like Discord, Twitch, or YouTube.

Encourage your members to share information about the book club and selected titles in their online communities, expanding your reach and impact.

Physical Channels

Take advantage of in-person opportunities to promote your book club from inside the library, including displays, shelftalkers, posters, flyers, and digital signage.

Share your excitement about the club with attendees of other events at your library, as well as local schools, universities, and relevant organizations.



If you have a local comics shop or independent bookseller, connect with them to help promote your book club to their customers, too.

Maximizing your reach within your local community is critical to building awareness and engagement for any library programming. Even if every reader isn't a potential book club member, knowing their library has an interest in comics may lead to them being more active patrons.



- ✓ Advertise events on the main page of the library's website, an events calendar, and through the online sign-up program.
- ✓ Announce all events on the library's social media and tag the author's and publisher's accounts to extend your reach.
- ✓ Local bookseller partners can help promote library-affiliated author events on their own websites or in their email and social media communications.
- ✓ Take advantage of free online event listings; invite the local book critic or event editor to all events.

—Directory of Best Practices for Public Library Events, The Panorama Project

3. PARTICIPATE

Once you've determined your book club's goals, identified your readers, selected a few good titles, and attracted your first group of members, the next step is ensuring they have a great experience.

Good moderation is an absolute must for a successful book club experience! A good moderator has read the book, established a clear agenda for the meeting in advance, and is prepared to **guide** the discussion rather than **lead** it.

Clear expectations should be established from the beginning, including a simple code of conduct to ensure your club is welcoming and accessible to everyone interested in participating. Periodically remind everyone to be respectful of each other as needed, while being prepared to enforce your agreed-upon code of conduct if it's been violated.

Everyone should be given a chance to share their insights on the book or a specific question before moving to open discussions. Even if your book club is meant to inspire spirited debate, mutual respect for reasonable opinions should still be expected and enforced.

When using an online forum for hosting discussions, be sure to have your club's rules and code of conduct clearly defined and posted.



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For example, if someone dominates the discussion, I can gently remind them that we have agreed to ‘share AND listen.’ And if things devolve further, I can always invoke the norm they have empowered me with: *‘Be willing and prepared to take control of the group, firmly but respectfully.’*”

—BECKY SPATFORD, RA FOR ALL



The best way to quell your nerves before your star turn is to thoroughly familiarize yourself with the material. Read the book and a few reviews as soon as you can. Give yourself as much time as possible to think about questions and themes, as well as which aspects of the book are most likely to interest your members. —I LOVE LIBRARIES, ALA

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When selecting a title for your book club, you'll want to prepare 3-5 discussion questions that are specifically about that title. The list below is just a cheat sheet that can be used as a starting point to craft your own questions, based on your own reading of the titles you've selected.

1. What did you enjoy about this book?
2. What have you read that is similar to this book?
3. What are some of the major themes of this book?
4. What do you think the author was trying to accomplish with this novel?
5. Who was your favorite character? What did you appreciate about him/her?
6. At the end of the book, do you feel hope for the characters?
7. Have you ever experienced anything similar to the action of this novel?
8. What are your concerns about this book?
9. How did you feel about the main character?
10. What are the most important relationships in the book?
11. What makes a minor character memorable?
12. Are any of the events in the book relevant to your own life?
13. Did you find any flaws in the book?
14. How do the images and text work together to communicate the story?
15. Could this story be as meaningful if it was not written in graphic novel format?
16. Could this ever be filmed as a movie? If so, how do you envision that?
17. Do the characters change over the course of the story? If so, in what way?
18. How would this story change if you covered the pictures and only read the text?
19. How do you think the pictures helped you visualize the characters?
20. Describe how the text and pictures work together to create a meaningful part of the story?

NOTE: Depending on the title, its publisher may have already created a guide specifically for book clubs, which you can usually find on their website. This resource includes custom Reader's Guides for a variety of comics and manga available on **Comics Plus**, and can be used by anyone with access to the titles themselves — digital or physical.

READ ALL
THE COMICS!

“A comics bonanza.”

—LIBRARY JOURNAL



COMICS
PLUS®

“Being able to offer a service in which a small reading group, an entire class, or an entire grade level can read the same book at the same time with no waiting period is an absolute game changer.”

—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

With Comics Plus®, your readers can have **unlimited, simultaneous access** to thousands of digital comics, manga, and picture books from dozens of library-friendly publishers.

Explore a diverse selection of new and backlist titles from Andrews McMeel, Dark Horse, Europe Comics, Fantagraphics, Humanoids, Image Comics, Kodansha, Mad Cave, Oni Press, Papercutz, Tokyopop, UDON Entertainment, Yen Press, and many more.

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#ReadAllTheComics



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