

FINDING SCHOLARLY SOURCES ABOUT COMICS

Finding scholarly sources about a popular medium like comics isn't always easy. You'll need some persistence and creative thinking, and I'll show you some strategies.

The first is to go straight to the Library and look at the shelves in person. Lots of scholarship about comics is located in books, and almost all the books on comics are located in one place. At the Waterloo campus library, you'll find the comics section on the 6th floor, starting with PN6710. You can browse the books to see which might be useful for you.

You can also search Omni, the Library catalogue. I'm searching for sources on how cancer is represented in *Stitches*, so I'll type in *Stitches* and cancer. Unfortunately, I don't get any relevant results.

This means I need to think about different ways to search. First I'll drop the idea of cancer, and just search for *Stitches* to see what's written about it.

Often comics-related sources will be published as chapters in books, so you'll want to look for those. To do that, look under Resource Type in the left column and click on Books & ebooks. If you don't see this, click on Show More first. Sometimes it's not obvious from the title why a book came up in your results. Click on the record. Then scroll down to see the book chapters, which will give you a better sense of what's in it. In my case there still doesn't seem to be anything useful.

Next I'll look to see if there are any scholarly articles. Click the x next to Books & ebooks at the top of the left column, then click on Articles under Resource Type. Next click on Peer-reviewed to limit to scholarly articles. Here I found a couple of scholarly articles on *Stitches*. To find out more about an article, click on the record, then scroll to see a summary. You'll also find links to the article here.

Unfortunately, it doesn't look like any of these articles are really helpful for my topic.

So now what do I do? I might be able to find some non-scholarly articles on my topic, but that won't work because I need scholarly articles. So I'll need to broaden my thinking about my topic. For example, I might be able to find scholarly information about cancer in other comics, or even in other media like film or tv. Or, I could think about my topic from a different angle. *Stitches* is an autobiography, which calls itself a graphic memoir, about childhood trauma. So I could also find some scholarly sources about comics or other autobiographies that deal with childhood trauma. In either case, the sources won't be specifically on my topic, but I can take what's been written about other comics or memoirs and apply or contrast it to what I found in *Stitches*.

I'll do another couple of searches to see what I get. In the first, I'll search for comics and cancer. This is much better—I get quite a few useful looking results.

I could also search for comics and trauma and childhood. I also find some useful sources with this search.

You can request a book that isn't at your library for delivery. Click on the record. Then look in the Get It area and click on the option there to get the request form. You'll need to sign in to see this, using the same login as for My LearningSpace.

If you're still not finding what you need, you have two options. The first is to try to search using different search words. People can refer to things using different words, so try to think of those and use them to modify your search. Comics could also be called graphic novels, for example, or in the case of *Stitches* it could be called a graphic memoir or a memoir or an autobiography. Try some different words and different combinations of words in your searches to get different results.

Your other option is to try searching with a different search tool. Your best option is a database called Cultural Studies @ Proquest. You can find it by clicking on the Research menu on the Library page, then choosing Subject Guides. Pick Cultural Studies from the list of subjects. You'll see Cultural Studies @ Proquest at the top of the list. I did a search for comics or graphic novels and cancer, and checked the box next to Peer-reviewed to make sure my results were scholarly. I get a few useful results that I didn't see in Omni, since the contents of the databases are different. You can see the articles by clicking on the Full-text or Get It @ Laurier links.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions, ask me! My name is Joanne, and I'm the librarian for Cultural Studies. You can contact me at joud@wlu.ca