

Comic-Con® presents in association with San Diego Public Library



COMIC-CON CONFERENCE FOR EDUCATORS AND LIBRARIANS



WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

3:30–5:30 | Teaching and Learning with Comics

Looking to bring comics into your classroom? **Peter Carlson** (Green Dot Public Schools), **Susan Kirtley** (Portland State University), and **Antero Garcia** (Stanford University) offer an interactive workshop where educators can explore how to teach *about*, *with*, and *through* comics. Through hands-on activities, you'll learn how to engage all students as superhero readers and writers while designing powerful lessons and thematic units rooted in the comic arts.

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THURSDAY, JULY 24 | LIBRARY PANELS

10:00–11:00 | Comics, Spanish, Library Magic!—Robert Lanuza and Claudia Apodaca of the San Diego Public Library unite for a fun session on how graphic novels can support Spanish language learning at any age. Robert, host of the city's only Spanish Graphic Novel Book Club for kids, will share how comics boost comprehension and keep learners engaged. Claudia will highlight the connection between early literacy and bilingual learning and how it all starts with a great story and a little laughter. Moderated by **Rebecca Wright** (St. Paul's Hollywood Library in S.C.).

11:00–12:00 **We've Got Pixie Dust (and We Know How to Use It)**—Explore how libraries can capture the spirit of Disney magic through immersive programming, creative design, and guest-centered service to inspire joy and wonder in their communities. **Jeffrey Davis** (Linda Vista Library branch manager), **Amanda Lorge** (art, music, and recreation librarian and former Jungle Cruise skipper), **Melissa Barbour** (Scripps Miramar Ranch Library youth services librarian), and **Jenny Parsons** (Central Children's Library manager) from the San Diego Public Library will share practical ways to transform spaces, engage patrons, and bring storytelling to life using pop culture and Imagineering-inspired techniques. Moderated by **Kit Jackson** (I CAN! Center library assistant).

12:00–1:00 **Creating Social and Environmental Justice Comics**—Author and teacher **Cindy Jensen-Elliott** (*The Doomsday Detectives*) and Madison High School Students (San Diego Unified School District) will share their process of creating nonfiction comics to tell local social and environmental justice stories and will lead participants in hands-on activities to plan their own projects with grades 4–12.

1:00–2:00 **Comic-Con Museum: Co-Designing a Popular Arts Learning Center with Our Community**—Learn how the Comic-Con Museum Education Center, led by Dr. **Emily Schindler**, uses co-design to engage community stakeholders to design learning experiences for fans old and new. This panel, moderated by **Jewyl Alderson** (San Diego County Office of Education), showcases a recent co-design project (funded by SDG&E) focused on developing makerspace fan art projects to accompany *Doctor Who: Worlds of Wonder*, a current museum exhibit. Co-designers **Danny Beckwith** (Comic-Con Museum), **Jennem Hobson** (Comic-Con Museum), **Lisa Will** (San Diego City College), **Tom** and **Caspian Rademacher** (Father/Child Whovian education team), and other project collaborators offer practical advice on using the popular arts as springboards for community-engaged learning design.

2:00–3:00 **Comics for Education**—**Dimithri Perera** (host of The Keeg podcasts) discusses the educational importance of comic books in schools, libraries, and the home with three comics-loving educators: **Sara Zitney** (cosplayer/educator), **Ambrosha Koepp** (content creator/educator), and **Drew Maxey** (comic writer/educator).

3:00–4:00 **Banned in the U.S.A.?! Freedom, Comics, and Education**—Comics can be used as a weapon and as a voice for liberation. Dr. **Lynnette Mawhinney** (Rutgers University), **Pamela Jackson** (San Diego State University Library), Dr. **William Nericcio** (San Diego State University Center for Comics Studies), and **Tony Weaver Jr.** (*Weirdo*) have a conversation

about comics, censorship, and curriculum. Moderated by comics editor, writer, and scholar Dr. **Shamika Mitchell** (State University of New York, Rockland Community College/Women in Comics).

4:00–5:00 **Women of Afghan History Through Comics: Detective Sanazu**—Did you know there are famous Afghan women who have changed the course of history? Flowers for the Future returns to SDCC promoting an international educational project that spins the story of famous Afghan women through comics. The international panel will share with the fans the process of creating and designing a comic book for a global audience while also safely collaborating and distributing to a population facing gender apartheid. Get an exclusive reveal of the initial concept art, and meet the author, artists, and Flowers for the Future student leaders.

5:00–6:00 **Library-Sponsored Virtual Drawing Programs for Teens**—Explore how San Diego Public Library staff use virtual platforms to inspire young artists through drawing programs. The free Zoom-based sessions are informal, welcoming of all skill levels, and inspired by pop culture. **Claude Castañeda** (library assistant), **Rovai Hernandez** (library assistant), **Thomas Vineberg** (senior library technician), and **Janet Yeager** (librarian) will share how they plan sessions and lead engaging virtual instruction. Discover how these programs foster imagination, artistic growth, and connection. Moderated by **Kit Jackson** (library assistant).



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FRIDAY, JULY 25 | PUBLISHER PANELS

10:00–11:00 **From Cartoons to Characters**—What do cartoons and graphic novels have in common—besides being awesome? Moderator **Brenda Maier** (*The Adventures of Penguin & Panda*) and creators **Dean Hale** (*Iron Man: Something Strange (A Might Marvel Team-Up)*), **Jeffrey Brown** (*Marvel The Uncanny X-Men: Days of Future Fun*), **Kennedy Tarrell** (*Evil-ish*), **Mary Shyne** (*You and Me on Repeat*), and **Steve Breen** (*Sky & Ty 2: Dinomite!*) explore how both formats boost visual literacy and keep young minds sharp, creative, and totally hooked.

11:00–12:00 **Graphic Novel vs. Manga**—It's a showdown here with YA and middle-grade graphic novels and manga, as both are dominating the shelves. Join moderator **Matthew Noe** (lead collection and knowledge management librarian, Harvard Medical School) and creators **Dora Wang** (*Pocket Peaches*), **Samuel Sattin** (*Unico*), **Kayden Phoenix** (*Latina Superheroes vol. 1: Jalisco & Santa*), **Whyt Manga** (*Apple Black*), and **Ursula Murray Husted** (*Botticelli's Apprentice*) for a fun look at what's best, their educational value, and why both formats get readers hooked!

12:00–1:00 **Make 'Em Laugh: Using Jokes, Puns, and Goofy Ideas to Hook Reluctant Readers**—This panel makes the case for comedy as a secret weapon and as a reading and teaching tool. Moderator **Joshua Pruett** (*Gyro and the Argonauts*) and creators **Amy Chase** (*Abuzz* and *Miraculous Chibi*), **Marz Jr.** (*Transformers: Worst Bot Ever—Meet Ballpoint!*), **Emmanuel Guerrero** (*Cactus Kid*), **Suzanne Lang** (*Grumpy Monkey School Stinks!*), and **Max Lang** (*Grumpy Monkey School Stinks!*) take a lively look at how humor keeps young readers engaged, learning, and laughing all the way to the last page.

1:00–2:00 **Navigating the 2025 (Comics) Librarian Experience**—With budgetary cuts, professional burnout, and never-ending calls for censorship, it's safe to say that all members of the library community are anxious about what 2025 may hold. Led by **Barbra Dillon** (editor-in-chief, Fanbase Press), this panel of seasoned library professionals—including **Megan Halsband** (Physical Collections Services, Library of Congress), **Moni Barrette** (director of collection development & publisher relations, Library Pass), **Matthew Noe** (librarian, Harvard Medical School), **Jack Phoenix** (collection development manager, Cuyahoga Falls Library), **Amie Wright** (executive director, Toronto Comic Arts Festival), and **Hillary Chang** (branch manager, McCully-Moiliili Public Library)—will discuss and troubleshoot current and potential challenges facing the library community.

2:00–3:00 **Express Your Emanata: Using Graphic Texts for SEL**—Graphic texts like comics and manga connect students with stories in a way no other medium can. The visual components evoke empathetic responses to characters and conflict, while the text supports language development with built-in differentiation for all learners. Dr. **Jason DeHart** (English teacher, *Building Critical Literacy and Empathy with Graphic Novels*), Dr. **Christian Hines** (assistant professor of Reading and Literacy at TXST), **Kane Lynch** (educator, cartoonist, Reel Life) and **Jana Tropper** (speech-language pathologist, graphic novelist, *Seeker Society*) discuss the use

of this powerful medium for understanding, creation, and connection with students from preschool through college level.

3:00–4:00 Leveling Up: Strengthening California’s Creative Workforce—Take a deep dive into how California’s arts and entertainment ecosystem is shifting and how state agencies are stepping in to help workers and creative businesses thrive. **Allison Frenzel** (arts, media, and entertainment industry sector lead, California Department of Education), **Xochitl Torres** (program director, BRIC Foundation), **Danielle Brazell** (executive director of the CA Arts Counsel), **Adam Fowler** (founding partner of CVL Economics), **Robert Meyer** (director of economic development, California Employment Training Panel), and **Leah Medrano** (deputy director, California Film Commission) explore fresh data, surprising trends, and new opportunities popping up across the Golden State. Moderated by **Jewyl Alderson** (San Diego County Office of Education).

4:00–5:00 Comic Making for Kids and Teachers—**Craig Knitt** (creative arts specialist at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Bay and Lakes Region) and **Michael Norton Dando** (professor of communication arts at St. Cloud State University) host a fun, hands-on workshop exploring the comic-making process. Young creators will learn to express their unique voices through storytelling and illustration, while educators will discover practical ways to inspire students in the classroom.

5:00–6:00 How Video Games Are Changing the Lives of Students at Monarch High School—Monarch High School students **Marcel, Jessica, Juan, Leo,** and **Messiah** share their experiences as members of the Monarch Esports Team and how gaming has helped improve attendance, leadership, and academic performance. They will explore the power of e-sports in a trauma-informed, strength-based environment and how it creates meaningful engagement for students navigating complex life challenges. Moderated by **Chris Garcia** (San Diego County Office of Education EdTech Coordinator and Monarch Esports Coach).

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SATURDAY, JULY 26 | EDUCATOR PANELS

10:00–11:00 **Teaching Literary Analysis and Social Justice with Comics**—Author and educator **Johnny Parker II** (*Godzilla Rivals*, *The Black Man's Guide to Getting Pulled Over*) shares the comics, strategies, and assessments he utilizes in his classroom to boost engagement, teach literary analysis, promote social justice, and scaffold for students in need.

11:00–12:00 **Comics Under Fire**—Censorship of comics is on the rise—and classrooms are feeling the heat. **Susan Kirtley** (Portland State University) and **Peter Carlson** (Green Dot Public Schools) discuss navigating book bans, administrative resistance, and pushback against graphic narratives. Educators and librarians will gain tools for advocacy, reflection, and resilience to ensure comics continue to empower readers of all ages.

12:00–1:00 **Comics, Culture, and the Classroom**—Explore how comics and pop culture turn classrooms into hubs of creativity and critical thinking. **Timothy Ojetunde** (WestEd), **Chanti Burnette** (Ánimo South Los Angeles), **Kaylee Bieraugel** (Ánimo Inglewood), and **Austin Bruns** (Ánimo Leadership) share student work and classroom strategies that connect identity, community, and counter-narratives through multimodal storytelling. You'll leave ready to transform your literacy instruction—one panel at a time. Moderated by **Angie Amador** (Green Dot Public Schools).

1:00–2:00 **Drawing New Futures**—What happens when Afrofuturism, AP lit, special education, and high expectations collide? Teachers **Marquitta Sutton-Adams** and **Warren Smith** from Alain Leroy Locke College Preparatory High School share how they use comics, differentiated supports, and inclusive practices to challenge and inspire every learner. Moderated by **Leondria Brown** (Green Dot Public Schools), this panel showcases student-centered success stories that prove access and rigor aren't just possible—they're inseparable.

2:00–3:00 **Teaching Pop Culture in 2025: Embracing the Past/Preparing for the Future**—The world of pop culture changes lightning fast; A.I. is both an opportunity and a challenge; cinema struggles to redefine itself; entertainment media churn and change. How do we keep up with it all and prepare students for today, tomorrow, and five years from now? Featuring academics Dr. **Chris Wildrick** (Syracuse University), Dr. **Christina Knopf** (SUNY Cortland), **Rob Salkowitz** (University of Oregon), **Bailey Day** (MBA, content producer), and **Krista Rozanski** (school library media specialist). Moderated by **Ed Catto** (Ithaca College).

3:00–4:00 **From Fantasy to Discovery: Harnessing Pop Culture for Epic Reading Intervention**—**Roel Mislán** (Feaster Charter administrator), **Aislinn Lowenberg** (Feaster Charter instructor), and **Aman Sahota** (Factors AI Platform CEO & founder) share how popular titles and themes such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Stranger Things*, and *Percy Jackson* inspired a fresh approach to reading intervention for struggling students. They will explore how fan-favorite narratives became the gateway to academic confidence and literacy growth. Moderated by **Chris Garcia** (San Diego County Office of Education: EdTech coordinator).

4:00–5:00 **Science in Middle-Grade Sci-Fi**—Panelists explore the importance of scientific accuracy in these stories and discuss whether it enhances the reading experience or gets in the way of the storytelling process. They will also talk about how accurately portrayed science can serve as a source of inspiration, potentially motivating young readers to become life-long readers of science fiction and even pursue future careers in STEM fields. Panelists include authors **Greg Van Eekhout** (*Happy Town*) and **Delilah Dawson** (*Minecraft Mob Squad, Ride or Die*) and scientists **Lisa Will** (resident astronomer; Fleet Science Center), and **Ronald Coleman** (PhD in Regenerative Medicine). Moderated by **Mwenda KudumuBiggs** (vice president of community service and engagement, Fleet Science Center).

5:00–6:00 **Transitioning Students from Consumers to Creators**—Educators **Lisa Harrison** (Vista Innovation and Design Academy), **Andrew Hudson** (Roosevelt Middle School), **Nichole Santangelo** (Summit Academy), and **Breann Williams** (Vista Innovation and Design Academy) share practical strategies and classroom experiences that empower students to move beyond simply reading comics and graphic novels to creating their own. Learn how teachers are helping students become world-builders, character designers, and authors of original comics and graphic novels that reflect their voices and imaginations.

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SUNDAY, JULY 27 | HIGHER ED PANELS

10:00–11:00 **GeekEd: Our Heroes and Villains Era**—Higher ed is under attack by powerful forces. Educators discuss how the lessons they’ve learned about how to face villainy in comic books, movies, and popular culture inform the fight they are currently facing in continuing to educate college students. The panel is moderated by Dr. **Alfred Day** (UC Berkeley) and features **Monroe Gorden** (UCLA), **Luis Corrales** (UCLA), **Joshua Mayfield** (UCLA), **Greedley Harris** (USC), and Dr. **Steve Sutton** (UC Berkeley).

11:00–12:00 **GeekEd: Mr. Stark, I Don't Feel So Good**—From the death of the Waynes, Eleven’s upbringing, or everything that Steven Universe had to deal with, traumatic experience is a part of so many narratives. Higher-education professionals discuss how being trauma-informed helps their work with students and how they use these stories to reach through the trauma of the real world. Moderated by Dr. **Alfred Day** (UC Berkeley), with **Alison Cares** (University of Central Florida), **Emilie Mitchell** (UC Berkeley), **Jaylen Christie** (University of Central Florida), and **Sabrina Van Zuiden** (UC Berkeley).

12:00–1:00 **GeekEd: Geek Out, Breathe In: Using Pop Culture to Support Mental Health on Campus**—Fandoms, films, video games, comics, and other elements of pop culture can be powerful tools for connection, coping, and conversation around mental health. This panel brings together six clinical psychologists in higher education who use pop culture as a bridge to talk about emotional well-being in ways that are fun, relatable, and deeply impactful. Whether it’s finding comfort in a favorite character’s storyline, bonding over shared fandoms, or drawing strength from fictional worlds, they’ll dive into how geeking out can help you breathe a little easier—and bring mental health support to the forefront of campus culture. Featuring Dr. **Christine Catipon** (Stanford University), Dr. **Drea Letamendi** (UCLA), Dr. **Helen Hsu** (Stanford University), Dr. **Donte Bernard** (University of Missouri), Dr. **Suan Stapatyanon** (UC Irvine), and Dr. **Danny Martinez** (UCLA).

1:00–2:00 **GeekEd: Hanging Up the Cape**—Late nights, second phones, and responding to crisis after crisis can add up overtime, even for the greatest heroes. Much like Captain America and Rupert Giles, higher-education professionals are rethinking their career paths and roles on campus and pivoting to focus on self-care while still finding ways to impact students. Featuring Dr. **Martha Enciso** (University of Redlands), Dr. **Sofia B. Pertuz** (Mainstream Insight, LLC), Dr. **Emily Sandoval** (University of Southern California), and **Brian MacDonald** (UCLA). Moderated by Dr. **Glenn DeGuzman** (UC Berkeley).

2:00–3:00 **How Libraries Help Promote Creators**—Dr. **Phoenix Alexander** (librarian for science fiction and fantasy, UC Riverside), **Daryl A. Maxwell** (adult librarian at Los Angeles Public Library), **Moni Barrette** (comics librarian/2023 Eisner Awards judge), **Lauren Salerno** (writer and former Los Angeles public librarian), and **Misty Jones** (city librarian/director, San Diego Public Library) discuss programs and promotional opportunities available at libraries, such as inclusion into library systems and library lists, recommendations, special promotions, local author advocacy, and more. Moderated by **Eric J. Guignard** (author, *A Graveside Gallery*).