

Design Research Summary

Comic Book Reader Project

Project idea: Develop a comic book reader for busy people on the go.

Motivating questions

- When do people currently read comics?
- What devices do people use to read comics?
- When do people have time to read comics, but currently don't? (How much could they read during that time? In what environments and circumstances are they?)
- How often do people start new comics? How often do they keep/read old comics?

Research methods

- In-person **interviews** with 5 comic book fans, recruited from the local comic book store. The interview covered participants' reading habits and what mobile devices they currently have.
- **Contextual inquiry** with 2 comic book collectors in which they showed us their comic book collections and talked about how they are organized.
- **Diary study** in which 10 comic book readers logged every comic they purchased and read, read, where they were, and when they read it for two weeks.

Design recommendations

1. Support reading on both smartphones and tablets.

All our interview participants owned multiple devices. All owned a mobile phone and 80% owned a tablet. Three of the five participants (60%) sometimes read comics on their tablet already. No participants currently read on their phone, but all agreed that they would try it.

Therefore, *we should create versions of the interface on devices with different sized screens, including phones and tablets.*

2. Support resuming a comic book midway through, even on a different device.

We asked our interview participants and diary study participants how often they took to read a specific issue. They reported an average of 30 minutes to read a single issue.

We asked our interview participants about times that they might be able to read a comic if it were easy to do so. Participants mentioned opportunities during public transit (3 participants), waiting in line (1 participant), and while doing other chores (2 participants). We asked participants how long each of these events would take, and all participants mentioned that these breaks were sometimes less than 30 minutes.

Therefore, we can support comic readers in reading on the go by *allowing them to continue to read a comic across multiple sessions or devices.*

3. Support summaries of previous issues

Our participants often went back to read previous issues before reading a new issue. During the diary study, 80% of participants demonstrated this behavior. During the contextual inquiry study, both participants kept recent reads separate from their archive.

Therefore, we should *provide a capability to quickly read through the previous issue before starting a new issue.*

4. Support indexing by writer, artist, character, and title

Rather than describing particular books that they liked, our interview participants often mentioned that they were fans of a particular writer (60% of participants), artist (40%), or character (40%). During the diary study, 20% of participants reported that they bought new comics because they had recently discovered a new writer.

Therefore, we should *provide the ability to sort comics and recommend new comics based on participants' interest in writers, artists, or characters.*