

REFERENCE NOTES

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Editors

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The Comics Code Authority



In 1954, Dr. Fredric Wertham published a book called *Seduction of the Innocent*. In his book, Wertham spoke of how comic books were a contributor to juvenile delinquency in the U.S. This book prompted the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency to begin an investigation of the comic book industry and its effects on America’s youth. The result: In October of 1954, the Comics Magazine Association of America formed to regulate the comics published in America.

The Comics Code addressed many things that had been identified as “problem areas”. The original Comics Code had 41 provisions, addressing general standards, religion, costume, marriage and sex, and advertising. The standards set forth by the CMAA ensured that comics were suitable for audiences of all ages.

In 1971, Marvel Comics submitted a Spider-Man story arc about drug use for the approval with the CMAA. The publication was rejected, but after Stan Lee, the writer of the story received a letter from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, asking him to address drug abuse in comics, the company went ahead and published the story without approval of

the Comics Code Authority. The CMAA chastised Marvel for their defiance of the Comics Code, but the incident caused the CMAA to revisit the standards established by the Comics Code. Restrictions were relaxed on crime comics and horror comics, and a section was added to address the depiction of drug use.

By the late 70s, the CMAA became much easier to bypass due to the rise of direct market distribution. Only four publishers remained active with the organization- Archie, DC, Harvey, and Marvel. Underground comics or comix were circulating without the approval of the CMAA. These underground comix contained a wide variety of material- some adult-oriented, some not.

In 1982, the CMAA once more looked at revising the Comics Code. Although several publishers were content to stay under regulations established in 1971, DC Comics indicated that it was considering eliminating the Seal of Approval from its comics. In response, a broader guideline released in 1989.

After the release of the 1989 code, the authority of the CMAA continued waning. Comics began to disappear from the shelves of general retailers, and the stores that still carried comics were happy to sell comics that did not have the Seal of Approval. Even publishers that were members of the CMAA did not follow the review process for all of their products.

Marvel Comics left the CMAA in 2001

and instead implemented its in-house rating system. In 2011, the final two members of the organization opted out of the Seal of Approval on their comics. The departure of these two publishers, Archie and DC Comics, marked the quiet demise of the Comics Code Authority.

Today, publishers regulate the content of their own comics. If a comic has content that is acceptable for all ages, it will be marked with a designation such as “A” for all ages. Comics appropriate for a teen audience are marked T for Teen. Comics with mature content intended for adult audiences are designated as mature.



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Pathfinder

The Montgomery City-County Public Library system did not carry *Seduction of the Innocent* by Fredric Wertham. In order to obtain a copy of the book, I needed to request a copy from a library outside of our system. This is something that any in-county patron of the Montgomery City-County Public Library system is able to do through the Reference desk at the Juliette Hampton Morgan Memorial Library. The policy is also available on our website: <https://www.mccpl.lib.al.us/>

General Nonfiction-

Chute, H. L. (2017). *Why Comics?:*

From Underground to Everywhere.

HarperCollins Publishers.

Gravett, P. (2006). *Graphic novels everything you need to know.* New York, NY: Collins Design.

Howe, S. (2013). *Marvel Comics: the untold story.* New York: Harper Perennial.

Nyberg, A. K. (1998). *Seal of approval: the history of the comics code.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.


Wertham, F. (1972). *Seduction of the innocent.* Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press.

Digital Resources-


The Comics Code of 1954. (1954). Retrieved from <http://cblidf.org/the-comics-code-of-1954/>

Comics Code History: The Seal of Approval. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://cblidf.org/comics-code-history-the-seal-of-approval/>


Comics Distributors-

 Dark Horse Comics- <https://www.darkhorse.com/>

Mike Richardson founded Dark Horse comics in 1986. The company is currently the third-largest comics publisher in the United States. Dark Horse comics offers a wide variety of both original comics and licensed adaptations of movies, television shows, video games, and cartoons.

 DC Comics- <https://www.dccomics.com/>

DC Comics is one of the nation's largest and oldest American comic book companies. DC is famed for their DC Universe in which numerous iconic superheroes reside. In addition to their lineup of superheroes, DC publishes a number of titles under their alternative imprint Vertigo.

 IDW Publishing- <https://www.idwpublishing.com/>

IDW Publishing was founded in 1999 as the publishing division of Idea and Design Works, LLC. IDW is the fifth-largest comic book publisher in the United States. The company is best known for its licensed adaptations of movies, television shows, video games and cartoons.



 Image Comics- <https://imagecomics.com/>

Image comics is an American comic books and graphic novel publisher founded in 1992 by a collective of bestselling artists. It was originally intended as a venue for creator-owned properties and has kept that purpose to this day. Image Comics

produces a wide variety of comics including *The Walking Dead*, *Spawn*, *Saga*, and *Kick-Ass*.

 Marvel Comics- <https://www.marvel.com/>

Marvel was founded in 1939 under the name of Timely Comics. By 1951 the company had generally become known as Atlas Comics. The branding of the company as Marvel Comics began in the 1960s and has since become the company's primary name. Marvel is primarily known for its superhero comics though the company has published a number of other licensed properties from other companies.

Article and Pathfinder written by Andrew Foster, Reference Librarian, Juliette Hampton Morgan Memorial Library



Amazing Spider-Man #5 October 1963 Image taken from Pinterest. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/347832771213349032/>