

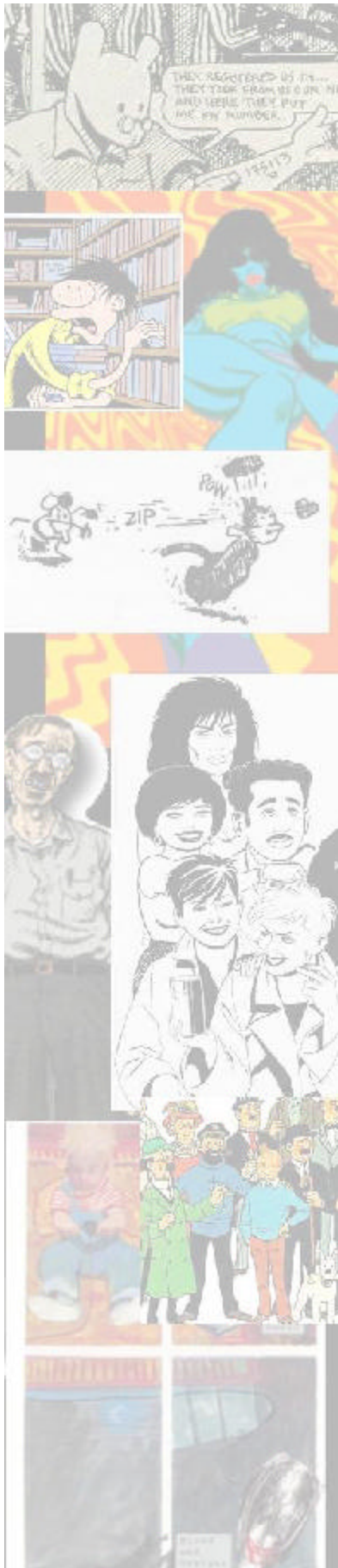
# ComicsLab:

Exploration of an Art Form

Project Documentation for ITEC 830

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5.15.03



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# Project Proposal

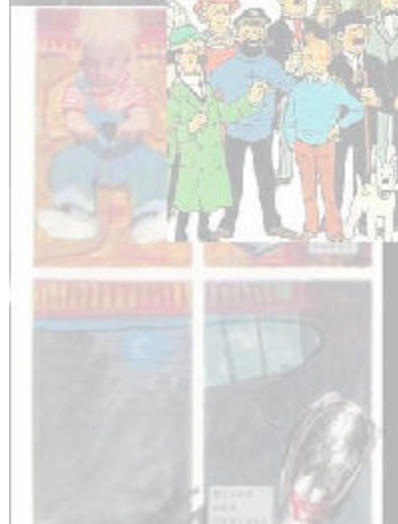
## Introduction



## Project Team and Roles



## Project Schedule



People the world over are embracing the Internet as a daily part of their lives, and educational content on the 'net is still in its infancy. A program to instruct writers and artists in the theory and mechanics of comics may provide a valuable service by increasing diverse cultures' access to external cultural products they may never have seen in all history preceding the Internet age. In addition, digital publishing and distribution of comics allows anyone with an idea, knowledge, and ever-less-expensive tools, to attract audiences the world over. These new tools can decrease the control major publishers wield over what gets published (and, almost as importantly, **publicized**), what format it takes, how it gets into the hands of readers, and how readers' feedback gets to creators.

Yasuko Kazama	Image collection, Illustration
Anthie K.	Graphic Design/Layout
Aniruddh Mukerji	Web and Flash Development
Carlos Rubinstein	Project Management/Content
(Ani, Yasuko, Carlos)	Instructional Design

3.1.03-3.30.03	Needs and Content Analysis
3.31.03-4.14.03	Instructional Design
4.1.03-4.20.03	Content Development
4.1.03-4.20.03	Graphic Design
4.18.03-5.9.03	Build and Test Site
5.10.03-5.15.03	Revise Site, Develop Presentation
5.15.03	Final Presentation

# Needs Assessment

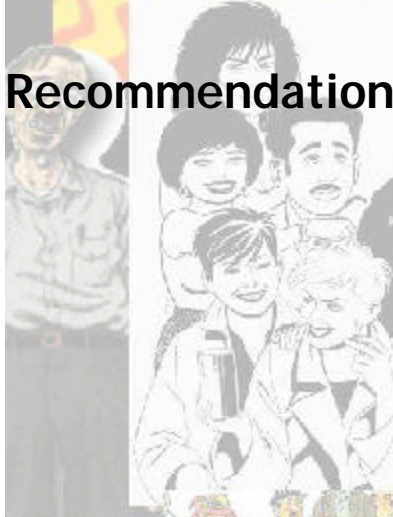
## Present Conditions



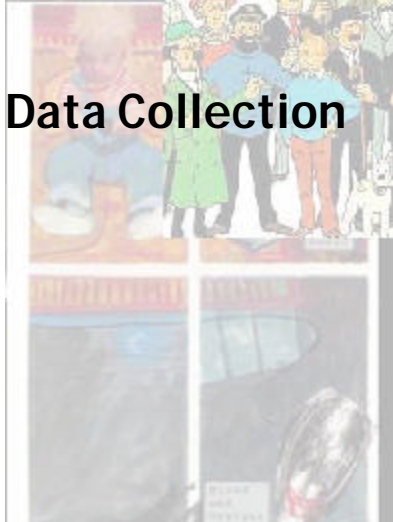
## Potential Solutions



## Recommendation



## Data Collection



Comics is unique as an art form in that it combines visual and textual storytelling, and engages the reader in a one-to-one relationship with the creator or creators. As more and more of our world **goes digital**, individuals' access to comics of all styles, genres and formats, increases. Academia is making strides in the recognition of comics as a literary and artistic medium of communication, but in the west, comics are still held in low regard compared to literature and 'fine art'. Writers and artists around the world need a way to understand comics, both as literature and as art, in order to decide if comics may be an art form they can fruitfully pursue.

- Produce a textbook on comics, presumably in comics format
- Produce an instructional video on comics
- Develop an interactive instructional website on comics

Of the choices above, only a text or website seems appropriate to the task. Texts on comics are rare, but do already exist; in fact, ComicsLab's chief resources are texts on comics. Although our team is strong in graphic design and illustration, we lack the time to create the number and quality of images necessary for such an undertaking. The ComicsLab team recommend an interactive instructional website. This format can provide online and offline activities and take advantage of recently developed technologies for learning interactions based on both behaviorist and constructivist theory. In addition, the internet is rapidly becoming a home for digital-format comics, and putting instruction in the same place could be advantageous.

### Primary Sources:

Eisner, Will, Comics & Sequential Art. Tamarack, FL: Poorhouse Press, 1985

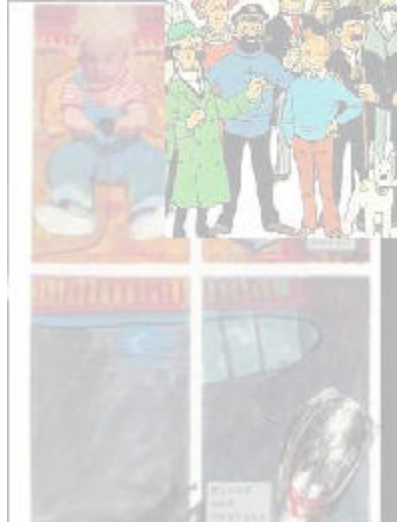
McCloud, Scott, Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art. New York: HarperPerennial, 1994



## Data Collection (continued)



## Content Analysis



### Interviews:

Rory Root, owner, Comic Relief, Berkeley, CA  
Makoto Soji: Seika University, Kyoto Japan  
Chikako Suzuki: Theatre; University of Philadelphia  
Vadim Gray: 3D Artist: 3DO, Redwood City, CA

### Handling of Time and Space in Comics

Comics panels **fracture** both **time** and **space**, offering a **jagged, staccato rhythm** of **unconnected moments**. But closure allows us to **connect** these moments and **mentally construct** a **continuous, unified reality**. (McCloud, 1993, p. 67)

### Realism, Expression and the Picture Plane

An image can be said to represent something real, or in the case of abstraction represent purely itself. There is also a continuum along the realistic, from photo-realistic to iconic, where the former represents a specific image, and the latter represents images so abstractly that only written language could be more abstract.

### Comics and Culture

Each team member will contribute content in this area. As that content is created, it will be added to this subsection.


### What Happens Between the Panels?

...**Human Imagination** takes two separate images and **transforms** them into a single idea. Nothing is **seen** between the panels, but experience tells you something **must** be there! (McCloud, 1993, p. 66)

### Comics as Teacher

From an interview with Rory Root:

1. The school system pushes archaic literature to kids. A lot of kids are not interested in european 'classic' literature. More teachers and librarians are pushing to include comics in the curriculum. Comics play a vital role in getting 'reluctant' readers to start reading. Visual reinforcement of stories



## Content Analysis (continued)

motivate readers to read more, enhance understanding and steps them to other forms of reading.

2. Art teachers are bringing in comics to their classroom to get students to create their own, learn drawing and art.

From Comics: A Multi-dimensional Teaching Aid in Integrated-skills Classes by Randall S. Davis (<http://www.esl-lab.com/research/comics.htm>)

Teachers, businesses, and publishers, however, have realized that comic strips and comic books have a widespread appeal to all age groups and levels of society because they reflect authentic language and culture, for example, social commentary, human idiosyncrasies, stereotypes, and life conflicts (Conrad, 1993; Elkins & Bruggemann, 1971), and contain a richness in story content and character development (Yoshihiro, 1992). In fact, it is one of the most widely read media throughout the world, especially in Japan where comic books accounted for 22.9% of the entire publications in 1994 (Weng Kin, 1995).

## Learner Analysis

Our audience is expected to include Creative Writing and Fine Arts students.

### Learner Characteristics:

- High School graduates (there will be some sophisticated content)
- Able to read at a decent level of complexity
- Aware of comics (probably)
- Interested in comics (hopefully)
- Computer-literate
- Web-savvy
- At least some will be visual learners
- Flash shouldn't be a problem

# Instructional Goals



To enhance the understanding of the art, theory, and mechanics of comics and sequential art among young writers and artists, and promote comics as art, literature, and a means of communication within, between, and among cultures.

# Instructional Design



## Learning Objectives



Learners will

*1. Task:* Create a comic on paper, using an original story, original artwork, or both

*Assessment:* Perform the Task (Create the comic)

*Learning outcome:* Procedure

*2. Task:* Identify types of panel transitions with 80% accuracy or better

*Assessment:* Identify Transitions (given several examples of different panel transitions, the learner identifies the type of transition in use.

*Learning outcome:* Concept, Principle

*3. Task:* Use panel transitions when creating a comic in a group activity

*Activity:* Participate in a comic slam/jam using transitions

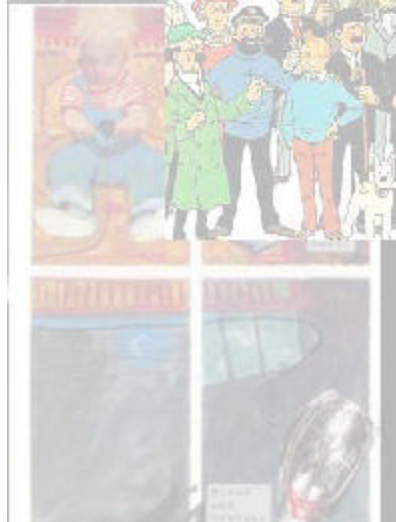
*Assessment:* A downloadable PDF-format rubric.

*Learning outcome:* Concept, Principle, Procedure

*4. Task:* Increase their understanding of the role and public perception of comics in different cultures

*Assessment:* Participation in an anonymous background and attitudes survey and discussion board

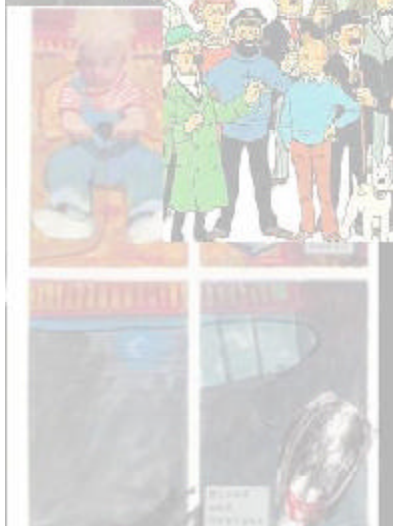
*Learning outcome:* Attitude



## Learning Strategies



## Deliverables



Objective 1, although it involves a certain amount of creativity, is procedural in nature. We will present a finished example (via illustration), and provide detailed instructions to the learner on how to complete the task. The finished example will serve as a proto-rubric against which learners can compare their products. The primary value of this activity is not in the nature or quality of the performance, so much as it is the boost to the learner's confidence provided by the completion of their first comic.

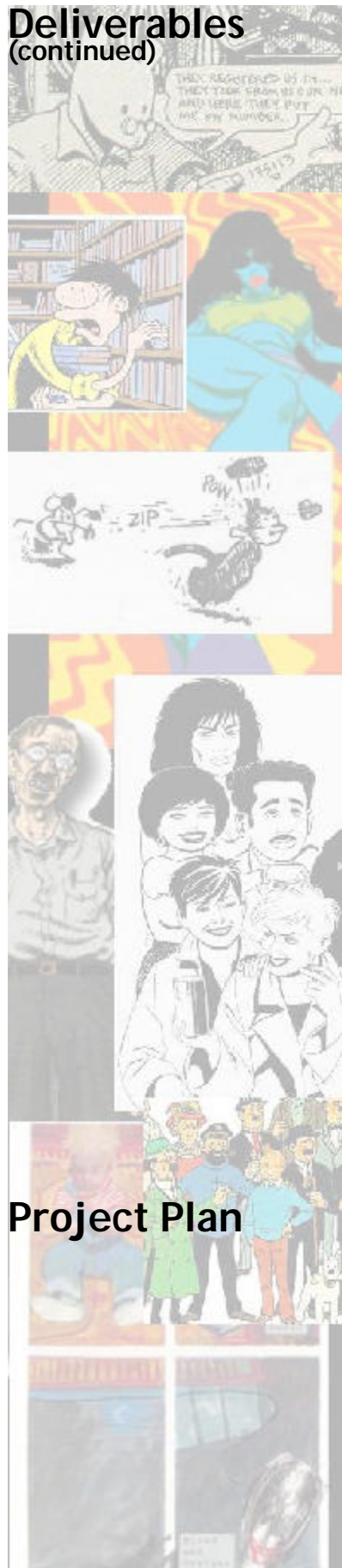
Objective 2 gets deeper into the concepts at work in comics. At the heart of comics is the continuity *between* the panels. The type of continuity can be related to time, space, or both (and sometimes to neither). The goal of the site is to increase learner understandings in ways that inform later practice. This activity is meant simply to reinforce understanding of a simple but powerful tool in creating comics.

Objective 3 is an extension of objective 2. The structure of a comics slam for transitions imposes practice in the use of a particular panel transition style. It requires the completion of objective 2, and reinforces the understandings gained from it. This is an offline activity scored via a downloadable rubric.

Objective 4 attempts to create, refine, or expand learner understandings and attitudes to comics, by presenting personal essays from the ComicsLab team, about their experience with comics in different countries and cultures. An online (and anonymous) survey and discussion board will collect and present, for team and learner analysis, the views of ComicsLab learners. This objective is, of course, exceedingly difficult to assess, and assessing it will involve reviewing the survey results and the content of the discussion boards.

1. Homepage HTML page with text and graphics
  - Logo and Tagline (?)
  - Global Navigation bar
  - Introductory Text to the Instructional Website
  - Brief descriptions of the three sections
  - Graphics accompanying textual content
2. Template for Sub Pages (Landing pages for all sections could be similar)
3. Introductory text for How-to Section (explaining section in detail)
4. Graphics accompanying textual content for How-to Section Introduction
5. List of Suggested Activities (Create comic based on a given story/Create a story out of images)

## Deliverables (continued)

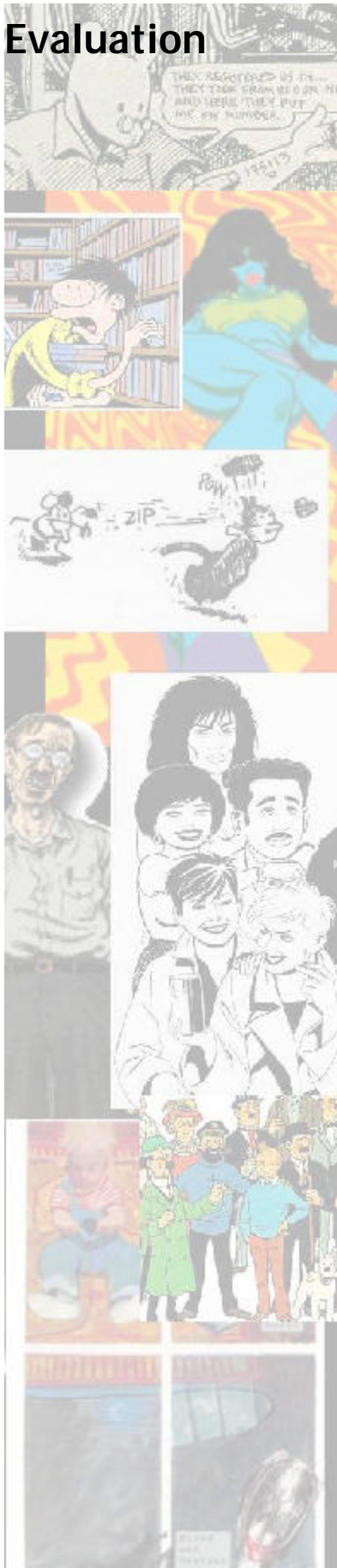


6. Downloadable PDF Templates
  - Cover page
  - Splash page
  - Panel Layout 1
  - Panel Layout 2
  - Panel Layout 3
7. How to create Flash animation lesson
  - Text
  - Graphics accompanying text
  - Sounds (?)
8. Introductory text for Transitions Section (explaining section in detail)
9. Transitions lesson
  - Text
  - Graphics accompanying text
10. List of Suggested Activities (How to conduct a Comic Slam using all the transitions)
11. Downloadable PDF Templates (some panels drawn out(?))
12. Introductory text for Culture and Comics Section (explaining section in detail)
13. Culture and Comics Essays x 4
  - Text
  - Graphics accompanying text
  - Page Layouts unique to essay
14. Annotated List of links
15. Annotated Suggested Reading List
16. Clipart, images for use by learner for activities suggested in other sections
17. Example Comics (finished products based on lessons delivered)
18. Text for eliciting feedback...outlining opportunities learners have to interact with the site, its authors and other learners
19. Discussion Board
20. Feedback form
21. About the authors
  - Text
  - Graphics accompanying text
22. Survey/Discussion section

## Project Plan

Step	Due Date	Owner
Needs Assessment	Done	All
Instructional Design	Done	Ani, Yasuko, Carlos
Layout Comps	4/14/03	Anthie
Content	4/20/03	All
Graphics	4/20/03	Anthie, Yasuko
Evaluation Instrument	5/1/03	Ani, Yasuko, Carlos
UAT	5/11/03	All
Presentation	5/16/03	All

# Evaluation



The evaluation checklist developed for in-class user testing is in Appendix A. The checklist has nineteen questions selected from heuristic guidelines for site design. Each question is answered via a Likert/smiley three-option scale. A section for reviewer comments is also provided.

There was insufficient time available in class for a thorough evaluation, but we received some very useful feedback. A summary of the feedback, and of the checklist scores, follows.

## Feedback Summary

Checklist questions inquiring about instructional design received mostly positive responses. Questions relating to website navigation and layout were slightly less positive, and questions relating to graphic design were very positive.

Positive comments generally mentioned the graphic design of the site, and criticism involved primarily navigation and information design.

## Revisions Based on Feedback

The How-to lesson was redesigned for ease of navigation, by removing the navigation for graphic elements and tying the display of graphics to the text of the lesson. The Transitions lesson was given similar treatment, both in navigation and in information design, to make it consistent with the How-to lesson.

Additional areas for improvement include the offline resources for the How-to lesson, which currently lack effective descriptive text, and the advanced Transitions activity. The basic Transitions activity was, we felt, too behaviorist in approach, and we feel learners will benefit from a less computer-based activity, involving self-scoring from a rubric.