

CFP: Panel „Digital Comics - The Digital in Comics”

The 17th international Congress 2024 of the German Semiotic Association “Signs.Cultures.Digitality“ (RPTU in Landau, 24.–28. September 2024)

To achieve its goals, the German Semiotic Association organizes conferences, colloquia, workshops, courses, lecture series on core areas of its research fields. Moreover, every three years the association organizes an international congress.

Within the 17th international congress „Signs.Cultures.Digitality“ (Landau, 24.–28. September 2024), the section “Comics” has organized a panel on the topic “Digital Comics – The Digital in Comics” and invite for paper proposals.

Call for Papers

Hardly any scholarly treatise on the subject of comics can do without attempts at definition and search(s) for origins, all of which show that the attempt to establish universally valid constituent characteristics of the medium of comics is inevitably doomed to failure. The following questions are posed: What distinguishes the comic from the picture story? Are cave paintings comics *avant la lettre*? To what extent is a comic tied to the place of publication and a specific materiality? Does a comic have to include speech bubbles and panels? Is seriality sufficient as a defining characteristic? With these discussions as subtext, the question of the location of *The Digital* in comics becomes all the more exciting and conflictual.

More and more artists are using digital tools to create their comics, even if they are published in print. As the comics researcher and author Scott McCloud illustrated more than twenty years ago in *Reinventing Comics: How Imagination and Technology Are Revolutionizing an Art Form* (2000) in the form of a comics essay, the "new" technical possibilities not only make it possible to draw comics digitally (or even, as McCloud does not yet discuss, to have them created by an AI), but above all to create comics beyond the conventional *mise en page*, to integrate further semiotic elements (e.g., moving images and/or sound elements), and to use the advantages of the "infinite canvas". This automatically results in new narrative forms, which not only influence reading habits, but also the (almost barrier-free and cost-free publishable) content. One of the questions to be asked today is whether/how the multimodal and synaesthetic potential in *digital comics* will be further potentiated and which rhetorics, poetics, aesthetics and thematic trends will result from the interplay. What is the common denominator, what *comicalité* characterizes *digital comics* and print comics? Are they still the same medium? What influence do digital techniques (such as lettering) in print comics have on their reception? Can certain conventions and/or certain genres be identified? (How) can experimental forms of *digital comics* and animated films be distinguished from each other? To what extent can the hybrid nature of the comic, which in most cases is based on text AND image, be made fruitful for literacy processes in the age of "new" media? What role do interactive elements (and be it

simply *likes* on *social media*) and ludic elements play in the communication of comic creators and readers? What influence does the growing online market have on the strongly developed collecting practice among comic consumers? And to what extent can print comics be preserved for posterity in the form of digital libraries, as has been the aim of a joint project between the French National Library (BNF) and the *Cité Internationale de la Bande Dessinée* since 2020? What digital tools can be used to annotate and analyze comics?

In the planned section we want to approach *digital comics* and *the digital in comics* from different perspectives. On the one hand, from the media semiotic perspective outlined above, and on the other hand, from literary and cultural semiotic perspectives. As the double title implies, the digital as a subject has also found its way into all sorts of forms and genres of print comics (*graphic memoirs*, nonfiction comics, literary adaptations, etc.), which shed multimodal light on the growing role of the Internet and social media in particular (Luz/Despentes, Liv Strömquist, Léa Murawiec), among other things through panel design and rhythm (for example, by framing and reproducing a panel in the form of a drawn smartphone screen).

We are looking forward to proposals for contributions that deal semiotically with the role of digital comics and the discourses about the digital in comics. The questions and aspects listed above are merely initial starting points; further and other approaches are very welcome.

Literature

Julie Delporte (2011): *La bédé-réalité : la bande dessinée autobiographique à l'heure des technologies numériques*. Université de Montréal, URL: <https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/handle/1866/5282>, last accessed 05/26/2023.

Alexander Dunst, Jochen Laubrock, and Janina Wildfeuer (Eds.) (2019): *Empirical Comics Research. Digital, Multimodal and Cognitive Approaches*. London: Routledge.

Thierry Groensteen (1999): *Système de la bande dessinée*, Paris: PUF.

Gaëlle Kovaliv (2022). Comment la bande dessinée nativement numérique influence le champ de la bande dessinée papier. *Comicalités. Études de culture graphique*

Stephan Packard and Lukas Wilde (Eds.) (2021), The Social, Political, and Ideological Semiotics of Comics and Cartoons. *Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics*, Volume 07, Issue 02.

Anthony Rageul (2020): Récit-interface. Une catégorie pour penser les récits numériques, *Ligeia*, Vol. 181-184, Issue 2, pp. 122-131.

Pascal Robert (Ed.) (2023) [2016]: *Bande dessinée et numérique*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, URL: <http://books.openedition.org/editionscnrs/20586>, last accessed 26/05/2023.

Keywords

Webcomics, Digital Comics, Online Comics, Digital Materiality, Multimodality, Transmediality

Information to the congress organization

The congress will be held between 24. and 28. September 2024 at the Technical University (RPTU) in Landau.

Please send your proposals for papers in German or English (20 minutes) largely unformatted and in an editable format (ideally Word) and a short academic CV by email to thomas.sahn@sorbonne-universite.fr and marie.schroeer@uni-potsdam.de no later than 30. November 2023. The document should include: Title, name of the author, summary of the topic (max. 300 words), affiliation, email address, short-bio, list of publications (max 5).

Talks should not exceed 20 minutes in length. Selected contributions will likely be published. The panel language is English and German with English slides and discussions. Please note that other panels might be presented in German only.

Contact

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us: Thomas Sähn (thomas.sahn@sorbonne-universite.fr) and Marie Schröer (marie.schroeer@uni-potsdam.de).

Conference conception and organization: Prof. Dr. Jan Georg Schneider (Chair of the DGS).
Conference organization: Dr. Georg Albert, Anne Diehr, Rafaela Kastor, Prof. Dr. Jan Georg Schneider.

For additional information please visit <<https://www.semiotik.eu/Kongresse>>. We also recommend the calls of the other sections.