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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii  
Introduction: Why Manga? ix  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manga 101</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Manga Collection Development</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Representation in Manga</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social-Emotional Learning and Manga</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Manga Programming</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Teaching with Manga</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion: Manga Sparks Joy 95

**APPENDIXES**  
Appendix A: Manga in Libraries Webinars 99  
Appendix B: Manga Book Lists 109  
Index 113

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MANGA
[mahn-gah] noun
Comics that originate from Japan

available at alastore.ala.org
INTRODUCTION
Why Manga?

Readers should have access to manga in their libraries because of its emotional and epic storytelling, its unique and breathtaking artwork, its relatable and transformative stories about humanity, and the endless variety of genres, characters, conflicts, and plots found in its pages. Manga is by far the most-read medium in my library, and readers visit multiple times a day to borrow it from the collection. There is definitely no one type of reader; patrons of every age, gender, background, and reading level read manga. So, if readers want to read manga, your library should provide them with access to it.

MANGA EMPOWERS READERS

For many of us, visual storytelling is what makes manga so engaging. We are consumed daily with visual media: television, movies, video games, and social media. These are all examples of visual storytelling, visual media that we are engaged with. Visual media grabs our attention and connects to our emotions, and those emotions are what allow us to make connections to the content. Manga is just another example of the visual media that we consume as a society.

Many of us also read manga to escape the reality of our daily lives and to reduce stress. Runners say that they get addicted to running because their bodies begin to crave exercise. I think the same goes for reading, as our minds also crave exercise. I read every day, and the moment I open a book, my blood pressure drops, my shoulders relax, and my mind frees and expands itself as I get lost in a story. This is something that I tell educators and parents all the time, when they express their concern that a teen is reading “too much” manga. I remind them that we want teens to fall in love with the feeling of reading. Reading manga is pleasurable, safe, and freeing for readers.
INTRODUCTION

I also think what engages many manga readers is that one can find a personal affinity for or a personal connection with a character. Manga usually focuses on the story of a main character, and the reader follows that character and lives through their experiences. Manga allows readers to be exposed to different perspectives, to the representation of diverse lived experiences, and to the conflicts and growth that will support their own personal development. I think this is particularly helpful for readers who are still trying to find their way in the world. It helps readers to understand themselves and their relationship to the world. Manga can also carry universal human truths and that may be why it is read all around the world.

Essentially, manga can empower readers. Through visual storytelling and character connections, manga can help build a reader’s confidence and independence. Readers can develop their critical thinking skills and become responsible decision-makers. They can also make emotional connections that motivate them to persevere.

MANGA ENHANCES LITERACY

Reading manga can lead to a lifelong love of reading. Manga not only engages a community of readers, but it can also create new readers. Manga can increase reading engagement and boost the reading confidence of readers. Manga readers are among the most dedicated and voracious of all readers. They read more because there are multiple volumes in many manga series, and they read consistently because manga connects to their personal stories.

MANGA SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF LEARNING STYLES AND LITERACIES

Manga allows readers to build visual literacy skills, which includes understanding and interpreting the reading direction, frames, text bubbles, visual clues, and Japanese Visual Language. This language is the visual vocabulary and the visual representation of a character’s emotions and thoughts. This visual information gives readers context clues so that they can decode and infer character motivation, conflict, and resolve.

Manga stories are complex and allow readers to engage in an analysis of literary devices such as plot, theme, symbolism, foreshadowing,
Why Manga?

Conflict, and character development (through emotions, thoughts, words, and actions), which allows for a higher level of critical thinking.

Manga also helps readers develop verbal literacy and communication skills, especially since there is not an overwhelming amount of text on a page like prose. As such, readers can build their vocabulary and comprehension skills by pairing the visuals and the text to make inferences and interpret meaning.

Manga offers readers an opportunity to reflect on the storyline and characters, as well as the art style of the mangaka (manga artist). Readers can focus on the format and the style of manga, which includes panel (size and design), shading, tone, patterns, textures, imagery, and the relationship between the text and the art. Not only can readers enhance their art appreciation skills, but they also can enhance their art technique skills by engaging in lessons about the manga art style.

Age-appropriate manga can also be a support system for the social-emotional development of readers. Manga can often reflect the lives of readers and their lived personal experiences, which can help them find self-acceptance, as well as build empathy and interpersonal skills. Many titles focus on issues like friendships, dating, and sex, as well as bullying, anxiety, and overcoming obstacles.

Manga also provides readers with the opportunity to become culturally literate. Manga is often a lens into Japanese culture where readers can learn about school life, food and cooking, religion, history, fashion, holidays and celebrations, music, sports, and more.


Manga Transforms Lives

Everything we want readers to learn and experience can happen through manga. It is our job as librarians to make sure that we continue to offer these opportunities for readers to not only read manga but also to reflect on what they have read, to share what they have read, and to celebrate what they have read.

Available at alastore.ala.org
MANGA 101

IN JAPAN, MANGA WAS INITIALLY CREATED TO entertain and provide literacy support to readers, but manga has since spread throughout the world, and there is now a widespread awareness of this global phenomenon. There is a lot to learn about building a manga collection, designing manga programming, and providing equitable manga services. To make the best decisions about developing a library culture that celebrates manga, it is essential that you have a foundational knowledge of this popular medium.

WHAT IS MANGA?

Manga (pronounced mahn-gah), which means “whimsical pictures,” are comics created and published in Japan. The term manga originated in the nineteenth century but did not apply to manga as we know it until the twentieth century. The panels and text bubbles in manga are read from right-to-left in the Japanese style, in contrast to Western comics, which are read from left-to-right. Manga is published in black-and-white, although sometimes manga can include pages with color.

Manga is often published and sold in tankobons (individual volumes). These individual volumes include multiple chapters and are often one part of a series. These multiple chapters usually first appear in installments in weekly or monthly Japanese print or digital magazines. Manga series can have multiple tankobons, so make sure to consider the space available in your library and your budget before building a manga collection.
CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPANESE VISUAL STORYTELLING

Japan has a long history of visual and narrative storytelling. Dating all the way back to the Nara period in Japan were *emakimono* (picture scrolls). *Emakimono*, created on long rolls of either rice paper or silk, were horizontal and often included calligraphy and illustrations to depict the sequence of everyday life events of the Japanese people. *Emakimono* were told in chronological order, and the scrolls were slowly unrolled as the story progressed. There was also *sumi-e* (ink-and-brush painting), which was brought to Japan by Zen Buddhist monks. *Sumi-e* was horizontal, monochrome, and consisted of simply lined ink-and-brush paintings that combined calligraphy, poetry, and nature. *Sumi-e* was used to capture the beauty and complexity of the natural world.

Advancements in visual storytelling led to *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) during the Edo period in Japan. *Ukiyo-e* depicted the interests of the people in Japan, which included samurai, geishas, kabuki actors, sumo wrestlers, and supernatural folktales. *Ukiyo-e* was created by carving a design into a woodblock, then inking and pressing the woodblock onto Japanese mulberry paper; colors were then added by hand. Woodblock printing led to the creation of *kusazoshi* (illustrated books). These books were about ten pages long and made up of folded and bound paper that depicted the events of everyday life in Japan. Dominated by illustrations, these books were color-coded by genres. There were *kibyoshi* books for adults, identified by a yellow cover; and there were *akahon* books for children, identified by a red cover. *Akahon* was a popular form of entertainment, but with the advent of the printing press, it would soon be replaced by *manga*.

There were also the performance arts, another type of visual storytelling in Japan. *Kabuki* theater (Japanese drama) included all sorts of audiovisual performances such as dancing, miming, and singing, as well as music on the *shamisen* (a three-stringed instrument). There were also elaborate costumes, wigs, and *kumadori* (stage makeup for kabuki actors). The *kumadori* allowed actors to visually express emotions on their face, with exaggerated lines around their mouth and eyes, and symbolic colors that represented human emotions. During the Great Depression, *kamishibai* (paper theater), also known as street theater, became a popular form of storytelling. *Kamishibaiya* (storytellers) would create hand-painted original art on storyboards and combine these illustrations with narrative storytelling. These small wooden
stages for kamishibai were transportable on bikes so that the kamishibaiya could easily ride around neighborhoods. This form of Japanese visual storytelling provided entertainment for both children and adults. Many kamishibaiya would later become mangaka (manga artists).

The sequence of events in emakimono, the monochrome and simple lines of sumi-e, the exaggerated facial expressions of kabuki actors, the wood-block-printed kusazoshi that brought entertainment to the masses, and kamishibai, which was an incubator for talented mangaka, all had an impact on the manga art form today. In many ways, it seems that manga evolved from a long history of Japanese visual storytelling. But we must also consider that in the 1850s, when Japan opened to the West, the people of Japan transitioned to the modern world, which had a huge impact on their society, technology, arts, and culture. Later, the development of manga was influenced by Western comics, as Japanese artists were looking to emulate the West and therefore adopted the style of cartooning and graphic narratives found in newspapers and other mediums. After WWII, the people of Japan were seeking affordable entertainment, and this led to the mass production of manga magazines and books. This demand for entertainment influenced the Japanese publishing industry and the manga that we now purchase for our libraries.

THE HISTORY OF MANGA

To learn more about the history of manga, read Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics, by Frederik L. Schodt. This book dives into the culture of comics in Japan, as well as its origins, its evolution, and its value in a global market. You can also read Comics and the Origins of Manga: A Revisionist History by Eike Exner. This book challenges the idea that manga developed from traditional Japanese visual storytelling, and instead argues that manga was influenced by foreign comics. Also, check out The Citi Exhibition: Manga edited by Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere and Matsuba Ryoko. This book will provide an understanding of Japanese visual storytelling and how to read, interpret, and analyze manga.
CHAPTER 1

HOW TO READ MANGA

Many readers have experience reading Western comics, so they are likely comfortable with that style of visual storytelling. But for readers who are new to manga, there can be quite a challenging transition. Western comics are read from left-to-right, but the pages, panels, and text bubbles of manga are all meant to be read from right-to-left.

Manga Panels

When following the panels in a manga, start each page in the upper-right corner. Then move to the left to the next panel or move down to the following row of panels starting on the right. (See figure 1.1.) Yonkoma manga, or four-panel manga, is read by starting with the panel at the top of the page, then moving down to the next panel below.

Manga Text Bubbles

When following the text bubbles in manga, start each page in the upper-right corner of the upper right panel. The text bubbles should be read in a right-to-left and up-to-down order (see figure 1.2).

FIGURE 1.1 | Manga Panels

FIGURE 1.2 | Manga Text Bubbles

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APPENDIX B
Manga Book Lists

CHAPTER 1: Manga 101

Adachi and Shimamura
Ascendance of a Bookworm
Attack on Titan
Berserk
Bleach
Bloom into You
Boys Run the Riot
Bungo Stray Dogs
Cardcaptor Sakura
Chi’s Sweet Home
Creepy Cat
Death Note
Erased
Given
Golden Kamuy
Horimiya
I Want to Be a Wall
I’m in Love with the Villainess
Jujustu Kaisen
Kaiju Girl Caramelize
Kaiju No. 8
Knights of Sidonia
Laid Back Camp
Little Witch Academia
Mobile Suit Gundam
Monthly Girls’ Nozaki-kun
My Hero Academia
My Love Mix-Up!
Naruto
Neon Genesis Evangelion
Nicola Traveling Around the Demons’ World
One Piece
Our Dining Table
Our Dreams at Dusk
Perfect World
Pokémon Adventures
Princess Jellyfish
Sailor Moon
Sasaki and Miyano
So I’m a Spider, So What?
Sweetness & Lightning
Tokyo Ghoul
Ultraman
The Way of the Househusband
Whisper Me a Love Song
Witch Hat Atelier
Wotakoi: Love Is Hard for Otaku
Yo-kai Watch

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APPENDIX B

CHAPTER 2: Manga Collection Development

Asadora!
Ascendance of a Bookworm
Attack on Titan
Beauty and the Beast of Paradise
Lost
Bleach
Blue Lock
Blue Period
Cardcaptor Sakura
Cat Massage Therapy
Chi’s Sweet Home
Creepy Cat
Death Note
Demon Slayer
Dr. Stone
The Elusive Samurai
Erased
The Evil Secret Society of Cats
The Fox and Little Tanuki
Fruits Basket
Fullmetal Alchemist
The Girl from the Other Side
Haikyuu!!
Horimiya
Jujutsu Kaisen
Kaguya-sama: Love Is War
Kaiju No. 8
Little Witch Academia
Look Back
Lovely Muco!
My Hero Academia
My Love Story!
My Love Mix-Up!
My Neighbor Seki
My Neighbor Totoro
Naruto
Nicola Traveling Around the Demons’ World
One Piece
One-Punch Man
Ouran High School Host Club
Perfect World
Penguin & House
Pokémon Adventures
A Polar Bear in Love
The Promised Neverland
Ranma 1/2
Rooster Fighter
Sailor Moon
A Sign of Affection
A Silent Voice
Splatoon
Spy x Family
Toilet-Bound Hanako-kun
Tokyo Ghoul
A Tropical Fish Yearns for Snow
Wandance
The Way of the Househusband
Witch Hat Atelier
Yokai Watch
Yotsuba&!
your name.

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## CHAPTER 3: Representation in Manga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manga</th>
<th>Disorders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple Black</td>
<td>My Hero Academia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack on Titan</td>
<td>My Wandering Warrior Existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beastars</td>
<td>One Piece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bleach</td>
<td>Overlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardcaptor Sakura</td>
<td>Perfect World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carole &amp; Tuesday</td>
<td>The Promised Neverland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clock Striker</td>
<td>QQ Sweeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doughnuts under a Crescent Moon</td>
<td>Queen’s Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragonball</td>
<td>Real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even Though We’re Adults</td>
<td>The Rose of Versailles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Force</td>
<td>Saigami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits Basket</td>
<td>Sailor Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haikyu!!</td>
<td>Satoko &amp; Nada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammer</td>
<td>Sex Education 120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Do We Relationship</td>
<td>Shino Can’t Say Her Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter x Hunter</td>
<td>A Sign of Affection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Hear the Sunspot</td>
<td>Skip Beat!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m in Love with the Villainess</td>
<td>Slam Dunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimi Ni Todoke</td>
<td>Snow White with the Red Hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komi Can’t Communicate</td>
<td>Soul Eater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March Comes in like a Lion</td>
<td>Still Sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Brain Is Different: Stories of ADHD and Other Developmental</td>
<td>Sweat and Soap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 4: Social-Emotional Learning and Manga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manga</th>
<th>Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beastars</td>
<td>Love in Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Run the Riot</td>
<td>Our Dreams at Dusk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demon Slayer</td>
<td>Perfect World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Golden Sheep</td>
<td>The Promised Neverland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haikyu!!</td>
<td>A Silent Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Think Our Son Is Gay</td>
<td>Wandance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Want to Be a Wall</td>
<td>Yuzu the Pet Vet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komi Can’t Communicate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

CHAPTER 6: Teaching with Manga

Beastars
Boys Run the Riot
Komi Can't Communicate
Tokyo Ghoul
Yuzu the Pet Vet
INDEX

A
Adachi and Shimamura, 8
age levels, in readerships, 5–6
age ratings, 9–10, 20–21
akahon, 2
Akutami, Gege, 28
“All Ages” ratings, 9, 10, 20
American Association of School Librarians (AASL), 16, 67
American Library Association (ALA), 16, 30
anime, 24, 63, 65–66, 69–70, 100–101
Anime Club programs, 65–66, 100–101
Anime News Network, 38–39, 41
Anime Planet, 100–107
Aoki, Deb, 23–26
Arakawa, Hiromu, 27
art programs, 68–69
artists. See mangaka
Aruga, Rie, 39, 52
Asadora!, 21
Ascendance of a Bookworm, 7, 20
Attack on Titan, 8, 21, 41
Aye, Jacque, 41, 42
Azuma, Kiyohiko, 24

B
Beastars (Itagaki), 42, 51, 78, 84, 85, 87, 92
Beauty and the Beast of Paradise Lost, 21
bento boxes, 68
Berserk, 6, 109
BIPOC representation, 40–42, 44, 105–106
Bleach, 8, 20, 41
Bloom into You, 8
Bloom’s taxonomy, 87
Blue Lock (Kaneshiro and Nomura), 19
Blue Period, 21
book clubs, 63–65
bookstores, recommended, 22
boys
  shonen manga for, 6, 8
  yaoi manga about, 7, 8
Boys’ Love (yaoi), 7, 8
Boys Run the Riot (Gaku), 8, 51, 78, 84, 85–88, 92
brush painting. See sumi-e

available at alastore.ala.org
INDEX

budgets, limited, 16–17, 73
*By Your Side* (Friedman), 32

C
Canva, 68, 93
*Cardcaptor Sakura*, 7, 20, 37
Carney, Colleen, 36
*Cat Massage Therapy*, 20
challenges and censorship, 11, 12, 28–30, 101–102
children, manga for, 5–6. See also boys; girls
*Chi’s Sweet Home* (Konami), 5, 24
*The Citi Exhibition* (Rousmaniere and Ryoko), 3
Coffee (author), 18, 51
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), 47–52, 55–58, 78, 82–83
collection development, 15–30
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, 32, 64
Comic Con programs, 71–74
comics, Western vs. Japanese, 1, 3, 4
*Comics and the Origins of Manga* (Exner), 3
community creators, interviews with, 22–28, 32–44, 45
content warnings, 11–13
cventions, 69–70, 73
cooking programs, 68
courses in manga, 77–93
craft programs, 68–69
*Creepy Cat* (Valent), 8, 18
CripCon, 39
cultural literacy, xi, 62, 66–70
curriculum planning, 77–93, 102, 106

D
D’Art Shtajio, 41
*Death Note*, 8, 21
decision-making, responsible, 48, 50, 52, 56, 78
Demizu, Posuka, 19, 51
demographics of readers, 5–6
*Demon Slayer* (Gotouge), 27, 51, 65
*Demystifying Disability* (Ladau), 39
*Disability Language Style Guide* (NCDJ), 39
disability representation, 37–39, 107
diversity and inclusion, 31. See also representation
*Doughnuts under a Crescent Moon*, 37
*Dr. Stone*, 20
*Dragonball*, 40
drawing programs, 68–69

E
EF Educational Tours, 70
elective courses, 77–93
*The Elusive Samurai*, 20
*emakimono*, 2, 3, 80
emotional intelligence, 52–54, 83
emotions identifying and responding to, 48–49, 52–55, 59, 83
illustrating through *JVL*, 5
empowerment, ix–x, 6
Endo, Tatsuya, 28

available at alastore.ala.org
equity, diversity, and inclusion, 31.

See also representation

Erased, 9, 20
Even Though We’re Adults (Shimura), 34, 37
The Evil Secret Society of Cats, 20
Exner, Eike, 3
experts, interviews with, 22–28, 32–44, 45

F
Feelings Wheel, 52–54, 83
females
josei manga for, 6, 9, 34, 36–37
positive representation of, 34–37, 100
shojo/shoujo manga for, 6, 8, 9, 34, 35, 36–37, 100
yuri manga about, 7, 8, 32–34, 37
field trips, 69–70
The Fox and Little Tanuki, 27
Friedman, Erica, 32–34
Fruits Basket (Takaya), 25, 37
Fullmetal Alchemist (Arakawa), 27
fundraising and grants, 16
Furudate, Haruichi, 28, 42, 51

G
Gaku, Keito, 51, 85
gallery walks, 80–81
gender
in readerships, 5–6
sexuality and, 32–34, 100
genres of manga, 6–8
The Girl from the Other Side (Nagabe), 18
girls
positive representations of, 34–37, 100
shojo/shoujo manga for, 6, 8, 9, 34, 35, 36–37, 100
yuri manga about, 7, 8, 32–34, 37
Given, 8
Golden Kamuy, 6, 109
The Golden Sheep (Ozaki), 52
Google Docs resources, 100–107
Gotouge, Koyoharu, 27, 51
grants and fundraising, 16, 67
The Graphic Library website, 21, 26
Graphic Novels & Comics Round Table (GNCRT), 21
graphic violence, 6, 11–12, 28
Great Graphic Novels for Teens List (YALSA), 22

H
Haikyu!! (Furudate), 28, 42, 51
Hatori, Bisco, 28
Horikoshi, Kohei, 25, 42
Horimiya, 6, 20
How Do We Relationship (Tamifull), 34
Hunter x Hunter, 41

I
I Hear the Sunspot, 39
I Think Our Son Is Gay (Okura), 51
I Want to Be a Wall (Shirono), 9, 52
Ieda, Akiho, 18
I’m in Love with the Villainess, 7, 34
inclusion, 31. See also representation
INDEX

Inoue, Takehiko, 39, 42
Inspire grants (AASL), 16, 67
interest surveys, 63
international travel programs, 70
interviews, with content creators, 22–28, 32–44, 45
isekai, 7, 34
Ishida, Sui, 19
Ito, Mingo, 51, 83

Kimi Ni Todoke, 37
Kinokuniya, 22, 69
Kishimoto, Masashi, 25
Knights of Sidonia, 7
Kodansha, 8, 10, 18, 19, 24, 42, 51–52
kodomo, 5
Komi Can’t Communicate (Oda), 41, 52, 57–58, 78, 84, 87
Konami, Kanata, 24
Kotone, Ranmaru, 19
kumadori, 2
Kusaka, Hidenori, 27
kusazoshi, 2, 3, 80

Japan
building cultural literacy about, xi, 66–70
history of manga in, 1–3
international travel to, 70
Japan Foundation, 33
Japanese Culture & Manga Club programs, 66–70
Japanese theater, 2, 3, 80–81
Japanese Visual Language (JVL), x, 5
Japanese visual storytelling course on, 77–93
history of, 2–3
Jones, Frederick L., 44, 45
josei, 6, 9, 34, 36–37
joy, sparking of, 95–97
Jujutsu Kaisen (Akutami), 6, 28

Kabuki, 2, 3, 80–81
Kaguya-Sama: Love Is War, 20, 65
kaiju, 7, 20
kamishibai, 2–3, 80–81
Kaneshiro, Muneyuki, 19

Ladau, Emily, 39
Laid Back Camp, 8
language, content warnings on, 13
Latinnx representation, 42–44
learning objectives, 61–62
LGBTQ+ manga, 8, 32–34, 37, 44–45, 84, 103–104
Library Comic Con, 71–74
Library Crew programs, 70–74
library elective courses, 77–93
literacy skills, x–xi, 6
Little Witch Academia, 7, 20
Look Back, 21
Lou, Christy, 37
Love in Focus (Nogiri), 52
Lovely Muco!, 20

magical girl manga, 7, 24
males. See boys; men

available at alastore.ala.org
manga
about, 1–13, 104–105
benefits of, ix–xi, 99–100
challenges to, 11, 12, 28–30, 101–102
collection development for, 15–28
programming with, 61–75, 100–101
representation in, 31–45, 100, 103, 105–106, 107
social-emotional learning and, 47–60, 82–83, 104
as sparking joy, 95–97
teaching with, 77–93, 102, 106
webinars on, 99–107
Manga Advisory Department, 71–72
*Manga Book Club Handbook*, 64
Manga Club programs, 62–70
Manga in Libraries
webinars, 99–107
website, 20, 22, 99
*Manga! Manga!* (Schodt), 3
*mangaka*, xi, 3, 12, 38, 88, 100
*Mangasplaining* (podcast), 22, 23
*March Comes in like a Lion*, 39
“Mature” age ratings, 9, 10, 12
*mecha*, 7
men
*seinen* manga for, 6
*yaoi* manga about, 7, 8
Miyanaga, Asaya, 27
*Mobile Suit Gundam*, 7
*Monthly Girls’ Nozaki-kun*, 6
Monzusu, 38–39
Moore, Caitlin, 38–39
Morishige, Takuma, 17
*My Brain Is Different* (Monzusu), 38–39
*My Hero Academia* (Horikoshi), 6, 25, 42
*My Love Mix-Up!*, 6, 20
*My Love Story!* , 25
*My Neighbor Seki* (Morishige), 17
*My Neighbor Totoro*, 20, 67
*My Wandering Warrior Existence* (Nagata), 34

N
Nagabe, 18
Nagata, Kabi, 34
*Naruto* (Kishimoto), 8, 25
National Center on Disability and Journalism, 39
*Neon Genesis Evangelion*, 7
Neuzeth, Laura, 34–37
New York Comic Con, 69–70, 73
*Nicola Traveling Around the Demons’ World*, 8, 27
No Flying No Tights website, 22, 44
Nomura, Yusuke, 19

O
Oda, Tomohito, 52, 57
OEL manga, 44–45
Office for Intellectual Freedom, 30
Oima, Yoshitoki, 18, 51
Okuyama, Yoshiko, 39
“Older Teen” age ratings, 9, 10, 21
*One Piece*, 6, 25, 41
*One-Punch Man*, 28

available at alastore.ala.org
online resources, 21–22, 99–107
Oshimi, Shuzo, 38
Our Dining Table, 8
Our Dreams at Dusk, 8, 52
Ouran High School Host Club (Hatori), 28

P
parental advisory warnings, 11–13
patrons
challenges from, 11, 12, 28–30, 101
collection development
considerations for, 15–16, 23
with disabilities, 38, 39, 107
teenage (see teens)
See also readers
Penguin & House (Ieda), 18
Perfect World (Aruga), 6, 21, 37, 39, 52
picture books (kusazoshi), 2, 3, 80
picture scrolls, 2, 80
Pokémon Adventures (Kusaka), 5, 27
A Polar Bear in Love, 20
policies, for collection development,
15–16, 29
Pop Culture Classroom, 84, 85–86f, 87, 90
pop culture panels, 73–74
positive representation. See representation
Princess Jellyfish, 6
prizes and promotional items, 73
programming, 61–75, 100–101
The Promised Neverland (Shirai and Demizu), 19, 40, 51
publishers of manga, 8–10

Q
QQ Sweeper, 35
Quarto Kids, 45
questions
for collection development
policies, 15–16
for interest surveys, 63
for social-emotional learning,
55–56
for teen-led panels; 74
Quilantan-Garza, Karina, 42–44

R
Rahbar, Victoria, 37–39
ramen, programs on, 68
Ranma 1/2 (Takahashi), 26
readers
age ratings for, 9–10
demographics of, 5–6
empowerment of, ix–x, 6
social-emotional development of,
47–60, 104
readerships, 5–6
reading, right-to-left, 1, 4, 81
reading guides, 84–91
Real (Inoue), 39
Reframing Disability in Manga
(Okuyama), 39
relationship skills, 48, 50, 52, 56, 78
representation
BIPOC, 40–42, 44, 105–106
disability, 37–39, 107
of girls and women, 34–37, 100
Latinx, 42–44
LGBTQ+, 32–34, 37, 44–45,
103–104

available at alastore.ala.org
INDEX

need for, 31
resources for, 44–45, 100, 103, 105–106, 107
Resobox, 66–67
responsible decision-making, 48, 50, 52, 56, 78
romance, 6, 8, 9, 12, 25
Rooster Fighter, 21
Rousmaniere, Nicole Coolidge, 3
Rudes, Jillian, xi
Ryoko, Matsuba, 3

S
Sailor Moon (Takeuchi), 7, 24, 37
Sasaki and Miyano, 8
Satoko & Nada (Yupechika), 41, 42
Saturday AM, 44–45
scary manga, 102–103
Schodt, Frederik L., 3
“A School Librarian’s Journey through
Manga Collection Development” (Rudes), xi
Scott, Renee, 40–42
seinen, 6
self-awareness, 48–51, 55, 78
self-management, 48, 49, 51, 55, 78
Seven Seas Entertainment, 8–9, 18, 27, 42
Sex Education 120% (Tataki), 34
sexual content, 9, 10, 12, 28
sexuality and gender, 32–34, 100
Shimura, Takako, 34
Shinkai, Makoto, 19
Shino Can’t Say Her Name, 38
Shirahama, Kamome, 24
Shirai, Kaiu, 19, 51
shojo/shoujo, 6, 8, 9, 34, 35, 36–37, 100
shonen, 6, 8
Shoujosei News & Info, 37
A Sign of Affection, 21, 37
A Silent Voice (Oima), 18, 51
Skip Beat!, 35
Slam Dunk (Inoue), 42
Slayter, Matt, 87
slice of life manga, 7, 8
Smith, Sara, 26–28
Snow White with the Red Hair, 35
So I’m a Spider, So What?, 7
social awareness, 48, 49, 51, 56, 78
social media influencers, 36–37
social-emotional learning (SEL), 47–60, 82–83, 104
Splatoon, 20
spooky manga, 102–103
Spy x Family (Endo), 28, 65
Still Sick, 37
storytelling. See Japanese visual storytelling
student volunteers, 70–71
students, feedback from, 91–92, 95–97
sumi-e, 2, 3, 80
Sweat and Soap, 36, 37
Sweetness & Lightning, 8

T
Takahashi, Rumiko, 26
Takaya, Natsuki, 25
Takeuchi, Naoko, 24
Tamifull, 34
tankobons, 1
Tataki, Kikiki, 34

available at alastore.ala.org
INDEX

teaching and curriculum, 77–93, 102, 106
“Teen” age ratings, 9, 10, 20
“Teen Plus” age ratings, 9, 10, 21
teens
age ratings for, 9–10, 20–21
panels led by, 73–74
programming for, 61–75
quotes from, 91–92, 95–97
sexuality content warnings and, 12
social-emotional development of, 47–60, 104
See also readers
text bubbles, 4–5
theater, Japanese, 2, 3, 80–81
themes, identifying, 87–88
Toilet Bound Hanako-kun, 20
Tokyo Ghoul (Ishida), 6, 19, 91f
translation notes, 13
travel programs, 70
A Tropical Fish Yearns for Snow, 20
Twitter, 34, 37, 40, 42

VIZ Media
content warnings from, 10, 11, 13
prizes from, 73
reading guides by, 84–85
titles by, 8, 19, 25–26, 27–28, 42,
51–52, 64
volunteers, student, 70–71

W
Wandance (Coffee), 18, 51
warnings, parental advisory, 11–13
The Way of the Househusband, 8, 21
web resources, 21–22, 99–107
webinars, Manga in Libraries, 99–107
Western comics, 1, 3, 4
Whisper Me a Love Song, 8
Witch Hat Atelier (Shirahama), 8, 24
women
jesi manga for, 6, 9, 34, 36–37
positive representations of, 34–37, 100
yuri manga about, 7, 8, 32–34, 37
woodblock prints, 2, 80
Wotakoi: Love Is Hard for Otaku, 6

U
ukiyo-e, 2, 80
Ultraman, 7

Y
Valent, Cotton, 18
violent content, 6, 10, 11–12, 28
visual literacy, x, 62
visual storytelling
  course on, 77–93
  history of, 2–3
Yamada, Kintetsu, 36
yaoi, 7, 8
Yen Press, 9, 10, 19, 24, 25, 34, 42, 52
Yo-kai Watch, 5, 20
Yonkoma manga, 4
Yotsuba&! (Azuma), 24
Young Adult Library Services
  Association (YALSA), 16, 22

available at alastore.ala.org