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# "Webcomics Archive? Now I'm Interested": Comics Readers Seeking Information in Web Archives

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## Overview

This exploratory study of digital comics readers interacting with the UK Web Comic Archive (<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/>) was designed to understand what digital comics readers need from information and technology that support them in **finding** and **interacting** with **web-based comics**. The approach involved naturalistic observations and semi-structured interviews of digital web comics readers **searching** and **browsing** the archive remotely. Through these methods, we answered the following questions:

## How Do Readers Discover and Share New Digital Comics?



Through **friends**, on **social media**, viewing **recommendations** on **comics apps**:

*"Usually my friend will give me a link, or I will follow a link from Instagram".(DCR3)*

*"I would be more likely to encounter new webcomics through other media".(DCR2)*

*"I have a look at what's new, the new releases of comics on the app, and then will download previews if I'm interested".(DCR1)*

## What Attracts Readers to Search and Browse a Comics Site or App?

Lots of **visuals**, including **splash pages**, **featured comics**, **thumbnails**, **recommendations**:

*"I would have expected some sort of splash feature, or pages which showed comics in some format whether it's modern day webcomics or traditional comics". (DCR3)*



## Key Lessons Learned

**Web archives** are traditionally designed to be **'search-first'** (and perhaps **even find-focused**). According to research participants, web archives are for looking for older or historical comics, or for research. Based on the findings from this exploratory research, web-based comics archives may need to be **'browse-first'** and **discover/encounter-focused**.



Archive capture of Discord Comics by Tab Kimpton. Retrieved from <https://www.webarchive.org.uk/waybackarchive/20171001081918/> <http://www.discordcomics.com/>

This approach to heritage organization finding tools can be more broadly instructive of how readers and users in general engage with emerging types of visual and text-based information.