

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Student Research Symposium

Student Research Symposium 2024

May 8th, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Manga In Bookstores

Claire L. Curry

Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium>



Part of the [Publishing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Curry, Claire L., "Manga In Bookstores" (2024). *Student Research Symposium*. 7.

<https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium/2024/posters/7>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

MANGA IN BOOKSTORES

Claire Curry
research paper completed for M.S. in Book Publishing

QUESTION
How is manga categorized and displayed in bookstores?
What influences these methods? Is there consistency among bookstores?
How might these shelving methods impact discoverability?

INTRODUCTION

Manga & Publishing
Manga has continued to rise in popularity. In an article on manga's growing popularity since 2020, Publisher's Weekly notes that the manga market is "2.5 times larger than the earlier sales peak back in 2007." Research by Kathi Inman Berens and Rachel Noorda shows that 59% of Gen Z and Millennials would prefer to read the graphic novel version of a text.

Genre
There are genre differences between American categories and Japanese categories. Japan's system focuses on the **age and gender** of the target audience. American categories often focus on **age and themes or tropes**.

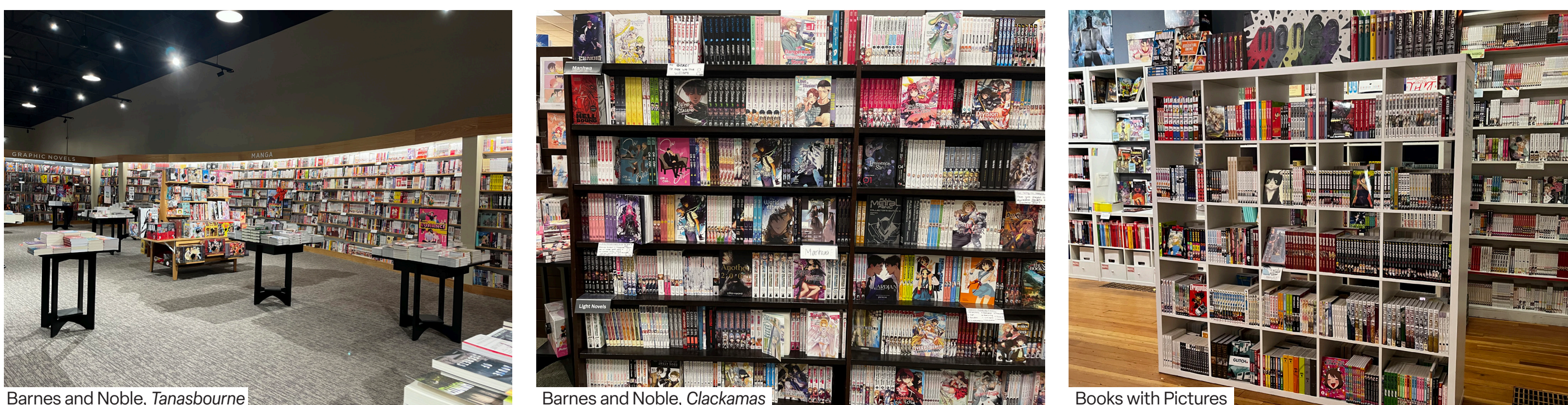
Bookstores & Libraries
Library research focuses on navigation, usability, and consistency. The goal is to make it easy for readers to find what they're looking for and to discover new books. Existing research on manga categorization focuses on its place in libraries. In comparison, this research focuses on bookstores where the goal is to sell books. However, both bookstores and libraries share similar goals in connecting to readers.

With growing interest in manga, bookstores are finding themselves stocking more and needing to determine how to meet the needs of readers. Debates on shelving and separation can take place across all genres in bookstores and libraries among booksellers, librarians, and researchers. Examples include mystery, thriller, and horror or even science fiction and fantasy. **Manga is especially interesting to consider as a unique format and translated title with preexisting genre conventions.**

Discoverability
Are bookstores trying to reach new readers or offer suggestions to existing manga readers? How do their shelving methods reflect that goal? What influences their audience?

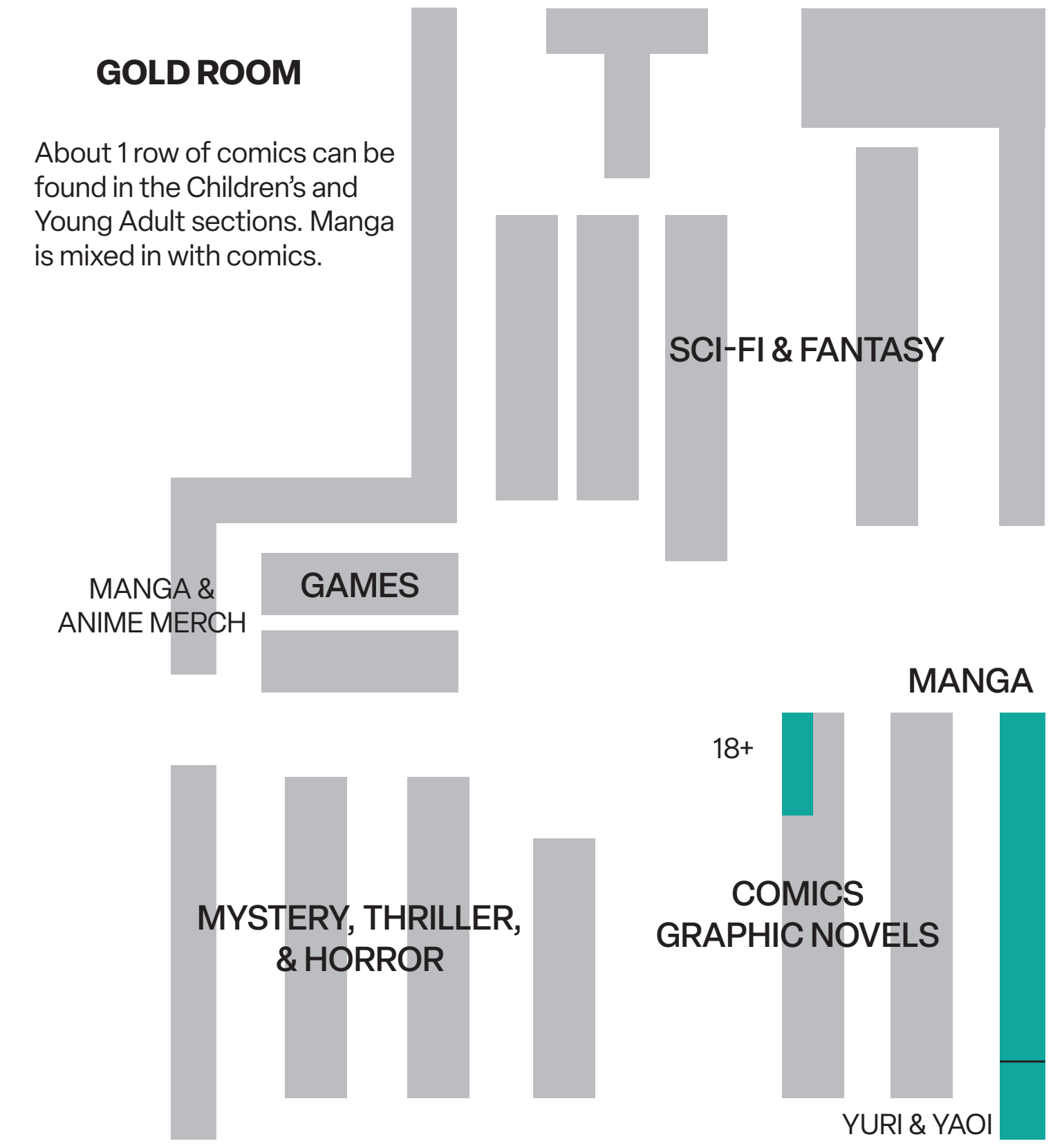
METHODS

- Observed 5 bookstores of different sizes and specializations**
- **Powell's City of Books**
 - Local Independent Bookstore
 - Downtown Portland location
 - Observations for before and after manga reorganization in November 2023)
 - **Barnes and Noble**
 - Clackamas and Tanasbourne locations
 - Under new ownership, B&N is allowing more customization for stores to address the needs of their audience
 - **Books with Pictures**
 - Local, independent comic book store
 - Located in SE Portland
- **Kinokuniya, Downtown Portland location**
- International bookstore chain
 - Started in Japan
 - Specializes in Japanese and English Books
- Gathered data on the following categories**
- Signage
 - Categories
 - Location in the store
 - Quantity of books
 - Sorting method
 - Displays and end caps
 - Shelf talkers
 - Categorization methods
 - Merchandise



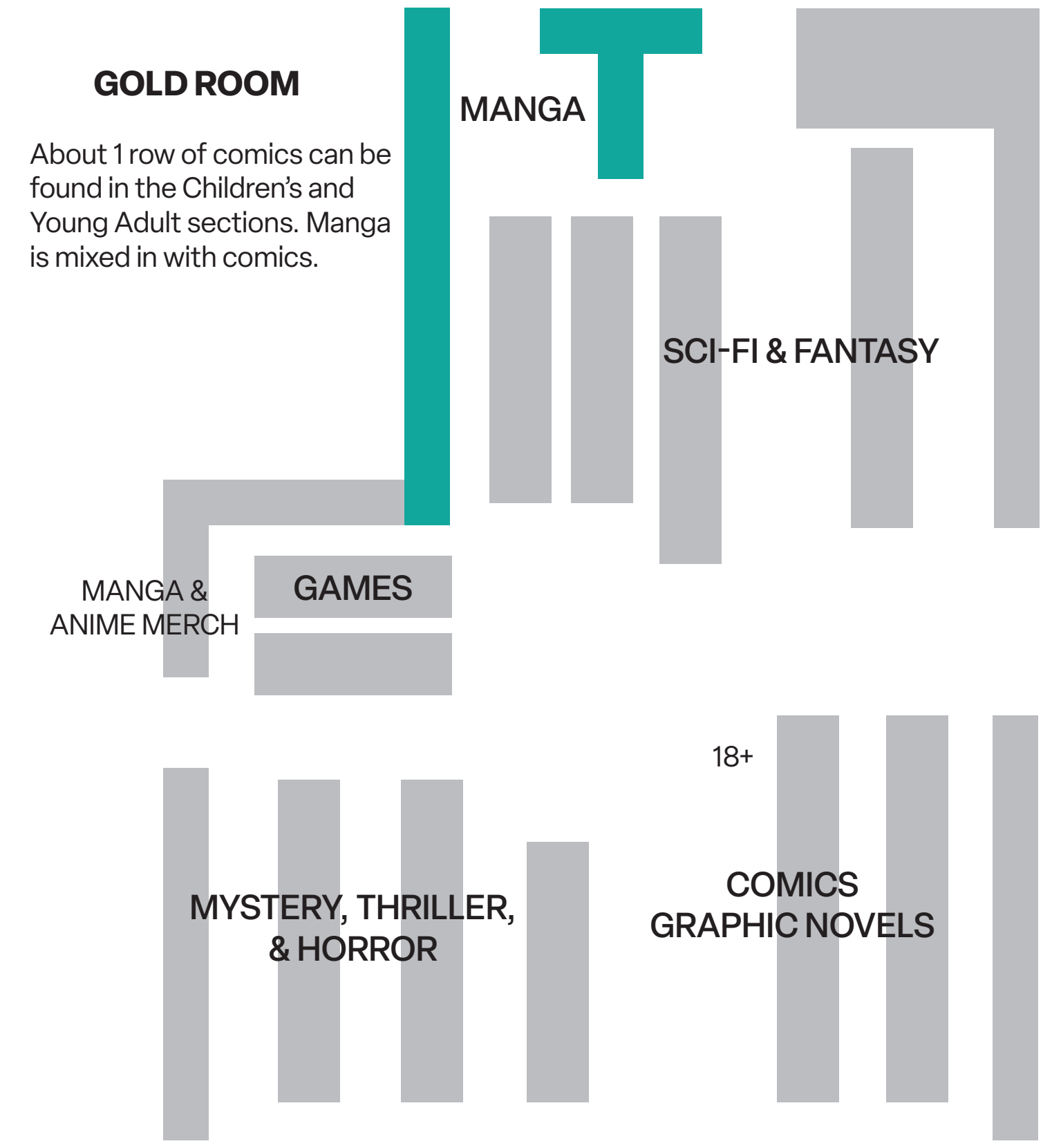
POWELL'S
Before November

- Separation based on age, labels for yuri and yaoi
- Closest to Comics/Graphic Novels
- 2 end cap displays for comics that include manga



POWELL'S
After November

- No more separation for yuri and yaoi
- Around twice the number of bookcases
- Includes a manga display area with Staff Picks



RESULTS

DIFFERENCES ACROSS BOOKSTORES:

- **Age/Gender**
 - **Japanese categories separate based on age and gender (shonen, shojo, seinen, and josei)**
 - None of the bookstores separated based the gender of intended audience
 - Books with Pictures and Powell's mixed teen and children/all ages manga with comics
 - Kinokuniya and Barnes and Noble do not
- **Displays**
 - **Common displays include new releases**
 - Barnes and Noble (Clackamas) and Kinokuniya had the most display tables/end caps
 - Books with Pictures and Powell's had the least
- **LGBTQ+ Books**
 - **Japanese categories exist for yuri/GL and yaoi/BL**
 - Powell's separated, but doesn't following the November rearrangement
 - Kinokuniya and Books with Pictures do
 - Barnes and Noble doesn't, but both had LGBTQ+ or pride themed displays
- **Light Novels, Manhwa, and Manhua**
 - **All bookstores treated manga-adjacent books differently**
 - Barnes and Noble (Clackamas) and Kinokuniya labeled light novels, manhwa, and manhua
 - Barnes and Noble (Tanasbourne) separated light novels, but didn't label
 - Powell's did not separate
 - Kinokuniya separated light novels and danmei
 - Books with Pictures separated manhwa, but didn't label

CONSISTENT AMONG BOOKSTORES:

- **All stores shelved manga A-Z by series title**
 - In contrast to A-Z by author last name
- **All stores restricted access to 18+ content**
 - Barnes and Noble wrapped
 - Powell's locked in a case
 - Kinokuniya wrapped all manga
 - Books with Pictures shelved in a separate section
- **All stores used displays and shelf talkers** to highlight certain series, usually emphasizing themes, popularity, or anime adaptations.

CONCLUSION

There is no standard method for how to categorize manga (or manga-related titles) in bookstores. The primary variations occur among age/gender, displays, LGBTQ+ books, and light novels, manhwa, and manhua. Common methods of reaching readers include displays and shelf talkers. Interestingly, all bookstores varied in their approaches, likely to fit the needs of their audience and based on their scale and specializations. The intention of these findings is to help bookstores make their decisions around shelving manga thoughtfully.

Further Research

- Surveying current and new readers of manga to see how shelving systems impact their bookstore experience
- Analyzing metadata (BISAC or THEMA codes, labels for genre/theme) to see how that impacts placement
 - With a special focus on GL, BL, and/or age
- Comparing U.S. to bookstores in Japan or other countries

REFERENCES

Dahlan, Hadi Akbar. "The Publishing and Distribution System of Japanese Manga and Doujinshi." *Publishing Research Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (December 1, 2022): 653–64. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-022-09919-9>.

Johnson-Woods, Toni. *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*. New York, UNITED STATES: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2010. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/psu/detail.action?docID=601796>.

Kalen, Elizabeth. *Mostly Manga: A Genre Guide to Popular Manga, Manhwa, Manhua, and Anime*. Genrelecting Advisory Series. Santa Barbara, Calif: Libraries Unlimited, 2012.

Rich, Danielle. "The Institutionalization of Japanese Comics in US Public Libraries (2000–2010)." *Journal of Graphic Novels & Comics* 4, no. 1 (June 2013): 134–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21504857.2012.747975>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Kathi Inman Berens, Book Publishing Program, and all bookstores visited!

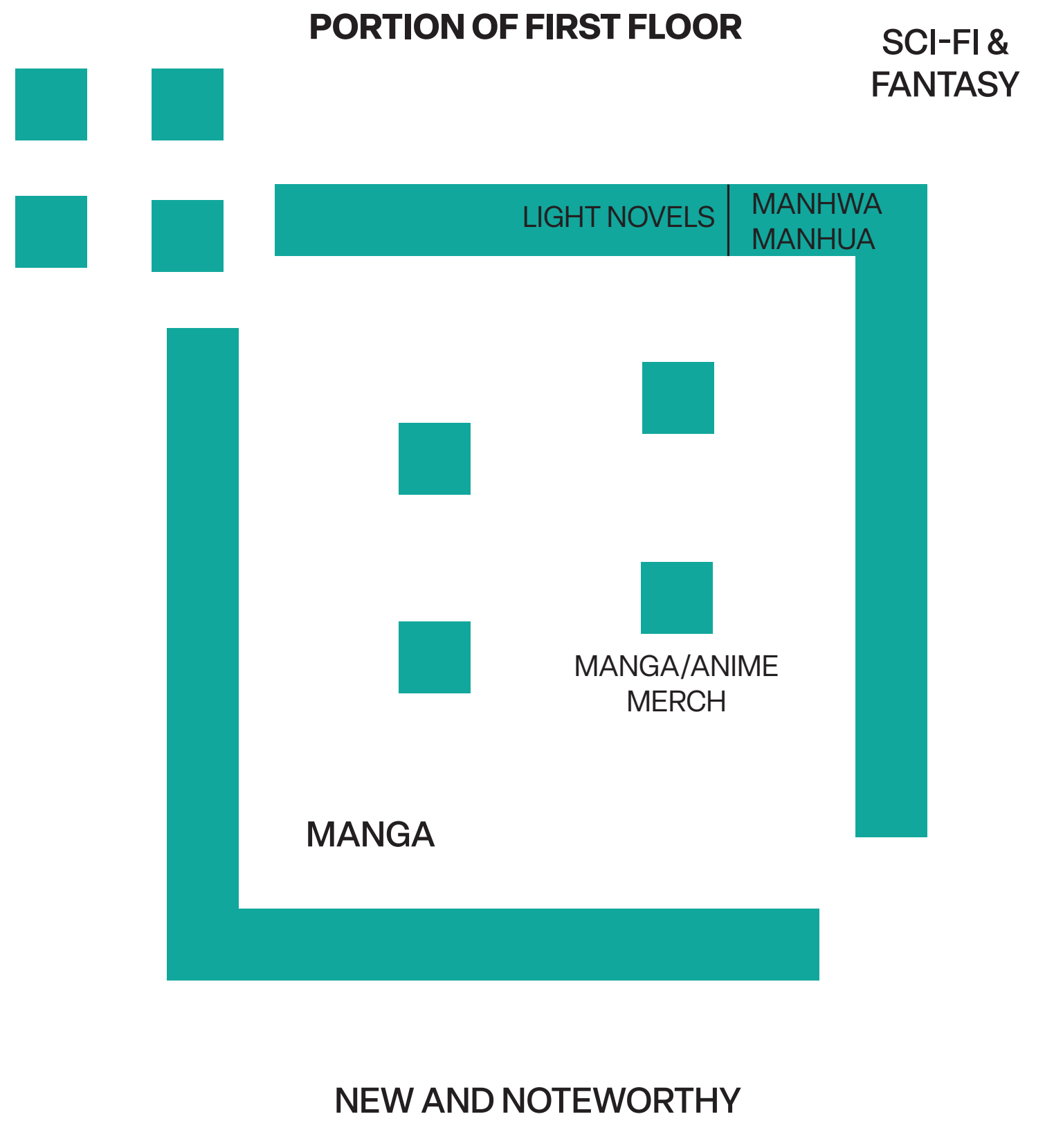
CONTACT

Claire Curry
cc34@pdx.edu
clairecurry.wordpress.com

BARNES AND NOBLE

Clackamas Location

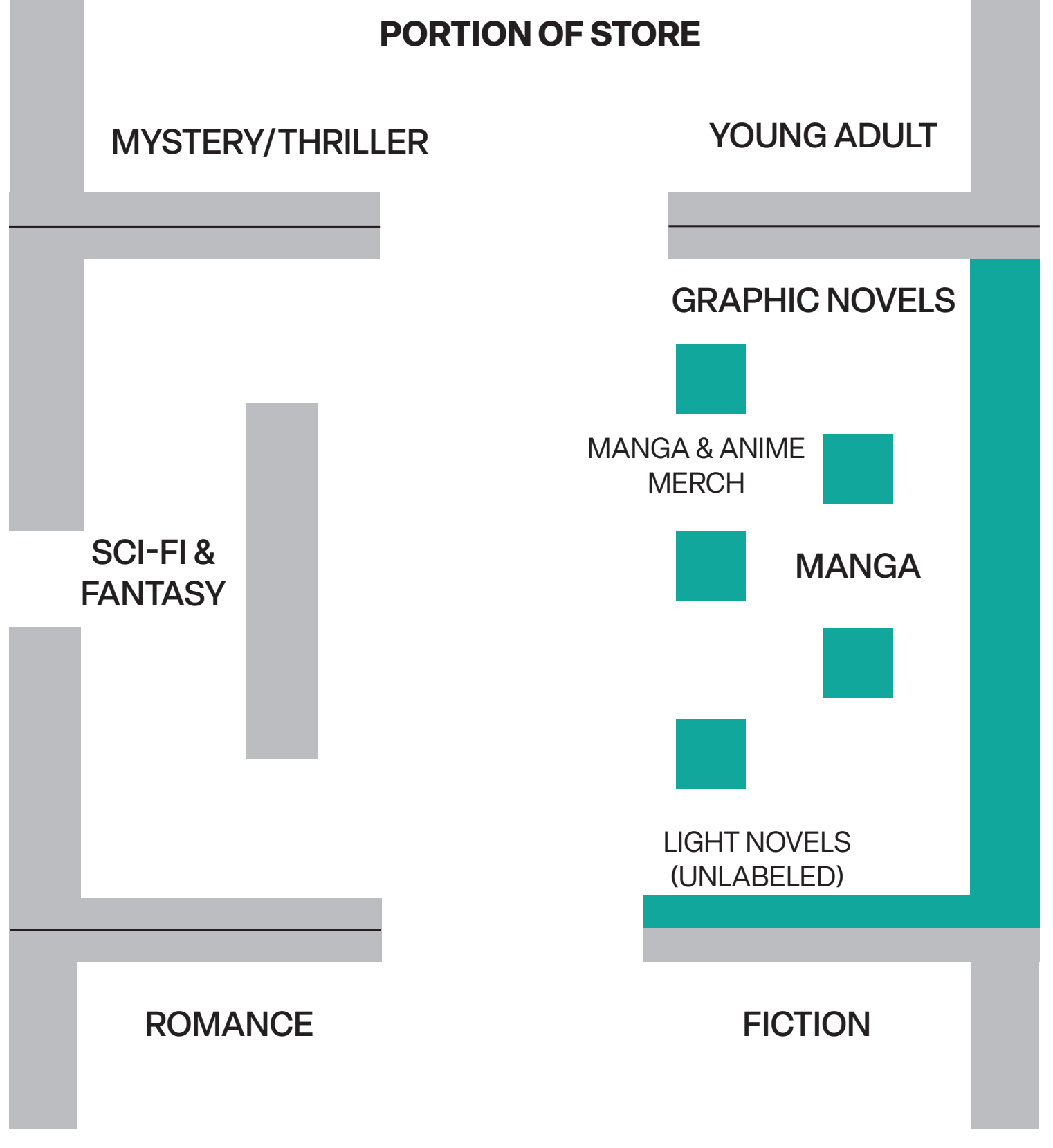
- 14 display tables or end caps
- 84 shelf talkers
- Separate labels for light novels, manhwa, & manhua



BARNES AND NOBLE

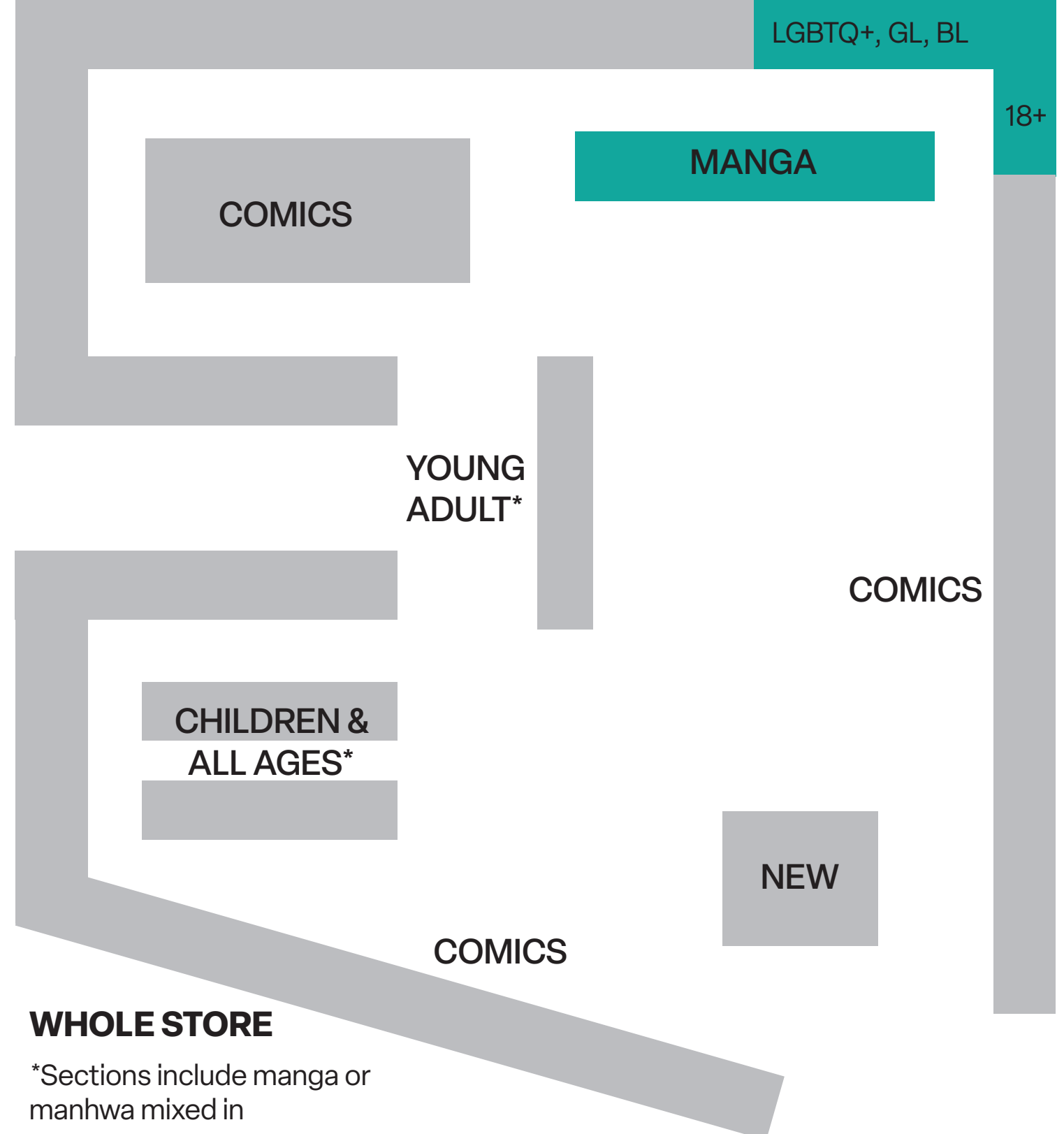
Tanasbourne Location

- 37 of the 48 shelf talkers were by "John"
- Light novels were separate but unlabeled
- No LGBTQ+ separation, "Read with Pride" table



BOOKS WITH PICTURES

- Separate and labeled LGBTQ, BL, and GL shelves
- All ages manga mixed in children's sections
- Manhwa mixed in with YA, similar themes



KINOKUNIYA

- Only store to carry Japanese manga
- Separation between LGBTQ+, Yuri, BL, & Danmei
- Displays include end caps, highlights, and new

