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# Manga in Bookstores

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# Manga in Bookstores

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May 2024



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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, manga has seen a surge in popularity. This research seeks to provide insights into the role of manga in U.S. bookstores and its implications for reader discovery. Through observations at bookstores in the Portland area, including Books with Pictures, Kinokuniya, Powell's, and Barnes and Noble, it was examined how manga is presented to readers. Factors considered include manga's physical placement in the store and surrounding sections as well as shelving methods and categorizations like genre labels, particularly for manhwa, manhua, and light novels. Display tables, end caps, and shelf talkers also demonstrate a unique way for bookstores to present their books to potential readers. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of manga's placement within bookstores by comparing and contrasting these methods of shelving.

## 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

For the past several years, the sale of manga has been rapidly increasing. 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."<sup>1</sup> Research by Kathi Berens and Rachel Noorda shows that 59% of Gen Z and Millennials would prefer to read the graphic novel version of a text.<sup>2</sup> Given this growth in popularity and interest, many bookstores are stocking manga for the first time or needing to adapt their current method to meet demand. These bookstores operate as places of discovery for readers. Berens and Noorda also state that 31% of Gen Z and Millennials discover books in brick-and-mortar bookstores. However, this presents new challenges for bookstores in the U.S. that are learning how to shelve manga. They must both help guide new readers and understand the genre conventions long-time manga readers may be familiar with. There are few standards for shelving manga. Series will generally be sorted A-Z by title but, from store to store, there is often variety in placement based on age, genre, and themes. During the course of this research, multiple bookstores rearranged their manga sections, which indicates that this is a topic that bookstores are currently contemplating.

I was motivated to research this topic because of my own experiences browsing the manga in bookstores. When I started reading manga, I was surprised to see both the differences in shelving across bookstores and the lack of separation by age or genre in some cases. It could be challenging to find specific titles or

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1 Aoki, Deb. "Manga Is Booming."

2 Berens, Kathi and Noorda, Rachel. "Gen Z and Millennials..."

overwhelming to browse without knowing where or what to look for. This challenge felt especially noticeable in stores with minimal separation or displays. It took a while to learn ways to look at the cover art, spine, and title to determine genre and themes. I hope that this will contribute to bookstore's and publisher's understanding of manga and help them reach readers.

This research will look at 5 bookstores in Portland, Oregon to explore how manga is shelved in bookstores. These 5 stores will be compared to see what methods are used for shelving, what categories or separations occur based on age or genre, and what has the potential to aid or inhibit discovery for readers.

## Manga in Bookstores & Libraries

Library research focuses on navigation, usability, and consistency.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> Manga is especially interesting to consider as a unique format and translated title with preexisting genre conventions.

In terms of the discoverability of manga in bookstores, this research hopes to touch on these questions: Are bookstores trying to reach new readers or offer suggestions to existing manga readers? How do their shelving methods convey their goals?

## Manga & Genre

To discuss shelving and the influence of genre, it's important to address how genre functions in manga. One of the particularly interesting things about manga is the way genre is discussed in the U.S. While there are similar categories such as fantasy, history, action & adventure, and more, there are ways of categorization that are unique to manga. The first is by age and gender of the intended audience. The four main categories include shonen which is manga for teenage boys, shojo for teenage girls, seinen for young/adult men, and josei for young/adult women.<sup>5</sup> This is similar to the distinction in the U.S. between adult and young adult.

There are also some additional unique genres & terminology for manga.<sup>6</sup> Some of these genres come

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3     Maker, Richard. "Finding What..."  
4     Hider, Philip, and Barbara Spiller. "Fiction Genres..."  
5     Kalen, Elizabeth. *Mostly Manga...*  
6     See Glossary for terminology and definitions

## BISAC CODES FOR MANGA

### Comics & Graphics Novels /

#### Manga /

General

Action & Adventure

Crime & Mystery

Dystopian

Erotica & Hentai

Fantasy

Food

Historical Fiction

Horror

Humorous

Isekai

LGBTQ

Light Novel

Magical Girl

Mecha

Media Tie-In

Nonfiction

Romance

School Life

Science Fiction

Sports

Supernatural

Yaoi

Yuri

from tropes and themes that come up in Japanese manga that do not have the same presence in American comics. These genres include magical girl, harem, mecha, and slice of life. Occasionally, some genres will retain the original Japanese term. For example, isekai, yuri, and yaoi are all Japanese words commonly used in American manga spaces.<sup>7</sup>

BISAC codes are a method of categorization that informs booksellers of where to place titles in their stores. As of 2023, there are the 25 BISAC codes for manga.<sup>8</sup> Some of these codes refer to genre categories that are the same as those commonly used in the US like fantasy, dystopian, crime & mystery, etc. This list of BISAC codes includes several of the genres Kalen has noted as “unique to Asian Graphic Novels” such as magical girl, yuri, yaoi, and isekai.<sup>9</sup>

Something in this list to note is that light novels are included here. This particular code stands out here because light novels are primarily text and do not contain panels, though there may be illustrations. Light novels often contain similar themes and tropes to manga. In fact, it’s common to find manga versions of light novels and vice versa.

## METHODS

In order to learn more about how manga is shelved in bookstores, I visited 5 bookstores in Portland, Oregon during November 2023. This method means that I will not be collecting data about a large number of bookstores or regions. Instead, I will be focusing on just a few stores and closely looking at their categorization and, hopefully, the themes, ideas, and sorting methods have greater connections outside of this specific region. Additionally, Portland has a robust literary scene with many different types of bookstores located near each other. There are also several anime and manga conventions in the area, so there is a community of active manga readers. These bookstores were selected to observe a variety of specialties and sizes. Bookstores that do not

7 Kalen, Elizabeth. *Mostly Manga...*

8 Book Industry Study Group

9 Kalen, Elizabeth. “Mostly Manga.”

have manga were not included since the goal of this research is to explore how manga is shelved.

These are the bookstores that were visited:

**Powell’s City of Books:**

1005 W Burnside St.

**Kinokuniya:**

829 SW 9th Ave.

**Barnes and Noble - Clackamas:**

12000 SE 82nd Ave

**Barnes and Noble - Tanasbourne:**

11125 NE Evergreen Pkwy

**Books with Pictures:**

1401 SE Division St.

Powell’s City of Books is a local, independent bookstore in downtown Portland, known for taking up several stories and a whole city block. Observations were made before, during, and after the manga section reorganization in November 2023. Additional documentation of the store before the reorganization was gathered using social media photos and videos. Books with Pictures is a Eisner-award winning, local, independent bookstore in SE Portland that specializes in comic books. Kinokuniya is an international bookstore chain that started in Japan that specializes in Japanese and English books.

Barnes and Noble I’ve noted two locations for Barnes and Noble. Recently, under new management, “new stores get a near-total makeover: brighter paint, lighter wood, a new layout. Bookshelves get arranged not in rows of alphabetical stacks but in thematic nooks.”<sup>10</sup> One of these thematic nooks includes comics, graphic novels, and manga. I intended to bring in a comparison of the older and newer Barnes and Noble stores. Another element of Barnes and Noble’s new system is that they are not allowing paid placement and directing individual stores to customize their stores for the local audience. The comparison also allows for observations to be made about the store’s set up and intended audience. Barnes and Noble Tanasbourne (B&N Tanasbourne) is located in the suburbs and was recently remodeled. Barnes and Noble Clackamas (B&N Clackamas) is located in a mall and, a few years ago, moved their manga to a more central location in the store.

Overall, this variety in bookstores is to get a sense of how factors like their size, specialization, and location can impact the way that they categorize manga. While this paper will not be focusing on the store’s

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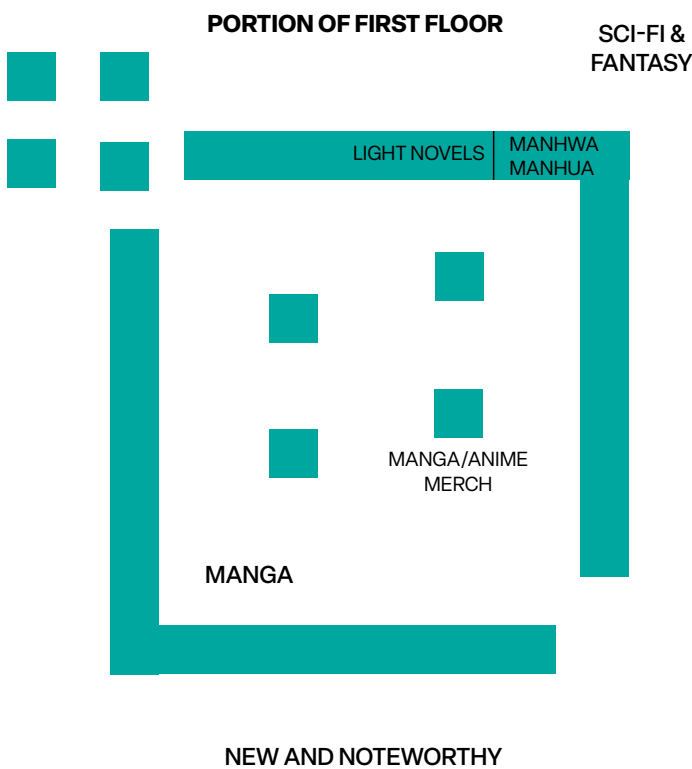
10 Selyukh, Alina. “How Barnes & Noble...”

specializations and other differences, it is important to gather a variety because their approach to shelving will differ based on their intended audience.

At each bookstore, I took pictures and tracked information in a spreadsheet. This sheet includes columns for date visited, directional signage, surrounding categories, location in the store, estimated number of books, sorting method, display tables and end caps, shelf talkers, separation and labels within manga, and other related merchandise.<sup>11</sup>

### B&N Clackamas Highlights

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



### DATA

#### BARNES AND NOBLE (CLACKAMAS)

B&N Clackamas has their manga in the center towards the back of the first floor of the store. This store had the most display tables and end caps for the following categories: Don’t Miss These Titles; Horror Manga; MXTX - Mo Xiang Tong Xiu (A danmei light novel author); First in Series; Junji Ito (a horror manga author/illustrator); One Piece; Romance; LGBTQ+ manga; Delicious Manga Titles; Now You’ve Watched It, Read It; New and Notable; Webtoons; My First Manga, and Start Something New. This is particularly notable because the B&N Tanasbourne had only 4 display tables. Location and readership are clearly a major influence in shelving as opposed to the newness of the store.

Part of Barnes and Noble’s new model allows stores more freedom to meet the needs of its local re-

gion. This seems to indicate that B&N Clackamas sees more manga readers in comparison to B&N Tanasbourne.

There were 26 bookcases with 4 shelves for manhwa, 1 for manhwa, and a little over two cases for light novels. All of these were labeled as such. There were about 84 shelf talkers. Similarly to the other Barnes and Noble, there was merchandise like Studio Ghibli section, figures, plushies, games, and box sets being sold as well.

11 see Appendix, Figure 1



## BARNES AND NOBLE (TANASBOURNE)

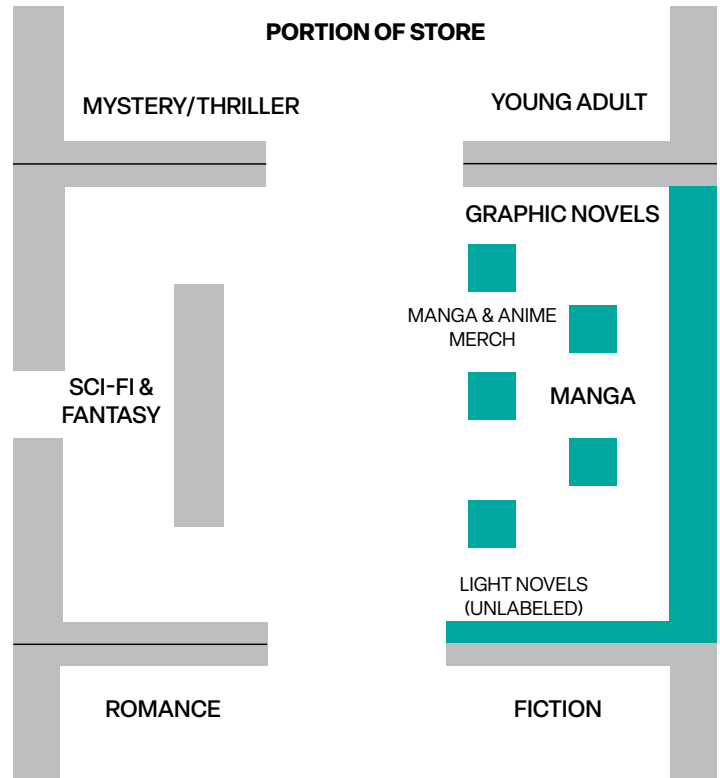
Newly remodeled Barnes and Nobles have “nooks” for different genres. Upon walking into the store, the magazine nook is on the left, fiction to the right, and new releases in the center. Once headed in the direction of fiction, several other nooks become visible including romance, sci-fi/fantasy, and manga. This Barnes and Noble shelves manga to the middle, right side section of the store. Manga shares a nook with graphic novels, which is surrounded by Young Adult to one side and fiction to the other. Nearby are mystery/thriller, romance, science fiction, and fantasy. Other sections have subcategories/signage. The science fiction nook, for example, has signs that read “Science Fiction & Fantasy” and “A-Z by Author.” No subcategories/signage exists for manga.

Display tables show romance, manga (with a bow), read with pride, and first in series. Manga there is no separate section for manga with mature content, instead it’s wrapped in plastic so it can’t be read without purchase.

Light novels are separated from manga, though there is no indication on the shelf of the transition from manga to light novel. The books go A-Z manga then A-Z light novel with the transition between the two happening mid-shelf with no marker. There were 45 shelf talkers, with 37 of them written by “John.” Other merchandise that Barnes and Noble sells includes art books, figures, plushies, box sets, and games.

### B&N Tanasbourne Highlights

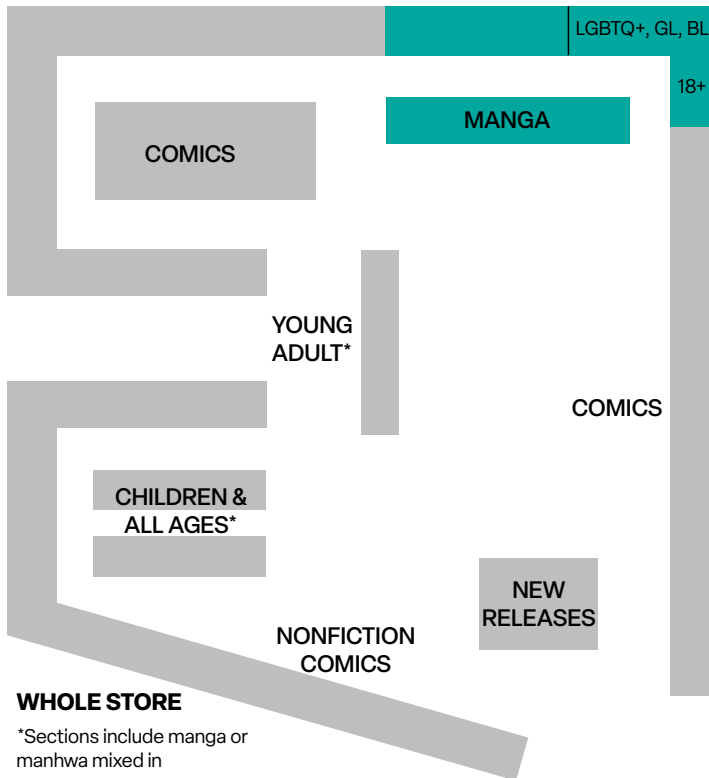
- 14 display tables or end caps
- 84 shelf talkers
- Separate labels for light novels, manhwa, & manhua




Manga at B&N Tanasbourne

## Books with Pictures Highlights

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



## BOOKS WITH PICTURES

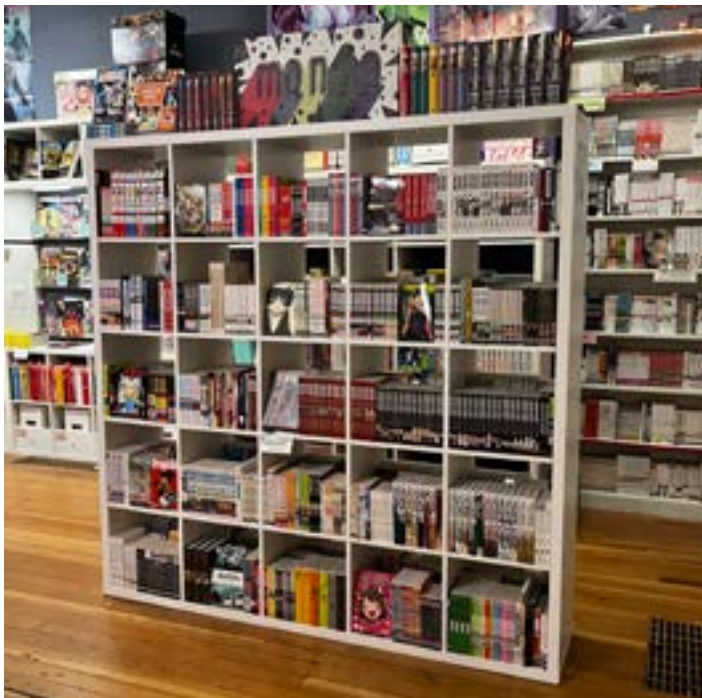
Books with Pictures is a local comic bookstore. They have signs above their Children, Young Adult, and Manga sections. Their manga is shelved in the back corner of the store. They have a general section that takes up 3 cases. Their fourth shelf has LGBTQ+ Manga, Girl's Love Manga, and Boy's Love Manga. LGBTQ+ manga takes up 1 shelf, GL manga takes up 3 and a half shelves, and BL takes up 2 and a half shelves. A sign with GL on one side and BL on the other side divide the shelf with both GL and BL. A smaller case nearby has “ Sexy, Smutty, Racy, Graphic” books with a portion of manga taking up about half of the shelves.

In addition to the section for manga, there are some all-ages manga found in the Children's section, new releases, and 30% off section. According to the store owner, mixing all ages manga in the Children's section is meant to aid discovery for younger readers. There's also manhwa shelved in the Young Adult section since many of the themes and content align with that category.<sup>12</sup> Books with Pictures had two shelf-talkers in the manga section and no other merch or light novels.

## KINOKUNIYA

Kinokuniya has their manga stored in the middle of the first floor of the store. About half of their books are English Manga. They also have at least three rows of Japanese Manga. There is one row for BL, Yuri, & LGBT books. This includes half a shelf for English

<sup>12</sup> Informal interview with Books with Pictures owner, Katie Pryde



Manga at Books with Pictures

Books (LGBT) with the other half of the shelf occupied by yuri & BL light novels, LGBTQ books, and danmei. One shelf has yuri manga further broken up by English comics (Yuri) and Japanese comics (Yuri). The third shelf of the row has boy's love manga with both English comics (BL) and Japanese comics (BL). One row includes their Manga Highlights. They also have New Books with rows for English books, Japanese books, and Children, comics, and cook books.

Kinokuniya also has frequently changing end caps with pins, keychains, and manga, shelf talkers, and a lot of other merchandise including plushies, figures (3D and acrylic standees), art books, DVDs, pins, keychains, and more.

## POWELL'S CITY OF BOOKS

What's particularly notable about Powell's is that they rearranged their manga section in the Gold Room during the process of this research, during the week of November 13th. The descriptions of Powell's books focus on the Rose Room and the Gold Room before and after the reorganization. Also, note that Powell's has a small section of mostly used Japanese language manga in their Languages section in the Red Room.

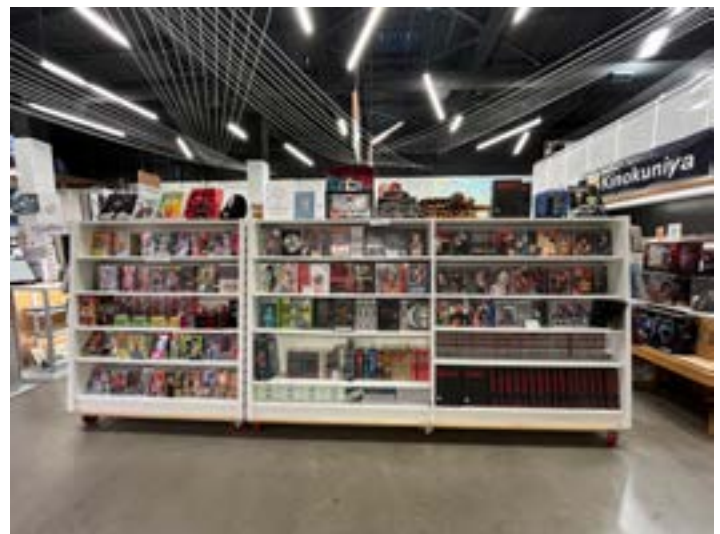
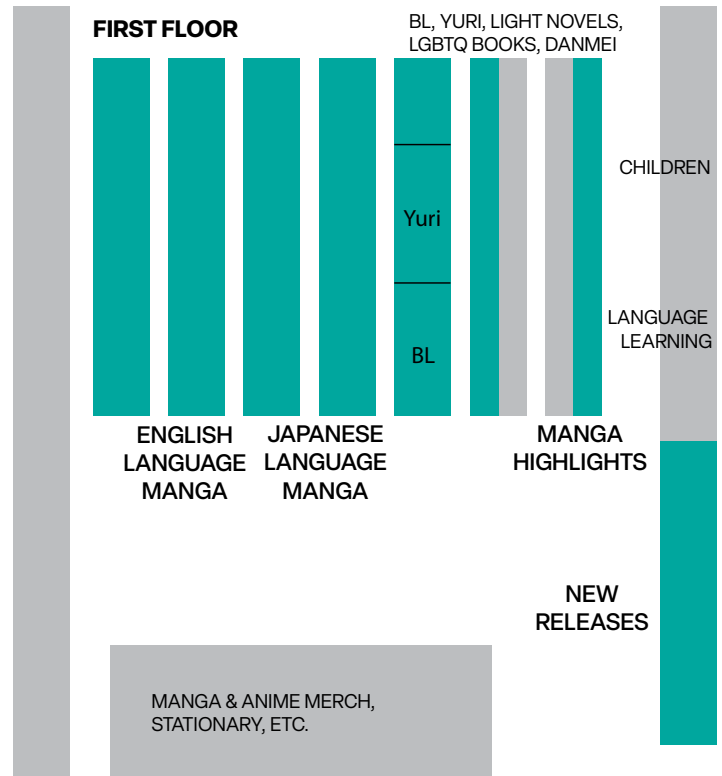
### Rose Room

Manga is included in two sections in this room: teens and all-ages. In both sections, manga is included with comics and graphic novels. It is not separated further.

The teen section mentions "Find Graphic Novels for All Ages in aisles 628-629 of this room" and to "Find Graphic Novels and Manga for older readers in aisles 313-316 of the Gold Room." A sign in all ages says to "Find Graphic Novels for Teens in aisle 646 of this room."

## Kinokuniya Highlights

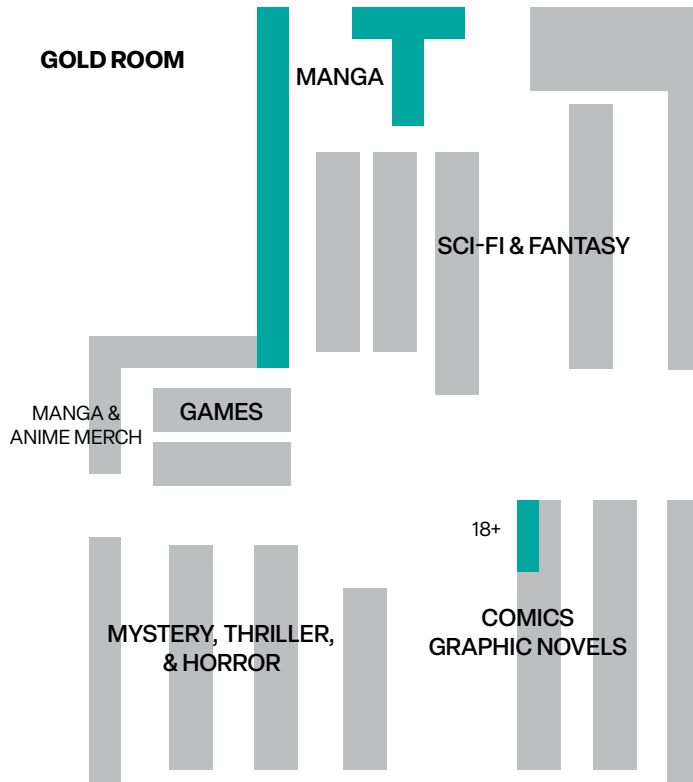
- Only store to carry Japanese language manga
- Separation between LGBTQ+, Yuri, BL, & Danmei
- Displays include end caps, highlights, and new



Manga at Kinokuniya

## Powell's Before Highlights

- 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 Highlights

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



Manga after the rearrangement process at Powell's

## Gold Room

### Before

Manga is shelved in the corner, next to graphic novels and across from sci-fi/fantasy. There were about 8 cases with 1 shelving yuri & yaoi, labeled as such. There is no separation between yuri and yaoi within this section. Booksellers were told that it was separated because readers looking for that genre would want specifically that genre and it would allow them to find it easily.<sup>13</sup> Endcap displays include Graphic Novels for Beginners, New + Recommended Graphic Novels. These displays feature graphic novels and include manga.

Other signage includes two handwritten notes. One says “We have hentai, go to aisle 317 in the locked case.” Their 18+ material takes up 2 shelves in a locked case in the Gold Room with other 18+ comics and graphic novels. This section did not change during the rearrangement. The other sign reads “Are you looking for: Bleach, Naruto, One Piece, Sailor Moon, Fruits Basket, and more” and directs people to the Gold room.<sup>14</sup>

### After

Manga is shelved along the back wall and wraps around the elevator and stair area. Now, there are 16 shelves for manga, which is double what it used to be. A bookseller mentioned that they previously had too much manga in overstock or back rooms,

<sup>13</sup> Informal interview with Rachael Phillips, bookseller at Powell's.

<sup>14</sup> Powell's Books (powellsbooks), “A sneak peak...”

but that it was selling very well.<sup>15</sup> The rearrangement allowed much more space for manga. While there was previously a section for yuri and yaoi, the new arrangement includes those books with all the others with no separation. There is an additional display that was showcasing Staff Picks. The handwritten signage was replaced with updated printed signs directing people to another aisle in the gold room for hentai or the rose room for teens and all-ages manga.

## ANALYSIS

There are a few things in common across all stores. They all sort A-Z by series or title and their general manga sections are not sorted by subgenre. In comparing these 5 bookstores, each has different ways of reaching readers and shelving manga. Each store approaches the subject of age; displays; treatment of yuri, yaoi, and LGBTQ+ books; and manga-adjacent books differently. Across the stores, these elements stood out.

### Age and Gender

Age rating can typically be found on the back of books. While each publisher has their own way of labeling, the general groupings include children/all ages, teens, and adult/mature. Quite a few publishers like Yen Press, Seven Seas Entertainment, and Viz Media break up the teen categories for younger and older teens. In Japan, there are not usually labels unless the content is explicit because the labels shonen, shojo, seinen, and josei indicate age.<sup>16</sup>

Both Books with Pictures and Powell's mix manga in with teens or all-ages comics and graphic novels. Manga for these age groups is separated from general manga, but manga is not separated from comics within the teen or all-ages section. Books with Pictures does this to increase discoverability so that teen and younger readers interested in comics can easily find manga. Because of Powell's division based on age, people browsing may find themselves needing to go between rooms and there is potential for series to be accidentally split up between rooms. While Books with Pictures and Powell's separated based on age, Kinokuniya and both Barnes and Nobles didn't; manga for all age groups are together. All stores do have methods meant to ensure that minors don't have access to the 18+ manga.

In Japan, books are sorted based on the age and gender of the intended audience. None of the bookstores visited separated books based on gender for the intended audience. Book with Pictures specifically does not follow this system to avoid enforcing gender expectations.<sup>17</sup> It's possible that the other bookstores do not follow the Japanese system for a number of reasons. Their audience may be unfamiliar with the Japanese terminology and genre system. Additionally, US bookstores generally do not use a system based on gender.

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15 Informal interview with Rachael Phillips

16 Danica Davidson. "What Do Manga Age Ratings..."

17 Informal interview with Katie Pryde, Books with Pictures owner

## Displays

All of the stores visited use book displays or end caps to highlight certain books and to aid discovery. For manga, this creates a way to showcase certain books based on author, genre, theme, trope, or popularity. The most common display types were new and popular books. These displays can provide insight into the audience bookstores are trying to reach. For example, display tables with first in series or popular books can be especially helpful for new readers who don't know where to start.

Barnes and Noble is an especially interesting example since stores have more variety from location to location. B&N Clackamas had a higher number of displays with 14 display tables and end caps. Their displays highlighted My First Manga, Delicious Manga Titles, and MXTX's books (a popular danmei author), You've Watched It, Now Read It, and more. The B&N Tanasbourne store had fewer displays and they were oriented towards newer readers. B&N Tanasbourne displays include Romance, Manga, Read with Pride, and First in Series.

Powell's included staff picks on the first shelf, but the theme of this changes periodically. Manga is also included in the New and Recommended Graphic Novels and Graphic Novels for Beginners endcaps.

Books with Pictures incorporates manga into the new and popular sections with other comic books. While this is the store with the least displays, it's also the smallest store visited so there isn't as much space for displays.

Kinokuniya has display tables with manga and merchandise throughout the store. They also have end caps on both ends of all shelves. These usually feature a collection of books such as independently published, a series with some merchandise like pins or keychains, or music.

Shelf talkers are also present at all the stores and usually highlight notable themes, if it has an anime, popularity, or tropes. At the B&N Tanasbourne, there were 45 shelf talkers, and 37 of them were written by one person named John. This seems to indicate that there's one employee who recommends manga. The most unique shelf talker was at the B&N Clackamas and referenced a joke within the Demon Slayer fandom that a character named Muzan looks like Michael Jackson. This shows that their employees and audience are likely involved in fandom and are established manga readers.



Food-themed display at B&N Clackamas



Shelf talker by John at B&N Tanasbourne



GL Manga signage at Books with Pictures



Yuri Manga signage at Kinokuniya



Read with Pride display at B&N Tanasbourne

## Yuri, Yaoi, and LGBTQ+

Yuri, Yaoi, and LGBTQ+ manga is separated at Kinokuniya, Books with Pictures, and Powell’s before the reorganization. It’s interesting to consider the reasons for and against separation. If separated, those looking for manga in these categories can easily find what they’re looking for. However, it means that readers who don’t look in those sections won’t see those titles. Additionally, there’s an aspect of ambiguity to the genre itself where the characters are implied to be LGBTQ+ or are Queer-coded and/or characters may not consider themselves LGBTQ+ or use labels.<sup>18</sup> It can make it challenging to determine what is or isn’t yuri or yaoi.

While conversations about censorship, book bans, and the content of these books are outside of the scope of this research, it is possible that these topics and debates influence store’s shelving decisions. It is interesting to note the anticipated audience for these books, as “BL is only tangentially connected with the lives of actual gay men. To the contrary, in Japan BL is generally assumed to be created and consumed by hetero-

sexual girls and women.”<sup>19</sup> There can also be assumptions that yuri and yaoi are sexually explicit.<sup>20</sup> Though, as with other romance genres, there can be mature content, yuri and yaoi are not inherently sexually explicit.

Books with Pictures and Kinokuniya have separation between yuri, yaoi, and LGBTQ+ books. In general, Kinokuniya has the most separation among their BL, Yuri, & LGBTQ Books with a label for English Books (LGBT) with sub-labels for Yuri & BL Light Novels, LGBTQ Books, Danmei; a label for Yuri Manga with sub-labels English Comics (Yuri), Japanese Comics (Yuri); and a label for Boy’s Love Manga with sub-labels for English Comics (BL), Japanese Comics (BL). On the labels for these sections, both Books with Pictures and Kinokuniya include a short explanation and visuals to convey meaning with two women together or the lesbian flag.

B&N’s have display tables with certain queer books highlighted, but they did not separate based on this category. For example, the B&N Tanasbourne had a display table called “Read with Pride” and the B&N Clackamas store had “LGBTQ+ Manga” both with rainbow imagery on the signage.

18 Fanasca, Marta. “Tales of Lilies...”

19 Mark J. McLelland. *Boys Love Manga...*

20 Book Trade. “Dedicated Issue...”

Powell's used to separate yuri and yaoi. Trainees were told that the separation was because those looking for yuri or yaoi were often looking specifically for those books.<sup>21</sup> After the store was rearranged, yuri and yaoi were no longer separated from other manga titles.

## Light Novels, Manhwa, and Manhua

This section addresses books similar to and often grouped with manga. Manhwa, and manhua have similarities with manga in that their readership often overlaps, similar tropes are found, and they are translated from Asian languages. Light novels have similar tropes and themes to manga, usually include a few illustrations, and can sometimes have manga counterparts. While they are similar, stores differ in how they shelve these types of books. This section seems to be the strongest indicator of stores trying to reach those familiar with manga. Those types of readers will likely be more aware of the differences between manga, manhwa, and manhua or looking specifically for a light novel. Newer readers might not be familiar with what the differences are.



B&N Clackamas labels for manga-adjacent sections

B&N Clackamas includes these books near manga because readers of manga will likely be interested in light novels, manhwa, and manhua. There are clear labels on the shelf indicating those types of books. One shelf is half manhwa and half manhua. There are about two shelves for light novels. This store also has displays for MTMX and webtoons. B&N Tanasbourne has manhwa and manhua mixed in with manga. There are about one and a half shelves for light novels. Light novels start immediately after Z-titled manga, but transition is not indicated by a label. At Books with Pictures, manhwa is shelved with YA because a lot of the themes overlap



B&N Tanasbourne showing the unlabeled transition from Z-manga to O-light novels

between manhwa and YA. Manhwa is also not manga, so she didn't want to shelve them together since they're not the same.<sup>22</sup> Powell's has light novels, manhwa, and manhua and it's all mixed in with the manga. There is no separation or labels to distinguish between them. Kinokuniya have separate labels for light novels, manhwa, and danmei.

21 Informal interview with Rachael

22 Informal interview with Katie Pryde



## Similarities

Among all these considerations, there are a few things that were consistent across all stores. They all shelve A-Z by series title, in comparison to A-Z by author's last name. This is common among comics and manga where there may be multiple contributors such as the author and illustrator.<sup>23</sup> There was restricted access to 18+ content. Barnes and Noble wraps their 18+ manga in plastic. Kinokuniya wraps all their manga and has signs for books with mature content. Powell's has a cabinet that needs a store employee to unlock. Books with Pictures has a specific shelf with multiple signs that let people know the shelf contains comics with mature content. All stores also use displays and shelf talkers, though stores differ based on space and intended audience. In general, manga is placed close to YA, comics, or sci-fi/fantasy in stores where those genres are present.

## 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. An example of this can be seen in the differences between B&N Tanasbourne with displays geared towards newer readers and Kinokuniya with more specialized labels and division among manga. 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 browsing experience
- Analyzing metadata (BISAC or THEMA codes) to see how that impacts placement, especially around yuri and yaoi or age
- Comparing U.S. to bookstores in Japan or other countries
- Continual study of store changes such as rearrangements or displays

## GLOSSARY

**Manga:** Japanese comic books and graphic novels considered collectively as a genre

**Manhua:** Chinese graphic novels

**Manhwa:** Korean graphic novels

**Shonen:** Manga for teenage boys

**Shojo:** Manga for teenage girls

**Seinen:** Manga for young/adult men

**Josei:** Manga for young/adult women

**Isekai:** A subgenre of portal fantasy that revolves around a displaced person or people who are transported to and have to survive in another world, such as a fantasy world, virtual world, or parallel universe.

**Hentai:** A subgenre of Japanese manga and anime characterized by overtly sexualized characters and sexually explicit images and plots.

**Girl's Love/GL/Yuri:** Yuri (Japanese for lily) also known as girls' love and its abbreviation GL, is a genre of Japanese media focusing on relationships between female characters.

**Boy's Love/BL/Yaoi:** Yaoi, also known as boys' love and its abbreviation BL, is a genre of fictional media originating in Japan that features relationships between male characters.

**Danmei:** A Chinese genre of literature and other fictional media that features relationships between male characters. Note: This is the Chinese equivalent of yaoi and both are also referred to as BL. There is a yuri equivalent (bǎihé), but it is not as popular.

**Light Novel:** A type of popular literature novel native to Japan, usually classified as young adult fiction targeting teens to twenties. Light novels are commonly illustrated in a manga art style and are often adapted into manga and anime.

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## APPENDIX

### PHOTOS

All photos can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1u0gngdZODiS7twGXX36jTR1JgBWTN48k?usp=sharing>

### FIGURE 1

Figure 1 can also be viewed here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WWV9KCUud6h-HZIP5ronPYX8HP67GrOnkZlHTR9Na2U/edit?usp=sharing>

	B&N Clackamas	B&N Tanasbourne	Books with Pictures	Kinokuniya	Powell's (Rose Room)	Powell's (Gold Room)	Powell's (Gold Room)
<b>Date Visited</b>	11/12	11/12	11/12	11/16	11/14	Before week of 11/13	After week of 11/13
<b>Signage</b>	No directional signs	No directional signs	Large Manga sign	Large signs above the shelves - not accurate (layout shifted since pandemic), arrow-shaped labels on shelf for current categories	Sign above shelf	when entering gold room and above shelf, reads "Manga, Yuri/Yaoi, alphabetical by series"	when entering gold room and above shelf, reads "Manga"
<b>Surrounding categories</b>	Ya graphic novels fantasy new and noteworthy	Mystery thriller, romance, science fiction, fantasy, ya (to the left), graphic novels, fiction (to the right). All other are surrounding	Comics	Children's, Stationary, Merch, Language Books	Young Adult, All Ages	Next to comics and graphic novels, across from sci-fi and fantasy	next to sci-fi and fantasy
<b>Location in store</b>	First floor center	Right side of the store	Back corner of the store	First floor, back of the store	Rose room, Young Adult Section in asile 646, All ages in 628/9	Gold room, 313 corner	Gold room, 310, 311 side
<b>Books per shelf</b>	50	50	20 70 20	45	50	50	50
<b>Shelves per case</b>	7	8	25 6 5	5	8	8	8
<b>Bookcases</b>	26	17	3 (cube-style) 1 (shelf) 1 (small cube-style)	42	4	8	16
<b>Estimated total of books</b>	9100	6800	2020	9450	1600	3200	6400

	B&N Clackamas	B&N Tanasbourne	Books with Pictures	Kinokuniya	Powell's (Rose Room)	Powell's (Gold Room)	Powell's (Gold Room)
<b>Sorting method</b>	A-z by title	A-z by title	A-z by title	A-z by title	A-Z series	A-Z series	A-Z series
<b>Display Tables &amp; End Caps</b>	Table displays: don't miss these titles, horror manga, MXTX (Mo Xiang Tong Xiu), first in series, junji ito, one piece, romance, lgbtq+ manga, delicious manga titles; you've watched it, now read it; new and notable, webtoons, start something new, my first manga	Table displays: romance, manga, read with pride, first in series	Manga included in New Releases and other recommended display areas	End caps with manga and other merch	N/A	End-cap displays include Graphic Novels for Beginners, New +Recommended graphic novels and have manga included.	Staff picks in addition to end-cap displays include Graphic Novels for Beginners, New +Recommended graphic novels and have manga included.
<b>Shelf Talkers</b>	Yes 84 shelf talkers	45 shelf talkers. 37 by John	1 per shelf	1-3 per shelf	0-4 per shelf	35	0-4 per shelf
<b>Categorization methods and labels on shelves</b>	light novel and manhwa and manhua section with manga and labeled, 18+ manga is wrapped	18+ manga is wrapped.	General, LGBTQ+, BL, GL, 18+. No light novels.	<b>English manga. Japanese manga. BL, Yuri &amp; LGBTQ Books:</b> English Books (LGBT): Yuri & BL Light Novels, LGBTQ Books, Danmei. Yuri Manga: English Comics (Yuri), Japanese Comics (Yuri). Boy's Love Manga: English Comics (BL), Japanese Comics (BL). <b>Light Novels:</b> Light novels in English. Manga Highlights. <b>New books:</b> English Books, Japanese Books. Manhwa.	Teens/All-ages, Teen section has signs that direct older readers to gold room or all ages aisle. All-ages aisle has sign that tells teens where to find graphic novels	General (7 cases), Yuri & yaoi (4 shelves, no distinction between yuri and yaoi)	No separation for yuri and yaoi titles or light novels.

	B&N Clackamas	B&N Tanasbourne	Books with Pictures	Kinokuniya	Powell's (Rose Room)	Powell's (Gold Room)	Powell's (Gold Room)
<b>Other related merchan- dise</b>	Art books plushies, fig- ures, light novel author sections	Art books, figures, plush- ies, box sets, webtoon stuff, light novels are separate but there's no indication of when that starts (A-Z manga, then A-Z light novels)	None	Art books, plush- ies, figures (vinyl and acrylic), keychains, pins, box sets, etc	Not in this section, see Gold room	Backpack, plushies, key- chains, hats	Backpack, plushies, key- chains, hats