



GCD Conventions Committee Report for 2014

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Grand Comics Database

"I mostly like to travel and volunteer because I get antsy if I stay in my comfort zone for too long." - Eden Sher

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Committee Objectives

The Grand Comics Database (GCD) Board of Directors authorized the creation of the Convention Committee on November 21, 2013. The scope and responsibilities of the Conventions Committee included:

1. Identify the conventions the GCD may want to appear
2. Recruit volunteers for the conventions
3. Lay out a program that encompasses both a floor presence and presentation
4. Develop a budget
5. Define success metrics
6. Track and manage convention appearances
7. Advertise convention appearances

At the end of each convention season, the committee is required to submit a final report detailing the convention season and answering the basic questions of:

- Was the cost worth it?
- What lessons can be applied to future projects?

Identify Conventions & Recruit Volunteers

The most persistent challenge the Convention Committee faced was finding volunteers from within the GCD membership. Ultimately, the convention committee only attracted 26 members to support the growing outreach efforts throughout the year.

Bob B	Convention	Handouts	Shops
Brian L	Support		Shops
Daniel N	Conventions	Handouts	
Derek R	Support		Shops
Fred B			Shops
James L		Handouts	Shops
Jerry H	Convention		
Jochen G	Support	Handouts	
Ken A		Handouts	
Kirk H			Shops
Lionel E			Shops
Lou M	Conventions	Handouts	Shops
Matt G	Conventions	Handouts	Shops

Mike N	Convention	Handouts	
Miki A		Handouts	Shops
Peter H		Handouts	
Ramon S	Conventions		
Ray B	Conventions		Shops
Rik	Conventions		
Robert K	Support		
Sean P		Handouts	Shops
Shad D		Handouts	
Steven R	Convention		
Tony R	Convention		
Vik-Thor R			Shops
Will A	Conventions		

Convention Booths

The committee's primary goal of running a booth and panel started with a list of 30 shows within the United States. That list was whittled down to four conventions that could be supported by more than one member. In addition to the non-member support at each of these conventions, the committee relied heavily on volunteers to provide material that was used at each show: Brian L, Derek R, Jochen G, and Robert K.

Convention	Dates	Members (9)	Non-Members (5)
Planet Comicon <i>Kansas City, MO</i>	March 14-16, 2014	Mike N, Jerry H, Tony R, Will A	Carrie N, Katie R
Awesome Con <i>Washington, DC</i>	April 18-20, 2014	Daniel N, Ray B	Rachel H, Samantha N
Heroes Convention <i>Charlotte, NC</i>	June 20-22, 2014	Bob B, Daniel N, Steven R, Will A	Becca N, Rachel H, Samantha N
Baltimore Comic-Con <i>Baltimore, MD</i>	September 5-7, 2014	Daniel N, Lou M, Ray B	Becca N, Rachel H, Samantha N

The GCD Convention Committee would like to thank Windmill Comics (Ramon & Rik), Boardman Books Direct (Matt G) and Tony Isabella for donating a space at their respective booths.

Booth Space Provided by Windmill Comics		
Apr 13	Tweede Grote Internationale Signeerdag	Aarschot, Belgium
May 4	Stripfestival Knokke-Heist	Knokke-Heist, Belgium
May 31-Jun 1	Stripdagen Haarlem	Haarlem, Netherlands
Aug 16	Kamper Stripfestival	Kamper, Netherlands
Aug 30-31	Brabants Stripspektakel	Valkenswaard, Netherlands
Oct 11-12	Stripfestival Breda	Breda, Netherlands

Booth Space Provided by Boardman Books Direct		
Sep 13	Memphis Comic Expo	Memphis, TN

Booth Space Provided by Tony Isabella		
Oct 26	Cleveland Comic Con	Cleveland, OH
Oct 31-Nov 2	Wizard World Ohio Comic Con	Columbus, OH
Nov 8-9	Akron Comicon	Akron, OH
Nov 21-23	Grand Rapids Comic-Con	Grand Rapids, MI

Convention Handouts

In April, the committee extended the convention coverage by asking for member volunteers to hand out GCD bookmarks other shows and conferences.

Convention Handouts			Members
Apr 5	Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art (MoCCA) Arts Fest	New York City, NY	Lou M
Apr 6	Raleigh Comic Book Show	Raleigh, NC	Bob B
Jun 1	Long Beach Comic Expo	Long Beach, CA	Ken A
Jun 8	SuperNoVA Comicon	Fredericksburg, VA	Dan N, Miki A
Jun 13-15	Denver Comic Con	Denver, CO	Miki A, Shad D
Jun 19-22	Internationaler Comic-Salon	Erlangen, Germany	Jochen G
Jul 11-13	London Film & Comic Con	London, UK	Peter H
Aug 29-Sep 1	Dragon Con	Dragon Con, GA	James L
Oct 8-11	DCMI International Conference on Dublin Core and Metadata Applications	Austin, TX	Sean P
Oct 16	Society of Tennessee Archivists	Memphis, TN	Matt G.
Oct 19	Cleveland Comic , Card & Nostalgia Show	Cleveland, OH	Sean P
Oct 25	Iowa Comic Book Club I-CON	Des Moines, IA	Mike N

Comic Shop Handouts

In September, the committee further extended the outreach effort by asking for member volunteers to hand out GCD bookmarks at their local comic book shops.

Members					Non-Members	
Brian L	Fred B	Lionel E	Miki A	Vik-Thor R	Fanfare Sports & Entertainment	Queen City Comic & Cards
Bob B	James L	Lou M	Ray B			
Derek R	Kirk H	Matt G	Sean P			

Convention Booth Design & Panel Program

Conscious of the limited GCD resources, the Conventions Committee kept the design minimal. The committee first focused on presenting the GCD website at each convention, but the cost of electricity, internet access and machines equaled (and sometimes exceeded) the cost of the booths. The biggest debate within (and subsequent controversy outside of) the committee surrounded the question of running a smaller number of shows with the websites or a larger number of show without the website. The committee determined the primary objective was to reach a wider audience. Optimistic that more members would volunteer to run a booth as the year progressed, the committee opted for no internet service.

Banners

The committee ordered two 3' x 5' banners from Crown Awards. The first banner was used at Planet Comicon in Kansas City and then mailed to the East Coast for Awesome Con DC, Heroes Convention, and Baltimore Comic-Con. A second banner was ordered for the Memphis Comic Expo and the Society of Tennessee Archivists.



T-Shirts

The committee ordered 40 shirts for the volunteers of each of the outreach efforts. The design from HippieBoy Design closely follows the banner.

Members				Non-Members	Gifts
Banks R.	James L.	Mike N.	Shad D.	Becca N.	George & Tony Entertainment Show
Bob B.	Jerry H.	Miki A.	Steven R.	Carrie N.	
Brain L.	Jochen G.	Peter H.	Tony R.	Katie R.	Roy Thomas
Chris B.	Ken A.	Ramon S.	Vik-Thor R.	Rachel H.	
Craig	Kirk H.	Ray B.	Will A.	Samantha N.	
Daniel N. (x2)	Lionel E.	Rik			
Derek R.	Lou M.	Robert K.			
Fred B.	Matt G.	Sean P.		Remaining:	3 t-shirts

Bookmarks

The committee designed and ordered 7,500 bookmarks.


Convention Booths (1,100)	
200	Belgium & The Netherlands
150	Planet Comicon
200	Awesome Con
200	Heroes Convention
200	Baltimore Comic-Con
150	Memphis Comic Expo

Convention Hand-Outs (650)	
50	MoCCA
50	Raleigh
50	Long Beach
50	Fredericksburg
100	Denver
50	Erlangen
50	London
150	Dragon Con
50	STA
50	I-CON

Comic Shop Hand-Outs (5,350)			
100	Brian L.	200	Lou M
600	Bob B.	50	Matt G
300	Derek R.	300	Miki A
300	Fanfare Sports & Entertainment	300	Queen City Comics & Cards
300	Fred B	300	Ray B
100	James L	600	Sean P
300	Kirk H	300	Tony I
400	Lionel E	300	Vick-Thor R

NOTE: 1,000 bookmarks remain


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Discuss Comics!
Develop Software!

QR Codes & Table Images

Members of the committee developed a few more items for the table. Different methods were used (at volunteer expense) to display each of these.

- Robert K designed six images that were displayed at each of the conventions
- Derek R designed QR Codes for each convention that linked users with smart phones to special creator checklists designed by Jochen G.

www.comics.org/creator_checklist/name/<CreatorName>/country/us/

- Daniel N designed a "Tech Help Wanted" ad and provided business cards
- Ray B designed a "We want you" indexer ad

Panels & Conference

Members of the Grand Comics Database also hosted a panel at two conventions and presented at a conference this year.

Researching Comics with the Grand Comics Database

Location: Planet Comicon KC

Date: March 15, 2014

Presenters: Will A & Tony R

Researching Comics with the Grand Comics Database

Location: Heroes Convention

Date: June 21, 2014

Presenters: Will A, Bob B & Steven R

Bam! Kapow! Preserving Comic Books & Why Research in Them Anyway

Location: Society of Tennessee Archivists

Date: October 16, 2014

Presenter: Matt G

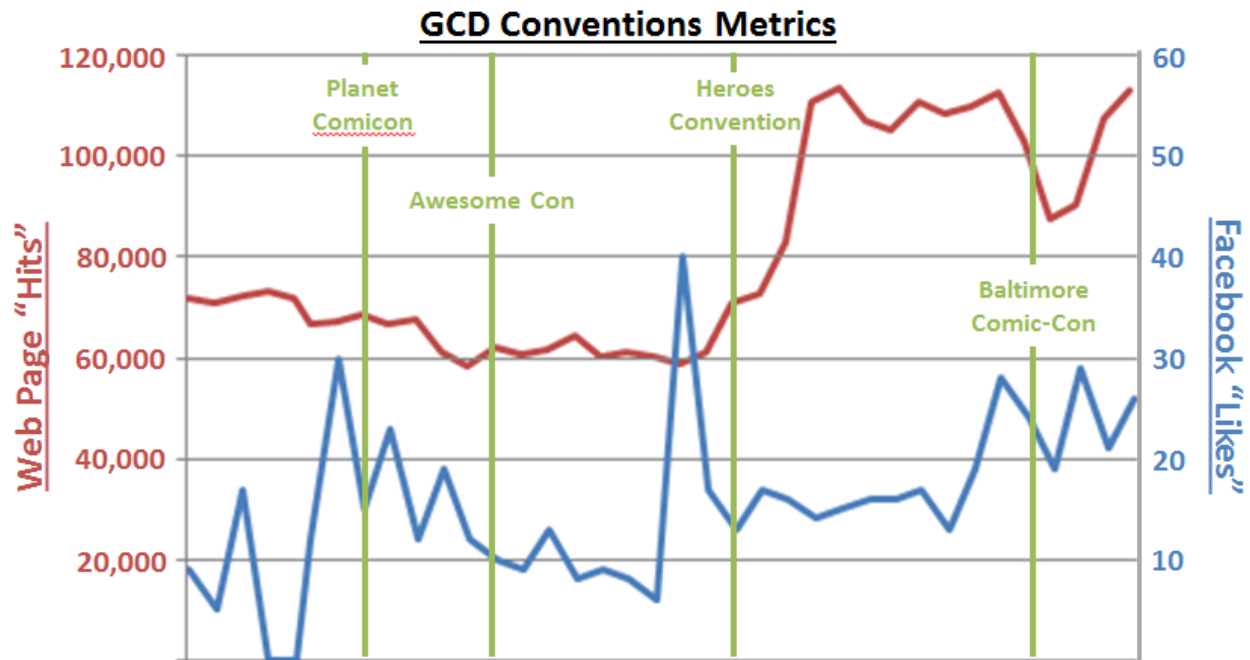
Budget

The GCD Board of Directors vote on January 9, 2014 set the Convention Committee budget at \$4,500. The higher amount was requested in anticipation of additional convention appearances. The committee was able to stay well within the defined budget.

Payee	For	Amount
Planet Comicon KC	Artist Alley Booth	\$185.00
Awesome Con DC	Artist Alley Booth	\$450.00
Heroes Convention	Artist Alley Booth & Extra Badges (2)	\$360.73
Baltimore Comic-Con	Artist Alley Booth & Extra Badges (2)	\$280.00
Dragon Con	Membership	\$100.00
Crown Awards	Banners (2) & Shipping	\$167.95
HippieBoy Design	T-Shirts (40) & Shipping	\$396.04
HippieBoy Design	Bookmarks (7,500) & Shipping	\$141.37
Daniel N	Mailing t-shirts & bookmarks	\$200.75
Total:		\$2,281.84

Define Success Metrics

The Convention Committee and the GCD Tech Team were unable to find metrics that would adequately capture the effectiveness of the Convention effort. The following chart shows two gross indicators: weekly GCD Web Page “hits” (in red) and Facebook “Likes” (in blue) between 29 January and 5 October. The numbers are not regional enough to make clear correlations, and there is an unexplainable jump in the GCD Web Page hits between 15 June and 13 July that cannot be attributed to conventions.

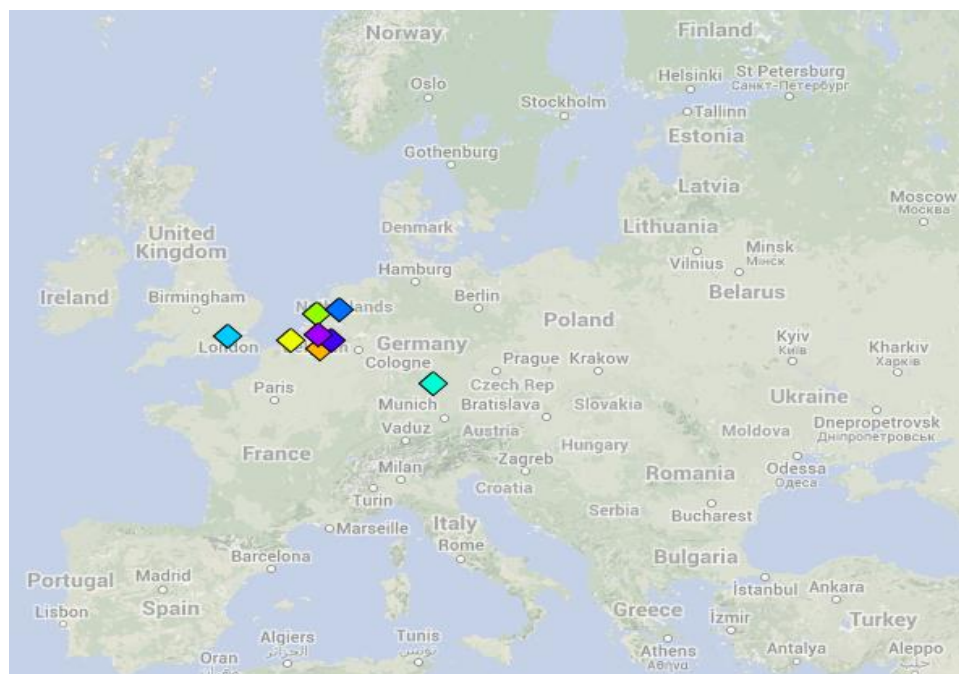
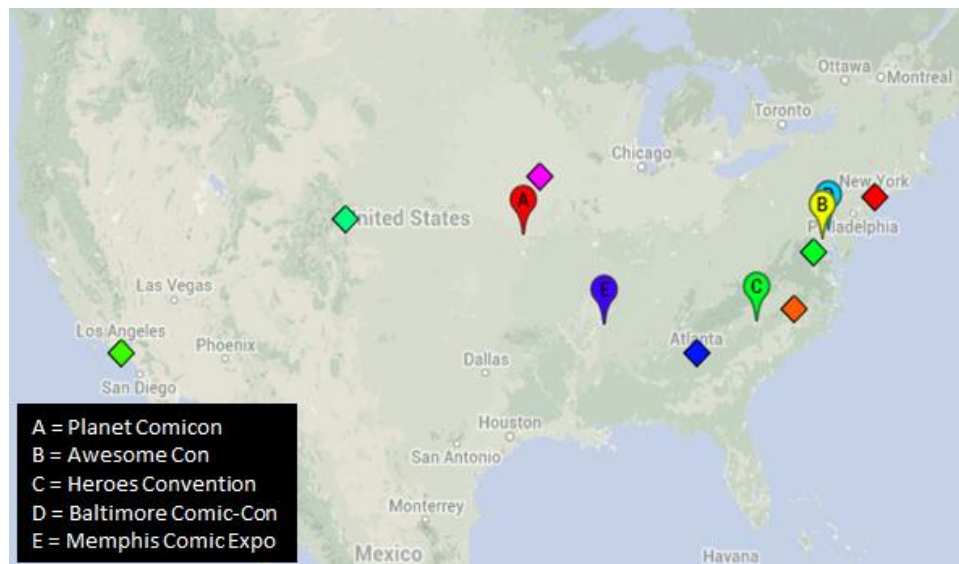


The Convention Committee experienced success in attracting potential tech support to the GCD. Many software developers and engineers expressed interest at the convention booths, but four of those talents reached out to the Tech Team after the show: Alex S (Awesome Con), Greg B (Awesome Con), Brandon Y (Heroes Convention) and Conrad S (Baltimore Comic-Con).

The Convention Committee was also able to initiate some solid business relationships that the GCD management team could further develop. Those preliminary contacts included the George & Tony Entertainment Show (Awesome Con), Cerulean Spark Inc (Heroes Convention) and ComiCase (Heroes Convention).

Track and Manage Convention Appearances

The Conventions Committee maintained a Google Sites page to keep GCD members informed of convention activities. The site (<https://sites.google.com/site/gcdconventions>) included information on upcoming conventions, a blog of lessons learned by members in the field, the running view of the metric indicators, links to each convention, commonly used files and a map of the shows attended (see below).



Advertise Convention Appearances





The **Grand Comics Database** is your source for comic information!

The GCD is a free, non-profit, collaborative database created and maintained by international volunteers dedicated to indexing every comic ever published in the world.

By the fans - for the fans, the GCD has become one of the largest comic databases online, but we still need your help:

- Contribute to the database
- Donate time as a software developer
- Join our online discussions

Help celebrate our 20th Anniversary and meet some of our volunteers at these 2014 conventions:

- **Heroes Convention** (20-22 June)
- **Baltimore Comic-Con** (5-7 September)
- More dates to be announced!

 Find us on Facebook  @GCDComics

 Email: contact@comics.org



www.comics.org

Primary advertisement was through the social media sites (Facebook, Google+ and Twitter). The social media team of Christopher B, Ralf H, Lionel E and Daniel N ensured that events were created, updates posted and convention pictures published.

An *Alter Ego* ad supplemented the advertisement campaign. This updated ad appeared in issues

- *Alter Ego* #124 (May 2014)
- *Alter Ego* #125 (Jun 2014)
- *Alter Ego* #126 (Jul 2014)
- *Alter Ego* #127 (Aug 2014)
- *Alter Ego* #128 (Sep 2014)

The Conventions Committee was able to extend a "Thank You" (and a GCD T-shirt) to Roy Thomas for the free quarter page advertisement space he provides the GCD in every issue of *Alter Ego*.

Member Opinions

The Conventions Committee was not set-up or run like a traditional GCD committee. Membership to the committee was not defined by who joined but by who participated – 28 in total. I asked each of them two questions:

- (1) Do you think that the 2014 Outreach effort was worth the time and money?
- (2) Would you be willing to help in the outreach effort in 2015?

One member choose to be evasive in answering the questions saying that he would vote with the Board rather than his committee colleagues. The implication was clear and resulted in the Chairmen of the Conventions Committee to step down from that role.

The response from the remaining was 21 members was overwhelmingly positive answering “yes” to both questions. The following reflects the comments from those many of those members.

Mike N

I was involved with the first one, Planet Comicon, along with Jerry Hilligas, Tony Rose and Will Allred (did I forget anybody?), along with several GCD members who attended the show and stopped by the table.

I know I thought we were prepared and quickly realized that we were not. We were able to communicate where we thought we had problems to Daniel and the next group to help them improve their experience. Things like building a stand to get our banner up above the table, and having a more dynamic display. I think you guys really built on the things that we discovered at Planet Comiccon.

I don't want Planet Comicon to sound like a disaster, far from it. We talked to many people. I felt like most of the people that understood what indexing was were already familiar with us. Met some that had indexed a few books for us, or submitted some error reports over the years. I think we re-energized some of those folks.

Another thing that came out of Planet Comicon was speaking to Paul Kupperberg, who said he uses us almost daily. This lead to connecting on Facebook, and posting on the Charlton Neo and Charlton Arrow Facebook pages, where I have met a lot of old-time fans who love the GCD, and introduced it to others by reposting our Facebook birthday posts there for Charlton creators. Several of the people there have posted original art and gotten credits to me for the GCD for some Charlton books. None of that would have happened without having gone to Planet ComiCon.

There is an intangible but concrete benefit to finally meeting fellow GCD people face to face.

Also the whole current movement to get bookmarks out to comic shops has grown out of the work laid by the convention committee.

Didn't the whole blog (that we need to try to keep moving forward) come out of discussions that started amongst the convention committee members? I remember Tony and I spending a lot of time talking about the blog idea in KC.

Ray B

Without hard data, I would speak more in the lines of anecdotal evidence. I believe the conventions had a net positive. I think we gained a few indexers and general outreach to the comics community as a whole.

Got to meet long time GCD members to which had only been just names before. I like to think we got some help on the tech side, though I believe we initially dropped the ball after Awesome Con by not being more open and helping to the volunteer tech help that indeed inquired about the group. Perhaps as it ended we overcame some of that, I hope.

We learned the verbiage, which helped us better explain ourselves and get our message out to those who did not understand what we were about. I think the bookmarks are something that works and gets bodies to the website.

The challenges. Continue to keep membership and the Board on track to keep the momentum going. Keep pushing for more tech help. Get more of our new indexers onto the discussion lists so they continue to feel invested in the community as a whole. And embracing new mediums.

And future such events should continue "pressing the flesh". It pays off on many levels.

James L

I was surprised by the number of comic fans that did not know about the GCD. For that reason I think our presence was worthwhile.

Lou M

It made us visible, got us some tech volunteers (even if we couldn't keep them) and got us looking at new partnerships and energized our members. I enjoyed the outreach. It was great to interact with other people involved in this crazy hobby that we all love. I just wish I could have committed more time and effort to it.

Steven R

Not being sure of the cost, I can only say that yes, the conventions seemed beneficial. Certainly a lot of people had not heard of us. We need to continue to use the terms free and non-profit.

Hadn't planned to go to a con in 2015, but apparently they do small cons in La Cruces NM, which is sorta local - I possibly can go there and put out bookmarks. It will be back to HeroesCon NC in 2016.

Sean P

I can't speak directly for the GCD with regards to money, but in my experience any outreach effort is typically worth the cost/time in the long-term. You never know who told a friend who told a friend that might eventually come back as a dedicated community member or a potential business opportunity.

My experience has been pretty positive, everyone I've talked to about the GCD has been receptive so far. Comics fans have different motivations and needs from data (i.e. looking up values, seeing covers, etc.), but I think it is easy for all to see the value.

I hope to be asking for more bookmarks early next year. I'd also like to see the GCD recognized as a significant academic resource for data about comics, especially with regards to libraries and Linked Data, which is my research area.

Robert K

Personally, there was no money involved, other than the show ticket I was going to buy anyway. Others are better positioned to judge about the use of GCD funds. I'm retired, but building those images gave me a chance to do a part of my old job that I have really missed.

Just to make sure to write up the lessons learned about booth presentation and attracting folks to the booth. That way new comers can be well informed even if nobody with previous experience can make that show.

Derek R

Doing the qr codes was fun for me, I always found them interesting. I wish I could have done more, I just had a bad year. My day now consists of work, spend a few minutes with my family and then study until I can't stay awake anymore. I wish I had more time to work on GOD stuff.

I think we need to look into the logistics of selling t-shirts at the conventions as a way to raise more money. Also, possibly talk to some of the creators that use our site to donate some of their time and draw some exclusive artwork (maybe incorporating our logo into it) which we could bind together and sell at the conventions, also as a way to fundraise.

Matt G

I had a blast at both of my events talking up the GCD and I particularly think my presentation for the Society of Tennessee Archivists was well received. Many of the archivists expressed how they felt they could use the GCD at their institutions and the folks from Vanderbilt Special Collections seemed particularly excited about researching their collection of undergrounds.

Ken A

It would have been fun to participate at a convention here in southern California with others from the GCD. I was envious of the support and attendance that was present on the east coast. It sounded like you guys had a pretty good time. That said I wouldn't have wanted to be the sole person, or even main person, to coordinate a presence at one of the local conventions here either. Counting my stop at Long Beach this past year the two times I've been to conventions was overwhelming. If I were able to work with someone who had a better feel for conventions, and comics in general, I would probably consider supporting that type of effort.

Will A

I think it was a great first effort and only see us growing our contributor base by engaging people at conventions.

Ramon S

I think it has increased the awareness about the GCD tremendously. Just yesterday, I was accosted by someone in a comic shop with the question: "aren't you from that database?" Turns it he picked up one of the bookmarks at the Breda con, asked the store owner if he had any experience with the GCD, and they both recognized me from the various cons.

Experiences vary widely. I think it will be hard in The Netherlands and Belgium to be competition to Catawiki. They are huge, have a huge number of volunteer members and have huge pockets. However, the collecting app will help with the US comic collectors, then the European albums and so forth. Already, people start to notice us as the "second database".

Personal contact seems to work best, especially when you can show the database. As internet access at cons is either unavailable or too expensive, the phone app will definitely be a tremendous help with that!

Brian L

I'd like to have been able to do more, but that's entirely a matter of my own circumstances rather than the way things were run. From everything I hear and see (on the lists, Facebook, etc.) a good time was had by those involved and there was successful raising of awareness/visibility.

Bob B

It certainly increased our presence and awareness in the public, but just like I tell my advertising clients, you have to keep doing something or the majority of the public forget if you if you stop doing that. I just think we need to keep doing it. Eventually more people will join the GCD and help out.

As long as my health holds out, I will continue to take bookmarks to conventions and will be happy to help arrange for a booth at Heroescon. Depending on my health, I'll be able to help man the booth and pass out bookmarks there too for at least one day and maybe two days. I certainly the GCD is worthwhile and I think promoting it is very important.