

Communication Using Manga Expression

The 'Exhibition by Manga' pattern and Its Actual Case

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Abstract

In this paper, we delve into the potential of manga as a novel medium for communication. We particularly focus on substituting conventional text-based posters in exhibition booths with manga panels to provide a more engaging and illustrative form of presentation. We will outline the framework of this approach, named 'Exhibition by Manga,' and illustrate its application with specific instances from our experiences, which introduced concepts of "creative society," "generator," and "pattern language." Ultimately, we introduce the concept of 'Mangacy,' which denotes the literacy required for effective manga-based communication, a subject we aim to explore in greater depth.

1. Introduction

From time immemorial, humanity has utilized both drawings and words as mediums of communication. Following the advent of writing, texts and images started being jointly recorded on paper, serving both documentation and communication purposes. Within this publishing culture, the art form of manga arose, characterized by sequences of images that depict time progression alongside accompanying texts.

As a vehicle for storytelling expression, manga has spawned numerous works and has been cherished for its storytelling prowess. Particularly, Japanese manga, alongside anime, has achieved international acclaim, transcending borders to captivate a worldwide audience, thus affirming its significant influence as a form of entertainment.

However, it's fascinating to note that the utilization of manga for non-entertainment purposes has been relatively scarce. Considering manga as a communication tool and delving into its potential represents a promising field of exploration.

This paper seeks to embark on such a journey. Our primary focus is the exploration of manga's feasibility as an exhibition method. Initially, we will introduce a pattern that concisely encapsulates this concept, termed 'Exhibition by Manga,' followed by a discussion of our practical implementations of such exhibitions. Readers of this paper will not only have the opportunity to peruse the exhibited manga but also gain insights into the creative process behind these works. Finally, we introduce a novel concept, 'Mangacy,' which denotes the skill of manga creation.

Now, let us commence by exploring the foundational pattern of this paper.

2. Pattern

Exhibition by Manga

In an exhibition booth targeting a general audience, you aim to convey specific content to visitors.

▼ In this context

Traditional posters, usually textual with occasional illustrations, often fail to capture attention unless the viewer has a particular interest. Amidst rows of booths featuring similar posters, the content, though diverse, may appear too uniform to visitors, reducing their likelihood to engage.

▼ Therefore

Express the desired content through manga to create an exhibition that is both engaging and easy to comprehend. Manga is an expressive medium that tells a story through the actions and dialogues of characters, emphasizing visual elements. Integrate this manga style into your display panels by crafting a brief narrative that communicates the intended message effectively through a combination of imagery and text. Collaboratively developing this with your team, through discussion and refinement, can enhance its impact.

▼ Consequently

Utilizing the appeal of manga, visitors are more likely to interact and read with interest. They will likely grasp and remember the message more effectively within the story's context. Furthermore, in an environment dominated by text-heavy posters, a manga-themed exhibit will stand out, attracting additional attention. Moreover, a space decorated with manga transforms into an exciting and captivating setting.

3. Case

In this section, we aim to showcase the exhibition at Iba Lab's booth during the Open Research Forum (ORF), a public event hosted at the Shonan Fujisawa Campus (SFC) of Keio University, as a case study of 'Exhibition by Manga.'

3.1 Iba Lab Exhibition at ORF2023

Open Research Forum (ORF) is a research exhibition aimed at translating research outcomes into societal impact. Each year, numerous labs present their research findings in various ways. While many labs typically use traditional posters for presentations, Iba Lab took a different approach at this year's exhibition. We used for illustrations and stories instead of using text-based displays to convey their ideas, aiming to engage visitors by evoking imagery. This shift allowed a wider range of attendees, from young children unfamiliar with academic content to elderly members of the community, to grasp and appreciate the exhibition's content. Some visitors remarked, "Even if it's complex, I can understand it through manga." This innovative method extended the understanding of their research to those not usually involved in academic realms.



Figure 1: Iba Lab Exhibition Showcasing 'Exhibition by Manga' at ORF 2023.

3.2 Manga Displayed at Iba Lab Exhibition

Let's proceed to examine the actual manga, represented in Figures 2-4. This manga introduces three concepts: “creative society” (Iba, 2013, 2016), “generator” (Iba *et al.*, 2011; Ichikawa and Iba, 2022), and “pattern language” (Alexander, 1977, 1979; Iba, 2015).

For added clarity, we will include a textual description of the story below. The story begins with a girl named Komari searching for a bag as a birthday present for her friend. Even after looking through online shopping sites, she struggles to find the perfect bag. At that moment, a boy named Gener and a bird named Metar emerge from a drawer, and together, they decide to create a bag. They come from a world called ‘Creative Society,’ where everyone is a creator.

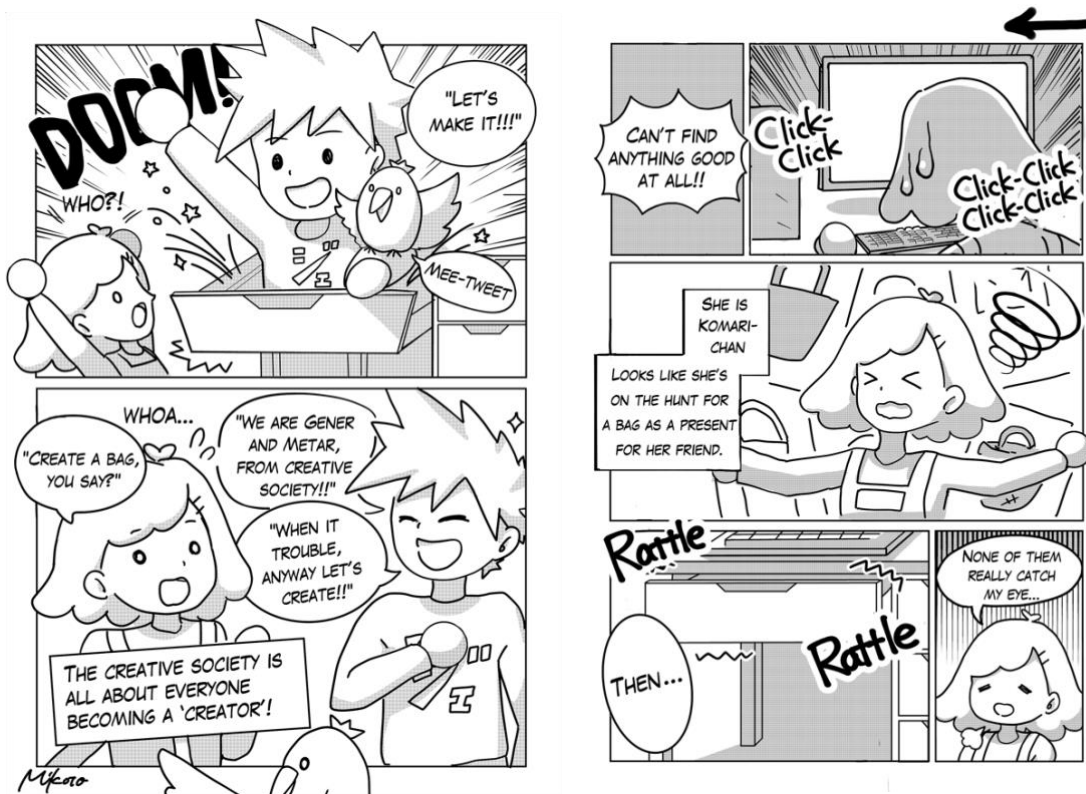


Figure 2: Iba Lab Exhibition Manga at ORF2023, page 1-2.



Figure 3: Iba Lab Exhibition Manga at ORF2023, page 3-4.

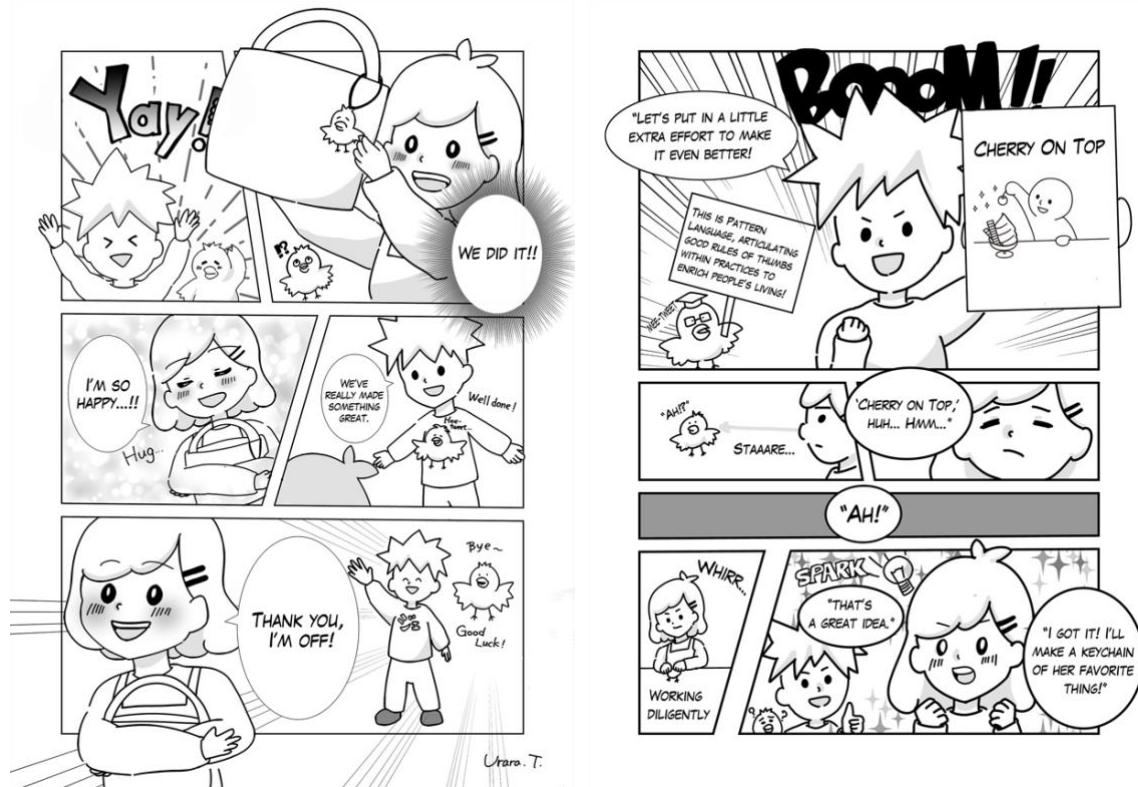


Figure 4: Iba Lab Exhibition Manga at ORF2023, page 5-6.

Komari, initially bewildered, starts making the bag with Gener. Throughout the process, Gener, behaving like a generator, involves Komari in a unique world of creativity. A generator is someone with a distinctive worldview who engages others in the creative process. Komari, being drawn into this generator's world, gradually finds joy in the creative endeavor and becomes more proactive.

When they think the bag is finished, Gener exclaims, "It's not over yet!!!" and presents a pattern called "CHERRY ON TOP." Here, Pattern Language articulates good rules of thumbs to support people's lives. "CHERRY ON TOP" is a tip to adding extra effort to make something even better. In the end, Komari decides to include her friend's favorite keychain in the bag. While creating a gift for her friend with Gener, Komari learns about what is Creative Society.

3.3 Crafting Process of the Manga

This manga is the result of a collaborative effort rather than the work of a single author. Initially, some members drafted character prototypes (Figure 5), refined them through discussion (Figure 6), and crafted the story (Figure 7). Subsequently, the group collectively deliberated on the manga's expression (Figure 8). After producing the first draft, we printed the manga in a large format, allowing fellow lab members to review it from a reader's perspective. They discussed modifications needed to enhance clarity and appeal (Figure 9). This iterative process of refinement was repeated multiple times to strengthen the story' and expressions. Ultimately, three members each contributed the final touches to two pages, culminating in the final piece. In this way, the manga was created through collaborative teamwork (Figure 10).



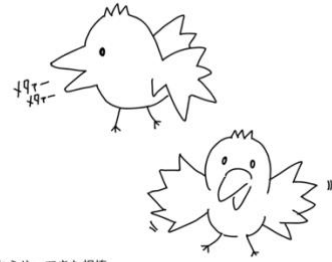
Figure 5: Visual Brainstorming on Characters.

ジェネルくん



- ・未来からやってきた創造社会のジェネレーター
- ・ジェネレーターとして魅力的な振る舞いで主人公を巻き込んでいく
- ・発見が起こると頭がピカピカと光る
- ・メタルの相棒

メタル



- ・ジェネルくんとともに未来からやってきた相棒
- ・ジェネルくんの振る舞いや主人公を見てちょっとメタ的な発言をする鋭いやツ
- ・鳴き声は「メターー」

困ってる女の子



- ・ちょっとおっちょこちょいな女の子
- ・友達にプレゼントを渡したいなあ
- ・ジェネルくんに触発されて、つくることの楽しさに気づき始める

Figure 6: Character Specifications.

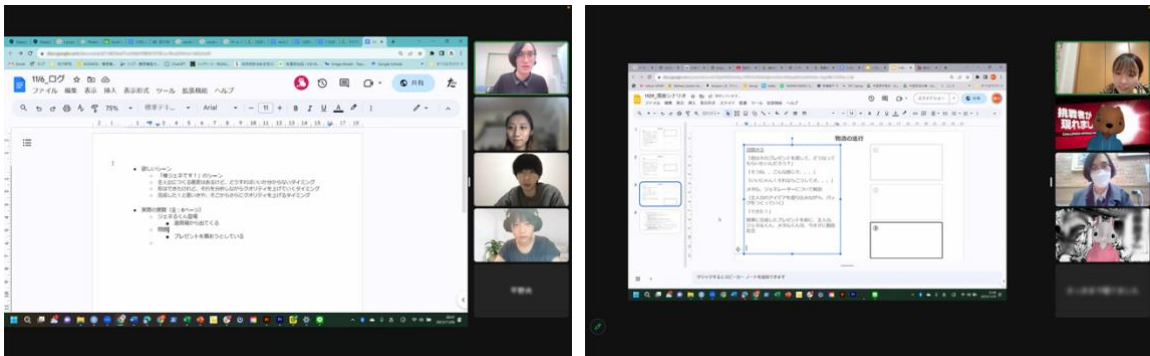


Figure 7: Collaboration for Story Making.

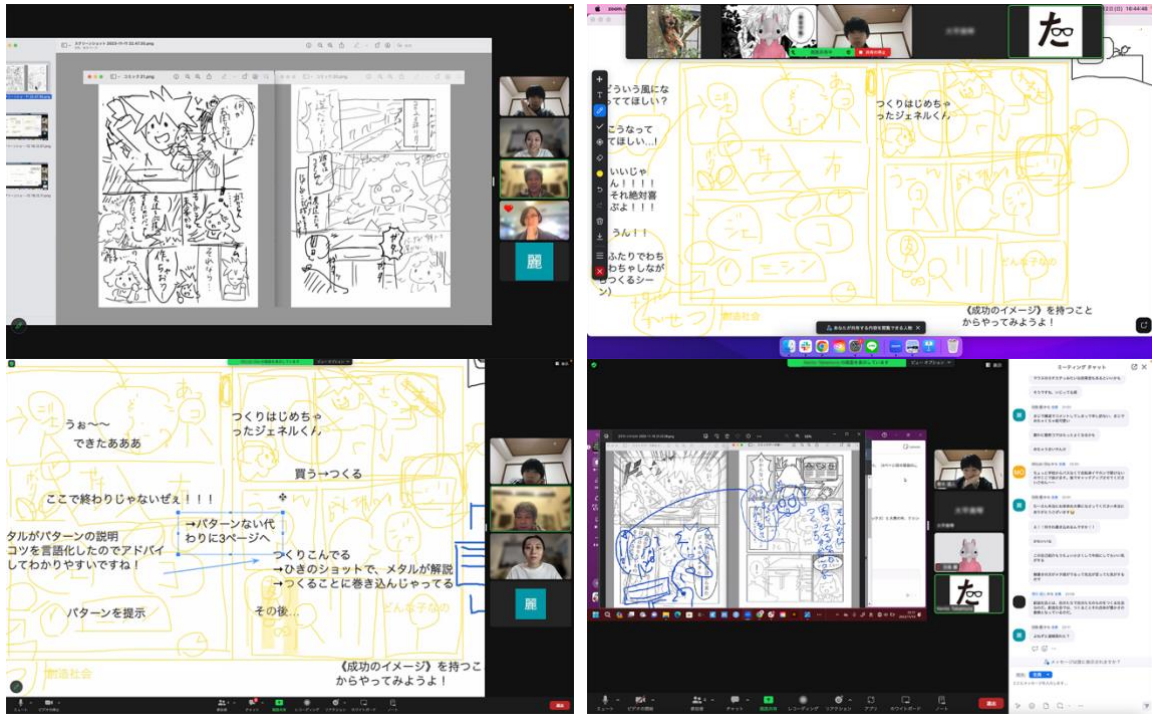


Figure 8: Discussion on the Composition of Manga Panels and Story Development.



Figure 9: Receiving Feedback from Fellow Lab Members.



Figure 10: The Manga Crafting Team.

3.4 Scenes of the Exhibition

Over the course of the two-day event, our booth featuring the 'Exhibition by Manga' attracted a significant number of visitors (Figure 11). Many stopped to read with keen interest, while others engaged in discussions or posed questions inspired by the content. The exhibition's clarity and appeal garnered positive feedback, particularly from children and teenagers. A high school student remarked, "Since it's written in manga, it's easier to read than plain text." Although we initially feared that adults might not find it appealing, such concerns were ultimately unnecessary. The exhibition's novelty also prompted discussions about the methods of display. Overall, this exhibition enabled us to genuinely feel the substantial impact of manga as a medium for communication.



Figure 11: Visitors Enjoying the booth featuring the 'Exhibition by Manga.'

4. Future of Communication Using Manga Expression and ‘Mangacy’

In this paper, we introduced 'Exhibition by Manga' as a unique approach to communication through manga expression, showcasing its patterns and real-life examples. Although this paper emphasizes the exhibition aspect of manga, there are extensive communication opportunities through narrative development in both pictorial and textual manga. As an exploration of this, we endeavored to articulate pattern language patterns through manga (Iba *et al.*, 2023).

Additionally, the potential extends to other areas, such as transforming written letters into manga expressions, illustrating recipes and operational instructions, and even representing academic papers in manga form. Beyond facilitating communication with others, individuals can also create personal diaries in manga style (indeed, a graduate student in our lab has begun documenting their parenting journey in manga).

This observation leads us to recognize that many may feel they lack the skills to create manga compared to traditional writing. For most, manga is primarily a medium to be consumed (read) rather than produced personally. Consequently, it's likely that many are unsure how to manifest their thoughts in manga form.

In light of this, enhancing the ability to draw manga, or 'Mangacy,' seems imperative. While 'literacy' typically refers to text, suggesting a semantic incongruity with 'manga drawing literacy,' we propose the term 'Mangacy.' This suffix 'cy' indicates a state or capability, implying that just as literacy is the power of letters, 'Mangacy' is the power of manga, encompassing both reading and drawing manga expressions.

As we continue to practice and refine communication through manga expression, we aim to further investigate and develop the concept of 'Mangacy.' If you're intrigued by this innovative and slightly fantastical vision for the future, we welcome collaboration.

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