

漫畫產業瀕臨怎麼樣的危機呢！

## **The comic book industry has nearly died before. Some artists fear AI will kill it**

It may surprise some people unfamiliar with the comic book industry, with its multibillion-dollar movie tie-ins, that it's been on the verge of collapse multiple times over the decades. Now AI tools are adding new fears of a death knell.

From political censorship in the 1950s to a sales crash in the 1990s and the modern era of digital distribution, creators can be understandably hostile to a technology widely viewed as a vehicle for copyright theft.

Still, some artists are embracing generative AI despite tensions over its use, hoping to ride the disruptive wave like comic book creators have done time and again to survive.

In November, comics legend Jim Starlin, creator of the Thanos of the Marvel films, revealed in an interview with Popverse that he would be incorporating AI in a future book. While he noted he would be transparent about what parts of his work would be touched by AI, he also likened opponents of the technology to Luddites.

“Embrace the fact that you can do three book projects at once now where before you couldn’t do one. Embrace the fact that you can take your thing and **extrapolate** it, you can basically create a world of assistants,” illustrator and AI art instructor Steve McDonald told CNN. “There’s a positive way to look at it is my point.”

Comic book publishing platform WEBTOON agrees. In its SEC filing for its IPO earlier this year, the digital publisher pointed to its new AI tools being rolled out for creators to speed up production.

“We have leveraged artificial intelligence and our data advantage to launch products aimed at reducing the workload for creators to produce high quality content,” the filing said, listing painting and 3D and 2D modeling tools as offerings.

AI also could address small business pain points by developing pitches, handling repetitive tasks and aiding in research, attorney Gamal Hennessy who specializes in working with comic book creators, told CNN.

“When they’re using AI for that, that’s where they’re excited that they could actually kind of speed up their production process,” he said.

“Because when you’re an independent publisher it takes you four times as long to put out a comic as if you’re, like, Marvel, DC or Image.”

But to a lot of creators, the advantages of AI still don't **offset** the potential downsides. Amy Reeder, an established artist who's worked for Marvel and DC, said she believes she lost potential work due to the tech.

"I'm pretty sure that I was offered and then lost a job because of AI," she said. "I know this because they had a mood board that was all clearly AI work."

The fear of automation replacing jobs isn't unique to comic books, of course. Actor and mogul Ben Affleck went viral for his view on AI in movie making: "I wouldn't like to be in the visual effects business. They're in trouble because what cost a lot of money is now going to cost a lot less, and it's going to hammer that space, and it already is." While Affleck is largely optimistic about Hollywood's creator-led future, the loss of skilled craftsmen who gain experience by working up the ranks to become creators themselves might be a deeper fear in comics.

Steve Ellis, an industry veteran and art teacher, said he remains concerned about the potential barriers to entry AI could create in the comic book industry. He highlighted "the little gigs that get taken and all those little gigs take away the training wheels, the skill building" for young artists.

“Talking to the students, they really are worried and affected and don’t know what to do, and I think some of them probably are considering how do I use this in my work,” Ellis added.

Even some established artists with a secure position in the industry don’t feel safe, afraid that their copyrighted material is being stolen without compensation, used to train the diffusion models and added to commercial work without their say.

Comic artist Ben Caldwell argued that AI **proponents** often echo the views of a larger “anti IP movement” looking to free up big corporate copyrights, such as those owned by Disney, “Which is understandable in terms of wanting to prevent a lockdown of creativity, but has been in some cases blindly, in other cases deliberately, weaponized against small creators.”

It’s difficult to imagine some of the more vocal anti-AI creators would find any use of AI acceptable. But not that long ago digital downloads caused a massive headache for the entertainment industry, and it found a way to overcome that seemingly existential threat.

“Maybe you remember when we had similar concerns about pirating music and movies in the late ’90s and early 2000s, and what happened was we had things like Spotify, other platforms, emerge where people

just basically got licenses,” said Jeff Trexler, interim head of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

While Trexler noted that Spotify royalties aren’t that much more than the zero dollars a musician would make from piracy the popular audio streaming service made a career in music at least more “tenable” than otherwise. For visual artists looking at similar licensing fees for AI training, he said, “I think that’s the direction we’re going with respect to content in AI.”

For other media industries, numerous copyright lawsuits have been launched in recent years and are wending their way through the courts. Celebrities like comedian Sarah Silverman and news outlets like the New York Times are testing the legal system to see if **precedent** can defend their IP before new laws are even written.

While everyone waits on court rulings, a group of attorneys held a legal education panel at New York Comic Con in October, addressing some contractual protections for creators, such as language to exclude works from being used to train AI.

“There’s a lot that I think we attorneys have to do to educate our clients, so they don’t run whole hog and adopt an AI-forward platform and then find out they’re going really have a hard time making money,” attorney Thomas Crowell said on the panel.

**Reference:**

<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/12/31/business/comic-books-ai/index.html>

# Key vocabularies

## Extrapolate (推斷)

- **Explanation:** To predict or estimate something based on known information or trends.
- **Sentence:** Based on past sales data, the company can extrapolate that the holiday season will bring a 20% increase in revenue.

## Offset (抵銷)

- **Explanation:** To balance or counteract the effect of something.
- **Sentence:** The company implemented sustainable practices to offset its carbon footprint.

## Proponent (支持者)

- **Explanation:** A person who supports or advocates for a particular idea or cause..
- **Sentence:** Steve McDonald is a proponent of using AI to improve productivity in the comic book industry.

## Precedent (先例)

- **Explanation:** An earlier event or action that serves as an example or guide for future situations.
- **Sentence:** The court case set a legal precedent that could influence future copyright lawsuits.

# Reading Comprehension

1. What is Steve McDonald's perspective on AI in the comic book industry?

2. What concerns do artists like Amy Reeder have about AI in the industry?

3. How does attorney Gamal Hennessy view the use of AI by independent publishers?

4. What historical comparison does Jeff Trexler make to explain the impact of AI on the comic book industry?

5. What legal steps are being taken to protect artists' rights against AI usage?