DOLLARS & CENTS
the business of the comic book industry
THREE INTERACTING STAGES

**PRODUCTION**: those entities that create the media message. In comics, this is associated with the publisher (either mainstream or independent)

**DISTRIBUTION**: deals with the business of transporting comics from the printing presses to the various outlets that sell them

**EXHIBITION**: includes all retail outlets where comics are sold
PRODUCTION

makin’ comics
**ARTISAN:**
Those comics created by individuals - who typically do all of the creative work producing the finished story (writing, art, etc.)

**INDUSTRIAL:**
Refers to those places where comics are created as a collaborative product, with the tasks of developing comics divided among writer, artist, inker, letterer, and colorist - and supervised by an editor.
The editor and the writer (and sometimes the artist) discuss ideas. Established writers tend to be more independent of this process. However, even with established writers, the editor has to make sure that the product is in accordance with company policy and coordinates with other events in the company’s “universe”
The writer creates a plot summary that can be very brief or very detailed, depending on the working relationship with the artist (and their own inclinations). Occasionally, the writer who does the plot summary is not the writer who does the final script.
3. **PENCILING**

The artist does the breakdown of the story into panels, the layout on the page, the composition within the panels, and the pacing of the story. Not only requires art skills, but storytelling skills.
 SCRIPTING

creating the script for the comic - including dialog, narration, and scene descriptions (very similar to what you might see in a movie script)
The letterer uses the writer’s script as a guide for where to place word balloons, captions, and sound effects
INKING

Taking artist’s pencils and going over them with ink. The role of the inker is to add texture and depth to penciled art. Sometimes penciler does their own inking. Sometimes inking is skipped in favoring of coloring.
COLORING

Colorists add color to the final artwork. Common to add color digitally - using software like Adobe Photoshop. Sometimes artists color their own artwork.
POST PRODUCTION

Art director (possibly editor) oversees in house touch ups, corrections, book design (creating the entire package), cover design, etc.
- **WORK FOR HIRE**: creators are commissioned to design characters and stories for the publisher. As part of the arrangement, the publisher (not the creator) copyrights the characters featured and the stories told in their publications.

- **EXCLUSIVE CONTRACTS**: Creator becomes a permanent employee of a particular publisher - steady paycheck, health insurance. Ability to work on character or book over a long period of time. Beneficial for the publisher because it signals creative stability to fans, retailers, and distributors.
OWNERSHIP CONCENTRATION

who owns what
Marvel & DC have the burden of having to return a large profit.

Much of what they sell is what is popular - as opposed to being cutting edge or pertinent to smaller interest groups.

One genre.

Other genres are relegated to other publishers.

Imprints of mainstream publishers - Vertigo, MAX.
DISTRIBUTION

cuttin’ comics to where they need to go
Diamond offers 3 kinds of distribution deals:

1. **Diamond acts as sales agent** - Diamond takes a percentage of the cover price plus fees for specific services. Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, and Image have this kind of deal. Diamond is purely the middleman.

2. **Consignment** - Publishers warehouse their inventory at Diamond’s facilities at the publisher’s expense. Diamond controls the terms of sale and discounts.

3. **But/Sell Arrangements** - Diamond buys inventory from the publisher to sell to the retailers - with the distributor taking all of the inventory risk.
PREVIEWS

- Diamond's monthly catalog of comic books
- Lists almost every comic book scheduled to go on sale (approximately) 60 days in advance (when books appear in Previews, they are said to be solicited)
- Gives retailers an advance look at what is coming - and decide what they are going to order
- Creators/publishers whose work does not appear in Previews are at an incredible disadvantage
EXHIBITION

sellin’ comics
THE BOOKSTORE

- Bookstore chains - Borders, Barnes & Noble, etc.

- In early 2007, bookstores sold the most graphic novels and trade paperbacks - and continue to show the fastest growth

- Responsible for about $220 million dollars in sales, while comic shops reported about $100 million dollars in sales

- Bookstores have the potential to break the hold that the direct market has on the comics industry