WILL EISNER WEEK
2017 PLAYBOOK

Will Eisner Week 2017 Poster
Dear Reader,

The Will Eisner Week Playbook provides information to help you plan a Will Eisner Week event for 2017 and in future years. We hope it inspires you and your organization to join us in this annual celebration. Were he alive today, Will Eisner would be thrilled about the growth and appreciation of graphic novels and that they are now accepted without question in schools, libraries, and museums. We know he would want to attend every Will Eisner Week event.

We hope you enjoy reading this year’s playbook. We look forward to hearing about your plans!

Danny Fingeroth  
Chair, Will Eisner Week

Nancy & Carl Gropper  
Will & Ann Eisner Family Foundation

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1. Will Eisner Week

Will Eisner Week is an annual series of events celebrating comics and sequential art, graphic novel literacy, free speech, and honoring the legacy of comics and graphic novel pioneer, Will Eisner. Will Eisner was one of the most innovative figures in the history of comics and graphic novels.

Will Eisner Week occurs at the beginning of March in conjunction with his March 6th birthday. We’re excited because 2017 will be the centennial celebration of Will Eisner’s birth. Will Eisner Week began in 2009 with two events in New York City and has grown every year since then. In 2016 there were over 75 events held in cities throughout the United States and internationally. With your help, we will exceed that number in 2017 and thereby achieve more of Will Eisner’s dreams for the sequential art medium that he championed.

The Will Eisner Week Playbook is a “living document” and has grown year-by-year with additional contributions and new suggestions. The Playbook provides ideas and tools to plan, create, organize, and promote Will Eisner Week at your location.

Will Eisner Week is for everyone, whether you’re…

- a retailer
- a librarian
- an educator
- a comics scholar
- or a fan of comics and Will Eisner

We hope this Playbook will inspire you to join us and organize your own event.

Will Eisner Week Event at MoCCA in NYC
Karen Green, Dennis O’Neil, Judith Hansen, Paul Levitz

For more information visit www.WillEisnerWeek.com or email info@willeisner.com.
2. About Will Eisner: Creator, Publisher, & Entrepreneur

Will Eisner (March 6, 1917 – Jan. 3, 2005) was a one-of-a-kind genius, that rare figure of whom it can be said, comics and graphic novels, as we know them today, would not exist without him.

He was one of the pioneers to lead the American comic book industry, proving himself a master of a variety of artistic and literary styles. His landmark comic series *The Spirit* (1940–1952) was noted for its expressive artwork and breathtaking experiments in content and form.

In 1978, Will Eisner popularized the term "graphic novel" with the publication of his book *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*, which was then followed by three decades of extraordinary work, much of it examining topics in comics form that had never before been dealt with in that medium. Some of it, like the works of Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, dealt with the Jewish-American experience. His work also explored themes of love, death, loyalty, life in the big city, and more – including humor and science fiction.
Eisner was one of those rare practitioners who was adept at both the creative and business aspects of the medium. He owned most of the properties that he created and was a pioneer in creating the “comics workshop,” where groups of creators worked together. The list of comics creators who passed through his shop for training and employment en route to becoming accomplished, admired comics professionals themselves is amazing. They included Jack Kirby, Jules Feiffer, Al Jaffee, Nick Cardy, Mike Ploog, and many others.

Eisner was an early contributor to formal comics studies with his textbooks *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* (1995) and *Expressive Anatomy* (2005). He taught at New York’s School of Visual Arts for twenty years, alongside other famous comic creators such as Harvey Kurtzman and Art Spiegelman. He was an evangelist and goodwill ambassador for comics, burning with a passion to show and tell people that comics stood on an equal footing with other storytelling media. As part of this, he lent his name to the prestigious Will Eisner Awards, the Oscars of the Comics Industry, presented each year at the world’s foremost comics convention, San Diego Comic-Con International.

Will Eisner passed away in 2005 at age 87, having just completed *The Plot*, a work of non-fiction, which was another significant graphic novel achievement. 2017 marks the centennial of Will Eisner’s birth and includes the publication of a centennial edition of “A Contract with God” and two simultaneous traveling original art exhibitions in museums in the US and Europe.
Praise for Will Eisner

“Eisner was not only ahead of his times; the present times are still catching up to him.” —JOHN UPDIKE (Pulitzer Prize winner)

"An American storyteller, like Ray Bradbury, like O.Henry." —NEIL GAIMAN (Sandman, Coraline)

“Eisner is the single person most responsible for giving comics its brains.”
—ALAN MOORE (Watchmen, From Hell)

“Will Eisner created the world of comics as I knew it.”
—MICHAEL CHABON (Pulitzer Prize winner)

“He was a cartoonist other cartoonists swiped from...Will Eisner is a national treasure.”
—JULES FEIFFER (Pulitzer Prize winner)

“Will Eisner is the heart and mind of American comics.”
—SCOTT MCCLOUD (Understanding Comics)

“[Will Eisner is] an inspiration to several generations of cartoonists.”
—ART SPIEGELMAN (Maus, Pulitzer Prize winner)
3. Will Eisner Week Ideas

So where do you start? All successful programs have very simple beginnings, and whether you work in a comic book shop, a library, an independent bookstore or know somewhere to hold an event, we created this playbook to give you some great ideas to launch your own annual Will Eisner Week program. Please read on!

Where Can You Host Your Event?

The venues for Will Eisner Week events have included:

- Retailers, bookstores, and comic book shops
- Libraries
- Schools of Art and Design
- Museums
- Colleges and Universities
- Pubs and Restaurants

Of course, events don’t have to be limited to the above venues. Other ideas are always welcome…

Partnerships Bring Great Opportunities

Will Eisner Week provides an excellent opportunity for librarians, educators and retailers to connect and create a mutually beneficial network and support system. A retailer’s goals for a Will Eisner Week event will be different from those of a library, college, art school, or even a tavern’s. By the same token, the various venues can complement each other. A coffee shop or tavern may have a reading of Eisner’s work, but could also partner with a local retailer for book sales at the event, and may also lean on the expertise of a local educator or librarian, and so on.

Will Eisner Week Programming for Librarians and Educators

Start a graphic novel book club. Attract new members with the superheroes they know and then introduce them to Raina Telgemeier and Gene Leun Yang. Create a display of Graphic Novels and challenge readers to read them all. Reach out to the local experts within your community. As the graphic novel market continues to grow, so will the pool of incredibly talented experts. Most local creators will be thrilled to participate. Chances are that you already have contacts with the nearest university, or there’s a comics-savvy teacher or two within your local school district who will be happy to lend their voices. It could also be of great benefit to create partnerships with other librarians, comic shop and independent bookstore owners for their support and participation.

Will Eisner Week Programming for Retailers

Below are but a few ways to host a celebration of Will Eisner’s contributions to the world of comics and graphic novel literature. Reach out to the local experts within your community. As the comics market expands, so does your pool of talented local experts. They’ll want to be a part of your event. Chances are that you already have contacts with the nearest university, or there are comics-friendly teachers in your local school district who can lend their voices. It would also be of great benefit to create partnerships with librarians and bookstore owners for their support and participation. And why not schedule a book sale for Will Eisner Week?
2017 is the 100th Anniversary of Will Eisner’s Birth!

People Love to Celebrate Cultural Anniversaries. Make the most of the Eisner Centennial to call attention to your event locally and in the media! For example, hold an event about an Eisner milestone such as:

Eisner’s Early Work: Will Eisner’s *The Spirit* recently celebrated its 75th Anniversary and has been in print almost continuously from its initial appearance in the newspapers in 1940. The original *Spirit* Sunday series is still being published today by DC Comics and new *Spirit* comics by Dynamite Entertainment. At its peak, *The Spirit* had about 5 million weekly newspaper readers. It is still recognized today for its powerful artwork and breathtaking experiments in content and form.

Eisner’s Later Work: Since his 1978 creation of *A Contract with God*, Will Eisner’s graphic novels have been recognized as important works both on their own, and for their role in the development of the medium of sequential art. In addition, his until-recently-overlooked work as the *auteur* of *P.S. Magazine* for the U.S. Army is also being recognized as a significant achievement.

A General Eisner Overview: You might host a celebration of Eisner’s work and invite local writers, artists, creators, and educators who should be happy to join a panel discussion graphic novels or of Eisner’s achievements and legacy. Partner with a retailer, schedule a book sale benefit, or a book signing.

Will Eisner Week Means Something for Everyone

Who do you create your program for? Everyone! As a librarian or retailer, you can create a wide range of programs that can bring new patrons to your library or store. Programs can range from age-specific activities, such as cape-making or a draw-your-own comic book workshop for kids, to a sketching workshop with local models for teens and adults. Invite a local artist or comics creator to lead a workshop and you will have a great program for your library or store. Older or more serious-minded attendees will be interested in a program about Eisner’s portrayals of historical events.

As a retailer, a partnership with your local library is a great idea. If you have very little space to host a medium or large event, your library may turn out to be an excellent venue. The partnership you create can become a long-term relationship that helps you both grow your audiences.

The Suggestions Below Are Great Starting Points For Your Program

Readings From Will Eisner’s and Other Creators’ Work
Celebrate the works of Will Eisner with a group reading of *The Spirit, The Plot*, or any of Eisner’s other great titles. Explore the cultural influences at work, Eisner’s artistic style, his use of light and shadow, the illusion of motion and sound, and evolving storytelling techniques through the comics medium.

How-to-Draw Workshops and Comics Craft Events
As a writer, an artist, and a publisher, Will Eisner was also a great teacher of sequential art. As part of Will Eisner Week event, local creators can be excellent ambassadors for introducing patrons to the craft of comics. Materials are simple: magic markers, pens, pencils, paper, and lots of imagination.
Celebrating the Comics Medium: An Appreciation of Comics as Literature
Not only was Will Eisner one of the first true comics publishing professionals, he worked hard to show the public that comics can be a genuine form of literature. During Will Eisner Week, titles such as *Persepolis*, *Smile*, *Blankets*, *Maus*, or many of Eisner's own works such as *Last Day in Vietnam*, *A Contract with God*, or *The Plot* can be used to demonstrate the wisdom of Eisner's convictions. Possible options include inviting local academics, educators, journalists, or creators as speakers.

Panel Programs and Lectures
Hosting panel discussions on the comics medium encourages a vast array of ideas. With a well-planned approach, you will find there are many experts within your region who are willing to set aside an evening to speak about their passion, ideas and proposals for the world of comics, creators, and fans. Here are a few suggestions for great panel sessions:
- Comics as a platform for political and societal commentary
- The Art of Comics
- The Influence of Comics on Other Media Such as Movies
- The History of Comics in North America and Around the World
- Comics in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.
- Comics Journalism
- Comics for Students with Spectrum Disorders
- Comics as Literature
- Comics and the Gifted Reader
- A lecture by a local comics expert on an aspect of Will Eisner's career

Host A Film or Documentary Screening
Hosting a showing of the Cooke award-winning feature-length documentary *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist*, Marisa Furtado's *Will Eisner: Profession Cartoonist*, or another film about comics creators is a great way to share an evening with fans of the comics medium. Or host a screening of a superhero film. Each showing can be followed-up with a discussion panel to explore the ideas in the documentary. There’s more information about this in Section 5 (Page 13).

Graphic Novel and Art Exhibitions
Set up an exhibit of graphic novels and art by Will Eisner and other creators. Showcase graphic novels to put comics and sequential art in a wider context. Examples would be the immigrant experience or the history of New York. (See Selected Bibliography)

Costume Contests and Fashion Shows
Host a cosplay event, where participants dress-up as their favorite comics characters and superheroes. Use a graphic novel story, or write an original play, that can be acted-out.

Don’t forget to promote: Get the word out to the community via your library, school, comic book shop, book store, social media, and the press. Use your website, Facebook Page, Twitter feed, and email.
4. Will Eisner Week Past Events

Will Eisner Week 2015 and 2016 Events Provide Good Examples:

- PASADENA, CA: The Pasadena Library showcased a display of Eisner graphic novels and those of authors inspired by him.
- JACKSONVILLE, FL: The University of North Florida hosted a “Women and Graphic Novels” panel.
- BOSTON, MA: The Cambridge Public Library hosted a children’s cartooning workshop with local cartoonists showing kids how to make comics.

- NEW YORK, NY: The Columbus Branch of the New York Public Library celebrated graphics novels as literature with a presentation and a panel of local experts.
- BOWLING GREEN, OH: Bowling Green University hosted a talk on “Will Eisner and Those He Inspired.”
- ARKADELPRIA, AR: Henderson State University presented a talk by Professor Randy Duncan: “Graphic Novels for Grown-ups: A Will Eisner Week Celebration of the Art Form.”
- MINNEAPOLIS, MN: A “Graphic Novel Read-In” was held by MCAD and UW in which students shared their favorite graphic novels and their own work. They also participated in creating a Communal Comic Jam Novella!
- PANAMA CITY, FL: Bay County Public Library held a "Comics Are For EVERYONE!" afterschool program for youth and teens.
- NORTHRIDGE, CA: Professor Charles Hatfield presented a talk on “Comics and Visual Culture: A Will Eisner Week Event.”
- SEATTLE, WA: The Emerald City Comic Con presented a panel on “Will Eisner’s The Spirit at 75.”
- PITTSBURGH, PA: The Toonseum hosted a presentation of Will Eisner's work on P*S Magazine with the U.S. Army-and screened Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist documentary.
- **DALLAS, TX:** Titan Comics Store presented a panel discussion about Eisner, as well as Eisner artwork on display.
- **GLASGOW, SCOTLAND:** Dundee University hosted a workshop: “Illustrate a Script in the Eisner Style.”
- **LONDON, ENGLAND:** The British Library hosted a talk by Scott McCloud about his new graphic novel, *The Sculptor.*

**Will Eisner Week 2013 and 2014 Events Included:**

- **SAVANNAH, GA:** The Savannah College of Art and Design, SCAD, hosted events run by Professor David Duncan featuring artist Kevin Cannon.
- **SAN FRANCISCO, CA:** The Cartoon Art Museum gave a presentation about James Bond as seen in comics including a little-known Spirit/James Bond crossover.
- **NEW YORK CITY, NY:** Mike Carbo’s Comic Book Marketplace “The Genius of Eisner” Panel
- **GLASGOW, SCOTLAND:** *Portrait of a Sequential Artist,* was screened at the Glasgow International Film Festival, followed by a reading of Eisner’s graphic novel at the Glasgow School of Art.

- **GLASGOW, SCOTLAND:** Glasgow University. A Will Eisner Symposium and Roundtable followed by an Eisner-related comics quiz!
- **SACRAMENTO, CA:** Wizard World Sacramento ComicCon “Why Eisner Matters,” a panel with Danny Fingeroth, Trina Robbins, & Professors Tom Andrae and Mel Gordon.
- **ARKADELPHIA, AR:** The Comics Club of Henderson State University, under the direction of Professor Randy Duncan, studied Eisner’s work in conjunction with the school’s Immigrant Experience Focus Week.
- **NEW YORK CITY, NY:** The Society of Illustrators hosted a Will Eisner Sketch Night including models dressed as characters from Will Eisner’s The Spirit.
- BOSTON, MA: Tufts University hosted a screening of Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist, followed by a panel discussion including A. David Lewis, Chuck Henebry, and Stephen Weiner.
- WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, VT: The Center for Cartoon Studies presented a lecture on Will Eisner by Stephen Bissette.
- BURBANK, CA: The Comic Art Professional Society, CAPS Special Meeting to celebrate Eisner’s work.

- PORTLAND, OR: The Art Institute of Portland: Lecture on Eisner by Dark Horse Comics Editor Diana Schutz.
- NEW YORK CITY, NY: The Society of Illustrators hosted a Will Eisner Sketch Night including models dressed as characters from Will Eisner’s The Spirit.
- SAN FRANCISCO, CA: The Cartoon Art Museum hosted An Evening with Mario Hernandez, including a discussion of Eisner’s influence.
- BOSTON, MA: Tufts University hosted a screening of Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist, followed by a panel discussion including A. David Lewis, Chuck Henebry, and Stephen Weiner.
- MINNEAPOLIS, MN: The Minneapolis College of Art and Design hosted a Graphic Novel Read-In at the MCAD library.
- BURBANK, CA: The Comic Art Professional Society, CAPS Special Meeting
5. Plan Your Will Eisner Week 2017 Event

Will Eisner Week Resources
Write to info@willeisner.com for any of the following resources:
- Use this Playbook for ideas.
- Request your event be added to the Will Eisner Week website.
- Request your event be linked to the Will Eisner Week Facebook page.
- Request annual Will Eisner Week posters.
- Request Will Eisner Week flyers and add your own event to the legal-size flyer.
- Request a DVD for screening the Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist or Will Eisner: Profession, Cartoonist documentary.
- Ask for assistance to contact local comics experts and creators.
- Have your event added to Will Eisner Week press releases, e-mails, & twitter feeds.
- Selected bibliography of Will Eisner titles is in Section 7 of the Playbook.
- Special order graphic novel titles from distributors and publishers.
- Educational resources on the internet.
- Will Eisner biographical information is in the playbook’s Section2, on Wikipedia’s Will Eisner listing, and on the Will Eisner website at www.willeisner.com/biography.

Write to info@willeisner.com for any of the above.

Need More Help?
Write to info@willeisner.com for contact information for:
A prior year event organizer.

Or one of the members of the Will Eisner Week Organizing Committee:
- Danny Fingeroth (Chair), Author & Comics Historian, New York, NY
- N.C. Christopher Couch, UMass, Amherst, MA
- Jeremy Dauber, Columbia University, New York, NY
- Marco Davanzo, ComicsPRO, Irvine, CA
- Randy Duncan, Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, AR
- Charles Hatfield, California State University, Northridge, CA
- Benjamin Herzberg, World Bank, Washington, DC
- Martha Kennedy, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
- Katie Monnin, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL
- Michelle Ollie, Center for Cartoon Studies, White River Junction, VT
- Barbara Schulz, MCAD, Minneapolis, MN
- Stephen Weiner, Author & Library Director, Maynard, MA

Or one of the Will Eisner Week Advisory Board members:
- Charles Brownstein, Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, Portland, OR
- Tina Coleman, American Library Association, Chicago, IL
- Karen Green, Columbia University, New York, NY
- Judy Hansen, Literary Agent, Bronxville, NY
- Denis Kitchen, Author & Cartoonist, Amherst, MA
- Paul Levitz, Author & Comics Historian, New York, NY
- Diana Schutz, Educator & Will Eisner's Editor, Portland, OR
- John Shableski, Consultant, Williamsport, PA

Write to info@willeisner.com for contact information for any of the above.
6. Propose Your Will Eisner Week 2017 Event

In order to provide support and maintain quality, we need to keep track of official Will Eisner Week 2017 events. As noted in the playbook, Will Eisner Week events can celebrate comics and sequential art, graphic novel literacy, free speech and thereby honor the legacy of Will Eisner. It’s easy; just tell us what you’d like to do.

Get your Will Eisner Week event rolling by sending as much information as you have:

Send:
Your contact information: (Name, Organization, Address, Phone, Email, etc.)

Your proposed event: As much as you’ve decided (description, location, date(s) and time)

Let us know if you’d like to include a screening of either documentary - *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, or Marisa Furtado’s documentary, *Will Eisner: Profession – Cartoonist*.

Let us know about your website, Facebook page, twitter feed, etc. Feel free to send questions and suggestions.

We can send Will Eisner Week 2017 posters (see the cover), and two type of Will Eisner Week 2017 flyers one with room to add your event information for publicity.

Ask to have your event listed on our websites, Facebook pages, twitter feed, and press releases.

Please e-mail the above information and any questions to info@willeisner.com

or fax it to 201-670-0724

or mail it to Will Eisner Week 2017
38 East Ridgewood Ave. #367
Ridgewood, NJ 07450

or call 201-389-3330.

*Do it as soon as possible in order to receive the best possible support.*

Email info@willeisner.com with questions or for assistance.

*Many Thanks!*
# 7. Will Eisner Selected Bibliography

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<td>A Contract with God Trilogy</td>
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