

THE WILL EISNER WEEK PLAYBOOK - 2015

**CELEBRATE
WILL EISNER WEEK**

READ A GRAPHIC NOVEL!

WILL EISNER WEEK is an annual celebration honoring the legacy of Will Eisner, widely regarded as "The Father of the Graphic Novel." This international event promotes graphic novel literacy, free speech, and the sequential arts.

MARCH 1-7, 2015 • For information and events in your area, visit www.willeisner.com

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Will Eisner Week 2015 Poster

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1. Will Eisner Week

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

Every year Will Eisner Week occurs in the beginning of March in conjunction with Will Eisner's birthday, March 6th. 2015 will be the seventh annual Will Eisner Week and it also marks the 75th Anniversary of Will Eisner's classic crime fighting character, The Spirit. The first Will Eisner Week was in 2009 with events in two cities and it has grown each year since. In 2014 there were events held in 12 cities in the United States and internationally. With your help, we hope to double the number of events in 2015.

This Will Eisner Week Playbook will be a "living document" and we expect it will grow year-by-year with new contributions and new suggestions. The Playbook will provide ideas and tools to plan, create, organize, and promote Will Eisner Week at your location. You might be:

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

We hope that this Playbook will inspire you to join us by helping to organize an event.



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

For more information visit www.WillEisnerWeek.com or email to info@willeisner.com.

2. About Will Eisner: Creator, Publisher, Entrepreneur



William Erwin "Will" Eisner (March 6, 1917 – January 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 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, much of it like the works of Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, dealing 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 the “comics workshop,” where groups of creators worked together. The list of comics creators who passed through his shop for training and employment enroute to becoming accomplished, admired comics professionals themselves is amazing. They included Jack Kirby, Jules Feiffer, Al Jaffee, and Nick Cardy.

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’s Comic-Con International.

Will Eisner passed away at age 87 in 2005, having just completed *The Plot*, a work of non-fiction and another significant graphic novel achievement.



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, American Gods*)



**"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 run a comic book shop, a library, an independent bookstore or know somewhere to hold an event, we are providing you with some great options for launching your own Will Eisner Week program. Please read on!

Where Can You Host Your Event?

The venues for Will Eisner Week events have included:

- Retailers (bookstores & comic book shops)
- Libraries
- Schools of Art and Design
- Museums
- Colleges and Universities
- Taverns and Restaurants

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

Partnerships Bring Great Opportunities

Will Eisner Week also provides an excellent opportunity for libraries, 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

Starting on the next page are some ideas for starting a celebration of Will Eisner's contributions to the world of graphic novel literature. In most instances why not reach out to the local experts within your own 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 teacher or two within your local school district who will 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 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.

2015 is the 75th Anniversary of Will Eisner's *The Spirit*!

Will Eisner's *The Spirit* has been in print continuously almost from its initial appearance in the newspapers in 1940. *The Spirit* is still being published today by DC Comics and Dynamite Entertainment, and at its peak about 5 million readers read it each week. It is still recognized today for its artwork and breathtaking experiments in content and form. Following below are a few of the ways to host a celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Will Eisner's *The Spirit*. It should be easy to find local writers, artists, creators, or educators who would be happy to join a panel discussing Will Eisner's *The Spirit*. If you're hosting events in conjunction with a retailer, schedule a book sale or for a library, invite a local comic book store to participate.

Will Eisner Week Means Something for Everyone

Who do you 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 like cape making to a draw-your-own comic book workshop. A How-To-Draw workshop will attract a broad range of interested patrons - invite a local comics creator to lead the workshop and you will have a great program for your library or store.

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 audience.

The suggestions below are great starting points for your Will Eisner Week program.

AND DON'T FORGET TO PROMOTE HEAVILY!

Get the word out to the community via your local comic book shops, book stores, social media, and the local press.

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, use of light and shadow, illusion of motion and sound, and evolving story telling techniques through the comics medium.

How to Draw

As a writer, an artist and a publisher, Will Eisner was also a great teacher of the craft. As part of Will Eisner Week, local creators can be excellent ambassadors for introducing the craft of comics. Materials are simple: magic markers, pens, pencils, paper, and ideas.

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 given good content, comics are a true 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 and experts on the subject.

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
- The History of Comics in North America and Around the World
- Comics and American Literacy
- Comics as Literature
- Comics for Students with Spectrum Disorders
- Comics and Science
- Comics and the Gifted Reader
- A Lecture by a local comics expert on an aspect of Will Eisner's career

Host A Documentary Screening

Hosting a showing of Andrew and Jon Cooke's award-winning feature-length documentary *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist*, Marisa Furtado's *Will Eisner: Profession – Cartoonist*, or other films about comics creators is a great way to share an evening with fans of the comics medium. Each showing can be followed-up with a discussion panel to explore the ideas presented in the documentary. There's more information about this in the *Plan Your 2015 Will Eisner Week Event* Section below.

Graphic Novel and Art Exhibitions

Set up an exhibit of graphic novels and art by Will Eisner and other creators. Showcase graphic novels about or by Eisner and others that put comics 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 an 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.



Jeremy Dauber and Danny Fingerroth at a NYC 2013 event.



Eisner editor Diana Schutz leading discussion at a 2013 event.



Fans in Portland celebrating Will Eisner Week

4. Will Eisner Week Past Events

Will Eisner Week 2014 Events Provide Examples of What You Can Do:

- **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, with museum chair Ron Evans and critic Alan J. Porter.
- **NEW YORK CITY, NY:** In the New Yorker Hotel at Mike Carbo's Comic Book Marketplace panel was presented on "The Genius of Will Eisner" panel with Danny Fingerroth, Dennis O'Neil, and Howard Zimmerman
- **GLASGOW, SCOTLAND:** A screening of *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist*, by Jon and Andrew Cooke was screened at the Glasgow International Film Festival, followed by a reading of Eisner's graphic novel "A Family Matter," at the Glasgow School of Art.
- **ARKADELPHIA, AR:** Henderson State University's Huie Library hosted a display, "Will Eisner at War," of Eisner's work about World War II (*P*S Magazine*, *To the Heart of the Storm*, etc.), produced by the Comics Arts Club.
- **NEW YORK CITY, NY:** Parsons School of Design, "Will Eisner: Champion of the Graphic Novel." Writer Paul Levitz (former president/publisher of DC Comics) read from his forthcoming book about Will Eisner's unique role in the evolution of the American Graphic Novel to be published in 2015 by Abrams ComicArts.
- **NEW YORK CITY, NY:** Columbia University, "Celebrating Al Jaffee," held a panel moderated by Paul Levitz, featuring Al Jaffee, the inventor of the *Mad* Fold-In and who started his career working for Will Eisner. *Mad* Art Director Sam Viviano; and *Mad* cartoonist Peter Kuper were on the panel.
- **GLASGOW, SCOTLAND:** Glasgow University. A Will Eisner Symposium and Roundtable followed by an Eisner-related comics quiz!
- **PORTLAND, OR:** At the Art Institute of Portland, Dark Horse Comics Executive Editor Diana Schutz gave an in-depth presentation on the innovative and prolific 70-year career of the founding father of sequential art, Will Eisner. As Eisner's editor for several years until his 2005 death, Schutz brings a uniquely personal insight to his work.
- **CAMBRIDGE, MA:** The Cambridge Public Library hosted a talk by Denis Kitchen and Paul Hornscheimer on Will Eisner, followed by a book signing at the Million Year Picnic.
- **PORTLAND, OR:** Floating World Comics, Comic book legend Matt Wagner gave a reading from Eisner's "Invisible People," with accompanying slides from the graphic novel.

- **MINNEAPOLIS, MN:** The Minneapolis College of Art and Design, MCAD, hosted a mini-comic con with a table of materials and graphic novels and a presentation of the documentary *Will Eisner: Profession - Cartoonist* directed by Marisa Furtado.
- **CAMBRIDGE, MA:** At the Cambridge Public Library, a drawing comics program led by artist, Jef Cjeka, followed with a signing by several Boston area cartoonists, including Paul Hornschmeier.
- **PITTSBURGH, PA:** The Toonseum hosted Jimmy Gownley with a discussion of his latest book, “The Dumbest Idea Ever!”
- **SACRAMENTO, CA:** Wizard World Sacramento comics convention. “Why Eisner Matters,” a panel moderated by Danny Fingerroth, featuring artist and comics historian Trina Robbins, and UC Berkeley professors Tom Andrae and Mel Gordon.
- **NEW YORK CITY, NY:** At the Society of Illustrators/MoCCA, a special day of Eisner-oriented history and art lessons for students from the NYC High School of Art & Design with practicing cartoonists including Dean Haspiel and facilitated by Danny Fingerroth.
- **MINNEAPOLIS, MN:** The Minneapolis College of Art & Design Screening, at the mini-comic con, of John and Andrew Cooke’s *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist*.

Will Eisner Week 2013 Events Included:

- **SEATTLE, WA:** Emerald City Comic Convention panel: “Why Eisner Matters,” featuring Jeff Smith, Peter David, Jimmy Palmiotti, Matt Fraction, and Michael Avon Oeming.
- **SAVANNAH, GA:** Savannah College of Art and Design held several events run by Professor David Duncan, including a screening of *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist* and various Eisner-themed art sessions.
- **SEATTLE, WA:** Emerald City Comic Con panel: Will Eisner’s “A Contract With God — Reflections on the 35th Anniversary” featuring Dennis O’Neil, Batton Lash, Matt Fraction, Jackie Estrada, and Ben Saunders.
- **PITTSBURGH, PA:** Events at the Toonseum, including a March 2 screening of the documentary *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist* by Andrew & Jon Cooke.
- **ARKADELPHIA, AR:** The Comics Arts Club of Henderson State University, under the direction of Professor Randy Duncan, studied Eisner’s work in the context of Immigrant Experience Focus Week.
- **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.
- **PORTLAND, OR:** The Jack London Bar hosted a reading of Will Eisner’s “Last Day in Vietnam,” with Brian Bendis, Matt Fraction, Kelly Sue DeConnick, and Michael Oeming.
- **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.
- **NEW YORK CITY, NY:** At Parsons/The New School Ben Katchor’s Comics & Picture-Story Symposium, Jeremy Dauber and Danny Fingeroth discussed Will Eisner’s work in the context of other Jewish-American literature.
- **WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, VT:** At the Center for Cartoon Studies a lecture on Will Eisner by Stephen Bissette.
- **BURBANK, CA:** The Comic Art Professional Society, CAPS, held a special meeting devoted to Will Eisner hosted by Scott Shaw and including other professionals on the panel who knew Will Eisner.



Mark Waid with his Eisner Award

5. Plan Your 2015 Will Eisner Week Event

Will Eisner Week Resources

- Use this Playbook to help decide what to propose.
- Add your event to the Will Eisner Week website
- Add your event to the Will Eisner Week Facebook page.
- Request annual Will Eisner Week posters.
- Request Will Eisner Week flyers and add your own event.
- Request a screening of *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist* or *Will Eisner: Profession – Cartoonist* documentaries.
- Ask for assistance in getting local experts and creators.
- Add your event to Will Eisner Week press releases, e-mails, & twitter feeds.
- Selected bibliography of Eisner titles in the Playbook Bibliography (see page 14).
- Special ordering of graphic novel titles from publishers.
- Educational resources on the internet.
- List of Will Eisner's books
- Will Eisner Biographical information (Page 4 of this playbook, Wikipedia Will Eisner listing, or the Will Eisner website, www.willeisner.com/biography)

Still need help?

Talk to a prior year event organizer.

(E-mail info@willeisner.com for contact information.)

Or ask one of the members of the Will Eisner Week Organizing Committee.

(E-mail info@willeisner.com for contact information.)

- Danny Fingerroth (Chair), New York, NY
- N.C. Christopher Couch, Amherst, MA
- Jeremy Dauber, New York, NY
- Randy Duncan, Arkadelphia, AR
- Karen Green, New York, NY
- Benjamin Herzberg, Washington, DC
- Martha Kennedy, Washington, DC
- Katie Monnin, Jacksonville, FL
- Michelle Ollie, White River Junction, VT
- Barbara Schulz, Minneapolis, MN
- Diana Schutz, Portland, OR
- John Shableski, Williamsport, PA
- Stephen Weiner, Maynard, MA

Or e-mail info@willeisner.com for assistance.

E-mail questions and suggestions to info@willeisnerweek.com

6. Propose Your Will Eisner Week 2015 Event

We need to keep track of formal Will Eisner Week 2015 events in order to assure quality and provide support. Will Eisner Week events can be events which 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 the Will Eisner Week event rolling by sending as much as you know:

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

Your proposed event - as much as you've decided - name, description, location, date(s) and time(s)

Please let us know if you're interested in including a screening of *Will Eisner: Portrait of a Sequential Artist*, which originally premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, or the Brazilian documentary film, *Will Eisner: Profession - Cartoonist* written and directed by Marisa Furtado.

Let us know about your website, facebook page, twitter feed, etc. And feel free to send questions and suggestions.

There will be a Will Eisner Week 2015 poster (see the cover), a Will Eisner Week 2015 flyer based on the poster with space to publicize your event, a listing of the events on our websites and Facebook pages (with links to your website and Facebook page), twitter feed, and press releases including your event information.

Please e-mail the above information to info@willeisner.com
or fax it to 201-670-0724
or mail it to Will Eisner Week 2015
38 East Ridgewood Ave. #367
Ridgewood, NJ 07450
or phone it to 201-389-3330.

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

Many Thanks!

7. Selected Will Eisner Bibliography



Title	Publisher	ISBN-13
Graphic Novels		
<i>A Contract with God Trilogy</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393061055
<i>Will Eisner's New York: Life in the Big City</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393061062
<i>Life, In Pictures: Autobiographical Stories</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393061079
<i>A Life Force</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328035
<i>Dropsie Avenue</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328110
<i>New York: The Big City</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328059
<i>City People Notebook</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328066
<i>Will Eisner Reader</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328073
<i>The Dreamer</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328080
<i>Invisible People</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328097
<i>To the Heart of the Storm</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328103
<i>Life on Another Planet</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328127
<i>A Family Matter</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328134
<i>Minor Miracles</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328141
<i>The Name of the Game</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328158
<i>The Building</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328165
<i>The Plot</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393328608
<i>Last Day in Vietnam</i>	Dark Horse	978-1616551209
<i>Eisner/Miller</i>	Dark Horse	978-1569717554
<i>Will Eisner's Shop Talk</i>	Dark Horse	978-1569715369
<i>Fagin the Jew</i>	Dark Horse	978-1616551261
<i>PS Magazine, The Best of</i>	Abrams ComicArts	978-0810997486
Textbooks		
<i>Comics and Sequential Art</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393331264
<i>Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393331271
<i>Expressive Anatomy</i>	W.W. Norton	978-0393331288
The Spirit		
<i>The Best of the Spirit</i>	DC Comics	978-1401207557
<i>The Spirit: Femmes Fatales</i>	DC Comics	978-1401219734
<i>Will Eisner's The Spirit Archives, Volumes 1 to 26</i>	DC Comics	Various
<i>The Spirit: The New Adventures Archives</i>	Dark Horse	978-1569717325
<i>Will Eisner's The Spirit, Artists Edition</i>	IDW Publ.	978-1613771754
Biographies		
<i>A Dreamer's Life in Comics</i> , Schumacher, Michael		978-1608190133
<i>A Spirited Life</i> , Andelman, Bob	Dark Horse	978-1595820112
<i>Will Eisner Companion</i> , S. Weiner, NC Couch,	DC Comics	978-1401204228