

University lecturer to celebrate comic books at BC3's free "A Night of Graphic Novels"

March 9, 2020

(Butler, PA) If Wayne Wise were a superhero, he says he'd be called "Lucky" – precisely because his alter-ego would possess not one, but all of the powers endowed to the valiant champions he's admired within the panels of the comic books he's been devouring since mother Alberta taught her toddler to read more than a half-century ago.

Strength. Flight. Speed. Agility. Regeneration. Immortality. Maybe even X-ray vision.

Wise's vision of the art form, honed since those days in the living room of his childhood home in Nineveh, Greene County, will entertain and educate guests March 19 when the 58-year-old Pittsburgh author and university lecturer discusses "How to Read Comics" during Butler County Community College's "A Night of Graphic Novels."

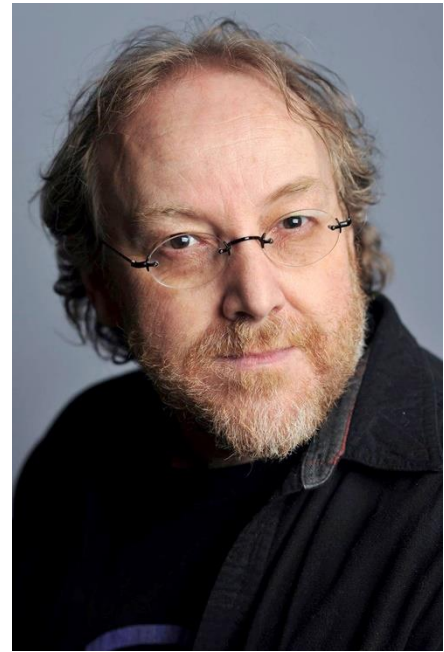
The event is scheduled from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Heaton Family Learning Commons on BC3's main campus in Butler Township and is free and open to the public.

Guests who attend "A Night of Graphic Novels" will be eligible to win tickets to the fifth 3 Rivers Comicon, to be held May 30-31 in Pittsburgh; can register for a free library card at BC3's 3½-year-old state-of-the-art academic and community library, and enjoy light refreshments.

New Dimension Comics, Butler, will present 60 graphic novels to bolster the Heaton Family Learning Commons' collection, said Todd McDevitt, of Ellwood City, owner of the chain of six stores and promoter of 3 Rivers Comicon.

"I think there was a time when having this kind of event in a library was not a thought," McDevitt said. "It's been very interesting over the years to see how much more accepted comic books have become and how they have been woven into everyday life."

The event is intended to "get visitors excited about graphic novels," said Jennifer Greenwald, BC3's reference librarian, "and to get them excited about reading, and what we have to offer."



Wayne Wise, of Pittsburgh, who has written four books and has taught comics pop culture history at Chatham University in Pittsburgh and introduction to the graphic novel at the University of Pittsburgh, will discuss "How to Read Comics" during "A Night of Graphic Novels" on March 19 at Butler County Community College. The free event will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Heaton Family Learning Commons on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

Guests can also learn from Wise's presentation about the difference between graphic novels and comic books, and about the "special magic" that takes place among the characters in those panels, captions and speech bubbles.

"It's something that is unique to the form," Wise said. "In my classes I talk about the third level of meaning. Here's the meaning of the picture. Here is the meaning of the words. But the way those two can interact can create a third level, a meaning that I don't know is possible in the same way in any other medium."

A picture shows Superman flying over Metropolis. A caption states Superman is thinking about how Lex Luthor has escaped.

"The words are now conveying a different piece of information from the picture," Wise said. "That third level of meaning that isn't explicit on the page is that Superman is looking for Lex Luthor."

Wise, who earned bachelor's degrees in history and psychology from Waynesburg College in 1983 and a master's degree in clinical psychology from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania in 1988, has taught comics pop culture history at Chatham University in Pittsburgh and introduction to the graphic novel at the University of Pittsburgh.

He is the author of "King of Summer," a novel published in 2002; "This Creature Fair," a horror fiction published in 2011; "Bedivere: The King's Right Hand," a historical novel published in 2013; and "Scratch," a horror fiction published in 2013.

Those who attend his presentation at BC3 will leave with "more of an appreciation for what they are reading," Wise said. "The bottom line for me is that comics should be fun."

3 Rivers Comicon will be held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh.