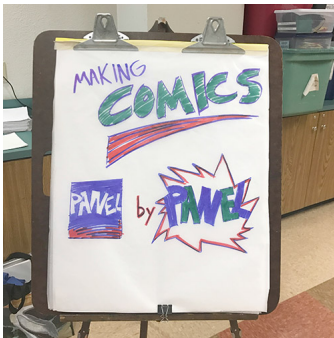


Gallup comic book fans get their nerd on at Fellin library

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 19 May 2017 00:11



City Librarian: 'They had fun'

And they said it wouldn't last.

Jeffrey Benham, an Albuquerque-based illustrator of comic books, has witnessed the changing trends in the comic book industry throughout the years – even before he became a comic book aficionado decades ago.

Benham, a member of the northern New Mexico group, "7,000 B.C.," an organization that provides opportunities for comics writers and artists to develop their styles and storytelling abilities, while promoting an understanding of the cultural significance of comic art through seminars and workshops, was at the Children's Branch of the Octavia Fellin Library May 13 in a two-hour educational event for kids.

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“It was a lot of fun and I learned how to draw comics,” David Garrison, 12, of Rio Rancho, said. Garrison was in Gallup visiting relatives. “I read comic books with my friends all the time.”

Benham, 51, is a California-born comic book illustrator who promotes the industry and travels where and when he can to give workshops to kids and adults. The comic book industry – both readers and artists – was once a male dominated industry, Benham said after the event.

But not anymore.

“Female fans are growing about 10 percent per year,” Benham said. “The industry isn’t what it used to be.”

Also, Benham said, the comic book market is changing in other ways. Male readers don’t really care who draws the comics as long as the stories that accompany them are riveting.

“We’ve seen a lot of people,” Anne Price, youth services manager at the Children’s Branch, said. “I’d say a couple of dozen fans have come through the door. They had fun. This, to some degree, this is about the importance of reading.”

Price said people (kids) who attended the event received illustration classes from Benham. They received a free comic book of their choice, too, Price said. Diamond Comic Distributors, a Maryland-based company, donated 100 comic books to the event, Price added.

Garrison, who started collecting comics at age 7, attended a similar comic book event the past weekend in Albuquerque. He said his favorite comic book series is Batman – something Benham had plenty of at Fellin.

“There’s always something new coming out,” Garrison said. “That’s why I go to all the comic book shows.”

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