

# Illustrating/Writing Graphic Novels: Going Completely Digital

Michael Carey, Ned Gannon, Skyler Moucha, Joel Pace ❖ Fine Arts and English Department ❖ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

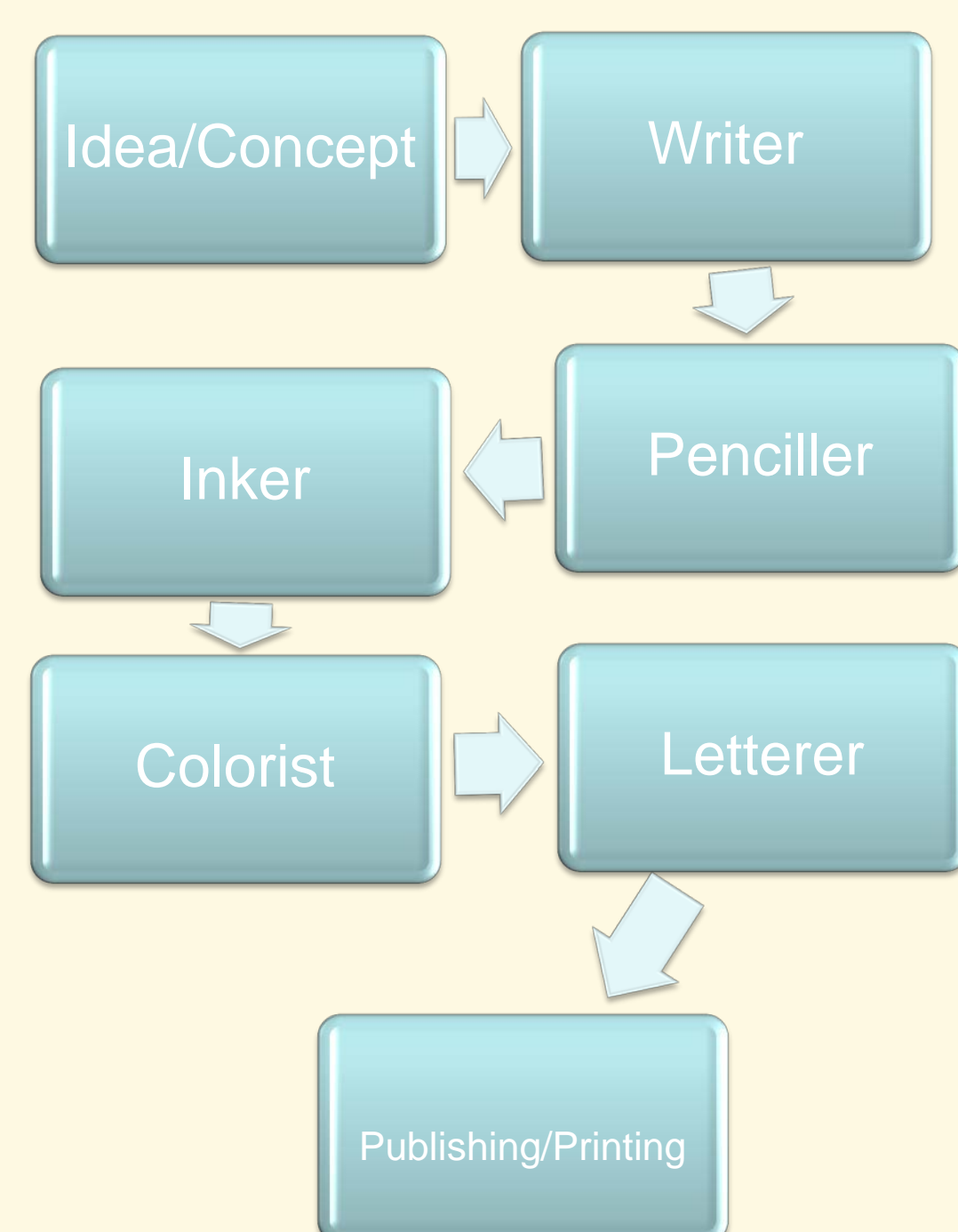


## Abstract

The purpose of this project was to explore the process of working completely digitally to illustrate a graphic novel. We live in a world that is becoming increasingly more digital with every day that passes and with that in mind I want to be at the forefront of this new digital movement within the art community. To achieve this goal I decided to work with the latest and most innovative drawing technology that is available which is a drawing tablet called the Wacom Cintiq. This is a tablet that allowed me to use programs such as Adobe Photoshop and draw directly on the pressure sensitive LCD screen with a unique pen stylus. As I have come to find out with my research for this project, graphic novels require a great deal of time to illustrate (and are usually done by three separate persons, a penciller, inker, and colorist) which is why I will continue to work on this project to complete more pages and further pursue the benefits of working completely digitally.

## Objective

- ❖ To discover the benefits of working completely digitally on a graphic novel.



- ❖ To obtain a more efficient workflow, we examined the process commonly used to create graphic novels (figure to the left)<sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ All jobs which are usually done traditionally (penciller, inker, and colorist) were changed to executing them digitally using the Wacom Cintiq drawing tablet with Adobe Photoshop Software.

## Hypothesis

- ❖ Our hypothesis was that working completely digitally would create a better and more fluid workflow because we would not have to scan the illustrations, be able to conveniently edit drawings using Photoshop, and be able to utilize simple digital effects that would be more difficult & time consuming to attain traditionally.

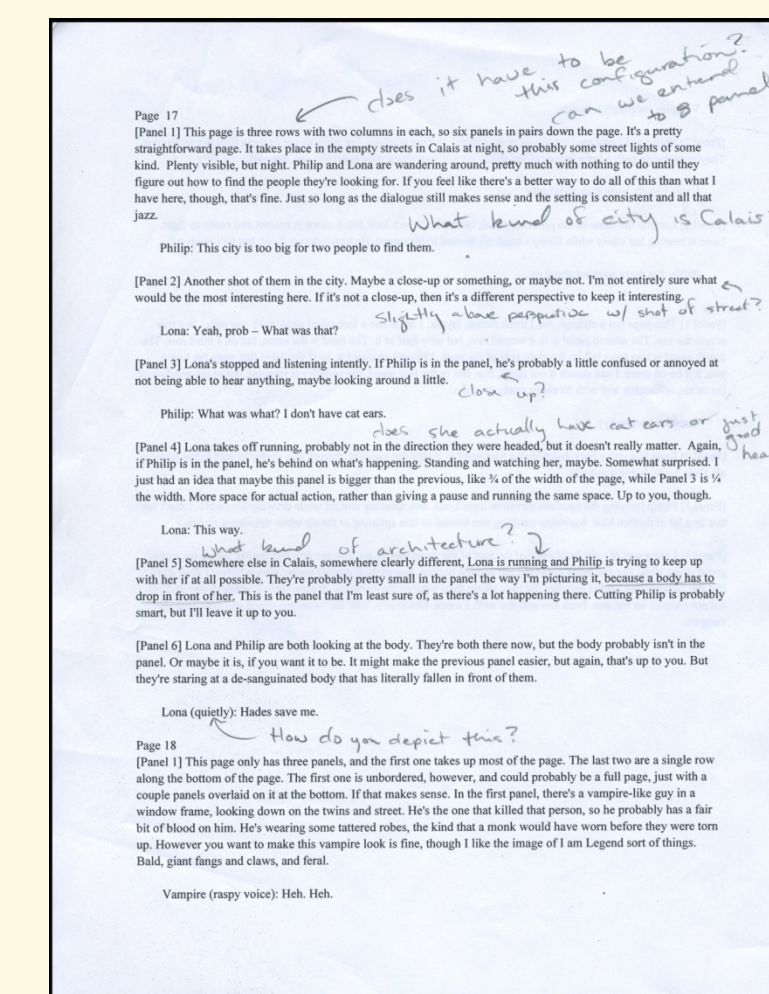
## Background

- ❖ The basic difference between comics and graphic novels is that graphic novels are much longer and tell a more conclusive storyline.
- ❖ The best definition of a comic that was found was defined by a comic book artist named Scott McCloud which is: "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer".<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ In the current comic book market the application of working digitally has not been fully picked up by everyone and many artists still work traditionally or in a hybrid method.
- ❖ Most graphic novels/comics are created in the dimensions of 10"x17" and then shrunk down for printing to 6"x9" so the artist can create more detail in the image.

## Methods

- ❖ The process that we used to create the graphic novel utilized the program Adobe Photoshop and the feature that allows you work with multiple layers of a drawing to reach the desired affect.
- ❖ The process would circulate between myself (Illustrator), Ned Gannon (Illustration Advisor), and Skyler Moucha (Author). There would also be some advisement meetings between Skyler Moucha and Joel Pace (English Advisor) to work out the kinks of the script.
- ❖ The graphic novel followed a 6-step process for each page that we created.

- a. Illustrator reads script for page and annotates it with questions
- b. Illustrator and author then meet up to discuss script and what they want for images for each panel on the page.



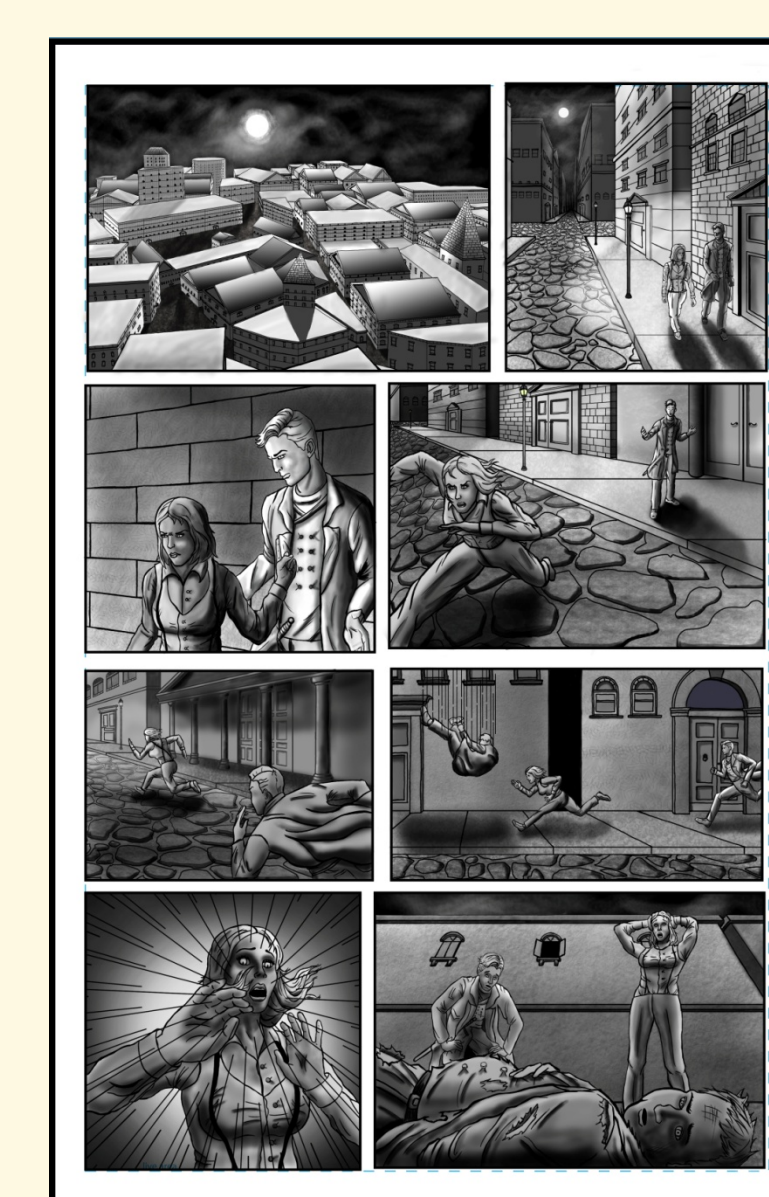
- a. Illustrator then makes digital thumbnails of the panels and page layout.
- b. Illustrator shows author and illustration advisor thumbnails and discuss improvements/corrections to be made.



- a. Illustrator then works with Photoshop and completes a rough sketch of the page.
- b. Then the illustrator must tighten up the drawing and add hard/solidified contour lines in a new layer.



- a. Illustrator meets with illustration advisor and author to discuss the development of the page and changes that could be made.
- b. Shading/inking/textures are then added on a different layer in Photoshop.



- a. Illustrator meets with illustration advisor and author to discuss the development of the page and changes that could be made.
- b. Digital color is then added to each panel in a different layer in Photoshop.



- a. Illustrator meets with illustration advisor and author to discuss the development of the page and changes that could be made.
- b. Text and word bubbles are the last element added to the page.
- c. Illustrator meets with illustration advisor and author one last time to discuss any minor corrections or changes that could be made.



## Conclusions

We found that working digitally came with great advantages but also some disadvantages. All of the benefits that we discovered were things that greatly sped up the process and made it more convenient when illustrating the graphic novel.

### Pros

- ❖ Easier and faster to erase mistakes (usually done traditionally with white out)
- ❖ Ability to make multiple versions of image without destroying the original because you can make copies of a layer (very time-consuming/impossible to do traditionally)
- ❖ Resize and move images with Photoshop tool (another time-consuming/impossible thing to do traditionally)

### Cons

- ❖ Trying to find correct page size resolution to work at.
- ❖ Details drawn in very small area may be too small to show up in printed version (wastes drawing time)
- ❖ Having to zoom in and out constantly to see whole picture and to work on portions of drawing (due to limitation of drawing tablet screen size of 12.1")

## Future Direction

What we found from this project is that digital media has a vast amount of possibilities in its future. I believe the pros definitely outweigh the cons and that many of the cons can be eradicated with an easy solution. I will continue to illustrate pages for this graphic novel which will eventually be submitted to a comic book company as a pitch to see if they want to pick it up to be published.

### References

1. Albert, Aaron. Creating Comic Books - The Process of Creating Comic Books. 2012. 19 March 2012 <<http://comicbooks.about.com/od/creatingcomicbooks/tp/process.htm>>.
2. McCloud, Scott. Understanding Comics the Invisible Art. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

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