

Check It Out! Podcast Transcript
Episode #18,
“Comics and audits and books, oh my!”
Sno-Isle Libraries, April 12, 2019



Ken Harvey:	00:00	In this episode of Check It Out we have something special in store for you. We have three short stories where you'll hear about new superhero comic books available online from the library. We also have a story for you on how Sno-Isle Libraries takes care of the tax dollars you give us. Finally, some reading recommendations from a librarian. Stick around for all three stories coming right up on Check It Out.
Ken Harvey:	00:33	Welcome to season two and episode 18 of Check It Out, the Sno-Isle Libraries podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds.
Speaker 2:	00:41	The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.
Ken Harvey:	00:48	So in our first story, Sno-Isle Libraries intern Rilee Louangphakdy is taking a look at the DC and Marvel universe of superheroes now available as online comics. This is a new service that Sno-Isle Libraries has made available to our customers. We hope that you'll check it out after listening to his story.
Rilee Louangphakdy:	01:09	I am a huge comic book and graphic novel fan. I'll admit that this is mostly because of the superhero movies that Marvel and DC have been pumping out for what's been over a decade now. The Marvel and DC cinematic universes have created this tidal wave of pop culture and storytelling that's united millions. So it's really no surprise that the Sno-Isle Libraries would also want to hop on this wave.
Rilee Louangphakdy:	01:32	As you may or may not know, within Sno-Isle Libraries collection of online materials and services, there's a mobile app called Hoopla Digital, which gives you access to their collection of movies and TV shows. Starting this year, Hoopla has added comic books to their collections.
Rilee Louangphakdy:	01:48	What exactly does this mean? It means that you can read comic books for free, just as long as you have a Sno-Isle library card.

(Continued)

Marvel comics, DC comics, you name it. So all you cinematic universe fans, let's say you want to know more about Captain Marvel or Aquaman. All you have to do is browse Hoopla and decide on which issues to read. Once you've found them, you can download them onto your account for up to 21 days at a time. For me, this is perfect because I can read about all the superheros I love, while also saving time and money.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 02:24

As much as I love comic books, I'm actually more of a Japanese manga guy, which one could say is roughly the American comics equivalent. Either way, comic books, graphic novels, and manga all fall under the same category of sequential arts. My favorite part about reading manga is learning about the backstory of the characters and trying to find that hidden life lesson in their upbringing. I think that's one of the true appeals of any sequential art. It's a legitimate form of literature that can teach readers extremely important life lessons through this vivid, magical, and symbolic storytelling.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 03:02

Andrew T. Wahl, an Everett Community College professor and a legitimate comic book expert, speaks and teaches about this exact topic for a living. We had a conversation a while back, and he was telling me how certain elements in comic books are known to have been directly related to current trends and events in our society, sometimes intentionally connected. Because of this, Andrew believes that one of the key factors in comic books is the power of story, how a reader can directly relate to their character and personally be affected by their story.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 03:36

I would take that and raise that all sequential art has that same power story. If you've ever picked up a comic book, graphic novel, or manga, you'll immediately get the sense of escapism, like you escape from reality, literally dive into the story and only worry about what happens next.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 03:56

One reason why the comic book community is so passionate is because comic books have an undeniable impact on the lives of readers. Having all these comic books available through a library card is a big deal because it allows the readers in our community to more easily enjoy this form of literature. And I personally think whether it's printed pages or the big screen, this whole world of sequential art is one that deserves to be explored by all readers.

Rilee Louangphakdy: 04:25

For now, my name is Rilee Louangphakdy, college student and library intern, looking for my next library surprise.

Speaker 4:	04:35	Join business people from around the region who are taking advantage of free expert business advice through business pro classes from Sno-Isle Libraries. Find a business pro class at a library near you by searching online for events at Sno-Isle Libraries.
Ken Harvey:	04:51	Enjoying this episode of the Check It Out podcast? Head over to the iTunes store, Google Play music store, or most other podcast stores to subscribe, rate the podcast, or leave a review. Your rating and review will make it easier for others to find the Check It Out podcast wherever it's available.
Ken Harvey:	05:11	In our next story Abe Martinez, our podcast reporter, sits down with Gary Sitzman, the Administrative Services Director for Sno-Isle Libraries, and they talk about how Sno-Isle Libraries uses the money and takes care of the money that property owners just like you give to us. They also talk about how the state auditor's office looks at the Sno-Isle Libraries finances every year. We hope you enjoy the story.
Abe Martinez:	05:42	Accountability. It's an acknowledgment of responsibility. At their best, people and organizations should welcome accountability. As a public agency, Sno-Isle Libraries is all about accountability. Don't believe me? Just ask this guy.
Gary Sitzman:	06:02	I'm Gary Sitzman, Administrative Services Director for Sno-Isle Libraries.
Abe Martinez:	06:07	Gary is responsible for the business operations of the library district. Among other things, he and his team oversee the district's 53 million dollar operating budget. Given that Sno-Isle has over 500 employees in 23 community libraries spread out over two counties, it would seem like a big job. It is. But Gary spent 32 years in the private sector managing billion dollar budgets for a multinational corporation that employs thousands. Still, in a personal way, he recognizes that what he does at Sno-Isle is special.
Gary Sitzman:	06:46	Public sector is different insofar as we're entrusted with public resources, and it's all about service to the public. So as we look at our finances, we look at decisions being made, it's really a question of: Is that in the public interest and, too, there's a filter that I use, which is, if this was my money what would I do with it? Is this the way I would spend it?
Abe Martinez:	07:13	To make sure that money is spent the right way, the Washington State Auditor's Office examines the books and

operations of every government agency in the state. For Sno-Isle Libraries, that means a financial audit every year and a more in depth review every other year, called an accountability audit.

- Gary Sitzman: 07:32 When they do this audit, they assess how the library manages, uses, and really safeguards public resources. They want a reasonable assurance that we're adhering to all of the state laws, regulations, and that we're in compliance with our own policies and principles.
- Abe Martinez: 07:55 In other words, it's not just about obeying the law, it's about whether an organization is living up to its own ideals and delivering on its promises to the public. Sno-Isle Libraries has some pretty lofty ideals and promises a lot to the communities it serves. So has it delivered? According to the state auditor's office, absolutely, like for 32 years.
- Abe Martinez: 08:22 You can check it out for yourself at sao.wa.gov. But honestly, you won't see much there. The state auditor's report is like a set of warning lights. When things are not right or in danger of going that way, their primary warning light is what they call a "finding." They're not uncommon. Since 2017, 470 agencies within the state have been issued findings, some of them multiple findings.
- Abe Martinez: 08:52 So how many findings has the library been issued over the past 32 years of audits? Zero. Nada. None.
- Gary Sitzman: 09:02 Some records are meant to be broken. This is one of these records that is motivating. You want to sustain it. 32 years is a long time, and I think most people would agree that trust requires a consistency of performance over a period of time. I don't take credit for that, there's a lot of years before I arrived here. But I'm very proud to carry that on, and certainly don't want that record to be changed under my watch.
- Abe Martinez: 09:31 It is good to know that the state auditor is confident that Sno-Isle Libraries is taking care of public funds, which brings us back to how I started. At their best, people and organizations are not only accountable, they should welcome accountability. Each year, the state auditors will make suggestions to the public agencies and organizations they audit about best practices, both in terms of finances and operations. Sno-Isle Libraries welcomes those suggestions and takes them seriously. But Gary takes it a step further.

Gary Sitzman: 10:08 We all get audited, and part of improving is to understand what are the things that are tripping up other agencies. So I will review the audit reports of other state agencies as well as Libraries, and see where do they have deficiencies and does that deficiency exist in our library, and is that something that we need to take care of? Is it an opportunity for us to get better?

Abe Martinez: 10:39 As a resident and taxpayer, these comments from Gary Sitzman, Administrative Services Director at Sno-Isle Libraries, are exactly what I want to hear from those responsible for the funds given to the public library. For Sno-Isle Libraries, I'm Abe Martinez.

Speaker 7: 11:11 Did you know you could download some of the best business and finance magazines for free with your Sno-Isle Libraries card? Learn more online at Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 11:22 We love hearing from our listeners and subscribers, especially if you enjoyed a guest or have a suggestion for a future topic. Drop us a line at Check It Out podcast at sno-isle.org. Again, that's Check It Out podcast at sno-isle.org. Let us know what you're thinking. Don't be surprised if we read your comment or answer your question on a future podcast episode.

Ken Harvey: 11:47 And for our final short story of this episode, we have some reading suggestions from librarian Kaley Costello, who's the manager of the Lakewood-Smokey Point Library. Come on in or go online to check out those suggested titles. Coming up next: Book Notes.

Ken Harvey: 12:09 In this Book Notes segment, I'm delighted to welcome Kaley Costello, who is a member of our reader services team. She and the rest of the members of her team are working to provide suggestions for podcast listeners and others who have a passion for all the things we offer. Welcome, Kaley.

Kaley Costello: 12:27 Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 12:28 So what would you like to offer our listeners?

Kaley Costello: 12:31 The first I have is a graphic novel by Emil Ferris, called My Favorite Thing is Monsters. By picking up this book you're stumbling across the hand drawn journal of a young girl trying to solve the mysterious death of her neighbor, a holocaust survivor. Can you manage to put it back down?

Kaley Costello: 12:48 The artist drew this while recovering from the paralyzing effects of the West Nile virus, and it is absolutely stunning. It is My Favorite Thing is Monsters, by Emil Ferris.

Ken Harvey: 12:59 Did you say the author was recovering from the West Nile virus?

Kaley Costello: 13:02 Yes, as she drew that, yeah. She was paralyzed from the waist down, and her ... I can't remember which hand, but whichever drawing hand was affected by it.

Ken Harvey: 13:13 Wow.

Kaley Costello: 13:14 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 13:15 So you have an additional suggestion?

Kaley Costello: 13:17 I do. This one is nonfiction: The Stranger in the Woods, by Michael Finkel. Christopher Knight sat on the sidelines of humanity for nearly 30 years before getting caught stealing food. Author Michael Finkel chronicles his meetings with the man who chose to live in a tent in the woods of Maine, surviving on stolen goods from surrounding cabins. That's The Stranger in the Woods, by Michael Finkel.

Ken Harvey: 13:42 And those titles are available in our collection. Anyone can take advantage of them?

Kaley Costello: 13:46 Yes. And before I forget, My Favorite Thing is Monsters, the second volume is coming out very soon.

Ken Harvey: 13:53 Good, so those items available in print. Any other kind of ways that people can access them, do you know?

Kaley Costello: 14:01 Yes. The Stranger in the Woods is available in many different formats: eBook, eAudio book. I believe that My Favorite Thing is Monsters is available as an eBook as well.

Ken Harvey: 14:12 Great. Well, thank you very much for joining us. Just want to remind our listeners that those things are available in our collection. Kaley, we look forward to you coming back to us in the future with more suggestions.

Kaley Costello: 14:28 Thank you. I look forward to it, too.

Ken Harvey: 14:31 That's this week's episode of the Check It Out podcast. Don't forget to join us next week for another episode. Thanks for listening.