

## Seymour Library Talk

Title: Comic Books as the American Shakespeare—Cultural Sites of Perpetual Adaptation

David Jay Gabriel, executive director of the New York City Comic Book Museum, has identified comic books as one of five “pure” American art forms alongside jazz, musical comedy, the mystery novel, and the banjo. Gabriel is just the latest to make such a claim. What about comic books makes them American? As the nation has changed, have comics changed in response? Do film and video game adaptations of comic titles carry the same sense of American heritage as their source material? This talk will engage with these questions by connecting the American comic book tradition to ideas of cultural adaptation, ultimately suggesting that comic books are an American equivalent to Shakespeare, and tracking the ways in which both traditions have been not only been embraced but also assimilated by the various cultures—and the various creators—who have had a hand in building those traditions.