



## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Chip Kidd '86

### To Chip Kidd for world-renowned cover designs that have caused millions of readers to take a book off the shelf.

In high school, Chip Kidd drew “what everybody draws”—logos of rock bands, and the shark from *Jaws*, “because that was very easy to draw.” Raised in Lincoln Park, a suburb of Reading, Pa., Kidd planned to study general communications at Penn State with the idea of going into TV broadcasting, but during his first term on campus, an advisor steered him toward graphic design.

That led to 27 years—and counting—of designing book covers at Alfred A. Knopf Publishing and being termed “the closest thing to a rock star in graphic design” by *USA Today*. He has even been the subject of a question on Jeopardy: “A. His work at Alfred A. Knopf made Chip Kidd a superstar in designing these. Q: What are book covers?”

Kidd credits Penn State Distinguished Professor of Graphic Design Lanny Sommese and the late Bill Kinser, a former associate professor, with laying the foundation for his sterling career. “They really helped shape my ability for

conceptual problem solving,” Kidd said. “I’ve never fancied myself a fine artist, facing a blank canvas. I like having a problem to solve.”

The graphic designer has solved “problems” such as creating the design for Michael Crichton’s 1990 book *Jurassic Park*. The much-lauded cover features the silhouetted Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton that became the basis for the logo of the iconic movie franchise. His extensive list of cover credits includes more than 1,000 books by diverse, notable authors including Anne Rice, Katharine Hepburn, Elmore Leonard, Cormac McCarthy, Augusten Burroughs, James Ellroy, John Updike, and David Sedaris. He also is the jacket designer for *The Letters of Ernest Hemingway* series, edited by Penn State Professor of English Sandra Spanier '76g, '81g.

Kidd is the author of books including *The Cheese Monkeys* and *The Learners*, both fictionalized, satirical accounts of his time at Penn State, as well as the graphic novel *Batman: Death by Design* and several books about comics. His most recent works are *Go: A Kidd’s Guide to Graphic Design* and *Chip Kidd: Book One, Work 1986-2006*, which covers his first two decades of jackets for works of fiction,

non-fiction, and poetry. A prolific lecturer, he has spoken at universities from Harvard to the Rhode Island School of Design, and his humorous 2012 TED Talk on design has racked up more than 1.2 million views. He delivered the 2007 commencement address for Penn State’s College of Arts and Architecture and was a 2013 Penn State Forum speaker.

Kidd recently donated his expansive archives to Penn State’s University Libraries. “For better or worse, I save everything,” he said of the 250 boxes now housed in The Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Extending from his youth to the present, the collection includes original artwork, digital data, correspondence from authors, and page proofs with handwritten notations that illuminate the artist’s creative process.

In 2014, AIGA, the professional association for design, honored Kidd with the AIGA Medal for exceptional achievements in the field of design. He also received the 2007 National Design Award for Communications, presented by Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, and in 1998 was invited to membership in the elite Alliance Graphique Internationale. His work has been featured in exhibitions ranging from

the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York to the GGG Gallery in Tokyo, Japan. He has been selected six times as a participant in The 100 Show, an annual competition held by the American Center for Design in Chicago, recognizing significant trends in communication design.

Kidd is a 2004 Penn State Alumni Fellow and received the College of Arts and Architecture Alumni Award in 1996.

In 2013, Kidd married his partner of 18 years, J.D. McClatchy, a writer and editor of the *Yale Review* and a Pulitzer-Prize-nominated poet and librettist. They divide their time among New York City, Stonington, Conn., and Palm Beach, Fla.

