LOVING THE PRINTED WORD

Loyola's unique student-staffed book publishing operation and the CityLit Project are both ways to get Baltimoreans, especially the young, excited about the literary arts.

Greg Wilhelm stands in front of a large metal cabinet in a classroom full of computers, proudly displaying the books that his students have published. It's an eclectic mix ranging from poetry to wine guides to a translation of the diaries of a second-century Christian martyr.

Greg Wilhelm makes his living off the printed word. In addition to helping run Loyola College's student-staffed educational publishing house, Apprentice House, he is the founder and CEO of the CityLit Project. At Apprentice, students learn to develop projects and design and market books. CityLit, meanwhile, aims to "nurture the culture of literature" in Baltimore through programs and workshops, including an annual festival at the downtown library.

The Loyola graduate had just finished grading final semester papers and took a break from his busy life — which he says he manages with the help of a very supportive wife and lots of coffee — to talk to The Sun about why he does the written word.

Tell me about this classroom — what goes on in here?

Apprentice House has been around for 18 to 20 years. It's a non-profit company producing non-fiction projects as part of the same course in the communications department at Loyola College. And then the technology really caught up with the idea. Now we can manufacture all our books digitally by which books are published in as small as 24 hours. So we basically just produce the book, and we have a weekly turn around. We went on the national stage, and I am proud to say that our books are in libraries all over the world. And we've been able to do something we've never done before.

In the fall I teach intro to publishing, which is about the business side of publishing. It's about marketing and design and the whole process of how a manuscript becomes a book. And in the fall, Kevin teaches the design course for projects that have already been accepted and have been produced. This year we just finished the marketing classes in which the students create marketing plans.

Tell me about the other life, with CityLit Project.

The idea stemmed from me that I wanted to do more to not just promote the written word, but to understand how the written word works. How does it work in Baltimore? We started the CityLit Project in 2005 and the CityLit Project.

In the fall of 2005, Hurricane Isabel blew through Baltimore and quite literally wiped out the Baltimore Rock Project. So after that, the CityLit Project had to scramble and said we would be a shame if there was no celebration of the literary arts in the city that people would love. So we scheduled a day of celebration and invited the community. So the CityLit Project.

What happens over the summer when the staff is gone on vacation?

That's a tricky one. We've never done this, but we have been able to do this for the past two years. We've had a small team of people who work on the ship, and we've been able to do something that we've never done before.

And I think about your other life, with CityLit Project.

It's been fantastic. We've been able to do something that we've never done before.