

YOUR ZINE TOOL

A DIY COLLECTION

By Jenna Freedman

Chris Dodge, a renowned alternative pressologist and the librarian at *Utne* magazine, has been known to say, "Every library should be a special library." At Barnard College, in order to meet this challenge, we decided in summer 2003 to start a collection of underground publications

The word "zine" is an abbreviation for magazine or fanzine. These nontraditional publications generally fit most of these criteria: they are self-published (written/edited, illustrated, copied, assembled, and distributed); they are motivated by desire for communication or self-expression (not profit, fame, or a grade); they have small distribution (5–3000 copies) and are underground or alternative in content or flavor; they are free of paid advertising

known as zines (rhymes with spleens). By 2004, we were finally cataloging and shelving them, and two years later we've got 1500-plus unique zine issues in our stacks, archives, or awaiting processing. These independent publications are used by undergraduates for fun

and research. The collection's other readers include faculty and doctoral students from other institutions, library school students, authors, and people who just like the things. Here's how we set up our collection at Barnard.

The proposal

Since zines are a nontraditional medium and potentially a little scary to administrators, I recommend a full-on, cover-every-possibility proposal. I presented seven detailed pages to my dean, dealing with the what, why, how, and how much of zine collecting, all within the context of collection development, processing, access, preservation, and budgeting. I also included a literature review, examined the advantages and disadvantages, and came up with an implementation plan. (A revised version of the proposal is available at www.barnard.edu/zines/proposal.htm.)

In addition to selling the concept of zines as the exuberant, unusual, and vital primary source documents that they are, you'll need to explain how they fit in your collection. It's not just why you should collect zines; it's why you should collect these zines. Some libraries don't specify which zines they'll take; they're more interested in cost and volume. That's a perfectly valid approach for a popular collection. However, research collections will serve librarianship better by selecting by topic or genre. Don't start a "local" collection unless you're at a historical society or if local history is already an emphasis at your library. Zines are not easily collected by region: they are not sold that way; they don't contain the bibliographic data that even tells you where they are published; and zinesters move a lot. Do everyone a favor by collecting

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and preserving by genre (e.g. mamazines, personal zines, DIY zines, teen zines, music fanzines, transgender zines, Christian zines, etc.).

Buying zines

Acquiring zines is a unique experience. There aren't traditional review sources, distributors, or net 30 payment options. There are, however, zines that review zines, also called metazines, such as *Broken Pencil* (really a full-fledged magazine), *Xerography Debt*, and *Zine World*. There are lots of others, but I discourage zine selectors from relying on reviews in the same way they do for other materials. Zine print runs are small, and there aren't enough of us collecting them to justify everyone buying the same items.

Zines also have their own distributors, known in the biz as distros. There's an excellent list of them on the Zine Street site (see Resources, p. 37). Perhaps the biggest distro is Microcosm Publishing. It's one of the few that takes credit cards, along with PayPal (a credit card payment service used by many zine publishers and distributors). Speaking of payment, to purchase zines, you'll need to figure out how to pay someone who lives in another state and doesn't have a bank account. Try to talk accounts payable into being open-minded about sending cash through the mail.

Truly, though, it's best to buy zines in person. Many independent bookstores like Quimby's in Chicago and Reading Frenzy in Portland, OR, and most Infoshops sell them. There are many regional zine festivals that provide excellent opportunities for shopping and learning.

LIBLIT

By Alycia Sellie

Since becoming addicted to zines, I have discovered a subset that has consumed my affections far more than any other: those made by and about library workers. These

intriguing publications offer a great look into the lives of working professionals, as well as LIS students. In creating the "Library Workers Zine Collection" at the SLIS library, University of Wisconsin-Madison, I have come across a few of the most recent and most interesting works that others in the field will enjoy. If your favorite zine or the one you created isn't listed, please get in touch. I'd love to add a copy to our SLIS library collection!

CLUTCH is a daily diary in comic form that highlights Clutch McBastard's experiences working in the zine capital of the world (Portland, OR) at the Independent Publishing Resource Center's zine library. Highly

Alycia Sellie, Graduate, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, May 2006, and founder of the Madison Zine Fest



The cataloging challenge

Cataloging may well be the biggest dilemma you'll have with zines. Julie Bartel's book *From A to Zine* covers this admirably. The main issue to wrestle with is standalone catalog vs. OPAC. I went for the latter because I desperately want the collection to be viewed as an integral part of our holdings and for zines to become increasingly visible to library users worldwide. Our zines' presence in WorldCat has already yielded interlibrary loan requests.

A second major decision: to deal with zines as serials or not. Once you get MARC involved, many zines demand serials cataloging, but I don't expect to check them in that way. Few offer subscriptions and far fewer come out regularly. Whenever possible, our zines are cataloged as monographs, rather than serials, as that allows for individual notes and abstracts.

That reminds me, providing a keyword-rich abstract in the 520 field is a workaround for increasing access points if content seems like it won't be fully served by current standard classification.

Access and preservation

Our zines are assigned a Cutter that results in their being shelved by author and by title if there is no author. Zines tend to be flimsy, so you may wish to consider housing them in comic book or magazine covers. Barnard's stacks zines are about to move from Princeton files to clear plastic zigzag shelving. They are barcoded (usually covering some art or text), Tattle-Tape™ed, and spine-labeled (despite their lack of spines). This is fine for the stacks, but what if you want to check one out? Where does the checkout stamp go on an object with no room even for a barcode? Many libraries use the "checking out the

Allied Media Conference
www.alliedmedia
conference.com

**Baltimore County Public
Library Zine Collection**
www.bcpl.info/zines,
bcplzines@gmail.com

**Barnard Library Zine
Collection**
www.barnard.edu/library/
zines, zines@barnard.edu

**Bartel, Julie. *From A to
Zine: Building a Winning
Zine Collection in Your
Library* (ALA Editions,
2004)**

**Book of Zines list of zine
libraries**
zinebook.com/resource/
libes.html

Broken Pencil
www.brokenpencil.com

**Develop a Collection at
Your Institution handout
from Madison Zine Fest
2005**

bc.barnard.columbia.edu/
~jfreedma/talks/
MZF_handout.doc

Microcosm Publishing
www.microcosm
publishing.com

NYPL Zines
www.nypl.org/research/
chss/per/zines.html

PayPal
www.paypal.com

Quimby's
www.quimbys.com

Reading Frenzy
www.readingfrenzy.com

**Xerography Debt
full text online:**
www.leekinginc.com/
xeroxdebt

Zine Fests list
groups.yahoo.com/group/
zinelibrarians/links/Zine_
Fests_001136487864

Zine Libraries web site
www.zinelibraries.info

Zine Street
www.zinestreet.com/
DistrosMain.htm

Zine World
www.undergroundpress.org

**Zinelibrarians
discussion list**
groups.yahoo.com/group/
zinelibrarians

For a history of zines, read either Stephen Duncombe's *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Verso) or the slightly less academic chronology by Chip Rowe at www.zinebook.com/resource/history.html



recommended for both its illustrations and the banal beauty of Clutch's everyday life. **CLUTCH** by Clutch McBastard, PO Box 12409, Portland, OR 97212 (latest issue is No. 14, "Happy War!," 2003) \$1-\$3/issue

With more than 45 issues to date (!), Donny Smith has filled **DWAN** with a wide variety of content, including queer poetry, book reviews, bibliographies, correspondence, diary entries, and interviews. Check out issues 38 and 40, "American Libraries" and "Library Journal." **DWAN** by Donny Smith, 915 W. 2d St., Bloomington, IN 47403 (latest issue is No. 46) \$1/issue, and free to prisoners

with stories from the reference desk. **THE GHOSTS OF READY REFERENCE**, Love Bunni Pr., 2622 Princeton Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44118 (latest issue is No. 3)

I DREAMED I WAS ASSERTIVE discusses everything from infertility to mix tapes and has a great reading list and a tiny vellum envelope glued to its final page filled with "haiku tributes to the things I love and loathe." **I DREAMED I WAS ASSERTIVE** by Celia Perez, 2272 W. Leland, #3E, Chicago, IL 60625 (latest issue is No. 7, Winter/Spring 2005) \$3 or equivalent in postage or trade. perezeeb@yahoo.com Tommy and Julie are playful enough to make up for a few uptight librarian

for a personal letter.
dwanzine@hotmail.com

Inspired by a collection of remnants from a public library's ready-reference card file collection, **THE GHOSTS OF READY REFERENCE** combines

photocopies of some of these materials

stereotypes. Filled with gripes, games, and a sometimes twisted sense of humor, this zine is amusing and lighthearted (with dark undertones). **LIBRARY BONNET** by Tommy Kovac and Julie Fredericksen, 1315-I N. Tustin, #259, Orange, CA 92867 (latest issue is No. 7) \$2/issue. heenie@juno.com; tommykovac.com/LibraryBonnet.htm

A compilation of "inappropriate coloring sheets," reviews, and articles, **LIBRARY URINAL** is named for an unusual sponsorship by Michael Zinman of the urinal fixtures in the Van Pelt Library. **LIBRARY URINAL**, edited by Donny Smith and Miriam DesHarnais, PO Box 4803, Baltimore, MD 21211 (latest issue is No. 1) \$1/issue. libraryurinal@gmail.com

Jenna Freedman has many projects, including the volunteer-run Radical Reference (www.radicalreference.info), as well as her zine collection at Barnard, and it is inspiring and humanizing to read the thoughts of a woman who works very hard to organize and make change both in and outside of the library world in her zine: **LOWER EAST SIDE LIBRARIAN**

envelope or bag” trick. Even more libraries choose not to circulate zines on the grounds that they’re ephemeral or fragile, short enough to read or photocopy on-site, or part of special collections.

You’ll notice I refer to “stacks zines.” Thanks to a suggestion from Jim Danky at the Wisconsin Historical Society, we collect two copies whenever possible. We preserve one in acid-free file folders in our climate-controlled archives and make the second available for photocopying, barcoding, and other abuses—thus, stacks zines and archives zines.

I haven’t addressed what to do with all of the extras that come with zines—free-floating buttons, CDs, condoms, stickers, teabags, etc. That’s because I don’t know. When you get this figured out, please tell me what you did.

Cost it out

Typical zines costs \$1–\$2. Even if you’re buying two issues of each, as we are, you can establish a respectable starter collection for \$500. If you make a request on zineinterest list, you’ll probably receive a few grab bags of largesse that won’t cost you anything but postage. What can be expensive is the furniture to display the zines, so browse a few catalogs to price display shelves before you submit your budget request.

Also consider including travel in the budget. Attending zine events such as the Allied Media Conference in Bowling Green, OH, is invaluable for making connections with zine publish-

Zine Reading in New Orleans

The authors of this piece will be joined by Elaine Harger (*E-Zine*) and New Orleans zinester Ammi Emergency (*Emergency*) at the here Free Speech Buffet on Monday, June 26 at the Omni Royal Orlean Hotel at 7pm. \$10 ticket includes food. Contact Jenna Freedman (zines@barnard.edu) for more information.

ers and for buying zines. Registration and housing will cost you under \$100 for the weekend, and you’ll get a tour of the wonderful Pop Culture collection at Bowling Green State University, admission to a punk show, and free bowling (including shoe rental).

The last items to consider are publicity and programming. The people who create zines won’t generally expect to be paid, but they won’t turn down vegan snacks, so budgeting in a few dollars for food is a good idea.

Put it on the table

In addition to extolling zines’ myriad virtues—they get a group of authors into the library who have previously been almost completely unrepresented, they’re valuable primary source documents, they are fun to read, they are beautiful, they’re rare in libraries, college students and young adults love them, librarians who love them won’t want to leave a library that has them, etc.—be honest about the vices. These could include the amount of staff time the zines will take and how those lucky enough to work with them won’t want to do anything else.

Plan in advance what you need to do to develop the collection, when it will happen, and who will be involved. Don’t underestimate how long this will take. The Barnard collection took over a year to go from idea to shelf.

So, that’s how to make your own zine collection. Have fun with it, and your patrons will, too. ■



WINTER SOLSTICE SHOUT OUT by Jenna Freedman, 521 E. 5th St., New York, NY 10009-6726 (latest issue is 2005) \$2–\$3/issue, concealed cash, or library zine trade. leszine@gmail.com

With only one issue created, **RIOT LIBRARRRRRIAN** is sadly defunct, since its authors, Jenn Phillips-Bacher and Sara Pete, are no longer “underwhelmed and underworked library school students,” but perhaps you might find a copy at your favorite distro or zine store (or you can interlibrary loan it from the SLIS library in a few months!).

Number five of **TRANSOM** is “The Library Issue,” filled with a number of stories and topics all about librarianship. Jackie also has a minizine titled **A DAY IN THE**

or worked with zine collections in both public, academic, and alternative libraries. The ups and downs of zine collecting are addressed, and there is even a list of librarian zines in issue No. 2, so here is the next place to look for more titles! **ZINE LIBRARIAN ZINE**, edited by Greig Means, PO Box 12409, Portland, OR 97212 (latest issue is No. 2) \$1/issue. zinelibrarian@yahoo.com

More zines made by library workers: **AMERICA?** by Travis Fristoe, PO Box 13077, Gainesville, FL 32604-1077 (latest issue is No. 13) \$1/issue. obscurist.press@gmail.com
BEST ZINE EVER! A REVIEW ZINE OF OUR FAVORITE ZINES OF THE YEAR, edited by Greig Means, PO Box 12409, Portland, OR 97212 (issue 4 is soon to be

LIFE AT THE INFORMATION DESK. TRANSMO by Jackie Campbell, PO Box 77716, Seattle, WA 98177-0716. \$1/issue or trade.

ZINE LIBRARIAN ZINE is written by librarians who have created

released) **Free!** zinelibrarian@yahoo.com
DURGA by Tracy, PO Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405 (latest is Winter 2006) \$1.50 or trade. durgazine@hotmail.com
FLOTATION DEVICE by Keith Helt, 1242 Dean St., Woodstock, IL 60098 (latest issue is No. 11) \$2–\$5/issue. flotationdevice@hotmail.com
HOW TO BE A LIBRARY PATRON by Jerianne, PO Box 330156, Murfreesboro, TN 37133-0156 \$2/issue. jerianne@undergroundpress.org; www.undergroundpress.org. (Jerianne also edits the popular zine review zine *Zine World* and writes *Rejected Band Names*.)
MUVFUGGA, ed. by John Gehner, 1907 Bellamy Dr., Champaign, IL 61821 (latest is No. 3, 2003) \$3/issue. john@slowpencil.net; www.muvfugga.com
SUGAR NEEDLE by Corina Fastwolf, PO Box 300152, Minneapolis, MN 55408 or Phlox Icona, 1174-2 Briarcliff Rd., Atlanta, GA 30306 (latest is No. 26) \$1 + a stamp/issue or “selective trades for zines or cool candy”
THOUGHTWORM by Sean Stewart, 3600 Buena Vista Ave., Baltimore, MD 21211 \$2/issue. sean@thoughtworm.com; thoughtworm.com
YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE ME CONFUSED WITH SOMEONE WHO CARES by School Zine Librarian (latest issue is No. 1.38) \$1 or free to school librarians. schoolzinelibrarian@yahoo.com ■

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