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The Bonds of Organization: Zine Archives and the Archival Tradition

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Cover Page Footnote

We would like to thank everyone who helped us along our way, and in particular: Scott Cline Jenna Freedman
Marc Parker Nora Mukaihata

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ABSTRACT

There is a current movement amongst zine archives toward collaboration and the standardization of policies and practices. As a relatively new area of archival collecting, zine archives are progressing through core archival issues at a rapid pace; this progression provides an opportunity for them to redefine traditional archival practices in relation to their specific needs.

The community-based nature of their collections compel zine archivists and librarians to include their unique audiences in the mapping of traditional practices onto the organic structures of their largely grassroots organizations: they are translators and interpreters between archival theory and this grassroots practice. Ideally, this results in a symbiotic balance by which the archives invite and sustain community involvement, while the community benefits from the formal organization and resulting accessibility provided by established, time-tested library and archival traditions.

The following paper discusses the new movement within archival practice that is arising to support the community-inclusive and decentralized work going on in zine archives and libraries around the country, focusing on the Zine Archive and Publishing Project (ZAPP) in Seattle; the Independent Publishing Resource Center (IPRC) in Portland; and Barnard Zine Library in New York City as examples. It reviews the special challenges that zines, as a form, present for the archivist, and considers the opportunities for reflection and redefinition that these challenges present for more traditional archival communities. The research included draws on interviews with zine library and archive staff, zine community documentation about the process of archiving zines, and traditional archival scholarship and theory.

Introduction

There is a current movement amongst zine archives toward collaboration and the standardization of policies and practices. As a relatively new area of archival collecting, zine archives are progressing through core archival issues at a rapid pace; this progression provides an opportunity for them to redefine traditional archival practices in relation to their specific needs.

The community-based nature of these collections compels zine archivists and librarians to include zines' unique audiences in the mapping of traditional archival practices onto the organic structures of their organizations: they are translators and interpreters, marrying established archival theory to grassroots practice. Ideally, this results in a symbiotic balance through which archives invite and sustain community involvement, while the community benefits from the formal organization and resulting accessibility provided by time-tested library and archival traditions.

The following discussion will address the new archival movement arising to support the community-inclusive and decentralized work going on in zine archives and libraries around the country, using the Zine Archive and Publishing Project (ZAPP) located in Seattle, Washington, as its primary illustration. The special challenges that zines, as a form, present for the archivist were reviewed while considering the opportunities for reflection and redefinition that these challenges present for more traditional archival communities. The supporting research draws on interviews with members of ZAPP in Seattle, the zine librarian at Barnard College in New York City, and the Independent Publishing Resource Center (IPRC) in Portland, as well as zine community documentation about the process of archiving zines and traditional archival scholarship and theory.

What Is a Zine?

Every author who writes about zines seems to tie herself into knots in an attempt to simultaneously define the instantly recognizable qualities that most zines share, and to do justice to the incredible diversity of what can rightly be called (read, handled and circulated as) a zine. Julie Bartel, a well-known zine librarian, begins her book *From A to Zine: Building a Winning Zine Collection in Your Library* with the question, "but what are they?"

Zines (pronounced "zeen," like "bean," rather than "line") are basically small, self-published magazines that are usually (though not always) written by one person and distributed through an intricate network of individuals and collectives.¹

Bartel immediately goes on to point out that this definition gives one very little sense of what a zine is actually like, why it was created, or why one would read it.

Zines are about diversity, creativity, innovation, and expression. As a group, zines deliberately lack cohesion of form or function, representing as they do, individual visions and ideals rather than

1. Julie Bartel, *From A to Zine: Building a Winning Zine Collection in Your Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2004), 1.

professional or corporate objectives. With zines, anything goes. Anything.²

Stephen Duncombe, in *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*, also notes the centrality of freedom from convention for zines as a form: “this celebration of the pure freedom to express helps explain the fact that traditional publishing practices are sometimes absent from zines.”³ Duncombe goes on to say that “what matters is unfettered, authentic expression; not necessarily making sense.”⁴ In keeping with this idea, ZAPP has adopted an even broader and more conceptual definition of zines. In their words zines are “any self-published creative endeavor conceived purely out of passion.”⁵

Typically, zines take the form of quarter- or half-sheet booklets that are photocopied, letterpress-printed or silk-screened and bound by stapling, sewing, gluing, or simply folding pages together. Zines are distributed through informal networks of friends, collectives, bookstores, record stores, music venues, or the mail for the purpose of self-expression, group-expression, or the expression or documentation of a social movement. Zines are, emphatically, not produced for profit. Zines are often unedited; they are sometimes one-offs and sometimes serials. They are often written by a single author, but are sometimes collaborative efforts.

The origin of zines as a form and as a movement claims various antecedents. Some historians locate zines’ beginnings in the pamphleteering and small-scale publishing of the French revolution and the founding of the United States.⁶ A solid “zinealogy” can be traced back at least to the 1930s, when science fiction in periodicals such as *Amazing Stories* spawned enthusiastic fan fiction that was traded by mail amongst groups of readers and writers.⁷

Zines took on a more political dimension in the punk movement of the 1970s and 1980s. The do-it-yourself ethic of punk culture encouraged the distribution of information, music reviews, and political literature in zine form at punk shows in the US and UK, due in part to a distrust of established publishing channels.⁸ The genre gained even more momentum, and a distinctly feminist infusion, with the Riot Grrrl

2. Ibid., 2.

3. Stephen Duncombe, *Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*, 2nd edition (Bloomington, Indiana: Microcosm Publishing, 2008), 38-39.

4. Ibid., 38-39.

5. ZAPP, *Zine Archive and Publishing Project* (Self-published, 2008), 2.

6. Bartel, 6.

7. Ibid., 7

8. Ibid., 8.

movement of the 1990s. Young women who were disaffected by the punk movement's misogyny decided to create their own woman-centered culture, and began reviewing female-fronted bands, discussing feminism, and proclaiming their slogan of "revolution girl style now!" in zines mailed out of Philadelphia, Olympia, Washington, DC and London.

Since their inception, zines have been strongly associated with underground movements and marginalized identities. Zine makers (or zinesters) have emphasized passion-driven rather than profit-driven motivations, with self-expression and communication at the center of the creative effort. While a number of zines have been turned into full-fledged books or national magazines (such as *Bitch Magazine* or *Bust*), it is important not to conflate mainstream exposure with "success" in the zine world. In the words of Marc Parker, librarian at the Independent Publishing Resource Center in Portland, Oregon, "all zines are equally good, even though they're not; someone is still putting their voice out there."⁹

The creation and circulation of zines without corporate backing or mainstream recognition have traditionally prioritized speed and inexpensiveness, encouraging zines to be read and shared until they fall apart. This presents a significant challenge to the archivist or librarian who wishes to preserve zines for future readers, especially since preservation that disrupts access is fundamentally at odds with the communicative intent of zine production. While cheap creation is effective for immediate distribution, it comes at some expense to posterity. The materials from which zines are constructed are, by and large, extremely vulnerable to wear and decay. As one zinester has said, "It's only a dollar...but I can never replace it."¹⁰

Organizations like the Barnard Zine Library in New York, the Salt Lake City Library in Utah, and the IPRC in Oregon have stepped in to steward the continuity of zines into the future by developing their collections and methods for preservation and cataloging.¹¹ Their efforts have gained the attention of archivists and librarians from outside the zine community. Panels such as "Organizing Anarchy: Zines in your Archives and Library Collections" have been introduced at recent library and archival conferences, providing instruction for institutions interested in fostering their own collections and communities and beginning conversations around best practices.¹²

9. Marc Parker, interview with Althea Lazzaro, September 28, 2010.
10. Moe Bowstern in *\$100 & A T-Shirt: A Documentary about Zines in the Northwest*. DVD. Directed by Joe Biel. 2008. Portland, OR: Microcosm Publishing, 2008.
11. Many zine repositories, including ZAPP, seem to fall somewhere in between libraries and archives on the organizational and philosophical spectrum. Zine literature often uses the word "cataloging" to refer to practices analogous to arrangement and description. Throughout this paper we retain the use of the term, while acknowledging that it does not always describe the same activities as library cataloging.
12. "Organizing Anarchy: Zines in your Archives and Library Collections" was presented at the Midwestern Archives Conference 2012 Annual Meeting. http://www.midwestarchives.org/assets/documents/2010Spring_Program.pdf (accessed March 9, 2012).

Among the active participants in the emerging movement to shape and support zine archiving culture, Seattle's ZAPP currently houses over 20,000 zines.¹³ During the mid-1990s Chuck Swain and Gary Greaves started ZAPP in the basement of the Richard Hugo House in Seattle, using their personal zine collections. Over the years ZAPP has continued to evolve with the support of the Richard Hugo House and a steady stream of volunteers and interns. The archive has faced challenges including changes in staff and a major flood that resulted in an extended period of closure, in addition to the more inherent questions surrounding how best to preserve and make their zines available to the community. In the last few years, ZAPP has been able not only to reopen its doors and provide regularly scheduled hours, but also to look toward the future by creating a comprehensive zine preservation plan and successfully pursuing grants for preservation.¹⁴ Throughout the process, ZAPP has depended on community members and those interested in the project to donate their personal and professional skills to keep the archive alive.

Why Should Zines be Preserved?

Anna Leventhal, in her article "The Politics of Small: Strategies and Considerations in Zine Preservation," adapts Deleuze and Guattari's theory of "minor literature" into a theory of "minor media" for the purpose of analyzing the cultural significance of zines.¹⁵ In this formulation, "minor media" share three characteristics. The first is "a high degree of deterritorialization," because production of the work "does not contribute to a sense of national identity, or even a sense of personal identity with reference to the nation, but rather uses the language of the majority to articulate a politics of displacement, smallness and minority."¹⁶

According to the second characteristic, every utterance of a minor literature is "vibrating" with the political.¹⁷ This refers to both the overtly political writing found in zines, and to the act of writing a zine itself. No matter what is contained in a zine—be it a comic, a recipe, a personal story, or a political diatribe—it has been written and distributed in a form that eschews dominant culture and implicitly rejects mainstream values.

The third characteristic of "minor media" is most significant to the idea of collecting and preserving zines:

13. Nora Mukaihata, interview with Rachel Woodbrook, February 24, 2010.

14. Ibid.

15. Anna Leventhal, "The Politics of Small: Strategies and Considerations in Zine Preservation," Graduate Student Panel: Preservation of New Media. (Montreal: McGill University, 2006). http://archives.docam.ca/Pedagogie/Seminaire_2006/Anna_Leventhal.pdf (accessed March 2010).

16. Quote from Deleuze and Guattari. Leventhal, 2.

17. Leventhal, 3.

...everything takes on a collective value. Indeed, precisely because talent isn't abundant in a minor literature, there are no possibilities for an individual enunciation that would belong to this or that "master" and that could be separated from a collective enunciation....it is a literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism.¹⁸

Zines often give voice to specific communities and points of view that are largely absent from the mainstream historical record—whether it be science fiction fans, punks, riot grrrls, or, moving beyond the political sphere and into the political-as-personal, communities concerned with mental health or physical conditions. Given the perspectives sometimes found in zines as nowhere else, professionals such as Alycia Sellie may well wonder “why any library would be interested in old diaries and not also want to archive perzines [personal zines] by riot grrrls.”¹⁹ Chris Dodge, paraphrasing archivist Jim Danke of the Wisconsin Historical Society, puts it this way: “let’s not attempt to sanitize our culture, ...but let future historians see for themselves the true diversity of interests and modes of expression that thrived for a time.”²⁰

A zine archive must sustain a sense of collective representation in order to remain relevant to its community.²¹ To accomplish this, ZAPP’s former library manager, Nora Mukaihata, speaks of the importance of maintaining a “living” archive.²² A living archive, in the case of ZAPP, is one in which those involved in the zine community actively participate in the archive as well. At ZAPP, Mukaihata was the only paid staff member; most cataloging, collecting, and maintaining of the collection is done by volunteers and interns, many of whom are zinesters themselves. Similarly, at the IPRC, all volunteers are trained to catalog zines, and are encouraged to rummage through the collection in their down time to find pieces they are genuinely interested in cataloging.²³ This marriage of passion and duty means more energy is available for investment in the caretaking of the collections.

18. Ibid., 4.

19. Jenna Freedman, Alycia Sellie, and Rachel Murphy et al. *Zine Librarian Zine #3* (Self-published, 2009), 1. <http://zinelibraries.info/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/master.pdf> (accessed March 2010).

20. Chris Dodge, “Collecting the Wretched Refuse: Lifting a Lamp to Zines, Military Newspapers, and Wisconsin,” *Library Trends* 56(3) (2008): 667-677.

21. Our use of the word “collective” here might be a bit confusing. Although zines are often produced in or distributed through organizations run as collectives, zines are also intensely individual creations. Stephen Duncombe makes this delineation neatly when he says, “...a zine network proposes something different: a community of people linked via bonds of difference, each sharing their originality.” Duncombe, 58.

22. Mukaihata, interview.

23. Marc Parker, interview with Althea Lazzaro, March 9, 2013

Although the involvement of those with strong investments in the culture can bring its own challenges, in the best-case scenario, a sustainable archival model can utilize the knowledge and passion of the community to bring the archive into being, and to support collective memory and the construction of identity. In this way, the construction and maintenance of the archive will reflect the multivocality that characterizes its collection.

In the film *\$100 and A T-Shirt: A Documentary about Zines in the Northwest*, which explores the motivations of zine-makers, there is a montage of zine creators answering the question, “Why do you make a zine?” Two recurring answers are “community” and “control.”²⁴ Negotiating the ideas of ownership, then, is important for philosophical as well as practical reasons, and is strongly tied to the idea of community. Flinn et al. put it nicely when they assert that the defining characteristic of what they term a “community archive” is “the active participation of a community in documenting and making accessible the history of their particular group and/or locality *on their own terms*.”²⁵ Creating a “living” community archive by putting zinesters in charge of their own history answers, in the case of zines, the challenge that documentation strategy has grappled with since the 1970s—how to “select from the mass of modern documentation to document contemporary social movements, under represented groups, and cultural shifts not well represented through traditional acquisition practices.”²⁶

Preservation

The materiality of a zine—be it photocopied, hand-screened or hand-colored—reflects its production by one or more individuals rather than a corporation, and bears witness to its purpose in the wear and tear that it acquires through reading and circulation.²⁷ Alex Wrekk, in *Stolen Sharpie Revolution*, characterizes this journey as a value-added process, building identity and forging connections between zines and the world at large:

...art that happens in everyday life always has the chance of being changed by the moments and places it's traveling through, and the people it encounters along the way. It always has the chance of not

24. *\$100 & A T-Shirt: A Documentary about Zines in the Northwest*. DVD. Directed by Joe Biel. Portland, OR: Microcosm Publishing, 2008.

25. Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd, “Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream,” *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 71-86.

26. Doris J. Malkmus, “Documentation Strategy: Mastodon or Retro-Success,” *American Archivist* 71 (2008): 385.

27. Leventhal, 12.

making it to the other end intact. It is art on an adventure of unknowing collaboration.²⁸

As a result, “the idea of zine preservation is more than a means of conserving memorabilia of an interesting period in the history of popular communication—it is a matter of protecting a cultural form whose very materiality is both its strength and its potential limitation.”²⁹ Therefore, in the context of the constant balance between preservation and access, zine archives often choose to err on the side of allowing their collections to remain a part of their creating community.

The practical challenges of this decision have been addressed in different ways. ZAPP currently houses open stacks in its reading room; it does not loan zines, though it may revisit the possibility when resources and time allow.³⁰ The Seattle Public Library system circulates its zines as it does its magazines, in envelopes marked with barcodes and the number of items inside the envelope, though none of the zines are cataloged. Barnard has two copies of most of its zines; preservation copies are kept in a climate-controlled vault, while reading copies are housed in the main library, and are made available to other institutions through interlibrary loan.³¹ Retention has been a problem for many zine repositories, which affects access as well since a zine must remain in the collection for multiple readers to use it.³²

Perhaps the most important implication of the attempt to balance preservation and access, however, is the effort’s contribution to reassessment and self-awareness on the part of the archive. Leventhal notes, “there is obviously no simple answer to this question, but its very consideration requires an articulation of what the most important features of zines (and thus what aspect of them needs to be preserved) might be.”³³ The tension between preservation and access has long been articulated within archival tradition (e.g., O’Toole’s discussion in “On the Idea of Permanence”).³⁴ Zines bring a great tension to archival practice in that their creators’ intentions argue ardently against preservation at the cost of access, even as the frailty of their creations seems to require extensive care. Although this is a consideration faced by every archivist, the particularly strong sense of ownership that subcultures may feel for their archives necessitates not only careful consideration, but also clear articulation of the issue to establish and preserve the trust needed to create and

28. Alex Wreck, *Stolen Sharpie Revolution 2* (Portland, OR: Lunchroom Publishing, 2009), 50.

29. Leventhal, 1.

30. Mukaihata, interview.

31. Jenna Freedman, interview with Althea Lazzaro, July 21, 2010.

32. Leventhal, 7.

33. Leventhal, 6.

34. James M O’Toole, “On the Idea of Permanence,” *American Archivist* 52 (1989): 10-25. Richard Stoddart and Teresa Kiser, “Zines and the Library,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 48(3) (2004): 191-8.

maintain such repositories as “living archives.” Thus archivists must, when resources allow, seek a workable middle way, such as designating duplicates in a collection as preservation or browsing copies, as practiced at Barnard and recommended by Heather Davis, consulting archivist in ZAPP’s Preservation Plan.³⁵

Cataloging & Arrangement

Given their vast array of formats, the non-standardized presence or absence of traditional publishing information, and the cross-genre nature of many zines, deciding how to arrange and catalog them in a way that provides clear organization and allows maximum access for users has presented a great challenge for would-be zine archivists and librarians. Organizing a collection of zines is akin to trying to catalog the zinesters themselves.

Zines are intended primarily as a medium of communication, but this communication is specifically predicated on the creators’ expressions of individuality, and their control of its dissemination. Given the frequent expression zines give to underground or minority positions, the anarchy or chaos of the zine world can provide security and regulation in its anonymity. If the information disseminated is considered dangerous or unorthodox, or even if a zinester is simply seeking to express her opinions amidst the cacophony of other zine voices, resisting organization can also be a strategy to prevent exposure by systematized access. “Writing for a zine allows people to become something else, someone else. If they contribute to the zine, they have the opportunity to assume identities of their own choosing, and not be molded into beings they don’t want to be.”³⁶ One might also add, to not be identified or revealed by those they do not wish to be.

Many zine collections got their start, or a large part of their collection, from donations of zinesters’ personal collections. Because of this, zines that make their way into a library or archive may have been produced on a very small scale, for distribution to only a few close friends. Jenna Freedman expands:

Some people are more appalled than pleased to find their zine from 1994 in a collection. Folks make a zine with a 20-copy print run and never imagine that one of their friends will decide that it’s an important artifact of a social movement. It’s like the equivalent of people sharing personal letters... before the writer is dead.³⁷

35. Davis, 5.

36. Quote from Gunderloy in Duncombe, 43.

37. Jenna Freedman, interview with Althea Lazzaro, August 3, 2010.

Kelly Wooten, writing on digitizing the Duke University Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture's collection of zines, almost exactly echoes Freedman's concerns:

Even though zines are "published" rather than private, like a letter or diary, we have no idea whether 10 copies were made for friends or 1,000 copies were made and sent far and wide through a zine distributor. They are most often written by young women who never imagined that their deepest secrets and angsty rants would be archived in a research library.³⁸

Is there, then, an ethical dilemma inherent in trying to organize zines? Does cataloging or arrangement co-opt power from the very community it seeks to understand? This is not easily answered, but as Duncombe notes, "alternative culture has already been discovered—the more important question is who will represent it and how?"³⁹ Archives and libraries connected to zine communities can provide a level of understanding and advocacy that even reticent zinesters might prefer over categorization by those completely outside of their community.⁴⁰

The digitization of existing collections, an idea proposed to enhance access and preserve original copies, further exacerbates the dilemma outlined above, since some authors might feel threatened by the exponential increase in access it would provide to their ideas or identities as represented in their zines. For this reason, ZAPP seeks to locate authors for works (or more often, parts of works) to be digitized—a formidable task in some instances—and includes a specific clause in its donation form for this possibility, though at the time of our interview did not intend to digitize its collection.⁴¹

Kelly Wooten addressed this dilemma in her blog post "Why We're Not Digitizing Zines." According to Wooten, it is very difficult to locate the authors of zines to acquire permission for posting online. Since zinesters often flout copyright in the production of their zines, freely copying images and words from published works

38. Kelly Wooten. "Why We're Not Digitizing Zines" Duke University Libraries Digital Collections (blog). September 21, 2009. <http://blogs.library.duke.edu/digital-collections/2009/09/21/why-were-not-digitizing-zines/> (accessed March 2010).

39. Duncombe, 20.

40. Of course, this issue of alternative identities and preserving culture is not unique to the zine community—at the extreme end of the spectrum, one might ask how much care should be taken to preserve, for example, the cultural integrity of a hate group that wanted to maintain its historical records. However, for the purposes of this discussion, a distinction is made between cultures (such as the zine culture) that are oriented toward supporting those who may have been oppressed and primarily seek to express their individuality (even if, in some cases, this involves language or ideas offensive to many), and organizations or groups based on hate or oppression of others.

41. Mukaihata, interview.

without acknowledgement, an institution runs the risk of violating copyright, despite fair-use allowances. Wooten also acknowledges the same dilemma that Freedman discusses in that some zines were created with a small circle of readers in mind, and some zinesters will say, do, and create things at one time in their life that they don't wish to have neatly categorized and made available online for years to come.⁴²

Even if these ethical dilemmas could be resolved, we must still ask how zine archives can best put their organizational schemes into practice. The archival tradition positions origin and provenance as paramount considerations for a collection's organization, which may be useful for contextualizing zine collections in relation to their communities. Within the archival tradition, the concept of origin is not limited to the individual but is often extended to the level of the community (or department, or social movement, or municipality). There is a useful alignment between the archival approach to origin and the way that many zine archivists and librarians consider community—despite the fact that many zine librarians and archivists lack formal archival training, they are acutely aware of the originating communities to whom they are responsible.

One of the main issues under discussion within the world of zine archives and libraries is an emerging desire for a national union catalog to allow for interoperability and communication among repositories.⁴³ This impulse is a natural continuation of the history of cooperation amongst zinesters and between zinesters and their local repositories. A recent survey of zine libraries and archives' cataloging practices, however, reveals a diversity of approaches that makes communication between catalogs challenging. These differences include whether zines are best categorized as serials (as in the case of the Seattle Public Library or the Wisconsin Historical Society, where they are integrated entirely into the periodical collection) or as monographs; at what level zines should be categorized; whether zine collections within libraries should be given their own catalogs; and finally, whether they are organized primarily by author (as at Barnard), subject (as at ZAPP and the IPRC), or by some other factor.⁴⁴ As noted in "The Politics of Small," "zines can be treated as art objects, rare books, or manuscripts," which leads to understandable differences in cataloging practices depending upon the perspective of the archivist, or the needs of the community using a particular archive.⁴⁵ The approach to arrangement can be a reflection of the professional (or non-professional) background of a given collection's caretakers and the resources available to institutions that house and support collections.

42. Wooten.

43. A "union catalog" is a catalog spanning the collections of multiple institutions; for traditional libraries, OCLC's WorldCat is an example of this.

44. Jerianne Thompson, "Zine Cataloging – A Needs Assessment," Assessment of survey results, 2009.

45. Leventhal, 5.

Outside the context of zines, archivists have addressed the diversity of their materials with flexible standards like DACS (Describing Archives—a Content Standard) and EAD (Encoded Archival Description), and, while some collections, such as DePaul University and the University of Iowa, appear to be basing their work with zines on those standards, the librarians and archivists at the IPRC and Barnard have elected not to use them for a variety of reasons. ZAPP had systematically assessed a variety of cataloging systems used by zine archives and libraries across the country before deciding to remain with its own home-grown customized MySQL catalog, which offers more flexibility than other options in storing archival information alongside catalog records, and keyword searchability.⁴⁶

In the end, the challenge of any organization comes down to creating an organizational system flexible enough for different types of repositories and users, yet simple enough to allow for ease in navigation and operation, since non-professionals will likely do much of the work of maintaining the catalog.⁴⁷ Conversation on this topic is vibrant, if still in its fledgling stages, as evident in the collaborative efforts resulting in the first Zine Librarian (Un)conference held in Seattle in March 2009 (hosted by ZAPP), and subsequent (Un)conferences during which development of the union catalog has been advanced.⁴⁸ Most recently, this includes efforts to begin building a metadata standard, Zinecore, based off of Dublin Core, which would support the creation of such a catalog.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Although the SAA has since adopted an updated code of ethics, the 1955 Archivist's Code begins with an exhortation that speaks to the heart of how zine archives, in particular, emphasize a personal as well as professional commitment to the documentation of contemporary culture: “the archivist has a moral obligation to society to take every possible measure to ensure the preservation of valuable records, not only those of the past but those of his [sic] own times, and with equal zeal.”⁵⁰ While Barnard, ZAPP and the IPRC follow organizational and access schemes that are based largely on the library tradition, each modifies this tradition to reflect what is at the heart of this code: the preservation of unique, fragile materials that are important

46. Scott Cline, email correspondence with Rachel Woodbrook, February 22, 2013; Mukaihata, interview.

47. Thompson, 10.

48. Jenna Freedman, email correspondence with Althea Lazzaro, February 22, 2013.

49. “Cataloging.” Zine Libraries Interest Group (blog). <http://zinelibraries.info/category/cataloging/> (accessed May 2013).

50. National Archives. “The Archivist’s Code,” 1955, <http://www.archives.gov/preservation/professionals/archivist-code.html> (accessed March 2010).

records of their communities. In so doing, they firmly ally themselves with the archival tradition.⁵¹

Ann Cvetkovich, in her book *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Cultures*, discusses the form that community collections take when they include archived documents that express the emotions, struggles and traumas of a particular group or subculture. She reports idiosyncrasies and a deep sense of urgency, describing archives that have existed and thrived in basements and other non-institutional spaces. Cvetkovich also reports a history of resistance amongst volunteers at lesbian and gay archives to having their collections incorporated into mainstream institutions such as the San Francisco Public library or New York Public Library, for fear that these “archives of feeling,” so long neglected by society, would not be protected for the long term by those outside of their community of origin.⁵²

A zine archive is very much an “archive of feeling.” Zines can look a thousand different ways and document innumerable stories and experiences, but what all zines exhibit is the passion of their creators to communicate freely and without restriction. In many cases, the urge to create zines is deeply emotional. They often represent dissatisfaction with more visible cultures, but more personally, joy at finding a way of expressing unique and previously invisible experiences to a sympathetic reader as part of a deeply felt urge to share, express and create. And as with all such “archives of feeling,” zine archives benefit from all of the passionate community attachment, and in turn, are susceptible to community-specific idiosyncrasies, inherent in that designation.

Zine archives like ZAPP are in the process of developing a radical new tradition in the archiving of subcultures and social movements by working to create practices that are responsive to both the unique materiality of zines and to the communities that have created them. These archives are struggling through a process of consensus—within their own organizations, and with the creators of their records, who also happen to be their patrons and their staff. They are struggling inter-organizationally to create consensus on how to share information, records, and organizational structures for cooperation and adaptive standardization. Archives like ZAPP are challenging themselves with the task of finding uniform functional ways of organizing records that do not fit neatly into any of the standard categories of archival material.

Yet the energy and zeal evident in these largely volunteer efforts attest to the commitment that the communities of zinesters and zine readers feel toward their material. If ever there was a way to challenge the stereotype of the dusty, musty

51. Marc Parker, interview with Althea Lazzaro, March 9, 2013.

52. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 245-249.

archive, it is to be found in movements such as zine archiving. These collections impart a sense of excitement about the dynamic, constantly changing nature of the archive as a thing enlivened by its community.

Looking to the future, one of the greatest challenges faced by “living archives” is attaining the sustainability to survive the transition from the original founding individuals to those who will follow.⁵³ The structure of many grassroots organizations exists primarily in the memories of their founding members. By implementing some of the time-tested support structures of archival tradition and adapting them to the purposes of their unique institutions and collections, zine archives can codify consistent systems, like description standards, to be used and improved upon by future members.

What, then, do zine archives have to offer the traditional archival community? Where is their voice, and should it be heard? However great or small the impact of these collections, their decisions, successes and failures marry theory to practice. They are an emerging group within archival practice. The more those established in or entering the archival field are willing to hear diverse voices, the greater the ability of zines to inspire development of other ideas within the field. Zine archives’ ability to garner strong support from their communities comes partly from being based in communities with which people strongly identify; but it also means that they are doing something right. The zine community is not a monolithic or even unified set of people, and one of the challenges of an institution is to navigate the waters of diverse and strongly held opinions, sometimes in opposition to one another and often without a strict hierarchical structure or institutional support.

Zine (and other alternative culture-based) archives have the potential to bring to the foreground issues that bear on traditional archives—they provide examples of what it might look like when archives make non-traditional decisions around preservation and access in response to community need, investment, or demand. They do have something to say, if we will listen. There are challenges here, of course, but really, one needs some amount of idealism to enter the profession in the first place. The idea that we can make a difference, help shape or preserve identity through documents with limited resources and constantly-changing contexts, is itself audacious. If there is promise that can be found here, it is that just as traditional archival theory can strengthen the position of the relatively new institution of the zine archive, the zine archive can challenge and push the limits of the archival tradition’s self-conception.

53. Flinn, 80. Colin Fogarty, email message to the authors, February 15, 2011.

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