

Creating a Zine Collection for Your Library

Acquiring zines is a unique experience. There aren't traditional review sources, distributors, or net 30 payment options.

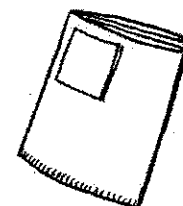
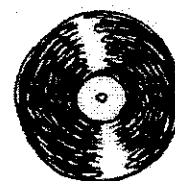
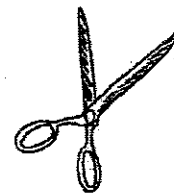
-Jenna Freedman, curator of the zine collection at the Salt Lake City Public Library.

Zines present an interesting challenge for librarians wishing to collect them, as they are produced and distributed outside of the mainstream publishing industry and they come in different formats. In recent years, librarians have battled the obstacles to establish zine collections in both public and academic libraries and have shared what they have learned in books and articles, making it easier for new zine librarians to set up their own collections. We have compiled this information into a helpful guide to collecting, cataloguing, processing, displaying, and publicizing your zine collection. For further information, I recommend consulting Julie Bartel's excellent book *From A to Zine: Building a Winning Zine Collection in Your Library*, other items in the bibliography, and the resources listed at the end of this issue of *YA Hotline*.

Selection

You will need to look beyond traditional review sources to choose zines for your collection. Zines are publicized by word of mouth, websites, e-mail, and mail, and the best way to get information about zines is to develop personal relationships with zinemakers (Bartel 42). There are quite a few resources that review zines, including review zines, websites, and magazines such as *Broken Pencil*, and these can be helpful in selecting zines. However, there is a huge variety of zines out there and some librarians warn against relying too heavily on zine reviews. They suggest building a unique collection based on your patrons interests and your own judgement.

In determining what your patrons want, remember that those who will use the zine collection may not currently be patrons of the library. To connect with potential patrons and track down locally made zines, you can visit zine fairs, art shows, concerts, coffee shops, and independent bookstores, and talk to youth in your community. A store in your community that already



carries zines can be an excellent resource for gathering information about your potential patrons, and buying zines here or at zine fairs will allow you to browse through zines before buying them.

The selection of zines out there is actually quite extensive, so once you are familiar with the range of zines available, decide exactly what you want for your library and collect accordingly. This way you will not end up with unwanted materials (Means 43).

Acquisition

Zines are very inexpensive to purchase. The average price is \$1 to \$3, and many are free or available by trading your own zine. Freedman suggests that you can start a respectable collection with only \$500 (38). Some libraries depend mainly on donations for their zine collections and solicit these donations through review zines or by word of mouth (Stoddart and Kiser 193-94).

Barriers to acquisition of zines by libraries lie in the fact that most zinemakers distribute zines informally out of their homes. Few offer subscriptions, so ordering must be done continuously. Most zinemakers will not send invoices and will require payment up front, preferably with cash but sometimes with checks, money orders, or postage (Bartel 63). You will probably need to negotiate with your acquisitions department to find a system that works for purchasing zines.

Zine distros present an easier alternative to acquiring zines. Distros are distributors of zines, run by individuals or collectives. There are numerous zine distros throughout North America that sell a variety of zines, allowing you to buy a number of zines in one place (Bartel 60). Many distros have online catalogues and some have online payment options (Bartel 60). You may also be fortunate enough to have an independent book or record store in your city that sells zines and may be able to supply you with a large number of zines at once.

Cataloguing

Some libraries do not catalogue their zine collections, while others catalogue them in a separate database from their main catalogue or as part of an archive or special collection. You will need to decide what works best for your library, patrons, and collection. Cataloguing zines will add legitimacy to the collection, give patrons the highest level of access to the collection, and make tracking circulation easier, but it can take significant time and money to do (Bartel 78).

Cataloguing zines requires flexibility and creativity. You will need to create original catalogue records for your zines, as no copy catalogue records are available. Often zines do not have a consistent title, page numbers, date, author, address, or other information included in a standard record, which makes cataloguing them a

challenge. Important access points to include (if included in the zine itself) are title, author, subjects, form, language, geographic location, date, and cost (Bartel 78). Some librarians recommend supplementing records with keyword-rich abstracts and making liberal use of the notes field. Zine librarian Jill Strass recommends using Library of Congress or Sears subject headings to avoid unnecessary complications (7). If you use your own subject headings, Greig Means suggests that you keep it simple and limit your subject terms to ten or fifteen (44). The zine collection of the Minneapolis Community and Technical College provides a zine subject thesaurus on their website:

<http://www.minneapolis.edu/Library/pages/ZineSubjectThesaurus.pdf>

You will also need to decide whether you will catalogue your zines as books or serials. As Bartel details in her book, zines have similarities to both media but Bartel concludes that zines are more like books than serials because zines are usually created by one person and their content and style can change significantly from issue to issue (87).

Circulation

Some libraries choose to not circulate their zine collections, due partly to the fact that most zines are made of flimsy paper stapled together and can easily be ruined by use. However, there are some ways to protect and preserve zines: tape the spines to reinforce them and cover the staples (Bartel 70) or place them in comic book or magazine covers (Freedman 37). For the zine collection at Barnard College, Freedman buys two copies of every zine, one of which she preserves in acid-free file folders in the climate-controlled archives while the other is made available for use by patrons (38).

In processing the zine collection at the Salt Lake City Public Library, Bartel did not find it feasible to add barcodes to the zines, so she put location stickers on them and created an envelope system for checking them out (70). She added location stamps and barcodes to a number of manilla envelopes, and when patrons check out zines, the zines are placed in an envelope and the envelope is scanned to the patron's card (Bartel 70). This does not allow the library to track which zines are checked out or how many but they can see that patrons have checked out zines (Bartel 70).

Display and Shelving

Zines can be displayed and shelved in many different ways and you should work with the shelving you have to find the option that works best for your library. Bartel recommends displaying zines facing out for easy browsing (74). Other libraries store their zines vertically in cardboard file holders.

Zines can be shelved in alphabetical order by author or title or organized by subject. Each has its advantages and disadvantages and must be assessed based on your patrons and collection.

Publicizing the Collection

As mentioned earlier, potential users of a zine collection may not be regular library users, so it might take time to draw in patrons and create demand for your zine collection. Once your collection is established, you will need to determine who your target market is and market the collection to them at places such as schools, universities, colleges, cafes, record stores, dance clubs, art galleries, museums, concert venues, vintage shops, tattoo parlors, art supply stores, skateboarding shops, independent bookstores, vegetarian restaurants, and movie theatres. You also may need to educate some of your current users about zines in order to draw them to the collection. Many libraries plan launch parties when they first open their zine collections and periodic open houses. These can include readings from local zine authors and performances by local music groups.

Works Cited

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