

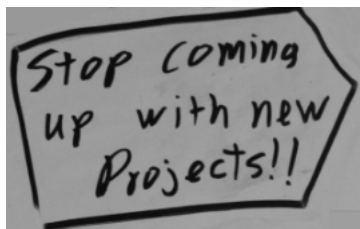
# BEHIND THE ZINES

## #17



# Ignoring My Own Rules

Some zine-friends came to stay with us recently, and one of them noticed my dry erase board, reserved solely for zine-related notes and goals, various tasks which need to be completed. He pointed to the item at the top, and started laughing. It was written in bold, black ink with an authoritative box around it.



But I can't help it! My brain won't stop, and there just aren't enough hours in the day. I did it again this week, I came up with an absolutely smash-hit idea. A new novel. Fiction. And I'm so excited, it's all I can think about. I'm backing out of lunch-dates with friends, my musical project has been put on hold, I can no longer sit through *an entire movie*, sheesh. All I want to do is write.

Hey friends, this world sucks some times, most of the time actually, and inspiration can be hard to find. When it hits, run with it. Paint and draw and twirl in circles if the mood strikes you. Don't question it, just go with it.

I'm so happy to have so many good friends, I'm so grateful to be part of the zine community. If you're feeling low, tap into my energy. I can't stop moving right now. Down the road, you'll be the one to pull me along, and when that time comes, I know I'm gonna need it. Thanks in advance.

**Billy McCall - March 2024**

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This zine comes out twice a year. The next one is in September of 2024. Get me your contributions by mid-summer. **WITHOUT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS, THIS ZINE STOPS EXISTING.** So, once again, get me some contributions.

Big thanks to everyone who is a part of this issue. Issue #16 had the theme of "Zines Saved My Life." I love that theme, I love that issue. I'm not sure if I love having themes. Yet, this issue sort of ended up with the theme of "zine libraries," which is great. Much love and respect to anyone willing to catalog.

The front and back covers were designed by David Hankins, as were the tiny alligator sketches scattered throughout the zine. The first 200 copies of this issue will come with block-printed covers of various color combinations, made by David. If you get a chance to work on a project with him, I highly recommend it.

**<http://lazerattack.com/>**

To get in touch with me:

**[iknowbilly@gmail.com](mailto:iknowbilly@gmail.com)**

To browse my distro:

**[www.behind-the-zines.com](http://www.behind-the-zines.com)**

To send me mail: Billy/PO Box 8818/Albuquerque, NM 87198

# As We Dwell In The Fold(ed Page)

by Anna Gecko (they/them)

In her art exhibit brochure-slash-zine, *As We Dwell In The Fold*, Andrea Canepa examines the soft objects in human life. The metals and weapons are relics, yes, but so are the clothes and bags, flags and burial shrouds. It's harder to preserve these things. The loss of these objects can mislead future generations about what life was like in those times.

Some of the oldest manuscripts we have are written on paper that's more like cloth. Today printer paper is made of wood pulp: cheap and sturdy, but not really meant to last.



In 1830, Charlotte Brontë and her sisters published an amateur magazine. Historians know of six copies ever made. Only five exist today. These pieces are kept in museums. Zines, in museums! Zines, cared for and preserved! Zines that cannot be read by strangers on the street. Zines that will not last forever.

One of the things I love about zines is how they act as documentation. They're records: hey, I existed once, here is what I saw and thought and felt. But they're also ephemeral, small print runs that will only exist as long as someone is putting them out.

We digitize things as a method of preservation, now. I worry we don't actually realize how fragile digitalization is. Links go down all the time. Archive sites get sued and taken down, taking their collections with them. I have PDFs of my zines on the internet. Would anyone be able to find them if I'm dead?

Should I embrace the ephemeral? Stop worrying about a hundred years in the future, focus instead on the shared connections of the here and now?

I got my hands on some perzines from the 90's. I'm surprised how well the materials hold up. The photocopying is blurry; some of the pages are bent – but they're readable. They're alive.





# Five Things, By Heather Andhercats

In September, of 2023, I tabled at Paper Planes Zine Fest in Lawrence KS. Here are 5 things I loved from the fest.

**1: Jammy photo-ops** - Paper Planes has an anthropomorphic photocopier named Jammy as their mascot. There are so many things that I love about this, but most especially as someone who sews for a living, I deeply appreciate how much mileage they have gotten out of this costume and how good it has held up. I love that Jammy was hanging at the fest all day, and that they made their rounds to each table so that everyone had a chance to take a picture with Jammy. (See photo on next page)

## **2: Meeting people who already have one of my zines -**

This is big for me. Since I mostly consign my work, I usually don't have a chance to interact directly with the people who read my zines, and it's always really nice to receive positive affirmation from someone who has read one of my zines and enjoyed it.

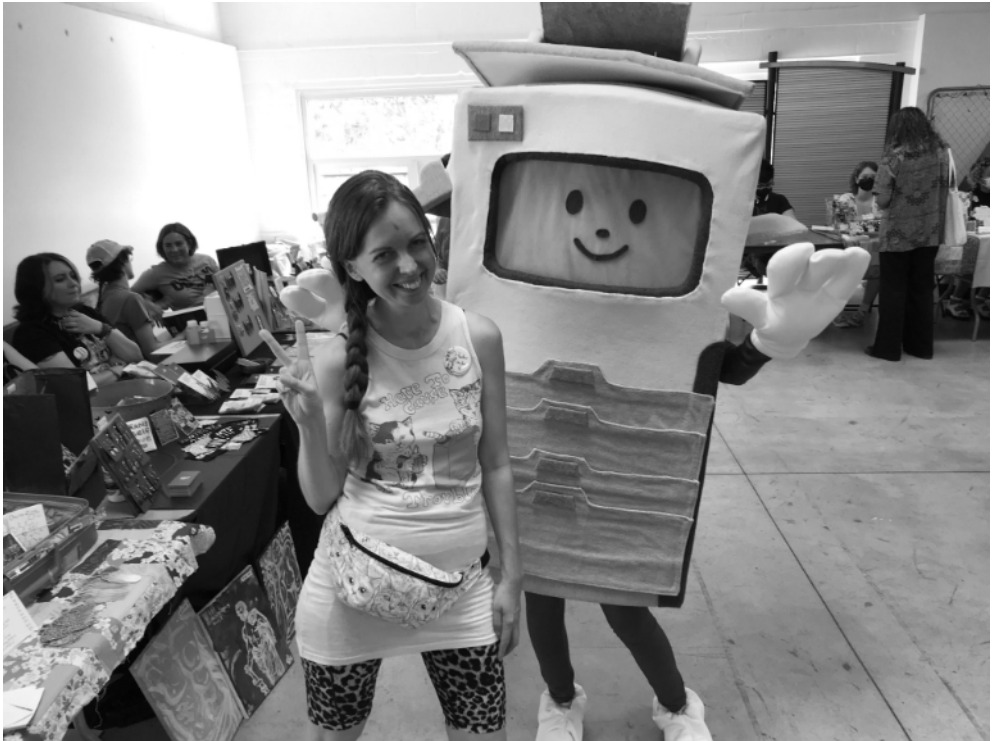
**3: Zine fest fashion** - I love the looks I see at zine fests. People rocking vintage high-waisted, wide leg, corduroy pants with flowers embroidered on them, earrings that are actual tiny zines, very zine specific t-shirts, fun-colored hair, kids in matching outfits, I love it all. I really like seeing people get dressed up in something that lets their freak flag fly.

**4: Random banter with strangers** - Most people don't talk to me very much when I table at a zine fest. They look at the stuff and

leave. That is fine and normal and expected. But some people engage in playful banter with me, which I find entertaining. Just to be clear, by playful I mean silly, not flirty. Please don't be creepy. Also banter has to be a mutual two-way thing; if the person isn't bantering back, best to drop it, this activity is not for everyone.

**5: Seeing zine friends** - It's always nice to run into zine friends! I saw people I know from KC Zine Con and different zine events I've been to in town. It's a great opportunity to catch up, trade zines and make plans for future zine-related activities.

All and all it was a great zine fest! I'm looking forward to going back next year! Maybe I'll see you there :)



A DAY AND AGE MINI-COMIC

"DO YOU LIKE COMICS?"



GRID ZINE FEST 2023

THAT'S ONE OF MY GO-TO LINES TO GET PEOPLE TO COME TO MY TABLE.

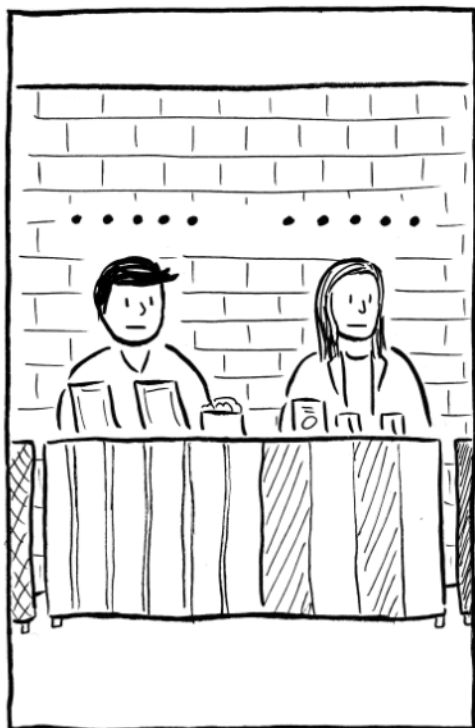
YOU SHOULD TRY IT!

OKAY!



HI, DO YOU LIKE COMICS?





# Selling Zines at a Book Store

By Matt Bormet

Selling zines is the most fun part of bookselling, in my experience. Having cool stuff that people haven't seen before they walk in the store gives us a level of authenticity and differentiates us from what you'll find at say, Barnes and Nobles, which I am intentionally misspelling because I'm a deeply petty person. It also gives an opportunity for someone who doesn't have \$39 for a new hardcover to walk out of the store happy with a \$2 purchase of a minizine, which is really important to us. We want everyone in our community to be a part of the store, and having zines helps make that happen.

When we first opened our store back in June 2023, I talked my wife into carrying 40-50 zines in one tiny section at the back of the store. We



assumed no one would buy them and I would just have my little project to make me happy. Insanely, we have now sold *1,460 zines*! Even though most of these sell for under \$10, they represent a bigger sales amount in dollar terms than our music, poetry, young adult, and politics sections. We're just on the border of DC, and we've sold more zines than political books. Of course, the motivation to make/sell zines is typically not building a Scrooge McDuck style gold coin pool – but it sure makes it a lot easier to have zines in the store when they pull their own weight on sales! I have payroll to make and it's nice to fund some of it with zine sales.

I'm thankful to Billy and all the other zine distributors out there for making my life easier. My one piece of advice to zinesters who want to sell in stores: get your stuff in the hands of a distributor! It's way easier for me to browse through the Antiquated Future catalog and buy in bulk than pore through the internet hoping I find good stuff.

I thought it might be interesting to report out our best sellers last year – none of this is commentary on what's good or bad, but just a sign of what people in Takoma Park, MD are into. Maybe we can make this a regular thing, who knows! This is by number of copies sold, so it's somewhat biased to the minizine stuff as you will see.

## People's Book Best-selling Zines of 2023

1. **How to Support Your Non-Binary Family Member** – This one sells like hotcakes and I cannot keep it in stock. It seems like it is unique in that older customers buy it as much as younger ones. I assume they're trying to figure out how to be nice.

2. **Dolly Pardon** – Look, anything with Dolly Parton does well. America's sweetheart.

3. **Mushrooms are Amazine** – Things that will sell at a lefty bookstore: items about mushrooms, Dolly Parton, queer stuff, tarot, cats. You can tell why I like living here!

4. **Tarot Zine** – I sort of combined these into one, but Wesley Sueker from Twenty Two Zines does these really fun tarot card zines, which people love! We do tarot readings in the store every month or so, and these pair very nicely.



5. **Famous Cats Passed** – I am a big fan of Joe Carlough's zines! The Gina and Joe Talk Horror series is another fave here at the store.

6. **Things Not To Do** – Wow! More Joe Carlough.

7. **Cat Magic** – Another Wesley Sueker jam. He gets it.

8. **Shit's Fucked, Still** – The sequel to Shit's Fucked, which is another one that people love.

9. **Is It Just Me or Are We Nailing This?** – Look, I can't deal with Bojack Horseman, I tried and couldn't get into it. But it appears other people like it!

10. **Sir, Is This Love?** – Sapphic Charles Schultz fanfic appears to do well here. Liz Yerby is good at zines.

11. **Oh No! You Got a Puppy** – I think I met Shay Mirk like ten years ago in DC as a friend of my friend Alison? Anyway hi Shay, thanks for making fun stuff.

12. **Herman the Manatee** – We're including the entire Herman canon here. Fuck Fleischman being in trouble, tell me more about Herman being in trouble.



People's Book is bookstore located in Takoma Park, MD. If you have something you think belongs in the store, please reach out at [matt@peoplesbooktakoma.com](mailto:matt@peoplesbooktakoma.com) and let me know. Also please come to the store and buy zines from us if you're ever in the DC area. Zines then, zines now, zines forever, together.

# The Razorcake Photocopier

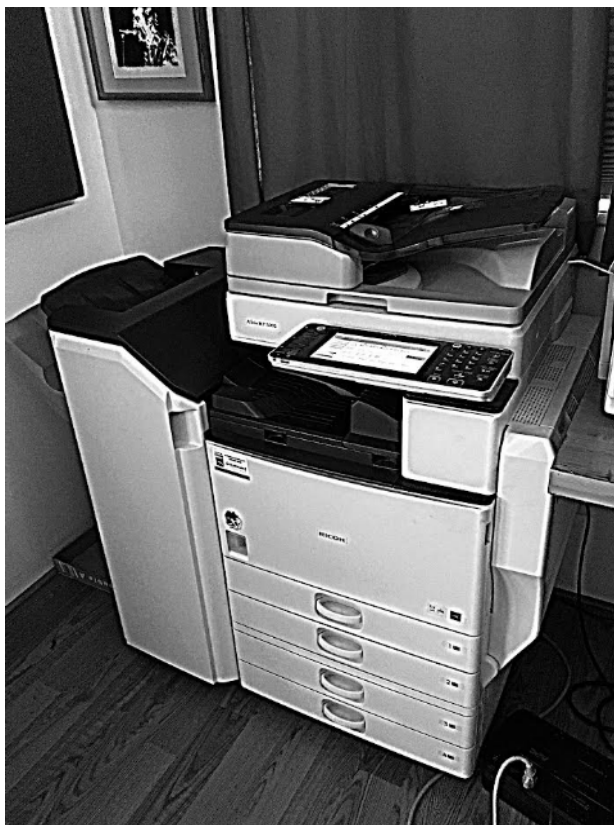
by Todd Taylor

X-acto knives. Scissors. Rubber cement. Long-arm staplers. Sharpies. These are some of the tools of the zinester's trade. But the way to multiply your efforts, the method to duplicate your master, to make from five to five hundred copies is to photocopy (or print) that sucker. Photocopiers are the backbone of zines. Without them, we'd probably still be using wet and messy mimeographs (a smell that takes me back to grade school. Deep inhale.). I think it's safe to say that, since the invention of the modern office photocopier, the lion's share of zines are made this way. So, shout-out to Chester Carlson, the inventor of photocopying. He also came up with the name of the process we use today—"xerography," roughly translated from the Greek "xiro grafi," meaning "dry writing."

There's a definite romance to sticking it to The Man—and in zinedom, before corporate mergers, that came in the form of scamming copies at your local office chain store. There were tricks to resetting the

counters at Kinko's (like setting the odometer back on a car) that I couldn't quite master, but were well documented in Erika Lyle's lovely *Scam*. There's also a romance in righteous destruction. I remember interviewing Aaron Cometbus and his recounting of killing off a photocopier he got on the cheap. When it stopped working, he gleefully took a bat to it.

I come from a long line of scavengers and savers. I also dream of infrastructure. I wanted





to own our means of production. To invert the pyramid. To be able to print out high volumes of stand-alone, photocopied zines on the property, not reliant on a third party. *Razorcake* itself is printed offset on newsprint, a totally different process. I missed the ozone in the air of a heated fuser attaching toner dust to paper. I also thought there were stand-alone pieces in *Razorcake*—mostly our One Punk’s Guides—that would benefit from separate, second print lives. They’re more “ziney” than *Razorcake* itself, if that makes sense.

I put out a call to our extended punk network that we were in the market. Our longtime buddy, Donofthedeath, was an operations manager for an entire level of a high rise in downtown L.A. for a bunch of lawyer squares. He was in charge of all the hard goods and services—everything in the supply closet, from manila folders and sticky notes, to massive photocopiers—and was in good stead with the vendors. He caught wind that after a certain number of copies, they cycled many photocopiers out because they didn’t want anything possibly ratty. He got us in touch with a company that dealt in “gently used” photocopiers.

Back in 2017, Razorcake made its single-largest hardware investment in a Ricoh Aficio MP5002 photocopier. It was a decision not made lightly. We saved up for years to buy it outright. This puppy not only prints at a high volume, it duplexes (prints both sides), folds, and saddle stitches auto-*fucking*-matically. We lay out the zine out in InDesign, output a PDF, send the PDF to the photocopier, and out plop fully-formed zines in the bottom tray. Fantastic. It still feels like magic six years later. When we interviewed Kathleen Hannah in the same room as the copier, she jokingly “wanted some alone time” with it. As an old head who cut her teeth on zines, Kathleen knows what’s up.

It’s been a workhorse. We feed it 40oz-bottle-looking containers of toner, refill the staple cartridges, top all four trays up with paper, and let ’er rip. As of 2023, we’ve printed 8,640 copies of our stand-alone zines. It wasn’t perfect printing, but perfect’s just a failure waiting to happen. The toner never 100% stuck. If you rubbed it, it acted like newsprint, so we tried not to design black-heavy covers. There were a couple of lines that wavered between prominent and barely noticeable on the printouts. It was all way within acceptable tolerances for making zines.

And then earlier this year we got a warning that was basically, “Call your rep. You’re toast.” My usual tricks didn’t work. I couldn’t get around the warning. According to the warning code, it was the fuser.

A brand new, factory-direct fuser was \$700. I rolled the dice and bought a used one for \$200. It was garbage and I got a refund, but I was no closer to having a functioning photocopier.



Let's take a couple steps back. About a decade ago, I vowed to myself to become a better fixer. I wanted to open up the aperture of DIY. This takes many forms.

I volunteer at my local bike co-op, the Bike Oven, regularly, to learn more about bike mechanics. I've installed an extensive water collection system at the home to feed the garden, so I know the rudiments of plumbing. I'm getting better at simple carpentry and am happy with the rock solid towel rack I made for the bathroom. So, I armed myself with a bit of confidence, the correct tools, and, probably most importantly, a video on YouTube from Poland that dealt with exactly what my issue was on the same model. The fuser—the heating element on the copier—needed to be completely disassembled, a couple of parts swapped out and/or cleaned, then reassembled. I spent \$45 on an upper fuser roller and a web assembly. I even sprung for a tube of non-corrosive, high-heat grease because I'm a high roller.

I've learned a couple of things about fixing over the years that work for me. One, don't rush. Two, don't force anything. Three, just pay attention and, if necessary, take pictures during the process. Machines

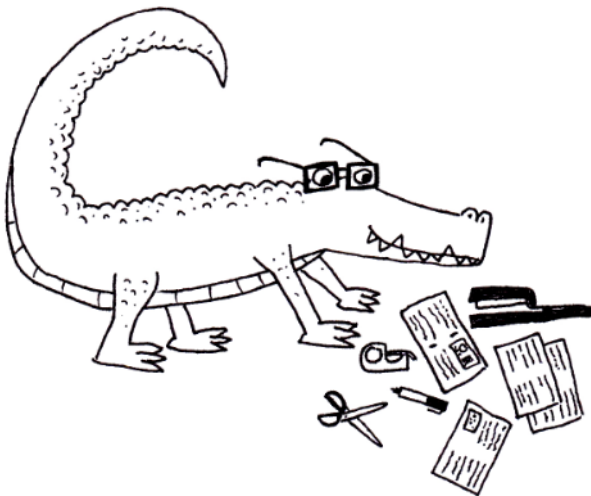
are like 3D puzzles. Everything has a function and there's usually an interior logic. Don't be afraid to pause, go back a couple of steps, then proceed again if a screw isn't threading correctly or something feels wonky. When the fuser was totally apart, I discovered the heating elements in the photocopier are two long, skinny halogen bulbs, sorta like those in not-energy-efficient lamps. I had no idea. Huh. A mechanic much smarter than me told me that after you put something back together, there better not be any additional parts left over, not even a single screw. I put the rebuilt fuser back in the machine and turned it on. The warning disappeared and the photocopier warmed up. I did a test print. Gone were the streaks. The paper held the toner better than before. I clapped and hooted. I was alone and very, very pleased.

For my inaugural trial run, I printed out copies of *One Punk's Guide to Digital Sex Work* by Lorde Destroyer and *One Punk's Guide to Surf Music* by Sean Carswell. For me, the world is better because these two zines are now physical entities.

Weeks later, we had to print close to 2,000 single-sided sheets and it didn't go well. Intermittently, the ink looked like drooping flesh melting in acid. It had something to do with the paper path. Pages jammed in seven different spots in the printer. Then it dawned on me to make a master and photocopy it, instead of print it. (I'm still fuzzy on the choose-your-own adventure nature of the paper paths the machine decides between the two processes because a.) the side of the machine isn't clear and b.) if I open it when it's working, that fucks up the job even more. It's an educated guess that photocopying a master hard copy uses a less complicated path through the machine.) That solved the issue—so I know it's not the fuser being a fucker, but another part

in the machine that needs attention in the future.

Welcome to the world of zines, a world I love. A world we can sometimes fix ourselves. It's an imperfect world, but it's a world we have some level of control over, and that's a win in and of itself.



# P4G3 NUM83R5

by Ed Tillman, [edtilman.net](http://edtilman.net)

Recently, I made a split zine with another zinester. I agreed to do the layout. In fact, that was the part I was most keen to do. When my collaborator sent me his pages, I noticed he included page numbers. Most of the zinesters I read number their pages. I almost never do.

Years ago, I read an article posted on [zinelibraries.info](http://zinelibraries.info) by a group of librarians and zinesters who specialize in organizing zine collections for public use. One of their suggestions was to use page numbers so that scholars and students could reference zines more easily.

I prefer the quarter-page format and I have always felt that page numbers crowd the layout.

Looking back at my zine collection, I guess I should reconsider that. If the pages are crowded, it is because the zinester wanted them that way, not because of any page numbers.

My split collaborator had hand-written his page numbers with a circle around them; but then, I suspect he does his layout with actual scissors and glue stick - the original cut and paste. When I had to 'fix' a layout issue, he was surprised that I considered the first page of his story as his **page 1**. He considered page 1 to be the cover and since there was a blank inner cover, the first page of writing was **page 3** in his mind.

I think of zines as little books with covers. I hope the reader will engage with the zine by opening it where the content is revealed. I even include a title page which could be considered extravagant in a 16-page booklet. But that is often the page I most enjoy making.

Clearly, my collaborator thinks of his zines as documents with an instant connection to the reader. If you look at his zine, you have begun reading it. These attitudes are an important and revealing distinction in the way we create our zines and the way we engage with the world.

There is a wonderful quote from the 17th Century fabulist, Jean de La Fontaine, in his first book of fables; "By the work, one knows the worker."

One of the beautiful things about zines is they reflect the personality of their creators. Even if you are not reading a perzine, you can get an idea of what the author is like. Strict layout rules could filter out the personality of the author. "By the zine, one knows the zinester."

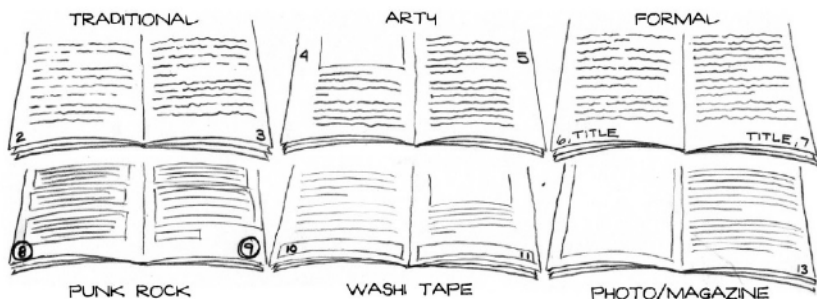
By the way, if you are interested in the system lovingly and meticulously crafted by that group of librarians and zinesters, you can google 'xZINECOREx' or check out these links:

Flats for the introduction zine:

<https://www.zinelibraries.info/tag/xzinecorex/>

Zinewiki entry: <https://zinewiki.com/wiki/Xzinecorex>

## FIND YOUR STYLE



Oh, and a special thanks to Milo Miller at The Queer Zine Archive Project (<http://www.qzap.org>) for their help with this article.

# Tips for Cataloging Zines

(from yr friendly neighborhood Virgo Rising, **SM Piotrowski**)

In my previous article (“Why We Catalog,” BtZ #15), I wrote about some of the reasons why one might want to catalog their zine collection: to reminisce and remember details about how a particular title was acquired, to know exactly which zines are in your collection (and avoid accidentally buying duplicates), and/or because you’re a spreadsheet nerd who legitimately enjoys organizing. Now, I’d like to share some tips I’ve learned in the process of cataloging my own zine collection.

Note: This is written for the individual zine collector who is interested in cataloging their personal zine collection. If you’re a zine librarian or are cataloging zines for a library, archive, or other community institution, I’d recommend checking out the amazingly helpful resources at [zinelibraries.info](http://zinelibraries.info)! They address in greater depth the important issues and concerns around cataloging zines in a public database.

## Choosing a platform

### **Goodreads**

Pros: Bigger userbase, seems to have more of a social aspect if that’s yr thing. Reviews can be helpful, informative, and entertaining; doesn’t seem to be overrun by bot/fake or otherwise dubious reviews.

Cons: Book metadata can only be edited by Goodreads Librarians. No way to add notes or other info about your specific copy. Metadata, including cover images, for books you’ve added to your catalog is subject to change if a GR Librarian updates the record. Zines and other non-book items are explicitly not supposed to be added to their database (people do it anyway – including me, haha – but technically a GR Librarian could delete any forbidden item without warning). Owned by Amazon.

## **LibraryThing**

**Pros:** You have a LOT of freedom to add as much or as little metadata as you want in your personal catalog. It's possible to link your individual catalog entry to the "master" or community entry for a particular work while still retaining all your personal notes and metadata. You can add private notes about your items. All forms of media are allowed in the database, including books, zines, comics, CDs, DVDs, and more.

**Cons:** Smaller userbase/community (tho this could be a pro for some). Although LT is majority-owned by its founder, Tim Spaulding, AbeBooks has a 40% stake and they're a subsidiary of Amazon. Cambridge Information Group, an investment firm, also owns a minority stake.

## **Personal Spreadsheet**

**Pros:** Total freedom to design your catalog based on the metadata you want to include. Super private unless you upload your file to the internet on purpose.

**Cons:** Excel (and other spreadsheet programs) can be annoying to deal with. Depending on your needs, you might have to do some formatting work to make your catalog look readable.

**Text document:** Easier to read if you plan to include lengthy paragraphs describing provenance or reviews, but you won't be able to easily sort, filter, or reorder data.

**Notebook:** Obviously the most private/secure option since it's not on the Internet, but extremely time-consuming and practically impossible to sort entries (if that's important to you). If you choose to go the olde-fashioned way, GODSPEED.

## **What I Do**

LibraryThing & spreadsheet. The spreadsheet isn't online, so I use it to include more personal thoughts/reviews, details about provenance, and info that doesn't necessarily need to be on the public Internet. But

I still keep the LT account so I can have a shareable/social database, too. I was a Goodreads user from 2012-2021 and switched to LibraryThing in 2022, mainly for reasons listed in the above “cons” section about Goodreads: I wanted to avoid Amazon as much as possible, and I wanted more control over my catalog. It was a pretty massive undertaking to manually transfer over 1,500 entries (books) and add over 500 new entries (zines), but BOY am I now basking in that glorious vibe of #things organized neatly! (Note: Both GR and LT have import/export features if you’re switching from one to the other. I just chose to do manual entries because I’m a weirdo control freak. YMMV.)



# LibraryThing

## A Home For Your Books.

LibraryThing is a free, library-quality catalog to track reading progress or your whole library.

### **Things to think about before you get started**

It's best to figure out some guidelines or ground rules *before* you start making entries. I'm an anti-authoritarian rule-follower and cataloging librarian is my day-job, so I can be excessively particular about organization. But I'm also a fuck-it-let's-go kind of person, and in my experience, this combination can lead to me going into a project full-steam ahead, realizing partway through that some aspect of my system is flawed, and then having to backtrack and frantically redo things. Please take heed from my dumb Aries ass and before you start, spend a few minutes thinking about what you want your catalog to be able to tell you about your collection, how you want the information to appear, what kind of formatting you think is ideal, etc.



## **Here are some examples of nitpicky details to consider:**

How do you want to capitalize zine titles? Sentence case (Capitalize first word only) vs. Title Case (Capitalize the Important Words) vs. transcribe exactly as printed on the zine (e.g. DORIS, doris, DoRiS).

How do you want to format issue numbering? Standardized or transcribed from the actual zine? Examples: 7, #7, no. 7, issue seven.

Do you want to include page counts? Should you count the covers as pages? Should you use the zinester's page numbering (even if incorrect)?

Do you want to use tags? In LibraryThing, you can add keyword tags to your catalog entries. (I also have my spreadsheet set up with columns for tags.) For zines, I find that using broad categories is most helpful – e.g., anarchism, comics, feminism, music, perzines, politics, queer, and so on – but you can add whatever you want. You can also use tags to group items by concepts other than subject matter: tags for shelving location (basement, bedroom, garage, etc.) or reading status (read in [year], partially read, gave up), or anything else you can think of.

Do you want to include other personal notes? Your acquisition and reading dates, review of the zine, a record of its provenance (when, where, and from whom did you acquire it?), quotes you liked, etc.

### **An important note on including personal info about zinesters:**

My general rule for cataloging zines in a public database is to *only* include information that appears on the zine itself, no matter if I personally know the author's "real" name, location, or other identifying info. There are many reasons why someone might publish anonymously or pseudonymously – it could be risky or potentially dangerous to put their legal name on a work, it could be an artistic choice or a personal preference, or maybe someone just doesn't want to be publicly associated with the zines they produced as a teenager in the pre-Internet era. The best practice is to be respectful of the author and assume that if they didn't print the info in their actual zine,

you shouldn't add that info to your public catalog. See the Zine Librarians Code of Ethics for more:

**<https://www.zinelibraries.info/code-of-ethics/>**

### **Time commitment**

As I mentioned in my long-winded intro in BtZ #15, depending on the size of your collection, cataloging your zines could take a long-ass time. Once your catalog is established, it's pretty quick and easy to add new titles as you get them, but the initial setup, starting from scratch, can be a chore. My advice is to break the project up into manageable chunks – set aside an hour or so for cataloging zines on weekends, or maybe do a couple every morning. I personally enjoy these sorts of repetitive data entry tasks, but it is extremely monotonous work and some may find it exceptionally boring. Cataloging zines can also be emotionally heavy, particularly if, like me, you've been collecting for over 20 years and are digging deep into your personal archives, trying to reach back through the ages to remember details about where you got a particular title. Searching for info online, there's always the chance of finding out bad news – punk houses evicted, indie venues and bookstores now defunct, old friends dead or disappeared. But I still take hope. My cataloging project has also led me to become more involved in the zine community and to reconnect with long-lost penpals, finding formerly angsty punks all grown up, maybe now with "real" jobs or small businesses, maybe a bit more tired now but still passionate – and still writing, still making art, still playing music – still trying to live the DIY/anticapitalist dream as best we can!

Stacey Piotrowski is a writer, photographer, and librarian from Pittsburgh PA, currently living in Athens GA. She sporadically publishes the perzines *Phases of the Moon* and *Moonshot*, and recently co-edited her first comp zine in 20 years, *Show Me Yr Selfie*.

Her work can be found at <http://selenographer.info/>

Her zine catalog: <https://www.librarything.com/catalog/moonmoth/>

# Blood on the Page

By: Sharaya O

*\*trigger warning: self-harm*

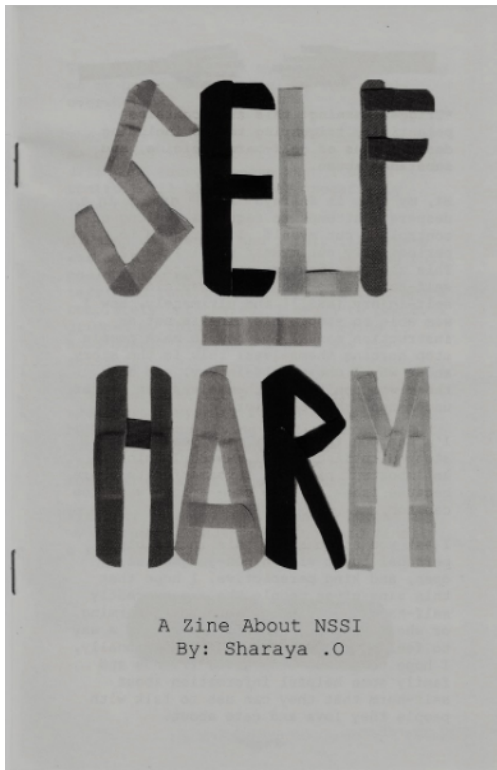
Last year, a local mental health nonprofit ran an open call for submissions: art themed around mental health, mental illness, and the journey between the two. I had been thinking about creating a zine about my history of self-harm – that open call felt like an invitation I didn't know I was waiting for.

Self-harm is a solitary act shrouded in stigma. It's something I did in private for over 10 years. I created a zine about non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) because I wanted to acknowledge and humanize folks that intentionally hurt themselves, and educate those who don't. Is this zine something that my 17 year old self would have been absolutely mortified to share? Yes. Is it something I think is important to talk about and de-stigmatize? Also yes. Is this the most vulnerable thing I've ever done? Definitely top 10.

A good friend of mine recently told me that you know you've overcome your trauma when you can talk about it, and in my experience, I think that's mostly true. I've spoken about my history of self-harm with quite a few friends over the years, which I think helped prepare me to make a zine about it. I've done enough therapy to reflect on my actions without spiraling into the whys and hows and what-ifs, but that doesn't mean that making this zine was fun (it wasn't really fun- fun), or that I wasn't filled with self-doubt (I was).

Regardless of the risks, my favorite kind of art is messy and vulnerable, and that's the kind I want to make.

In my zine, I describe the very first time I cut myself and the timeline of my self-harm coping mechanism. I talk about why some people choose self-harm over other coping mechanisms, common misconceptions about people who intentionally hurt themselves, and potential risk factors, and signs. I talk about the ever-present cycle of desperation and shame I felt during those years, and why I transitioned into socially acceptable, but more dangerous, forms of self-medicating. I interviewed my dad and got some answers I'm still trying to unpack. I compiled help lines. I researched the literature and realized there are still so many unknowns about this behavior.



Even though I've come to understand that the person I am now is because of, not in spite of, cutting myself for years, it remains a vulnerable place to create from. It still makes me sad for my lost, lonely younger self, and worried that my employer or a judgmental stranger might think I'm stupid or reckless for making my story public. Despite it all, I made a zine because I think helping someone feel seen and

understood is more important than feeling embarrassed about something I did a decade ago.

Make no mistake, I'm still caught off-guard when someone grabs my wrist to examine my scars, or when, in the heat of an argument,

a lover tells me I'm broken because I used to intentionally hurt myself. Even though I've created a zine about an incredibly intimate experience, that does not mean it is my responsibility to justify the behavior, or bear the ignorance and insecurities of others. In the face of ignorance and fear, I choose to create. I choose compassion for the person that I was, for those who can relate, and for those who are scared by self-harm, but want to help people they love.

The scars I've given myself are a physical timeline of my struggle, and eventual victory. It took me a long time to get to a point of self-acceptance. I'm not ashamed of how I fought because I won. I made Self Harm in the hopes that whoever reads this zine can see that shame is not the only option. That accepting ourselves for who we are regardless of what ugly things lie in our pasts is empowering. I believe there is strength in being vulnerable, and that vulnerability is beautiful, even if it's scarred.

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*Along with being an excellent zine-maker,  
and a wonderful pen pal, Sharaya is also  
starting a zine library. Send her some stuff!*

Want to share your zine with growing young minds? Inspire new zine-makers to join the community! Donate your zine to the Allan Hancock college library Zine Collection, and get a heartfelt thank you in return. Send all donations to:

Sharaya O.  
P.O. Box 294  
Morro Bay, CA 93443

# Libraries are for Everyone, Zines are for Everyone --BY Jesse Cole

Starting a Zine Collection at Greenfield Public Library

Greenfield Public Library, in the small town of Greenfield, Massachusetts, is home to a cozy collection of around 150 zines. When I started working at GPL as the technical services coordinator, I was lucky enough to have several co-workers encourage me to develop my own programs or projects, even if they felt ambitious. Like most zine enthusiasts, I can't pass up an opportunity to talk about zines, so bringing a zine collection to GPL felt like the perfect project. While initially intimidating, starting a zine collection in your library doesn't have to be daunting - both zinesters and librarians tend to believe in open-access resources, and there's plenty of information out there. I'm happy to have the chance to add to the resources in this issue of *Behind The Zines*.

## Librarians Love Sharing

There are many online resources for folks looking to start a zine collection. [Zinelibraries.info](http://Zinelibraries.info) is a great one-stop shop for initial brainstorming. The site, run by a collective of zine librarians, includes guides for cataloging, programming, and collection development. There's also plenty of ways to connect with other zine librarians through the site, including event listings, info about the Zine Librarians unConference, and a listserv to connect with others on more specific questions. Zinelibraries was invaluable in figuring out the best practices for cataloging and purchasing zines, and I've relied on the listserv heavily for problem-solving.

Librarians also love to chat about their work and their favorite media. I benefited a lot from talking to established zine librarians about their processes and challenges in getting collections going. Carey Conkin-Finn from Watertown Public Library and Tim Devin from Somerville

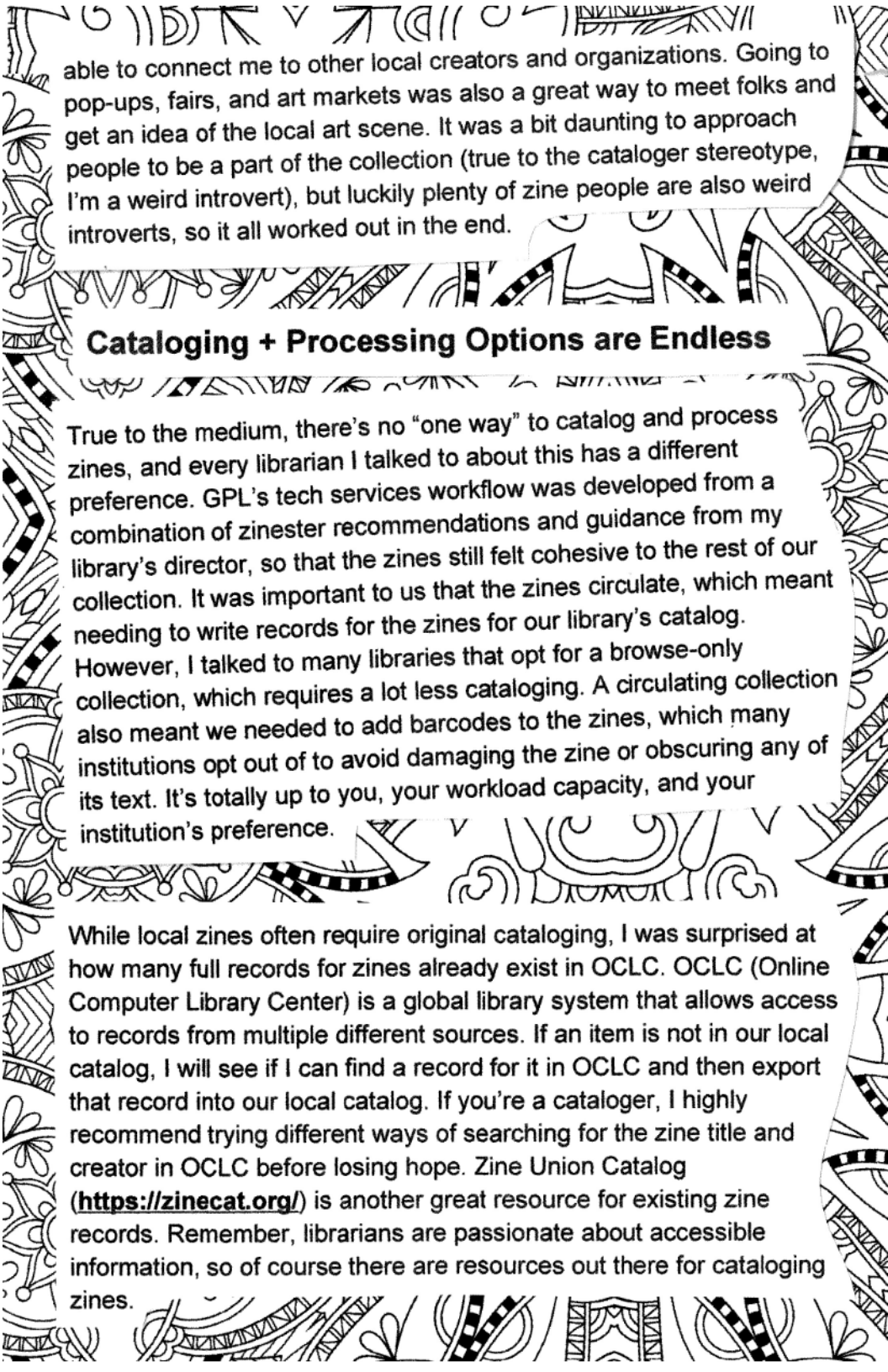


Public Library were extremely generous with their time, and answered my many questions on getting a zine collection up and running.



## Zinesters Love Sharing Too

Unsurprisingly, zinemakers are often library-lovers and supporters of their community. I have yet to encounter a zinemaker who declined to be a part of GPL's collection or share resources. Many of the zinesters I met looking for artists to be a part of the collection were



able to connect me to other local creators and organizations. Going to pop-ups, fairs, and art markets was also a great way to meet folks and get an idea of the local art scene. It was a bit daunting to approach people to be a part of the collection (true to the cataloger stereotype, I'm a weird introvert), but luckily plenty of zine people are also weird introverts, so it all worked out in the end.

## Cataloging + Processing Options are Endless

True to the medium, there's no "one way" to catalog and process zines, and every librarian I talked to about this has a different preference. GPL's tech services workflow was developed from a combination of zinester recommendations and guidance from my library's director, so that the zines still felt cohesive to the rest of our collection. It was important to us that the zines circulate, which meant needing to write records for the zines for our library's catalog. However, I talked to many libraries that opt for a browse-only collection, which requires a lot less cataloging. A circulating collection also meant we needed to add barcodes to the zines, which many institutions opt out of to avoid damaging the zine or obscuring any of its text. It's totally up to you, your workload capacity, and your institution's preference.

While local zines often require original cataloging, I was surprised at how many full records for zines already exist in OCLC. OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) is a global library system that allows access to records from multiple different sources. If an item is not in our local catalog, I will see if I can find a record for it in OCLC and then export that record into our local catalog. If you're a cataloger, I highly recommend trying different ways of searching for the zine title and creator in OCLC before losing hope. Zine Union Catalog (<https://zinecat.org/>) is another great resource for existing zine records. Remember, librarians are passionate about accessible information, so of course there are resources out there for cataloging zines.



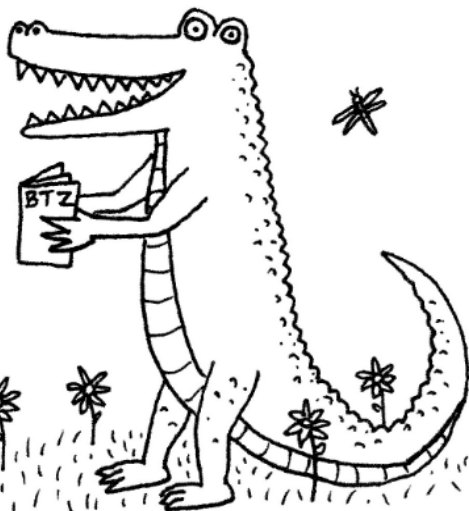
## The Zines Will Come to You

One of the zine librarians I got advice from, Shaun Trujillo at Hampshire College, emphasized the resourcefulness and initiative of zinesters. Once initial marketing or information for your zine collection exists, people will find you. I was surprised at how many local zinesters ended up submitting zines or donating zines to GPL's collection. My initial goal was to get a collection of 30 zines started, and within the first month we were up to 100. Zinesters are often big library supporters, so folks will want to be involved!

It's been exciting to see the response towards the zine collection from patrons. Even if it gets tiresome to answer "what's a zine?" daily, it's worthwhile to see my community engage with zines and get excited about a new medium in the library. If you have stories of getting your own zine collection started, or questions, please reach out! I'm always happy to talk zines and libraries with others.

-Jesse Cole, [jesse.cole@greenfield-ma.gov](mailto:jesse.cole@greenfield-ma.gov)

Our physical address is:  
Greenfield Public Library  
412 Main Street  
Greenfield,  
MA 01301



# Obscure Memory Institution

## The Prelinger Library

"What IS this place?"

By Carolee Wheeler

"Ohhhh, I love the smell of books!"

"I've heard about this place for years  
but never made it here until now."

I spend one day a week, every week, at the Prelinger Library. Situated above a carpet showroom and a furniture store at the corner of 8th and Folsom St. in San Francisco's historic leather district, the Library shares its hallway with dance studios and tech offices. In earlier times, the room was a commercial laundry. Now it holds books, pamphlets, bound volumes, and over 10,000 zines, in a 20x80 foot room.

Founded in 2004 by Rick Prelinger and Megan Shaw Prelinger, the library began as an extension of their personal interests and overflow from their personal libraries, but is now utilized by researchers, authors, artists, students, citizen scientists, zinesters, and historians. You may have heard of Mary Roach, Jenny Odell, Annalee Newitz, and Rebecca Solnit - all have researched books here.

The folks who visit the Prelinger Library are difficult to categorize. Unlike a traditional research library, we don't require that our visitors have credentials or even anything specific they're looking for. The first thing I ask people is whether they've visited before; the second question I ask is what they're into and whether I can show them a similar area within the library. While some of the people affiliated with the library have library degrees (myself included), neither of the founders do; one interviewer classified Rick and Megan as *outsider librarians*, in large part because their punk past informs the library they've created, and how they hope visitors will use what's held there.

Outsider status has informed the organizational scheme of the library: its arrangement is based in the concept of a body, standing within the library, in the city of San Francisco, and then moves out through the natural world, into agriculture and automation, transportation, cities, suburbs, human technologies like media and tech, social groups, social control, and the mind, and then finishes in the stars, in interstellar space exploration. Visitors sometimes ask what the library's collection policy is, or if there's a certain scope, and the answer is as open-ended as the library itself. I've heard the founders describe the collection as "a history of bad ideas": we hold materials that other libraries have deemed irrelevant or obsolete, from failed urban development prospectuses to a full run of original TV Guides. Those materials, having lost their original context, gain new meaning in their shared proximity, and by extension their new audiences. For some institutions, the goal is continual cultural relevance: the newest edition, the most currently interesting media, the most immediate now. By contrast, the Prelinger Library intervenes in this process, planting both feet in the culture we all inhabit, holding on to the ideas that some would rather we forget. There may be a push (by the media, by the government, by the state) to keep people in the eternal now, not looking back—but here we wade in many waters.

That doesn't mean the library doesn't change! People ask us if we ever get rid of anything, and in truth the collection is in a constant state of flux. Megan Prelinger likens the library to a sauce that grows more flavorful as it cooks down. Even conceptually, the library is the sauce that makes itself. It changes each time it's used; each person who takes a book off the shelf creates a new version of the collection, a shifting of its meaning.

While the materials in the library don't circulate (you can't check them out), the library is "appropriation-friendly," meaning that visitors are free to photograph anything for their own personal use, and we're also happy to set up a scanning session on our tabloid-size high-res scanner. It's part of the ethos of the library to encourage people to remix what's housed here: in one online article, which I've seen referred to as a manifesto (and I agree),



Rick Prelinger not only encourages “honor[ing] our ancestors by recycling their wisdom” but also the goal of “cultural permaculture” — rendering the output more sustainable than starting from scratch every single time. Zines are the perfect use-case of this philosophy!

In addition to small stand-alone collections of titles like *Processed World*, *Murder Can Be Fun*, *Flipside*, *Factsheet 5* and the like, the library acquired the Epicenter Zone infozine collection, which is like a time capsule of early zinedom, radical organizing, and grassroots community. To so many visitors, the zine collection is a perfect example of the anti-capitalist, anti-establishment spirit that drives people into our library in the first place. Last week, two visitors spent the entire afternoon reading issues of *Bamboo Girl*, pointing out different passages to each other.

Among the library's other atypical holdings are periodicals: a collection of radical magazine *Ramparts*; *Akwesasne Notes*, a newspaper published by the Mohawk Nation; a large run of *BYTE* magazine, and *Candy Industry* and

*Confectioner's Journal*. Some are so visually rich that I can spend an entire day just looking at the advertisements. The library has a huge “ephemera annex” - a quarter of the room



devoted to rows of blue boxes filled with newsletters, brochures, government publications, photos, maps, and even pinback buttons. A couple of boxes of original punk show flyers from San Francisco in the 70s and 80s are a perpetual favorite, and visitors are free to download digital scans of them to add to their own collection.

What recommends this library to a creative person is its *potential*: so many libraries are repositories of published work, things that have been discovered and recorded. At Prelinger Library, so much of the material here has yet to be gathered in any kind of discoverable or coherent format. In the obsolete documents, the urban development prospectuses for neighborhoods that never came to be, the zines typed in 1986 by someone growing up in a small town, there are a thousand essays (novels) (speeches) (manifestos) waiting to be written. By now maybe you're thinking "wow, this sounds great, how can I access your collection online," or "is there a way I can see a list of everything you have?" The answer is *well, you can, sort of, and not exactly, but kind of?* Part of the challenge of operating this very special space means that it's rather atypical access-wise, as well. You can visit [archive.org](http://archive.org) and search for "Prelinger Library" to see the holdings that have been digitized (this is also true of the film collection, which can be accessed by searching "Prelinger Archives"). To see a semi-recent visualization of the holdings, visit [prelingerlibrary.org](http://prelingerlibrary.org) and click on "stacks explorer." By now you'll appreciate how these half-answers describe the indescribability of this place.

I hope this piece has made you want to visit a library, start your own archive, or at least bookmark the Prelinger for your future visit to San Francisco. I'll leave you with this final thought from Rick Prelinger's brain:

*"Research is now indicating that kids who grow up on farms have fewer allergies later in life. The hypothesis is that exposure to manure immunizes them early on. City kids miss out. I hope you'll all come visit the library, get your own dose of bad ideas and build up your immune system."*

## A Collaborative Process!

Interview By Billy McCall

I recently purchased a couple of comic-zines from Antiquated Future, and really enjoyed them. I was surprised to see that there were two author names instead of one, surprised because each zine felt like it was speaking with one voice. These weren't split-zines, or a project where 2 people traded stories. The creators of these zines were working closely together to tell singular, seamless, stories, and I wanted to know how they did it so well.

**Q: First off, what are your names, and how can people contact you?**

Allia (she/her), and Audra (she/they). We're friends--we've known each other since 1st grade. We post all our work online at [audmcname.com](http://audmcname.com) and [alliaservice.com](http://alliaservice.com).

**Q: Many of your zines are educational in some way. What is the best part of creating non-fiction zines?**

**Audra:** I like making nonfiction zines because it's a great excuse to dive deep into something and then make sense of the information I've gotten. We make most of our zines because one or the other of us can't stop thinking about a topic. Equally important to our zines is how fun collaboration is! It's creatively fulfilling to bounce ideas back and



forth. I figure out why I care about a topic and why Allia cares about the topic. I still get stuck and/or frustrated working on our zines, but way less frequently than when I'm working alone.

**Allia:** I love the research process-- it can feel like you're discovering a whole world of information that you didn't know existed. The most challenging, and most rewarding, part is figuring out why we care about a topic and what point we want to communicate to our audience. There are lots of topics we've started to research and find interesting, but we haven't figured out what we bring to the topic yet.

**Q:** The 2 zines of yours that I've read were NED #1, about a specific billboard in Washington state, and NED #2, which was a history of Jell-O. They were both really great and interesting. On the back of the zine it says that NED stands for Ned the Education Demon. Can you please explain what that means?

**Audra:** NED is a recursive acronym: NED stands for NED the Education Demon, where NED stands for NED the education demon... and so on. Like the GNU operating system, where GNU stands for GNU is Not Unix. All of the jokes we put in our zines are for an audience of us.

**Allia:** We put a lot of thought into the character design for NED and we had such a hard time naming NED. The recursive acronym really felt like it fit NED's chaotic design. We also wanted our main character to be clearly separate from us and our perspective, and to have a distinct voice. As we write shorter and slightly more personal zines Audra has started occasionally including versions of ourselves in some zines in addition to NED.





**Q: You both pick topics together and do the research, though it seems that Allia does most of the research while Audra does the art, is that correct?**

**Audra:** Allia is 100% the researcher, and she organizes the ideas and figures out what the zine should say. I do the art.

**Allia:** It's such a collaborative process! Audra does all of the art and I do most of the research and usually take the lead on the writing (outlining and writing a first draft), but it's all collaborative. We often sit at a table together and write or edit and we're talking regularly through most of the research process and a lot of the drawing. A lot of our best ideas come out of conversations and through a cyclical process of editing and collaboration — to the point where we can't always separate who wrote what.

**Q: Allia, you work in a library, which gives you so much access to information. How much of your research is online, and how much is done with actual physical media? Do you enjoy the actual act of researching?**

**Allia:** Almost all of my research is online —although it depends on the project. I recently spent a day in the University of Oregon special collections following up on research I did as an undergraduate. Some of that research ended up in one of our zines (Dear Miss Tingle), and we'll probably end up writing more based on the project. That being said, most of my research is digital, I get access to a lot of great databases and digital archives through my work. And there's also great research tools available through the public library. Historic newspapers are a big focus of my research, and many universities, including the University of Oregon, host digital newspaper archives that are free to access even if you're not a student/ staff member. I love the research process! Especially for the zines since we only



pick topics we're really interested in. I majored in history, so working on the zines is a way to really use the skills I built completing my degree. Doing the research is the fun part for me—even though it can be frustrating and time-consuming it's very rewarding and often leads you down interesting paths.

**Q: Audra, once the research is done, either by Allia or by both of you, how do you start piecing together a storyboard for how you'll illustrate it?**

**Audra:** Usually once Allia is done with the research she writes a draft of the comic, and I'll give some input on where the page-breaks go. I'll usually read a couple articles that Allia recommends from the research process—we share a Zotero folder (Zotero is our citation management software of choice) so I can see what she's saved from the research process. Sometimes Allia will also send me reference images of people or places in the comic. For the billboard zine we drove the three hours round trip to Chehalis just to get our own pictures of the Hamilton sign. I'll rough out the thumbnails based on all that, and paste all the text into the draft. I always paste the text in as early in the drawing process as possible, even if I'm going to hand-letter it later. Usually there's too much text, so I trim it where I can, and then periodically as I pencil and ink I send it to Allia and she marks it all up. Eventually it's inked and the text is finalized, and hopefully none of the panels are confusing and the important information is properly signposted. We make our friends and family read it as we're finishing the text and use their feedback, too.



**Q: Do either of you also make zines on your own? Or do you always work together?**

**Audra:** We both make zines on our own! Allia's made a couple zines, including one about accessing affordable textbooks that she did for her day job. I make zines on my own, both commissioned work (making nonfiction comics is my day job; I'm a research assistant and resident cartoonist in a neuroscience lab and



I make comics as outreach for them, along with other freelance stuff and weird personal projects that don't have enough meat on them to turn into properly researched collaborative zines. But I ask Allia for feedback on pretty much everything I make.

**Q: I picked up your zines from Antiquated Future. How did you get connected with them?**

**Audra:** We'd made a couple zines and posted them on Instagram and our website, but hadn't done anything else with them. I knew Powell's Books sells some independent zines, so I went over there to see if they'd take any of mine and the head of small press at the Hawthorne Powell's told me that I should look into Antiquated Future. Their website says you need to mail zines to them, and they'll get back to you, so I put zines in an envelope and sent them off with an awkward letter. And 10 months later they sent us an email and said our zines were up their alley!

**Q: Do you sell your zines through other distros? Where and how do you sell the majority of your zines?**

**Audra:** Antiquated Future is the only distro we sell zines through, and they sell most of our zines. We sell zines in some comics and book stores local to us, and through our website, and we table a couple times a year— but selling our zines isn't necessarily our forte or our priority. It's just as exciting to hear that someone's read one of our zines online as it is to make a sale!

**Allia:** I think we've sold the majority of our zines in person while tabling (although Antiquated Future will probably out-do tabling this year). It still blows my mind that people are buying them, it's so exciting to see our work out in the world! Even though we'd already been to lots of in-person events, the first time someone we didn't know personally bought something directly from our online shop was a surreal moment.

**Q:** And finally, of course, I have to ask: What is the next project we can expect from you?

**Audra:** We're just finishing up our third single-page mini-zine in a row. This one is about a pet peeve of Allia's. We've been riso printing the mini-zines at Outlet in Portland. The speed of finishing mini-zines is pretty addictive in contrast to the length of time it takes to finish our longer projects, so we'll probably make another couple minis as we decide what topic we want to commit to for NED #4.

**Allia:** The mini zines are so fun to make, we have a ton of ideas for those! But for our next long project we've been thinking about something around data privacy -- possibly with a focus on libraries and privacy.

Happy 2024!

Best,  
Audra & Allia

Go to: [audmcname.com](https://audmcname.com)

Or: [alliaservice.com](https://alliaservice.com)

Or: [antiquatedfuture.com](https://antiquatedfuture.com)

# A ZINE ABOUT ZINES

