

Scratching the Surface: Zines in Libraries

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Abstract

The way zines are treated in different library settings were examined and compared. Briefly, the more general characteristics of zines and a perspective on historical phenomena relating to and leading up to the creation of modern day zines were outlined. To follow, zines were demonstrated to be valid research sources as they include voices independent of mainstream and commercial media and literature. The more practical ways in which zines are and have been implemented into library collections was explored by analyzing other libraries' collection development policies and strategies in regard to their treatment of zines, touching also on more specific issues such as the cataloging of zines, the acquisition of zines, patron access to zines, the physical location of zines within libraries, the online access of a library's zine collection, and how zine collections help libraries reach out to more factions of their communities.

Literature Review

Much of the literature exploring the presence and treatment of zines in library collections tends to also speak as advocacy pieces for the vital need of “alternative” information sources in libraries, even and especially in “nonstandard” formats like zines, as a way to supply their patrons and communities with the most in-depth and widest array of perspectives on topics as possible. Article II of the Library’s Bill of Rights, addressing a library’s duty to “provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues,” is constantly referenced, serving as a solid, ethical basis for the authors’ advocacy of libraries including zines in their collections.

The two most cited authorities on this topic seem to be Chris Dodge (cataloger at Hennepin County Library in Minnesota, “Street Librarian” columnist for *Utne* magazine, editor for the MSRRT newsletter, *Library Alternatives*, and a crowned guru of underground culture by many of his peers) and Mike Gunderloy (recognized mostly for his writings on zine culture, especially his publication *Factsheet 5*, a catalog and review of zines. Also, the New York State Library’s zine collection is named after Gunderloy’s *Factsheet 5*, as he donated his entire zine collection to the library.). Dodge’s article “Pushing the boundaries: Zines and libraries” (1995) serves as a preliminary tool for understanding the need for zines in libraries as he argues their quintessential nature of documenting contemporary cultures in very “real,” albeit substandard formats. Gunderloy’s writings (which include his more famous book *The World of Zines: A Guide to the Independent Magazine Revolution*, co-authored with Cari Goldberg Janice) and the push behind creating *Factsheet Five* make him the often quoted and interviewed authority on zine culture.

Other noteworthy writings on this topic include Julie Bartel's "The Salt Lake City Public Library Zine Collection" published in *Public Libraries* (2003), which offers an extremely comprehensive view of the accession, cataloging, and classification methods employed in her zine collection at SLCPL. Also, Ron Chepesiuk's widely cited article "Libraries preserve the latest trend in publishing: Zines" (*American Libraries*, 1997) incorporates a broader scope by exploring various libraries that have zine collections, their treatment of zines, and the underlying philosophies and arguments made for the importance of collecting zines as they are proven to be valuable cultural artifacts. Additionally, Billie Aul, Julie Herrada, Jason Kucsma, Cheryl Zobel, Chris Atton, Stephen Duncombe, and Chip Rowe prove to be valid and experienced writers regarding the role of zines in libraries (Aul and Herrada also manage their own zine collections).

With the advent of including zines in library collections or creating autonomous zine collections in libraries comes the difficulty of cataloging these ephemeral texts using standard cataloging methods, a phenomena that Julie Bartel, Ron Chepesiuk, and Chris Dodge discuss in length in their writings. There leaves a lot to be desired for users and librarians doing inquiries and research on zines when most zine collections are catalogued in an alphabetized-by-title reference list. At the same time, there remains the constant struggle with lack of funds and time, not to mention the underrated status zines continue to receive by library administrations, that keep more complete and useful cataloging methods for zines underdeveloped. Therefore, there seems to be little research done on alternative cataloging methods for zines in libraries. For this reason, I am working towards filling this gap by interviewing librarians and zine publishers regarding

their experience with zines and libraries and the joining of the two to hopefully gain more options and possibilities for the treatment of zines in libraries.

Annotated Bibliography

Articles

Bartel, J. (2003, July/August). The Salt Lake City Public Library zine collection. *Public Libraries*, 42(4), 232-238.

Julie Bartel is the Zine Collection Librarian in the Teen Department at the Salt Lake City Public Library. This article discusses the approaches taken by the Salt Lake City Public Library to integrate and create a space for zines in their library. The article is laid out similarly to Cheryl Zobel's "Zines in Public Libraries" in that it opens with an intro and brief history of zines, then leans into the more specific issues regarding why zine collections are beneficial to libraries, collection development policies to be considered, material accession and different routes to pursue for obtaining zines for a collection, and cataloging, processing, storage, and publicity considerations and approaches. Fortunately for librarians that are either new to zines or are perhaps interested in beginning a zine collection in their library, Bartel's article (more specifically than Zobel's) offers more useful information to her readers regarding exactly how to go about going through distros to obtain zines and ways to pay for zines that adhere to library policy, for example. What's more, my research will be enhanced by Bartel's attention to the painstaking details she so graciously extends to her readers in regards to her zine collection. Plus, the information provided about the Zine Collection's outreach programs to their young adult patrons is quite inspiring, and gives me yet another idea as to how I can continue my research in other areas pertaining to zines and libraries.

Chepesiuk, R. (1997). Libraries preserve the latest trend in publishing: Zines. *American Libraries*, February 1997, 58-62.

Ron Chepesiuk is *American Libraries* contributing editor, professor and head of special collections at Winthrop University Library, editor of ALA's International Leads, and a member of the editorial board of Reference Books Bulletin, and author of *Raising Hell: Straight Talk from Today's Top Investigative Journalists*. Chepesiuk's article reviews an array of libraries such as Bowling Green State University's Popular culture Library and San Francisco's Public Library that house zine archives or include zines in their alternative literature collections. Within his explorations of these particular library collections crop up issues including the treatment of zines in libraries (touching upon some shortcomings of traditional cataloging methods when using them to catalog unique zines), considerations of zine publishers who may not want their work mainstreamed into a library, and the overall responsibility of librarians and libraries to provide as many relevant sources (like zines that are viewed by many zine advocates to be valuable, primary cultural documents) of information for their patrons as possible. This article will help me establish some of the crucial arguments that surround my assertion of zines being necessary sources for those studying various aspects of individual cultures, counter cultures, subcultures, and societies in general. Plus, Chepesiuk's inclusive review of libraries has lead me to pertinent web sites where I can access some of the library's catalogs and databases that include their zine collections for my research purposes.

Dodge, C. (1998). Taking libraries to the street: Infoshops & alternative reading Rooms. *American Libraries*, May 1998, 62-64.

Chris Dodge is a cataloger at Hennepin County Library in Minnesota, “Street Librarian” columnist for *Utne* magazine, editor for the MSRRT newsletter, *Library Alternatives*, and a crowned guru of underground culture by many of his peers. This article depicts some of the more famous or infamous infoshops around the country, while at the same time showing their characteristics to be similar to that of an ideal public library that caters to the “real” public, or people that reside outside the charmed middle-class, white circle. The intent of this article seems to be to rouse enthusiasm in librarians to make their libraries more friendly to their patrons “on the fringe.” It would have been more helpful, however, if the author could have relayed more information discussing the particulars on how the infoshops identified in this article cataloged their materials. As result, it may have appealed to librarians more who are not as familiar in dealing with various types of alternative literature like zines. Yet, this attention paid to infoshops has offered me another avenue of which I can explore a wider range of possibilities for housing zines into a library’s collection.

Dodge, C. (1995, May). Pushing the boundaries: Zines and libraries. *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 69, 26-30.

This article was written by the same Chris Dodge mentioned in the previous citation. As a first-stop, quickie introduction to zines and some underlying issues (like the misuse and lack of LCSH’s for zines) of zines being represented in library collections, this article primarily targets a librarian audience; however, the article’s more sociological approach to the subject (mostly involving the overall importance of zines in our society as they bring a wider range of dissonant and different voices to the surface) seems to make it widely accessible to readers outside library and academic circles. One of the most helpful aspects of this article that has launched me into another aspect of researching zines in libraries is Dodge’s short, but significant mention of the Library of Congress’ treatment of zines and their cataloging and subject heading methods for these ephemeral publications. Although, a more in-depth discussion about this classification conundrum would not only have benefited the first semester MLIS student, like myself, but would have cast a more urgent light on the issue for other librarians and the public who may not have been aware of the management of zine records in the Library of Congress.

Herrada, J. & Aul, B. (1995). Zines in libraries: A culture preserved. *Serials Review*, 21(2), 79-88.

Julie Herrada is a curator for the Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan and Billie Aul is Senior Librarian of Collections, Acquisition and Processing at New York State Library’s Cultural Education Center. Both authors receive mention in other articles on the topic of zine collections in libraries, especially Aul. Most important to the article’s librarian readership, especially it’s cataloging audience, is the detailed explanation of how Mike Gunderloy’s donation of his Factsheet Five zine collection (including 10,000

zine titles) to the New York Public Library became an archival collection for the library. Some discussion to the finding aids and cataloging procedures is offered; although, samples of the finding aids would have been more helpful. Herrada and Aul's harried librarian viewpoint will help balance out my research that wholeheartedly champions zine collections that are cataloged into the library's system. Most interestingly, a fresh approach is taken in this article that could accentuate other articles written on this subject—an actual zine publisher was given substantial voice. The publisher of the zine *Babyfish...lost its momma* contributed a couple pages worth of insight regarding her experience with seeing her zine go from her hands into the archives of a library.

Kucsma, J. (2002). Countering marginalization: Incorporating zines into the library. *Library Juice*, 5:6. Retrieved March 13, 2004, from http://www.libr.org/Juice/issues/vol5/LJ_5.6.sup.html

Jason Kucsma is the co-editor of Clamor Magazine, co-editor of *The Zine Yearbook*, and organizer of the Underground Publishing Conference. This article rallies for the importance of including zines in library collections as a way to preserve true voices of various cultures and subcultures in society that often times get overlooked in academic circles. Like other texts devoted to the topic of alternative/DIY/underground literature, this article establishes a brief overview of zines, including the purpose behind zines, a brief history of zines in general, and champions the authentic perspectives offered in zines that cover a wide array of topics. This article could be easily understood by the general public as well as librarians who may have very little knowledge of zines. It is not intended to teach librarians how to physically catalog zines into their library's collection, however. Overall, Kucsma establishes pertinent political and sociological bases for zines to demonstrate their relevance in libraries, especially public libraries where they can be accessed by a wider audience than just readers within their immediate zine communities. These bases will help me appeal to my reader more as I open my paper with a discussion of not only why zines are invaluable library sources, but also why it is important to look at the different ways they can be implemented into a library's collection.

Zobel, C. (1999). Zines in public libraries. *Counterpoise*, April 1999, 5-10.

Cheryl Zobel, at the time of this publication, was a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Her article is essentially a How-To for librarians to start a zine collection in their library. The article lists a series of pros and cons involved in obtaining and incorporating zines into a libraries collection. From ordering advice to different cataloging and indexing methods utilized by other librarians, this article speaks directly to librarians who may feel overwhelmed by attempting to begin a zine collection. Compared to most other short articles on this topic, Zobel provides more specific information on zine cataloging and collection management methods. If only she could provide more in-depth methods for librarians interested in starting a collection or having to justify such a collection to their administration. Yet, for the purposes of my research, this article has opened up new

avenues of exploration regarding particular methods of collection management for zines, especially in public libraries.

Books

Atton, C. (1996). *Alternative literature: A practical guide for librarians*. Hampshire, England: Gower Publishing Limited.

Chris Atton is a professor of Information and Media in the School of Communication Arts at Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland, was awarded the American Library Association's Eubanks Award (1998), and author of the book *Media at the Margins?* (2002). His book *Alternative Literature* (1996) is cited in much of the literature addressing zines and libraries as he develops a strong philosophical base that hails the importance of alternative literary sources in libraries. His notion of leveling, or creating a healthy balance of perspectives in library collections, weaves itself throughout the entire book as it addresses formidable and respectable sources for alternative literature for librarians to benefit from. Although his book seems to be written to librarians (something even the author claims to be one of the main purposes for writing this book), any reader nursed by mainstream media could benefit from the convincing and comprehensive analysis of independent publications that Atton champions in every chapter. As chock full of alternative press and media sources as the book is, it is unfortunate that there is not more written about actual cataloging alternatives taken by librarians to integrate alternative literature into their collections. Not only would it benefit fellow librarian readers, but it would also enhance my research more. Yet, Atton's deep dig into the fundamental cores of alternative literature offers complimentary theoretical bases from which I can more deftly argue the dire need for alternative literature sources like zines in my paper.

Duncombe, S. (1997). *Notes from the underground: Zines and the politics of alternative culture*. London, UK: Verso.

Stephen Duncombe is a Professor of American Studies at the Gallatin School, New York University. He is also publisher of the zine *Primary Documents*. *Notes from the Underground* submerges its reader—no matter their degree of involvement and experience with zines—into complexities of zine culture. The author's in-depth approach to the book's chapters, "Zines," "Identity," "Community," "Work," "Consumption," "Discovery," "Purity and Danger," and "The Politics of Alternative Culture," employs extensive interviews with numerous zine publishers and alternative culture gurus that peel and divulge layer upon layer of the zine world. This book has aided me in establishing a theoretical background for arguing the utter importance of zines in libraries. I've heard some readers complain that the book overlaps information too much, but I find Duncombe's discussion of zines to be highly aware of the circuitous nature of zine culture and the way zine ethics, politics, and practices feed off and are integral to each other. As this book primarily explores the many sides of zine culture, it does not specifically address the issue of zines in libraries like much of the other sources I'm

focusing on for my research, yet it does maintain an overall academic tone with its academic research-style approach.

Web Sites

American Library Association. (2004). *Library bill of rights*. Retrieved March 23, 2004, from <http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.htm>

The American Library Association (ALA), founded in 1876, espouses the mission “to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all,” (<http://www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/ourassociation.htm>). Adopted initially by ALA in 1948 the Bill of Rights include six articles delineating the responsibilities of libraries to provide as much access as possible to each of its patrons and all facets of its communities unfettered access to information. For the purposes of this research, Article Two will be focused on primarily (“Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.”). Much of the literature advocating the presence of zines in library collections points to the second article as a main ethical basis to support their arguments as it clearly stresses the need for libraries to support and make alternative sources like zines accessible to their patrons.

Dodge, C. *A zine-ography: An annotated list of books and articles about Zines*. (1998). Retrieved March 12, 2004, from <http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Café/7423/zineot2.html>

Chris Dodge is a cataloger at Hennepin County Library in Minnesota, columnist for Utne magazine, and a recognized by many of his published peers as being an authoritative source on zines and alternative literature. *A Zine-ography* is a 23-page list citing articles, books, and Web sites written on a variety of aspects of zines including zine history, culture, politics, and, most pertinent to my research, the treatment of zines in libraries. Although Dodge’s list is available online, it is not, unfortunately, formatted to include links to any of these sources that may be available Online. However, 16 of the citations were useful for researching various aspects of zines and libraries. Overall, skimming this extensive list would give readers, including librarians, possessing varying interest in zines a grand scope of zines and zine culture.

Independent Publishing Resource Center. (n.d.). *Search*. Retrieved March 23, 2004, from <http://www.iprc.org/library-search.php>

The Independent Publishing Resource Center (IPRC) states on its homepage (<http://www.iprc.org/about.php>) that it “facilitates creative expression and identity by providing individual access to the resources and tools for the creation of independently published media and art. Since its inception in 1998 the center has been dedicated to encouraging the growth of a visual and literary publishing community by offering a space to gather and exchange information and ideas, as well as providing a place in which to produce art and writing. The IPRC is an Oregon 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization” (and noted in a few of the other main sources I’ve run across discussing aspects of zines in libraries). What the IPRC is most popular for is its zine library. Online access to the zine library’s catalog is available to any user with access to the Internet, which is key for creating access to information for as many people as possible. I plan to use this site and the design of their online catalog as an example of how other libraries with zine collections could possibly expand their collections to reach those who may not be able to physically visit their library (especially since many of the zine libraries are spread out across the country). My only complaint about this site is that there are no dates visible indicating when the site was last updated. Even on the calendar, there are no years noted after the day and month of which the events fall on.

Rowe, C. *The book of zines: Readings from the fringe*. (2002-2004). Retrieved March 13, 2004, from <http://zinebook.com/>

Chip Rowe is the editor of both *The Book of Zines* (1997) as well as *The Book of Zines* Web site. His site is continuously referred to in other literature involving zines and, more specifically, how zines have found their place in libraries. Rowe’s site consists of a plethora of informative pages on various aspects of zines titled “Zine Archives,” “Zine Libraries,” “Comics,” “Humor,” “Legal Issues,” “Discussion,” “Distribution,” “Buy Zines,” “Zine Reviews,” “Zine Help,” “E-Zine Help,” “Zine Books,” “Interviews,” “Controversies,” “What’s a Zine?” “Book of Zines,” “Zine History,” “Recommended,” “Events,” “Directories,” and “Articles and Essays.” The pages “Zine Libraries” and “Articles and Essays” are the ones I’m using most for the purpose of my research as they have led me to the sites and contact information of over 35 online and physical zine libraries or libraries that house zine collections and archives. Additionally, the “Articles and Essays” page linked to pertinent sources like that of Chris Dodge’s “Zineography” (1998) (cited above), “What They’re Saying About Us,” a bibliography of popular press views of zines from publications like the New York Times and The Wall Street Journal (to name a couple), and articles by Steven Svymbersky (2001) and Judith Williamson (1994) on cheap and easy production methods for making zines that will help engage children and young adults in writing—a concept I plan to broach in one section of my paper as I discuss how libraries can become involved in such activities to better reach out to their public. This site would be a useful tool for not only zine advocates and collectors, but also for readers, including librarians, beginning to learn about zines and zine culture.

Scratching the Surface: Zines in Libraries

Simply put, “Libraries are democracy in action [,] and by providing all kinds of materials, we allow people to educate themselves and expose themselves to new ideas” maintains Cathy Camper, Librarian and Collection Management at Minneapolis Public Library (personal communication, March 30, 2004). Honing in on how non-mainstream materials like zines help libraries uphold their democratic nature, Sean Stewart, public librarian and publisher of the zine *Thoughtworm* expounds:

If librarians are to continue providing access to a wide range of viewpoints, then including zines in our collections is one viable way of doing that. Zines offer fresh, often alternative, perspectives on current issues, and they typically do so without the influence of profit-making motives. (personal communication, April 22, 2004)

It is the ideal that libraries enable the democratization of information along with the nature of zines being free forums for voices unconstrained by mass media and academic standards of acceptability, that a sense of reciprocity and common ground becomes evident between zines and libraries. By libraries making a space for zines and realizing how they are invaluable literary spaces fostering independent thought, libraries can then benefit from how zines supplement and add to the more standardized views allocated through mainstream, commercial, and academic publications.

However, what the literature addressing the inclusion of zines in library collections and what librarians who have experience working with zines all express is that the task of bringing zines into a library involves a number of considerations ranging from the acquisition of zines for a library’s collection to the cataloging of zines to the

way zine collections inspire community outreach activities for libraries can become a complicated, yet highly rewarding mission.

Thus, the bulk of this research offers a wide and, at times, a more narrow lens to the thought given by different librarians and zine publishers to the clerical, administrative, and theoretical aspects of implementing zines into libraries (or, in some cases, creating libraries *with* zines). This is done first by discussing the more general characteristics of zines, including historical phenomena and eras attributed to the modern day zine. Further into this paper, the more theoretical and philosophical aspects pertaining to why zines are important material for library collections are followed a section discussing more practical views on the actual treatment of zines in libraries and the designing and maintaining of zine collections.

Characteristics of Zines

The sky is the limit when it comes to zines. Like any other art form, the look and content of a zine invariably differs from one to the next. In Chip Rowe's *The Book of Zines: Readings from the Fringe* (1997) publisher of the zine *Don't Say Uh-Oh!* Maria Goodman reflects on her reaction to receiving a batch of random zines in the mail: "Some were brilliant, some were boring, some were perverted, some were so personal they made me sigh. Inspired, I wrote some things and drew some things and glued some things down" (p. 77). And, some measure to be as small as a stamp or as large as an 11x17 inch tabloid (*Digress*), and some may consist of only one sheet of paper, folded in various ways to create a booklet containing multiple pages (*Figure Eight #1*). In fact, a recent trip to Quimby's in Chicago included the purchase of a zine, consisting of a rectangular box containing cards with print on them, each card representing one page of the "zine." What

is inside these seeming curios can cover the widest gamut of visual art and writing, including cut-and-paste collage, haiku, paintings, academic essays, political rants, extremely personal rants, math equations, electrical grid diagrams, recipes—the list of content possibilities are endless for zines. To reiterate, Chris Atton (1996) offers this description of zines in *Alternative Literature: A Practical Guide for Librarians*, depicting them to be the genre of alternative with virtually no bounds:

...the ensuing years have seen [zines] diversify into all kinds of subjects...Zine publishing is truly the ‘alternative alternative’, offering a range of topics, formats, viewpoints and value systems that are unique even within the wider ambit of alternative publishing. (p. 24-25)

Equally important, if not more noteworthy, is the truly independent nature of zines and the intent of those who create them. An unfailing DIY (Do It Yourself) presence emanates from zines, which is not only responsible for generating a unique and individual publication, but also an autonomous space for the publisher/author who is not tied to any corporate publishing institution’s agendas. Atton explains:

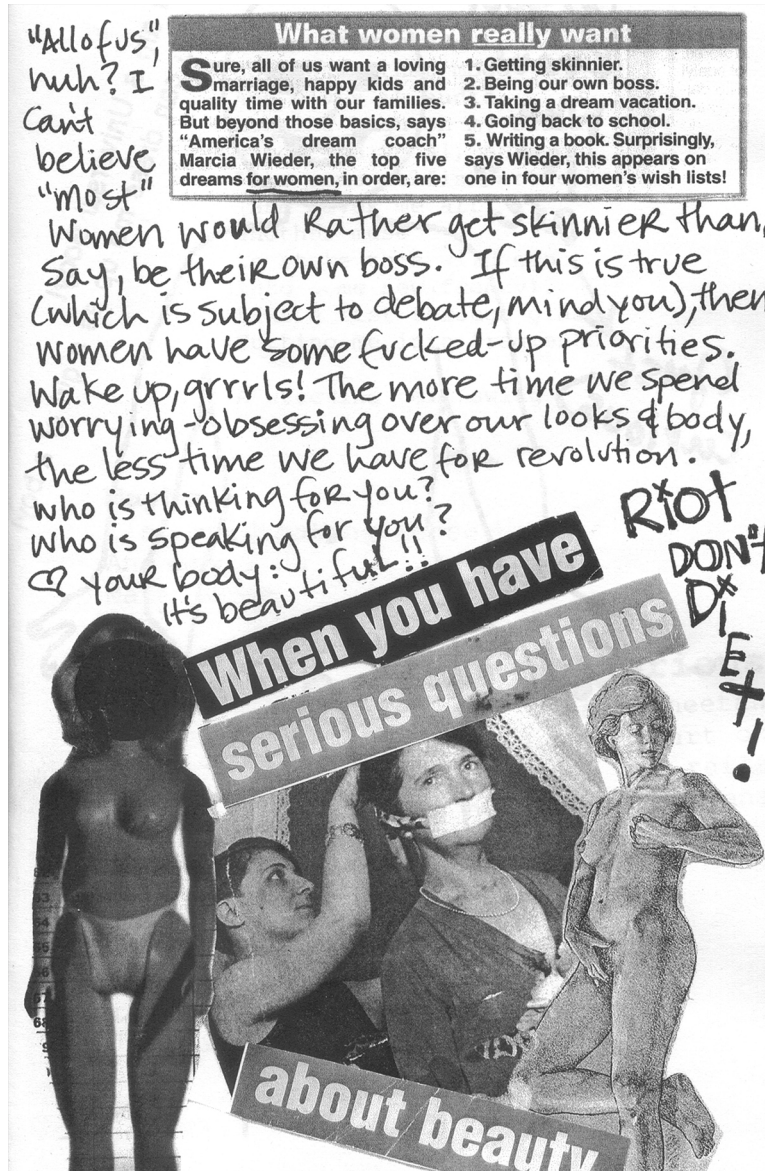
[Zines] are still most often the product of an individual or small group of friends, acting as writers, designers, publishers and distributors combined. Zine publishing brings together all the characteristics of alternative publishing, but it also establishes communities of interest and enthusiasm with the control and commercial necessities not only of mainstream publishing, but of those alternative publishers operating along similar lines. (p.24-25)

An expansion of this realization of the social autonomy established by the act of publishing zines is evident in Stephen Duncombe’s (1997) postulation:

I came to realize that, considered in their totality, zines weren't the capricious ramblings of isolated cranks (though some certainly were), but the variegated voices of a subterranean world staking out its identity through the cracks of capitalism and in the shadows of the mass media. (p. 2)

Duncombe's summation raises the pertinent fact that the "organic" voices emitted from zines allow for a dialogue that is not often represented in mainstream media sources. As a result, views offered in zines often times give more insight (many times personal) into a variety of facets of politics and society at large that speak more genuinely to readers.

Below, a page from Angela Chaos' zine *Bitch King* (2003) aptly communicates, through the medium of collage, a voice of dissent protesting mass media's (and as a result, society's) pressure placed on women to maintain a cumbersome and often unattainable thin body type (please see next page as the image would not fit on the remainder of this page):



Although an exhaustive rhetorical analysis could be done on the socio-political spectrums addressed in Chaos' collage, what strikes this reader most is how much louder, figuratively, the speaker's voice is denouncing traditional female-centered stereotypes with the use of cut-and-paste images and a news clipping to accompany her commentary. (In an interview with Leslie Powell, the zinester and library clerk refers to zines as "collage-like observations of the world" (personal communication, March 24, 2004).) With this collaged splay of borrowed images and commentary so prevalent in the design

of many zine pages, the reader is offered various and, more importantly, alternative and underrepresented aspects to the ubiquitous mass media's message (in this case that being thin is the main concern for women as a whole).

An Historical Perspective of Zines

The individual and often antipathetic voices found in zines reverberates and recalls other past alternative publishing ventures. R. Seth Friedman pays homage to in the comprehensive zine history outlined in his introduction to *The Factsheet Five Zine Reader: The Best Writing from the Underground World of Zines* (1997). Beginning with the science fiction magazine subculture of the 1930's and 40's, the term "fanzine" was established from which the more contemporary label of "zine" evolved from. Friedman then backtracks to the late 1800's where he explains how the invention of the mimeograph and its "popularity" "fueled" the publishing of fanzines. Friedman even goes on to give due credit to Johannes Gutenberg's movable type printing as well as Benjamin Franklin's "belie[f] in the power of the press" leading to Franklin's "found[ing] America's first circulating library" and "self-published" pamphlets like that of *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Credited also is Thomas Paine's "opinionated political tract *Common Sense*." This history of zines proceeds to the founding of the National Amateur Press in 1876 and acknowledges the "Dadaist manifestos, surrealist journals, anarchist broadsheets, and 'little magazines' of serious literary intent" afforded by mimeograph machines. Moving forward to 1967, credit is given to the UPS or Underground Press Syndicate, which included many alternative newspapers responding to this period of "political unrest." More historical significances and relics of independent publishing cultures and ventures like that of the Punk scene and Mike Gunderloy's landmark and

first-of-its-kind *Factsheet Five* zine review publication, for example, make their way into Friedman's history of zines, noted along with the above compilation of historical phenomena to be either a stepping stone or distant echo to the modern day zine (p. 9-13).

The Importance of Zines in Library Collections

In an interview with Chris Dodge, Sanford Berman asserts, "public libraries are the last refuge for genuine diversity and cultural excitement" (Dodge, 2002, ¶ 19), which frames the more specific roles and responsibilities he attributes to libraries:

Libraries represent the sole contemporary American institution with the potential for making available a wide-ranging, genuinely diverse spectrum of opinions, cultural expressions, and ideas in an environment that is commercial-free and huckster-free... (¶ 17)

The library's responsibility to providing heterogeneous and multifarious views for their communities as expressed by Berman above is more ably done with the inclusion of a zine collection. In his article "Countering Marginalization: Incorporating Zines into the Library" Jason Kucsma focuses more on the role of academic libraries in suggesting:

...zines, in addition to being a form of media created by individuals instead of corporations, are actually valuable evidence of progressive political thought and action. As such, libraries (especially special collections) should be concerned with documenting zines before their ephemeral nature renders them extinct. (¶ 1)

In an interview with Jenna Freedman, Coordinator of Reference Services at Bernard College Library, she adds her "academic library perspective," which includes seeing zines as viable resources for research:

Is our cultural record just what is printed by the *New York Times*, Random House, and Oxford University Press? Is that all that will interest future scholars? I don't think so. I've already had students work on projects that I think would benefit by having zines included in their research. (personal communication, March 20, 2004)

Freedman's point is resonated by Chris Dodge's appeal, "Academic and research librarians must foresee that this era's zines will one day be important historical sources" (1995, ¶ 5). For subcultures and other groups often placed in the margins of society and outweighed by "the norm" by corporately published literature and mainstream media publications, independently published zines offer a medium in which individuals can communicate their authentic and first-hand ideas. Therefore, as more libraries provide zines to their communities, under- and often misrepresented voices like those found in Veruska Outlaw's queer-centered *Clit Rocket* help to, as Kucsma explains, "fill the gaps of cultural representation left empty by having focused collection attention primarily on elite or 'accepted' literature" (¶ 13).

Additionally, by libraries making zines accessible to their patrons, they come closer to "provid[ing] materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues" as prescribed by the ALA's Library Bill of Rights (Article II)—Rights "we can and should read," entreats Kucsma "as we would the United States Constitution" (¶ 3). Kucsma then strengthens Article II's merit in relationship to libraries' provision of zines by recognizing Articles III and IV and how libraries are "also obligated to "challenge censorship (and) cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas" (¶ 3). Pertaining these

three articles of the Library Bill of Rights to zines not only legitimizes the presence of zines in libraries, but also assigns power to those publishing ideas counter to or independent of the mainstream—a category that many zine publishers fall under.

Yet, there are some who feel that zines do not have a place in a library institution as it goes against the nature of zines' independent and DIY roots. As elucidated by Kathryn DeGraff in Ron Chepesiuk's "Libraries Pervolve the Latest Trend in Publishing: Zines" (1997):

They feel that having their zines in a library flies in the face of what they are doing. I understand their point of view, but I think that it's the library profession's responsibility to try to convince zine publishers that their efforts should be preserved in a library. (¶ 22)

What the presence of zines in libraries also creates is a tangible, primary record of their DIY publishing methods and ideology for those who have never stepped inside zine circles and who may be unaware that such a phenomena exists. Britton Neubacher, M.A., S/he Collective Organizer, and Co-Creator of San Diego State University's West Coast Zine Archive also focuses on the effect zines potentially have on people who have yet to discover literature of this kind by averring "By cross-referencing zines in the larger database topic-searches, people will be newly exposed to underground writing while zines challenge the bigger or 'legitimized' discourse" (personal communication, April 21, 2004). This reflects Kucsma's concept of zines' ability to "fill in the gaps" when the more "legitimized discourse" leaves researchers and patrons thirsty for a more genuine, raw, and original voice residing outside academia or the mass media circuit. Neubacher goes on to depict the more authentic ideals found in zines as they "[involve] the

production of street theory and otherwise non-academized thinking and strategizing for social change: ideas that otherwise have limited form in the underground.” This along with Neubacher’s notion of cross-referencing zines within the library’s main holdings creates a more comprehensive information space where researchers and patrons are more likely to happen upon other voices on a given topic, which can offer a fresh and unconventional angle—perhaps offering also a more human rather than academic voice that speaks more personally or realistically to the reader.

Yet, the integration of zines into a libraries collection awakens a whole slew of administrative and clerical considerations for libraries, which many libraries that house zine collections are continuing to negotiate and make decisions on. For example, one of the most pending questions for those involved with the treatment of zines in libraries is the issue of how to catalog and keep records of their zine holdings.

The Treatment of Zines in Libraries

In this next section, some libraries that house zines and/or zine collections are given particular attention with the purpose of illustrating different paths taken by these information institutions to care for their zines. In no way is the following list of libraries meant to indicate any definitive or all encompassing model concerning the treatment of zines in libraries. The glimpse I give to these libraries is meant to only show the wide breadth of possibilities in dealing with zines in different library settings involving a collection’s development, acquisitions, display methods, and online visibility (a tenet of zine collections that became more of a priority as I was having to rely more on a collections online access and catalogs to grasp a feel for the physical collection I was have yet to visit).

I had the inestimable benefit of interviewing librarians, other library staff, and zinesters (those who publish zines or who are heavily involved with zine communities) for my research—all of whom openly and graciously offered their expertise, ideals, and knowledge of zines. Most of the individuals interviewed (with the exception of a couple), have direct experience in dealing with zines in a library setting. All interviewees were asked questions about how zines are solicited for their library (with this question and for the others following, I reworded my inquiries to match the role held by the interviewee regarding their involvement with zine collections. For example, when interviewing a zine publisher, I asked them instead how they *would* solicit zines for a collection.); why they believe it is important for zines to be included in a library's collection; how zines are made accessible to the patrons in their library; how the zine collection was started in their library; how the collection is maintained; and, finally, what future plans they have for their zine collections. Inevitably, the variance of responses yielded multiple angles and attitudes regarding zine acquisition, collection development and collection maintenance. It seems also that the responses brought forth, at times, more current practices and concerns involving libraries' treatment of zines, nicely adding to and complimenting the literature in journals and books already published on this topic.

Judging from interviewees' responses, a prominent concern involving the incorporation of zines into library collections points to how zines should or can be cataloged and accessed by users. There seems to be those who believe zines should be integrated with the main library collection and catalog whereas others feel it is best to keep zines as an autonomous special collection. Of course within these two camps, ideas

of how to catalog and treat zines diverge as demonstrated below in some of the many libraries that housed zine collections.

Andrea Grimes, Special Collections Librarian of the San Francisco Public Library and head of the Little Magz/Zine Collection (maintained as an autonomous collection in the Book Arts & Special Collections department) explains in an interview that the zines in her collection are in the process of being cataloged so that it is accessible to users in the library's online catalog: "We hope to make it more accessible with MARC cataloging, giving the collection many more points of access for each title" (personal communication, March 23, 2004). Until then, users can either physically visit the library and view the collection in its entirety (where requests for photocopying can be made) or access an online version of the collection's finding aid at <http://www.sfpl.org/librarylocations/main/bookarts/zines/zinetitles.htm>, which includes a list of the zines held in the collection, alphabetized by title along with the zine's place of origin, date of publication, and the particular issue(s) of the zine held by the library. For example, the entry for the zine *Quixote* appears as:

QUIXOTE (Austin, Texas)

v.4 no.2 (1968) – v.9 no.3 (n.d.) Br

Location: PL

Included in the finding aid is a list of symbols for users (**Br** Broken run, **LM** Call number for the Little Maga/Zine Collection, **LM P** Magazine is located in pamphlet-size archival box, **LM PL** Magazine is located in legal-size archival box, **LM FB** Magazine is located in flat archival box, **LM FFB** Magazine is located in flat folio archival box) indicating

where the zine is located. Anyone interested can request photocopies, and the policies for this are outlined in the finding aid.

Similarly, the West Coast Zine Collection of San Diego State University's Malcolm A. Love Library is an autonomous collection housed in the library's Special Collections department. The collection was created by Cristina Favretto, Head of Special Collections and University Archives (prior to her position at SDSU, Favretto was Director of the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture and Curator of the Sarah Dyer Zine Collection at Duke University), Britton Neubacher, and Elke Zobel, Creator of Grrrl Zine Network (<http://www.grrrlzines.net/>). To access the zine collection, patrons can view a finding aid online (<http://infodome.sdsu.edu/about/depts/spcollections/rarebooks/zinesfindingaid.shtml> - findingaid), consisting of a list of zine titles in alphabetical order, place of publication origin, author(s), publisher(s), date of publication, format, category (which includes key terms pertaining to that zine, taken mostly from the Subject Access Terms listed in the finding aid: Women/ Girls/ Gender/ Trans/ Feminism / Politics/ Music/ Local Scenes/ Alternative Culture/ Popular Culture/ Comics), and description (a brief overview of the zine). Entries for each zine in the list appear as this one for the zine *Ack-Ack Grrrl*:

Ack-Ack Grrrl (San Diego, CA)

Authors: Jaime, Nicole, Britton, Meghan, and Amity

Publisher: Same as above [entry]

Date: April 1999

Format: 8.5" X 11" folded in half, photocopied, unpaginated

Category: feminism/gender issues

(bibliographical information con't.)

Description: Riot grrrl, Feminism, Music, Resource Guide

Currently, an Access database is being created for this collection.

Minneapolis Community & Technical College's zine collection, created by Tom Eland (and begun with zines donated by Chris Dodge), Department Coordinator, is also accessible to users online (<http://www.minneapolis.edu/library/zines>). Instead of supplying a list of the zines in the collection, users can actually search for zines by keyword, title, author, and subject. For example, doing a keyword search on the term "grrrl" elicits 34 zine titles of zines, ordered alphabetically. A user can then click on one of the titles to view more information about that particular zine. Thus, clicking *Alabama Grrrl* brings up information regarding this zine's author(s), author role, title, place of publication, date of publication, volume, issue, extent of work, packaging method, and address/availability, and URL. According to Leslie Powell, a library clerk who helps maintain the zine collection, not all the library's zine titles are accessible through the Web. Inside the library, the zines are kept as an autonomous collection located near the periodical wing, open to anyone who wishes to sort through the filing cabinets in which they are stored, alphabetically by title, in hanging folders (personal communication, March 24, 2004).

While many libraries keep their zines as a separate, autonomous collection (whether in filing cabinets, special boxes, or acid-free folders in a special collections department), the Salt Lake City Public Library (SLCPL) integrates part of their main zine collection into the teen department of their library, explains Associate Librarian Brooke

Young. The zines in the teen department are kept in envelopes with barcodes and can be checked out by patrons (personal communication, March 25, 2004).

SLCPL's zine collection houses one of the largest collections of zines (over 8,000) in the country. Zine Collection Librarian Julie Bartel, initiator and creator of SLCPL's zine collection, writes an extensive and extremely informative account regarding the collection's history and development in her article, "The Salt Lake City Public Library Zine Collection" (2003). As this article looks specifically at issues regarding the organization of SLCPL's zine collection's method of payment for zines, material acquisition, and publicity and programs involving the collection, it not only serves as a useful tool for those looking for ways to handle zines in their libraries, but also introduces new possibilities of zine collections creating a means for libraries to reach out more to their communities. Bartel writes, "one new (and gratifying) connection we've made is with the Homeless Youth Resource Center, where the kids just released the third issue of their group zine, SLC Streetz" (§ 30). Prior to this, Bartel more generally connects zines, libraries, and communities in her introduction: "Including zines in the public library is a great way to attract new patrons, establish relationships with disenfranchised groups, and put into practice the Library Bill of Rights" (§ 1).

The Independent Publishing Resource Center (IPRC), an independent zine library in Portland, Oregon is a paragon of Bartel's ideals espoused above bridging zines, communities, and libraries. The IPRC, in addition to its extensive zine library, also serves as a workspace for zinesters who, for a low, hourly rate can use the library's photocopying and fax machines along with its computer station to create and promote their publications. The collection, itself, is maintained by volunteers who reshel and

catalog new, incoming zines. Zine librarian, and publisher of *Zine Librarian Zine* and *Clutch* Greig explains,

When the IPRC was started, the founding members wanted a library of zines to be available as both a record of what has been created and a resource for inspiration for future and current independent publishers. Portland has always been a bit of a zine-making hotbed, so finding zines for the collection was no problem. A volunteer created our catalog and online database. Another volunteer built us shelves and before you knew it, we had our library. (personal communication, March 29, 2004)

The IPRC offers comprehensive Web access to their library's catalog (<http://www.iprc.org/library-search.php>) where zine titles can be accessed through title/name, author/publisher, a drop-down category list, description, year published, and/or free text searches. Individuals can also go to the library itself, seven days a week, peruse the library's collection of zines, and even create an account in order to check out specific zines for a two-week time period. As with most zine libraries, the IPRC continues to grow as copies of zines are donated to its collection.

As some libraries are at the stage of fine tuning and expanding their already existing zine collections, there are some like Jenna Freeman, MLIS, Coordinator of Reference Services at Bernard College Library, and publisher of the zine *Lower East Side Librarian Winter Solstice Shout Out*, who are in the beginning stages of developing their zine collections.



To get her collection started, Jenna describes how she first asked permission from her dean and then wrote a proposal and created a collection development policy. As for acquiring zines for the collection, Jenna admits her strategy to be random as she scopes out copies of zines at local, independent bookstores (Quimby's in Chicago is a must, and they have an online catalog where users can order zines and have them shipped), zine distros (Jenna favors Microcosm and Spy Kids), and special events (such as Ladyfest, as suggested by both Britton and Elke of SDSU's zine library). Another invaluable resource Jenna mentions for accruing zines is posting a "call for zines" on online discussion lists (here, Jenna points to two groups: Zinesters and Zine Geeks). Not to mention, zine publishers themselves are possible sources for zine donations. Plus, zines often include

addresses to zine distros (or distributors) and other zines that may have copies of their publications to donate to libraries.

Regarding the cataloging of the zines in her collection, Jenna expresses her hopes to add abstracts to the existing catalog records that, at this time, only assign an LC class number and subject headings to each zine (personal communication, March 28, 2004).

In addition to her zine collection, Freedman founded the Yahoo! Group, *Zinelibrarians* (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/zinelibrarians/>), which proffers invaluable posts regarding the practice and theories pertaining to zines and the treatment of zines in libraries. For these reasons, *Zinelibrarians* serves as an extremely useful resource for librarians who already work with a zine collection as well as those who are merely in the planning stages of their collection. Topics raised within the posts range anywhere from zine cataloging methods to debates on the inclusion of abstracts for zine records to zine related events at the next ALA conference, just to name a few. The group's members consist mostly of librarians who either have experience running or being involved with their library's zine collection or are looking to start one at their library. Adding balance to the conversation are the group members who are not librarians but avid zine collectors and/or active members of zine communities or lowly first semester MLIS students whose eyes glaze over at terms like "505 field" and "analytics."

To show the myriad and insight of responses that can be expected from the posts on *Zinelibrarian*, I felt it was important to include those published in response to the following questions raised by one member: "What do you all think is the best way to catalog zines for a public collection (as opposed to an archive or special collections type setup)? As a serial? A monograph? A book?...What is the best access point? Author?"

Title? Subject?” (Julie, personal communication, January 8, 2004). Another group member, who is a cataloger, responded with “If it’s a serial, I’d catalog it as a serial. I’d catalog a one-shot zine as a monograph.” Further in her response, she briefly discusses her preference for which access points to use: “I’d definitely go with author/title. I love subject headings, but I don’t think LC subject headings do a good job with zines.... You should create a local thesaurus of subjects you’d want to use, I guess” (Katia, personal communication, January 8, 2004). In another response to the above cataloging questions a third member adds, “We’re using subject headings. I want people to find the zines even when they’re not looking for them.” Then this member goes on to admit that it is easy for her to be a “fan of treating the zines as individuals and therefore giving them each their own SHs” as she is not, herself, the one doing the actual cataloging work. She then explains, “As for access points, I think you want all of the basics that are in a typical record: date and place of publication, physical description, notes if there are any. I’d love to provide TOCs, but I don’t think our cataloger would be into that!” Another point brought up by this member is that she “believe[s]” there is a part of the rules for serial monographs that allows for notes to be made regarding special features of the publication, which seems quite appropriate for publications like zines that consist of innumerable unique characteristics. Not to mention, as this member points out, the notes section would be a useful tool for including special content areas of the zine like contributing writers, artists, and interviews (Jenna, personal communication, January 8, 2004).

Possible methods for applying call numbers to zines are raised in this particular thread regarding zine cataloging on the *Zinelibrarians* message board. The member who

raised the initial cataloging questions asks, "...what would the call # be for zines...would the call # look like Zine_Title_ in the catalog?" (Julie, personal communication, January 8, 2004). In response, another member explains how her library is using LC class numbers and goes on to ask, "Would it be totally impractical for you to do Dewey?" (Jenna, personal communication, January 8, 2004) while another response expounds, "As long as you make sure they're coded to indicate that they aren't LC or Dewey or SuDocs or whatever, you may well use whatever you want. What you use would depend on how you want them arranged (e.g., by title, subject, genre...) (personal communication, January 8, 2004).

Another cataloging issue that arises on the discussion board involves a librarian pre-cataloging zines for a cataloger at her library. She posts:

I'm trying to assign each [zine] a zine type for the notes field. So far I've got
 perzine
 compilation zine
 queer zine (or queerzine—which do you think???)
 non-fiction zine
 literary zine (or chapbook?).

What else? (Jenna, personal communication, November 17, 2003)

In response, another member inquires about using the term "personal zine" in addition to "perzine" (Celia, personal communication, November 17, 2003), which then leads to another member asking, "Well, what's the difference between "personal zine" and "perzine"?" This question touches on another challenge, lexicographically speaking, when dealing with the cataloging of zines, especially when considering the variety of

users a library's catalog caters to. This point is brought up in a post by the member who listed the above possible type categories for zines as she writes in a later post, "I've seen perzine in print more than personal. Then again library users try to psych us out as much as we do them" (Katia, personal communication, November 17, 2003).

Consideration is also given by a cataloger in the group to how the category "queer zine" stands in relation to its fellow categories listed above as she explains, "I think if you're going to break out queer zine as a category, you'll have to break out more and it might lead to some evil labyrinth of zine categories" (Katia, personal communication, November 17, 2003). However, this response is replied to by the initial member who began this thread discussing pre-cataloging, explaining that the purpose of the broad categories she proposes were created to correlate with the way she felt users would search the OPAC in addition to "provid[ing] additional keyword access and also to prepare for the day that LC adopts them as legitimate" (personal communication, November 17, 2003). It is in this post where yet another source of controversy surfaces—the Library of Congress subject headings for zines, or the lack thereof.

In an interview with Cristina Favretto, she remembers a conversation with an acquaintance who served on a Library of Congress cataloging committee responsible for making decisions involving new LC subject headings. She explained to Favretto, that it took "forever" to implement new LCSH's due to the long process involved in getting other libraries countrywide to agree, "apply[ing] standards, and get[ting] everyone's calendars in sync." Favretto goes on to guess that many people at that level "probably don't know much about zines"—something she urges those passionate about preserving zines in libraries to help change by continuing to write letters to the Library of Congress,

as a means to reiterate the importance of zines as extremely important and valid social documents of their time.

At the same time, there remains also the continuous responsibility of the Library of Congress to employ more up to date in their subject heading assignments, as addressed articulately by Sanford Berman in his letter to Sarah Thomas, Director for Cataloging at the Library of Congress (in 1994, the year this letter was written) in “Jackdaws Strut in Peacock’s Feathers: The Sham of ‘Standard’ Cataloging” (1998). After recalling his years of experience in dealing directly with the Library of Congress concerning their subject heading assignments along with his own suggested list of subject heading additions (“zines” being one of the suggested terms), Berman asserts in the letter’s closing, “...what the Library of Congress does (or doesn’t) do affects the ...usefulness of catalogs in literally thousands of libraries throughout the Anglophone world.” This goes back to Favretto’s encouragement of librarians and zine activists to join together and continue to express their concerns (and we can surely use Sandy Berman’s tireless efforts as an example) to the Library of Congress in making “zines” an “official” subject heading, making it a more widely used and agreed upon term by catalogers.

Conclusion

The title of this paper was the best way for me to sum up in a few words how this research was simply one MLIS student’s glimpse into the universe of zines and libraries’ treatment of them. As exhibited in the section recounting posts made on the *Zinelibrarians* listserv, the one aspect of cataloging zines spirals into countless considerations, attempts, and practicalities, which is reminiscent of the burgeoning nature of other issues such as the treatment of zines in libraries including the acquisition of

zines, patron access to zines, the physical location of zines within libraries, the online access of a library's zine collection, and how zine collections help libraries reach out to more factions of their communities. Since the field of zine librarianship is still relatively a new practice, the debate and discussion regarding these issues is quite exciting and fresh, especially for one who is in the midst of compiling a library's zine collection into a database, a library student, and zine publisher herself.

As much as the literature written about the invaluable place zines hold in libraries provided me with a base from which to begin my research, it was the people sources I utilized through the discussions posted on *Zinelibrarians* and the interviews I conducted with other zinesters and librarians invested in preserving the profound voices of zines that provided me with incredible insight and contacts that I will be able to carry with me as I continue in my research and profession. For these reasons, I am greatly indebted to Chris Dodge, Andrea Grimes, Jenna Freedman, Cristina Favretto, Steven Savage, Brooke Young, Elke Zobl, Britton Neubacher, Greig Means, Angela Chaos, Cathy Camper, Leslie Powell, Sean Stewart, and Dr. Debra Hansen for taking time out of their compacted schedules to share their experiences and encourage me in my research.

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