

# **Notes From the One Day Zine Librarian Mini Conference**

## **August 30, 2010, North Portland Multnomah County Library**

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### **Session 1: Promoting Literacy Through Outreach**

Kim Riot, Grrrl Zines a Go-Go collective & Cathy Camper, Multnomah County Library outreach librarian

Presentation description: Three Word Chant! Literacy, Creativity, and History! Kim Riot, collective member of Grrrl Zines A-Go-Go, will talk about the last 7 years of zine activism through education and outreach. Kim will explore how GZAGG jointly worked together with youth and adults to make zines, not just something people talk about, but something people take away. Cathy Camper will discuss zines going to prison and school! Learn how to use zines to connect with at risk kids, or to reconnect students to their classroom studies. Cathy will talk about what worked, how to network with teachers, and share some zines kids made as well as zine making techniques they loved.

Stuff Cathy brings for zine workshop activities:

- plastic tub for outreach activities
- glue sticks
- pre-folded paper
- examples of zines
- template for one page mini zines
- blunt scissors
- pens
- scotch tape
- newspaper
- clipart
- damaged library books for cutting up (the kids like this!)

Cathy allots at least two hours for the workshop & does an intro to zines that includes some tips on graphic art basics:

- cut & paste techniques
- clipart
- tape lifting technique (using scotch tape to remove/distress portions of an image, can also use the tape with the lifted toner to layer in your zine master)
- reproduction concepts (working on a master that can be duplicated)
- making sure to use dark lines in the master

One girl said “It changed the way I look at magazines.” She wrote a zine about her experience running away from home.

Doing outreach to jails & detention centers- they are more strict on subject matter & imagery, more rules and restrictions. A lot of the kids in detention centers never got a chance to be kids

& play, and the zine workshops provide them with that opportunity.

Kim provided a brief history of the Grrrl Zines a Go-Go collective:

- Started in 2002
- GZAGG focuses on young women to combat the influence of mass media
- They wrote the zines “Let's DIY!” & “Let's DIY 2” about how to do zine workshops
- Wrote Zine Capsule- zine about DIY archiving, preserving zines & why it's important to preserve zines
- Held a Scrap Lounge at an academic event- they projected the GZAGG manifesto on the wall so people could read it
- Have done zine workshops for women learning life skills and discussed how the women could empower themselves through creativity and writing
- Applied for some grants in San Diego in 2006, which forced them to hone in on their position statement- Zines build strong culture in three ways:
  - Literacy
    - Engaging people in reading is only part of the path toward true literacy. It's equally important to engage them in writing. The skill involved in shaping a text, be it story or rant, engages literacy skills on a deeper level through active use. Reading and writing zines makes it clear that the power of literacy skills is tangible and doable.
    - Visual literacy is also practiced in zine-making, as the message of imagery is wrestled with through collage, drawing, and juxtaposing image with text. Zine makers learn how powerful images can be to create an emotional response or to further the power of the written text.
    - Zines are also a path toward cultural literacy. The depth and breadth of our culture is not adequately presented by mainstream media. Zines offer off-the-beaten path images and stories, and commentaries about society, making it clear that people should be creating their culture.
  - Creativity
    - Creating and not just consuming culture, writing, images, and ideas is central to the power of zines. More and more of our activities are mediated and shaped for us, rather than created by us. Making choices is central to developing creative skills. In today's culture it can feel like we have to consciously separate ourselves from the mainstream in order to have real choices, and zine culture provides a community of other do-it-yourself experimenters to make contact with.
    - Zines also provide a place to practice both individual and collaborative creativity. The skills of each are unique, and our culture does not provide adequate forums to really explore either. Collaboration is a skill that is given short shrift in our hierarchical and competitive society. Zines are one way to practice the give and take that collaboration entails, as you work with others to create a collective expression.
  - History

- It's frequently said that history is created by the winner. These days the winner is corporate media, the government, and those with the money to control others. It's essential that the experiences of each person is valued, that the culture they are part of is valued, that the importance of the small stories of life are valued as all being essential to the recording of history. Being a part of shaping history means including zines the archives of libraries, and treating them as valuable resources for future generations who want to learn from the past.

General Workshop Advice from Cathy, Kim, & Laural Winter (Laural does workshops with Cathy for Multnomah County Library):

1. Don't assume that your audience is going to know what a zine is
2. Teens- respect their space
3. Minimum 2 hours & more than one meeting if possible
4. Have examples
5. Have a broad subject or theme ready if the kids don't know what to do (for schools, ask the teachers what the kids are currently learning about before the workshop)
6. Talk about the aesthetic/artwork and show some easy techniques (no big blocks of text!)
7. Provide variety in clip art and imagery
8. Provide examples of how a zine can give kids a voice- give them a sense of community
9. Tell them where they can find zines
10. Tell them about distros
11. Consider including chapbooks and poetry in your workshops
12. "When you're speaking to young adults, you might not realize how many of them that you touch."
13. Be there for the 20% of your audience that this workshop might spark something for
14. Show enthusiasm
15. Don't be afraid to vocalize your stance on things
16. Be personal when you're talking to others- tell them about your experiences
17. Remember: you're laying a foundation

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## **Session 2: From the Ground: Using Zines for Emerging Stories**

Lindsae Sindalu & Allynn Carpenter, Bird's Nest Zine Library in Spokane

Presentation description: Zines are a new concept to many people in the inland, economically depressed city of Spokane. We'll be talking about how we are promoting zine making and reading as a way for people to make their own stories known - whether those stories are relevant to entire communities or to one person's struggle. We will discuss outreach methods, some of the stories that have been shared, and how we plan to affect community awareness and education.

- About Spokane:
  - Largest US city between Seattle & Minneapolis
  - One of the poorest cities in NW- 18% of population is below poverty level
  - High percentage of people with disabilities
  - Only 23% of population have higher education degrees
- About Bird's Nest Zine Library (Lindsae presented this part):
  - 3 months old
  - Library hours- open thursdays & fridays 2-6
  - Anybody can get a library card; requires a name, phone number, and email address (if they have one)
  - Mission statement: "Knowledge is Power"
  - Goals: encouraging people in Spokane to share stories, have self knowledge, and think about themselves within the context of their community
  - Had their first free community zine workshop in July 2010
  - Participated in Story Walk, where participants walked through downtown Spokane and shared stories about local places. A zine was produced for the event, and Bird's Nest has a copy for checkout
  - Don't want to charge fees for anything- want to minimize bureaucracy
  - Want to promote the idea of shared storytelling- verbal, zines, storytelling workshops, story parties
  - Plans to add a zinemaking station
  - Lots of Spokane people don't have good computer skills, don't understand how to do layout, etc; Bird's Nest wants to help people learn these skills through zinemaking workshops
- About Allyn Carpenter, Bird's Nest librarian
  - Author of Kiss Kiss Push Push zine, where she writes about her experiences as a punk anarchist and young mother
  - Allyn has been making zines for as long as she can remember
  - She likes to break down assumptions
  - She pulls content for her zines from a cut & paste personal journal
  - Allyn lived in Portland for a year and got inspired by the zine culture
  - She moved back to Spokane, published her first serious zine and tried to sell it at hip coffee shops, etc; nobody knew what a zine was.
  - This provided her with a goal: to expand and introduce zine culture to Spokane
  - Motivation: giving people in Spokane a voice
  - A zine isn't just any story, it can be your story

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### **Session 3: Freestyle Moderated Discussion**

Emily-Jane Dawson, Multnomah County librarian & member of the MCL zine task force

Presentation description: Emily-Jane will facilitate a discussion about how we handle various aspects of our work -- finding and selecting zines, working within an institution/bureaucracy (for those of us who do!), creating professional development opportunities, recruiting and working with volunteers, practicing and evaluating outreach efforts, and so on. Come prepared with ideas about which topics you'd like to discuss!

Emily-Jane started by soliciting topics for discussion:

- Selecting & adding zines- criteria?
- Money- how can organizations that do have money help those that don't? (the idea of funneling donated zines to places that need them came up)
- Promoting awareness in communities that are not zine-centric
- Volunteers- processes, how to identify good recruits, what are appropriate tasks for volunteers?
- Mutual aid- how can we all support each other?

#### **Promoting awareness in communities that are not zine-centric:**

- Kelly did a zine workshop for a science library, mostly students studying to be doctors, personal zines about health issues are good to read and learn about people's personal health and how they manage their health issues, zines are an accessible tool for sharing health information. Kelly said she'd come up with a list of health related zines for us.
- Make flyers and literature in zine format, more accessible than lofty literature about medical conditions.
- Find people to help you with promotion- spread out the outreach efforts so you aren't the only one that's promoting your collection. Ex: find someone that's a prolific zine-maker and have them talk or give a workshop- they will do a lot of the promotion for you and bring their own audience because they want people to attend their program.
- Partnering with other local organizations- ex: Northern|the Olympia All Ages Project; Rock & Roll Camp for Girls in Murfreesboro, Tn; Bird's Nest had an extravaganza- music, bird themed food, etc.
- Even if you only get ten people attending your events, they might each tell another ten people about the event and the word will slowly spread.

#### **Selecting and Adding Zines:**

Identifying sources for finding zines can vary depending on whether you have money/a budget, or you're a donation driven organization.

- If you have money...

- depends on organizational practices (bureaucracy)
  - might end up buying directly from distros because it's easier that way, but you're not getting those direct connections with the zinesters. You'll miss out on a lot of zines. Ex: buying from Microcosm, lots of zinesters won't sell through Microcosm, so you're missing all of their voices in your collection.
  - If you have to buy from distros, find distros that fit your collection development policies and collection goals
  - Try to buy at zine symposiums if you can
  - Use review resources: Library Journal, Zine World, Best Zine Ever
  - Buy from local stores and make connections with the store proprietors
  - Ask for recommendations from stores and distros that you respect
  - Be prepared to accept donations as well- people really love their libraries and want to share their zines with them, they also aren't driven by profit and their motivation is to have people interact with their zines
  - Let people know it might be a while to get added to the collection- the cataloging takes some time
  - Decide what to accept and reject for the needs of your community- ex: Gun Culture Magazine, the Match (balancing personal feelings & community values about the issue vs librarian ethics)
  - Older zine donations- do they belong in a public library? Jerianne adds some of them because she thinks they are representative of the history of zines. It depends on your library and what you think will be of interest to your community. Some zines have local history value and should maybe be added for that reason.
  - Collect community feedback to share with your administration so that they can better understand zine culture- circ statistics, attendance at programs, when you pay for a zine program have the presenter write a letter about how the money sustained them, gather stories from people who check out zines & attend zine programs. Ex: MCL is focusing on making a difference during the current economy, hearing that the money given to zinesters when they present is essential- some of them are living hand to mouth. Money goes back into the community and is a valid expenditure. Ex: A woman who was 8 months pregnant walked a half hour in the rain to attend a zine event.
- If you don't have money...
    - If you've got a website, make sure you say that you want donations on there
    - Participate in online communities & let them know that you want donations. Ex: We Make Zines
    - Make sure your library is listed on Zine World (in magazine and online), and indicate that you accept donations there. Also, you can place free classifieds in Zine World and indicate that you want donations.
    - Solicit donations through zine librarians listserv on Yahoo- lots of people donate zines on there

- Make a zine for your library to use for trades
- Note: ZAPP wants everything, they don't turn any donations away. Donate to ZAPP!
- Make a selection policy if you intend to reject any donations, you can use it for backup just in case (even if it's just “we reserve the right to decide what we're adding to our collection.”)

## **Volunteers**

- Have your outgoing volunteers train your incoming volunteers- adds some continuity, particularly in community libraries & archives
- Volunteers come and go, if you document things and preserve institutional memory the incoming people can take up the torch and have a sense of the history of the place
- ZAPP- when people leave, the line is broken
- Keep old everything- flyers, meeting agendas, etc.
- Archives often forget to keep an archive about themselves

## **Session 4: Zines and Community Archives/Libraries**

Kelly McElroy, recently minted MLIS, former ZAPP volunteer & Portland Zine Symposium Organizer & Kathryn Higgins- Brown University grad student & former ZAPP volunteer

Presentation description: Community Archives are what they sound like: collections of documents about a community and/or collected by a community. (See <http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/> for more information.) Community archives help a group collect its own documentary heritage and can build awareness of minority groups. Zines often accumulate into this sort of collection. We'll discuss how institutions can support communities with these sorts of collections, using the Zine Archive and Publishing Project as a case study.

- Kelly's experience started with a community archive in LA that collected communist/social justice papers
- Kelly went to school to get her MLS with a focus in archival studies- her teachers had a different definition of archives that was more traditional. Ex: birth records, government type records, etc.
- Kathryn's experience started with ZAPP- Zine Archive & Publishing Project
- ZAPP and Hugo House had different visions and started parting ways
- Most community archive literature & research comes out of the U.K.
- Community archives loosely defined...
  - Created by the community or some motivated individuals instead of one or two people in an institutional setting
  - More free wheeling!
  - Almost always volunteer powered

- Focus on access as opposed to preservation
- Advice for success in community archives...
  - There can be a lack of expertise, so figuring out ways for people to help is important
  - It's important to have standards and guidelines if you're working with the community because everybody is going to have a different opinion about what's important
  - Leave the materials in boxes for as long as it takes to deal with them
  - If there is a lack of volunteers or community interest for a time, keep things organized in storage until someone is inspired and wants to revitalize the project
  - If the archive ceases to be valuable to the community, there's no reason it needs to continue existing
  - Having at least one paid staff member is ideal
  - Institutional memory- write stuff down, and keep an archive of your history! When someone with passion returns to the project, the records will be available to them.
  - There can be value in having a board of directors or some group that helps to share the load, because often one person is motivated on a project and then they burn out, and the success of the archives depends on their ability to pass the fire along (Cathy)
  - The people who have the passion have to be willing to share the knowledge and educate people to help them
  - Important to connect with people that have expertise (ex: professional librarians and archivists) to help with the sustainability of the organization
  - Recognize when to back off- if you're coming from an academic background, you can't apply your expectations to the grassroots organization who might have different expectations