

Promoting Literacy Through Outreach, Cathy Camper & Kim Riot

Cathy has a tub that she brings for outreach programs: glue sticks, clip art, folded paper, tape & dispensers, examples of zines, template(s) for a 1-page zine, pens, newspapers, blunted scissors. Teaches a 2-hour session: quick intro & history of zines, talk about why kids would want to make them; show examples of how to do graphic art (10 minute lesson) – cut & paste with clip art, scotch tape on newspaper (it pulls off the newsprint; you can press it down on other paper to make borders or a collage); talk briefly of reproduction (leaving margins, how color looks photocopied to b&w). Recently restructured focus, offering zine workshops to schools as part of library's emphasis on outreach; focuses on underprivileged or at-risk kids. Skills can include bibliography, computer skills, art/literature connection.

Kim talked about history of Grrl Zines A Go Go, how interest in wanted to educate people – especially re: mass media issues, younger women who are impressionable – led to Let's DIY (zine about how to do a workshop). Applying for grant funding led to formation of mission statement (see GZAGG website). Wanted to make it so people take the ideas from the workshops and go forward with it on their own; this led to the second Let's DIY zine. Said: The internet has opened communication lines (networking) for zines; permanence lies in the physical creation of zines. Now that libraries are collecting zines, we can see how important the physical item is to keep.

Advice for giving workshops – Kim said don't assume your audience will know what a zine is or that it has a community. With teenagers you need to respect their space and socialization, work with them within that context. Don't be afraid to vocalize opinions about things. Cathy said to allow a minimum of 2 hours, maybe plan to continue to the next week or day (even if they continue without you). Sometimes kids don't know what to do; have some examples – personal zine, a topic to focus on, backlist of ideas. Good idea to talk with the teacher in advance – is there something she wants them to focus on? – and give them a theme. Talk about the artwork – how we can make the zine without using a computer, how to make it look interesting rather than just a school paper. Cathy talks about how the library buys zines, the library's speaker series. For kids in prison, it gives them a voice, being able to talk to people outside, the potential to connect. Kim said telling people where they can find zines is important, explain what they can do with their zine when it's done. Cathy said that when you're working with young adults, you may never know the ones you will touch. Even if it looks like no one is reacting or cares, it's still important. Aim for that 20 percent who might be into this idea, for those kids who feel that spark. Give it your all whether the audience responds or not.