

Zines and Community Archives/Libraries, Kelly McElroy (former ZAPP volunteer) & Kathryn Higgins (former ZAPP volunteer)

(some discussion about ZAPP history, etc.)

Kathryn – ZAPP, community archive started by a group of impassioned zinesters. Housed it within another organizations – Hugo House. As both organizations grew, went different directions, eventually came to a head. ... One of important differences between public/academic library and community archive, the way they're born and how they're powered. Generally, collection created by community can be more freewheeling, you can decide what goes in it, how it's organized. As it grows, someone else takes over, can go through many changes. If it remains independent, still volunteer-powered. Even if it gets subsumed by a bigger nonprofit, important for respect, to actively connect with the community. Physical protection of zines isn't as important as access. ... Even if you don't have cultural conflicts – look at Papercut, had 1 month notice they had to move, took a year to find a new space.

Kelly – Lack of expertise, cataloging – people wanted to come and help but no one to teach them. Sometimes issues would come up and we needed more knowledge than we had.

Kathryn – Some people don't understand the need for cataloging. (important to be consistent in cataloging)

Kelsey – How do you sustain? (organization falls apart, people stop using collection, etc.)

Kelly – If you leave them in a box, they can sit until people are ready to use it again. An archive in UK pointed out – if community stops caring about the archive, it doesn't matter to the community anymore, it doesn't have to continue.

Kathryn – ZAPP, never lack of passion. Has a space, pretty consistent, had paid staff member for long time. ... institutional memory, write it down. If you have a group of committed volunteers, come up with a collection policy, get your cataloging standards written down, keep records. So if it does sit in a box for 2 years, when that passion in the community comes back, they don't have to start from scratch.

Cathy – A lot of places start with a core group, driving force, keep all they know in their head. They get burned out and move on. Success depends on ability to pass that information along. Can conflict with radical politics of setting it up; why do we need a board, why do we need to have these rules? So many things can fall apart from exhaustion, because there's not that passing on. Having a board, then it's not all on one person; if you drop the ball it doesn't fall apart.

Kathryn – Something you see a lot, one person who holds all that knowledge in their head, but don't share it with anyone else. That's part of the reason they don't write stuff down, they just do it all themselves. ...

Kelly – Bottom line, what can professionals do to support community archives? Stay connected, know what's going on in your community and be able to support that. Multnomah Library: where to find zines in the community. Offer tangible skills when you can. Recognizing when to back off... grass roots organization is different. If you're not part of the collective, try not to be overbearing.

Kathryn – Community archives serve a different purpose, academic archive's process may be counter to their goals. It's a different experience, gives user different opportunities and ways to connect with the zine community.

Kelly – recent discussion of subject headings on the librarian group lately is good illustration of that.