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Zines are small, self-published, non-commercial works produced by individuals or small groups. Zines are relatively new to public libraries, and not much is known about zine programming practices. This study describes interviews with five public librarians who engage in zine programming with young adults. Based on the data gathered in these interviews, the following guidelines for best practice in zine programming with young adults are recommended: 1. Know your audience. 2. Collaborate. 3. Encourage DIY. 4. Set up a support system. 5. Evaluate. 6. Provide tangible results.

Headings:

Underground literature

Young adults' library services -- Activity projects

Young adults' library services -- Standards

Public libraries -- Zines

Public libraries -- Collection development

BEST PRACTICES FOR ZINE PROGRAMMING WITH YOUNG ADULTS IN THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

by
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Introduction

Do you realize that you saved my life by coming into my classroom with a stack of zines? I don't think any physical realm could illustrate the vibrancy and anticipation that beamed through my body that day...I would love to be a part of the creative process, if possible, discussing what needs to be done about letting people know what zines are, and how they liberate young minds (as well as wiser, more mature minds), working on... not "dealing" with teens, but connecting with them and listening to them (Bartel 110).

The preceding comments from teenage library aide Moey Nelson were directed to Julie Bartel, a zine librarian at The Salt Lake City Public Library. Ms. Nelson's comments only begin to illustrate the amazing potential of connecting young adults to zines. Zines (small, self-published, non-commercial works produced by individuals or small groups) are still relatively new to the public library, and although many young adult librarians are doing zine programs, there is very little professional discussion or research being done on the subject. This study examines current practices among zine librarians in order to develop a model of best practice for zine programming with young adults in the public library.

Literature Review

Although there is very little existing literature on public library zine programming with young adults, there is ample literature on young adult library programming, and a growing body of work addressing zines in the public library. This literature review will begin with a brief introduction to zines, as many people are not familiar with the concept.

This introduction will be followed by a discussion of the relevant literature and the ways in which it supports the uses of zines in public libraries, particularly with young adults.

Definition and History of Zines

The medium of zines is so diverse and inclusive that it is rather difficult to define. Of the existing definitions, no two are in perfect agreement. According to Richard Stoddart and Teresa Kiser, zines are “a written product of the human need for self expression” (192). Colleen Hubbard defines zines simply as “noncommercial, self-published works usually written by one person” (351). Karen Gisonny and Jenna Freedman offer a more elaborate definition based on specific characteristics:

Zines are ‘do-it-yourself’ (DIY) magazines, independently produced and published for love rather than profit. They cover a myriad of topics and come in all different formats, shapes and sizes. Many are photocopied and stapled, while others are professionally printed. Common types include art, compilation, electronic, literary, music, personal and political” (26).

Chip Rowe’s definition gives a bit more insight into zine culture—he describes zines as “cut-and-paste, ‘sorry this is late,’ self-published magazines reproduced at Kinko’s or on the sly at work and distributed through mail order and word of mouth” (xii). Rowe captures the difficulty of zine production and distribution, both facets of zine publishing that one must understand in order to completely grasp the dedication and passion of zinesters (that is, people who create zines).

Self-publishing requires a great deal of ingenuity and motivation. The do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic is crucial to zine creation. DIY is often associated with the punk rock and Riot Grrl subcultures, and it centers around the notion that individuals are responsible for creating the changes they want to see. Julie Bartel, author of the

invaluable zine collection manual *From A to Zine*, describes the zinester-DIY relationship this way:

The predominant attitude these days is, why do it yourself when someone else will do it for you? Why produce content when there is so much already out there to be consumed? Zinesters, on the other hand, are more apt to wonder why someone else should do it for them when they can do it themselves just fine. Why would they choose to consume mainstream, corporate, homogenized content when they and their peers can create something better and more relevant on their own?" (22)

DIY activity, including zine creation, is motivated by love, not profit. Indeed, since zines are usually traded, sold cheaply, or given away, money spent on zine production is generally not recouped.

Clearly, it is difficult to pin down the definition or nature of zines. Because of the ephemeral nature of the medium, zine history is almost as difficult to determine. For instance, many people assume that the term "zine" is simply a shortened form of "magazine." But Seth Friedman, editor of the legendary review zine *Factsheet Five*, points out that "zine" actually derives from "fanzine," a term that originated with science fiction magazines of the 30s and 40s (9). There appears to be consensus that zines as we understand them today originated in the sci-fi fan culture of the 30s and 40s. Historically, growth in zine publishing is often associated with social and political movements such as 1960s counter-culture, 1970s punk music, and second and third wave feminism, specifically the Riot Grrl movement of the 1990s (Friedman; Stoddart and Kiser).

Since those movements, there has been a more recent media revolution: user-generated content on the Internet. Websites and blogs offer individuals the ability to broadcast their personal opinions to a much wider audience than any print publication could ever reach, and to do so with relative ease. E-zines or webzines programs are an

attractive format for many librarians seeking to appeal to young adults, especially given the desirability (and marketability) of web design skills for young people. Webzines and blogs are changing the media landscape, and many zinesters are drawn to them. Of course, some zinesters take pride in *resisting* mainstream media trends. Given this fact, and the prodigious creative drive necessary to produce a print zine, it seems likely that print zines will continue alongside their electronic counterparts for as long as zinesters have something to say.

Zines in Public Libraries

The reasons public libraries collect zines are centered around providing better service, and can be grouped into three main areas: supporting the Library Bill of Rights, providing better service to nonusers and users alike, and preserving an excellent source of local and primary material.

The literature is rife with the assertion that zines help libraries to fulfill Article II of the American Library Association Bill of Rights. Article II states that “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” (ALA). The mandate to “provide materials and information presenting all points of view” is one that zine librarians take very seriously.

Stoddart and Kiser praise zines for providing an alternative perspective from mainstream periodicals, and for embracing individual expression (193). Gissonny and Freedman also praise zines as “a forum for marginalized writers” and “underrepresented points-of-view.” Collecting zines, they claim, is “essential and at the core of

librarianship's mission. We are mandated by the Library Bill of Rights to build diverse collections that represent all points of view and to provide free and open access to those collections" (Gisonny and Freedman 26). Hubbard points out that not only do zines introduce a broad spectrum of viewpoints overlooked by mass-market publications, they do so at a fairly low cost (351). Chris Dodge sums up the situation vividly: "Irreverent, gritty, lively, and a hell of a lot cheaper than overpriced academic journals, zines provide an ideal opportunity to put the Library Bill of Rights into action" (Dodge 29).

But zines are more than just an alternative perspective—they are also an excellent resource for gaining insight into contemporary popular culture. It is impossible for any institution to present a comprehensive picture of a given culture at any point in its history. Yet libraries collect toward this goal nonetheless. "Print zines are one of the most direct links to the viewpoints and artistic endeavors, and therefore the understandings, of individual members of a society. As such, zines are a potent cultural tool and should be considered a worthy addition to libraries" (Stoddart and Kiser 191). The insight that zines can give is extremely valuable as personal communication becomes more digitized and archival primary source material like letters and journals give way to intangible emails and blogs (Gisonny and Freedman). Collecting print zines will ensure that future generations have access to the "unfiltered voice of the common person" from our day and age (Stoddart and Kiser 192).

Zines can be source material not only for scholars of popular culture, but also for local historians. The Baltimore County Public Library lists "high local interest" as one of the reasons they maintain a zine collection (BCPL website). The San Francisco Public Library collects zines with an emphasis on the San Francisco experience, and the Kansas

City Public Library's "Local Zines, Mini-Comics, and Mail Art Collection" is just one of many local history collections held by the library.

Besides providing a primary local history resource, there are other advantages to collecting local zines. Collecting local zines can help libraries and librarians connect with their communities. In this way, zine collections function as an outreach tool to the community in general, and to people who may not normally use the library in particular. Also, involving local zinesters in planning nontraditional programs at the library can enhance the local zine community, as well as the library (Gisonny and Freedman 27).

Bartel also advocates for the nontraditional programming zines can inspire, and the ways in which such programming can open previously uninterested minds to the possibilities of libraries. "Zines," writes Bartel, "can engage truly alienated or disenfranchised groups—including the ever-coveted teen population—in a way nothing else can, because they speak directly to individuals and because their mere presence helps chip away at the conventional image of libraries" (Bartel 36). Drawing in nonusers is also a motivating factor for the Baltimore County Public Library. Their zine collection FAQ page states that "BCPL is always looking at new formats and trying to reach underserved populations," and that zines hold appeal for both users and potential users (BCPL).

The notion that zine collections "chip away at the conventional image" of libraries is worth consideration. The Public Libraries as Partners in Youth Development surveyed a number of young adults about their opinions of libraries. They found, among other things, that teens believe that "libraries are not cool; they are frequented by nerds, dorks, and dweebs" (Walter and Meyers 25). Based on young adult input, Meyers formed a vision of "cool libraries." Cool libraries focus on technology, space, collections, and

youth involvement (qtd. in Jones and Shoemaker 109). Zines could be included under collections and youth involvement, and thus could further the “cool libraries” vision.

So, while there are many reasons to recommend zines to public librarians, there are still many practical issues to be resolved when collecting zines. “Zines present unique challenges due to qualities inherent to the genre itself” write Stoddart and Kiser. They describe issues such as the changeability of zine titles and formats, as well as the inconsistent publication schedule and lack of dates or identifying marks (such as ISSNs), and conclude that “zinesters do not make it easy for the librarian” (194).

Universities, and occasionally public libraries, may receive collections from individuals (Stoddart and Kiser 193). For instance, Mike Gunderloy, the original publisher of *Factsheet Five*, donated his zine collection to the New York State Library, and Sarah Dyer, a comic artist and zinester, donated her collection to the Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture at Duke University. Many collections thrive on donations of individual zines or of large collections of zines. But like any other collection, it is usually necessary to make new purchases to keep a zine collection up-to-date and diverse.

Purchasing zines can present a problem for librarians, as most zines are purchased by simply mailing off a request accompanied by cash, stamps, or a zine for trade. There is no centralized ordering system, no oversight, and no guarantee that the library will actually receive the zine. Wooten observes that sending advance payment in cash through the mail for material that may never be received is not going to work for a library’s acquisition department. In a fast-paced environment where many librarians barely have

enough time for traditional orders, they certainly don't have the time to cultivate relationships with zine editors in order to acquire material (Wooten 9-10).

Many university libraries maintain zine collections as part of their archives, used mainly for in-house scholarly research. In a public library setting, however, the priority is generally to get materials into people's hands. Some public libraries allow their zine collections to circulate, while others keep zines as part of their special collections. One library even keeps the bulk of their zines reference-only, but circulates smaller groups of zines through the teen collections at their various branches.

There are as many approaches to cataloging zines as there are to collecting them. Options include full searchable cataloging, in-house databases, archival finding aids, cataloging at collection rather than item level, or simply eschewing cataloging and placing zines immediately on the shelf (Stoddart and Kiser 194).

Zines and Young Adults

Zines can be especially useful in engaging young adults at the library. Indeed, "public librarians who discount [zines] risk snubbing teenagers and young adults already ill-served by inadequate collections of comic books, punk rock, rap music, and videos" (Dodge 26). Improving the diversity of YA collections is just one way in which zines are ideal for young adults.

Over the years, librarians have taken many approaches toward determining what young adults want, need, and deserve from the public library. One of the prevailing contemporary approaches is to begin by considering outcomes for young adults. Virginia Walter includes this concept in her definition of programs: "Programs begin with a

desired outcome for youth and then develop activities and opportunities to achieve these outcomes” (Walter and Meyers 48).

Direct participation by youth is crucial to thinking about and planning library programs for young adults, since only young adults themselves can tell librarians the outcomes they desire (Walter and Meyers 43). Having teens plan, implement, and participate in programming allows teens to express their desired outcomes, allows librarians to utilize the experience and expertise of young adults, and promotes adolescent-adult cooperation in a way that is unfortunately uncommon in our age-segregated culture (Jones and Shoemaker 2). This section will examine the various ways in which zine programming can help young adults and librarians alike achieved their desired outcomes.

Lists of competencies and service goals for young adult librarians abound in the literature of youth services, and zine programming lends itself to the fulfillment of many of these competencies and goals. Consider, for instance, the ways in which zine programming could be applied to the competencies for librarians serving youth as described by YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association), a division of the American Library Association. These competencies include being able to “document program experience and learning so as to contribute to institutional and professional memory,” to “provide opportunities for young adults to direct their own personal growth and development,” and to “develop programs that create community among young adults, allow for social interaction, and give young adults a sense of belonging and bonding to libraries” (YALSA, 2003).

Jones and Shoemaker give the following summary of common themes of quality young adult service, based on the works of Mary K. Chelton:

1. Provides a transition entry and a buffer into adult reading and collections
2. Responds to school-related demands of YAs.
3. Includes cooperation between schools and libraries.
4. Encourages reading for personal enrichment and independent learning.
5. Models for other staff delivery of service.
6. Allows for YA participation.
7. Reaches out to at-risk or special groups of YAs.
8. Reacts to social and cultural trends.
9. Advocates for free and equal access for YAs.
10. Contributes to the healthy development of YAs (quoted in Jones and Shoemaker 97).

Zine programming could potentially address points 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10. The tenth theme, contributing to the healthy development of young adults, is an integral part of the outcome-based programming. According to Walter, librarians must remove barriers that youth face in meeting their developmental goals, and then provide the opportunities and supports for youth to grow (Walter and Meyers 39).

But what are the developmental goals of teens? Again, the literature abounds with countless lists. Renee Vaillancourt's list of what young adults want and need in their lives is a relevant example:

- Physical activity
- Competence and achievement
- Self-definition
- Creative expression
- Positive social interaction with peers and adults
- Structure and clear limits
- Meaningful participation (Vaillancourt, quoted in Jones and Shoemaker 120).

Obviously, participating in zine creation meets the need for creative expression. But zine programming meets several of the other needs as well.

Meaningful participation. Creating a zine is more than just a creative act—it is also personally and socially empowering. Zines allow young adults to be initiators and producers of their own social agendas and personal representations (Chu 82).

Julie Chu claims that policy and research have framed media as an area in which young people are powerless, at risk of being corrupted, and therefore require the close supervision and control of adults. But, she wonders, “what would this media environment look like if we actually asked youths about their media interests, rather than simply observing and objectifying them as a monolithic group of vulnerable couch potatoes?” (Chu 73). The media environment can be much less daunting and much more empowering for young adults if they are creating and critiquing it, rather than just consuming it. The DIY ethic that is so important to zine culture is also important to supporting meaningful participation for teens.

After all, argues Bartel, teens “just want to be treated like real people, to have their opinions count, their experiences validated. They want to connect with other people. Zines do that by offering teens a venue where anyone can play, sort of an open mike situation where all they have to do is step up and make their voice heard” (Bartel 36).

The contemporary media is full of talk about the so-call Net Generation (young people who have grown up with the internet), and how young people are creating spaces for themselves online through user-generated content like blogs, videos, and online social networks. This sort of online behavior is similar to zine creation in that it views media as “one of the only hopeful environments in an era of increasing public retrenchment of material and moral support for young people” (Chu 73). The amount of content created by young people, whether it is print or digital, indicates young people's strong need for a

place of their own, despite the fact that such public spaces are vanishing from the material environment (Chu 73). Libraries are one of the few remaining material spaces where teens are allowed a place of their own; combining the material space of the library with the social space of zines could be quite alluring and powerful for young adults.

According to Dodge, zines also encourage meaningful participation by allowing teens to exercise not only the freedom to read, but also the freedom to publish. Indeed, zines may appeal to teens because of the way zines epitomize freedom from control (28).

Positive social interaction with peers and adults. A common item on lists of desired youth outcomes is the need for youth to contribute to their community (Walter and Meyers 44). Planning, implementing, and participating in a zine program at the library, especially if the zine produced is locally focused, is a way to contribute to the community, as well as to interact with other teens and adults. This kind of contribution even benefits teens who don't participate, because the teens who *do* participate help inform and improve library services and the community in general (Walter and Meyers 98).

Zines also provide an opportunity for social interaction outside of the physical community. While some people simply enjoy reading something different, the primary audience for zines is other zinesters. Zinesters can find out about other zines through the descriptions in "distro" (short for distributor) catalogs, by reading review zines and websites, or by reviews or recommendations in individual zines. Zine trades are standard practice between zinesters. Friedman writes: "this network of mutual reviews and trades is the lifeblood of the zine community. It's through this network that the unsuspecting

reader might pick up a single innocuous-looking zine and then be exposed to an entire world of bustling activity” (9).

Networking among zinesters and corresponding with readers can expose young adults to people they might never have otherwise encountered, and can help young adults to better understand their own identities through involvement with others. Bartel describes a situation in which she tried to help a distraught mother whose teenage daughter was cutting herself. Therapy hadn't helped, and despite Bartel's efforts, no amount of exposure to books or information changed the daughter's behavior. It wasn't until Bartel gave the daughter some zines dealing with self-injury that the daughter began to help herself. The daughter began corresponding with the zinesters, and essentially formed a support group with them, which gave her the confidence to seek help from both her mother and professionals. Connecting to peers through zines had done what no one and nothing else had managed to do (Bartel 37).

Self-definition. The above story also illustrates how zines can encourage positive self-definition in young adults. The girl in question used zines as a way to turn a negative experience into a sharing experience in which she learned she was not alone. Schilt and Green and Taormino all note that many girls make zines a way of sharing their experiences in order to better understand themselves (Schilt 87; Green and Taormino xi).

Much of the research on zines and identity deal with adolescent girls and freedom of expression that they find only in zines. Zines are an outlet in which they can be open about their lives while still controlling the audience of their zines and how much personal identification they provide for the reader (Schilt 79). Essentially, zines give girls (and

other young people) a tremendous amount of self-sufficiency and control over their own identities.

Zines also provide positive self-definition among other groups, such as gays and lesbians and ethnic minorities, and any intersection thereof. Wooten points out that “minority women who are also queer have more than one obstacle to face if they want to have their voices heard. Their voices are certainly absent from everyday media” (Wooten 27). For groups such as this, whose voices are often suppressed or ignored, the uncensored self-expression of zines, and the emotional support of other zinesters, can be invaluable to positive self-definition.

Competence and achievement. An often overlooked aspect of zines is their contribution in the area of information literacy. Students who may not be motivated to read and write at school may feel differently when it comes to creating their own literature. Zines have been used to teach reading, writing, and even art to students at varying educational levels (see information below on the Parker School Zine Project and Salt Lake City Public Library outreach). For a student who has previously struggled with literacy, creating a zine can produce an enormous sense of achievement. Also, as previously mentioned, creating a zine through the library, or just donating your own zine to the library’s collection, is an empowering act, and it can help young adults feel that they are part of the library in a meaningful way, more than if they were just readers or borrowers (Gisonny and Freedman 29).

Having read the existing bodies of literature about zines in public libraries, and about young adult programming, it becomes clear that there is very little published work that deals directly or in any depth with zine programming with young adults in the public

library. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the current practices of zine librarians doing programming with young adults, and based on that information, proposing guidelines for best practice in zine programming with young adults in the public library.

Methods

Determining best practices in teen zine programming required the collection of complex and in-depth data about current practices. Interviews were the most obvious choice for a data collection method. Powell and Connaway state that the interview is “better at revealing information that is complex or emotionally laden,” and that the personal contact of interviews (as opposed to questionnaires) encourages participants to respond more fully (150). As I was working with open-ended research questions, rather than with a fixed hypothesis to prove, I chose a qualitative interview format that allowed for a more flexible and iterative research process (Babbie 313).

Participant selection. In order to participate in this study, subjects had to be librarians who worked in a public library with a zine collection and who engaged in zine-related programming with young adults. Internet searching and literature review revealed a total of seven public libraries in the United States that maintain official zine collections. These public libraries are in Salt Lake City, Baltimore, Cleveland, New York City, San Francisco, Kansas City (MO), and Portland (OR). Initial contact with each of these institutions was established via email, and these seven contacts yielded five individuals who consented to be interviewed about teen zine programming.

Data gathering. Although a guiding list of questions was prepared (see Figure 1), the interview structure was flexible, allowing me to tailor the questions to each participant's experience, and to pursue fruitful lines of inquiry as they occurred.

Figure 1: Guiding Interview Questions

1. Why do you feel zines are right for your public library?
2. What kind of administrative support do you have for the zine collection and zine programs?
3. What age groups do you do zine programming with?
4. Do you focus on a specific age group when planning zine programs?
5. If so, why?
6. Do you focus on a specific age group when collecting zines?
7. If so, why?
8. Do you have more than one zine program or program series for young adults?
(*Questions 9-16 would be asked about each program.*)
9. Does the program occur completely in one meeting, or is it presented as a series or in multiple sessions, or any other format that involves multiple meetings?
10. What occurs during the program?
11. What is the average group size per program?
12. Do you have a separate budget for the program, or do you fund it from your general programming budget or general funds?
13. If you have a budget, what do you spend it on?
14. Has the program changed over time?
15. Please describe any changes made.
16. Why were the changes made?
17. How do you evaluate your programs?
18. Do you gather any data on your programs (such as exit surveys, attendance statistics, etc.)?
19. If so, do you mind sharing what you have discovered?
20. What aspects of your programs have gotten the most positive responses?
21. What barriers do you encounter in doing zine programming with young adults?
22. How could your zine program be improved?
23. What would enable you to improve your zine programming?
24. Describe your ideal zine program for young adults.

As the participants were geographically disparate, in-person interviews would have been financially prohibitive. Online chat was selected as the interview format because it allows for a similar conversational style to spoken interviews without the extra steps of recording and transcribing. Also, like phone interviews, chat allows the participants to choose the location in which they are interviewed. The Google Gmail chat

client was selected because its interface is simple, its transcripts are easy to save, and it has a clearly stated privacy policy. A Gmail account was established for use by participants, and the password to this account was changed for each interview. This allowed participants to access the chat client without downloading software or divulging personal information in order to create an account.

Data analysis. To protect the privacy of the participants, identifying information was removed from the interview data, and each participant was assigned a pseudonym. The interview data were then coded for emergent themes and unique characteristics, and analyzed using the constant comparative method. The four basic stages of the constant comparative method are:

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category.
2. Integrating categories and their properties.
3. Delimiting the theory.
4. Writing the theory (Glaser and Strauss qtd. in Babbie 390).

This method allows for an inductive approach to establishing a theory, or, in this case, proposing guidelines for best practice. The findings below have been grouped around the proposed guidelines.

Findings

When examining the assembled interview data, one of the most striking aspects is the variety of programs. No two programs are the same, and no two libraries approach them in the same way. For instance, Robin's young adult zine program is a basic introduction to zines and their history and importance, followed by a question and answer session. All the participants receive a packet filled with information about the zine

collection, zine distros, zine review places, plus some basic instructions on how to make a zine; and, of course, everyone gets a free zine (Robin 4).

Laura's young adult zine program involves a similar show-and-tell of materials from the collection, but it is aimed at older young adults. When presenting to college students at a local art school, she shares publishing tips and money-saving tricks, and makes a point of sharing insights about how independently published zines and mini-comics can be a viable and proactive route to the wider world of publishing (Laura 4-5).

The zine workshops hosted by Kate's library, however, are much more hands-on, and they take place in two parts. The first part gives an introduction to zines and gets the participants brainstorming, while the second part involves actually assembling zines. The library has planned a longer, four-part zine workshop featuring a specific theme (Kate 2).

Michelle supervises a hands-on zine program as well, only the young adults in this program meet twice weekly, and the result is an online webzine. Each session begins with some instruction from the two paid teaching assistants, but the teens have creative control of the zine, and they decide what projects to work on, individually or in groups (Michelle 1- 2). These projects include digital photography, creating web pages, conducting interviews, and writing articles.

The young adults at Julia's library also have an ongoing zine project, though theirs is a more traditional print zine. Before changing positions, Julia supervised the Teen Advisory Council (TAC) zine program. The initial planning would occur at regular TAC meetings, but once the creativity started flowing and the content piled up, more meetings would be planned, right up to pulling together last-minute content, pasting the whole thing together, and assembling it once it had been photocopied (Julia 1-2).

Know your audience. Even out of all of these different programs, several common themes became evident. One theme that emerged quite clearly was the necessity of establishing zine collections and young adult zine programs based on the needs and wants of the community. Kate identified the library she works at as “one of the centers of zine culture. Our patrons make and read zines, and we want them to have [zines] to check out of the library, too” (Kate 1). She referenced the library’s zine collection development policy, with its emphasis on local content, as an example of how the zine collection served the community, and how, in turn, the community served the zine collection (by donating their zines). Laura also brought up library policy (specifically the library’s mission and values) while describing why a zine collection is a good fit for her community (Laura 1).

The teen zine program that Michelle supervises is engaged with the community on multiple levels. Not only do the teens in this biweekly webzine program learn the necessary skills for producing a webzine, but also they explore their neighborhood through field trips and learn about their cultural history and heritage. The program’s teaching assistants are bilingual so that they can help new immigrant teens with homework and learning English. The older teens are counseled about college options and assistance. The teen zine program is so enjoyable that many of the young adults in the zine program also join the Teen Advisory Council (Michelle 2). This program is a great example of how a young adult zine program can function as the self-expressive part of a larger mission on the part of the library to promote education, cultural understanding, and community involvement.

Potential problems can arise if the teen zine programs aren't connecting with the young adults in the community. "Make sure you are sounding out your audience constantly," Robin cautions (Robin 8). The collection at her library struggles with a lack of local connections. "We accept all [zines] that come to us and we work really hard to foster ties with the local people who do make zines, but for whatever reason...there just aren't a ton of zines being produced in my area" (Robin 2). She also mentions that it's important to gauge the potentially inflammatory content of zines against the values of the young adults participating in a program; if teens are alienated by zine content they perceive as being offensive, it can be hard to maintain their interest in the program (Robin 8).

Robin is not the only librarian concerned about zine content and young adults. Although Kate reports that she hasn't encountered any major problems with the zine collection or teen zine programs, she also points out that the collection is still new enough that potential challengers aren't aware of it. She adds that "folks who come to the programs are such a self-selecting group that anyone who might have concerns just isn't showing up" (Kate 3).

At Laura's library, there had originally been plans for a teen zine collection, but the plans were canceled for two main reasons: first, because of the lack of zine review sources that speak to age-appropriateness, and second, because when the librarians looked at the zines they already had, they found that the content appealed more to people in their twenties and thirties (Laura 3). Laura acknowledges that young people often like to read about the lives of people who are older than themselves, but "older like 'she's going to prom,' and not so much 'she's paying her mortgage and going to grad school'"

(Laura 4). Instead, the collection and the programs were focused more on people in their twenties and thirties, which, says Laura, does actually attract a few older teens (Laura 4).

Another problem with keeping zine programs connected to the community is a lack of public access to the zine collection. The Teen Advisory Council that Julia worked with was at a library system that had a zine collection, but never did the TAC visit that zine collection. Julia believes that the lack of a large and accessible zine collection is the most significant stumbling block to the teen zine program at her library:

I wanted teens to feel inspired and creative, and I think one of the best ways for teens to know how far their self-expression can go is to see lots of examples of where others have taken the form. [It] seems like at my library anything that is considered ‘ephemera’ gets thrown in an archival box and held under lock and key. For some reason we just could never figure out how to get these zine items circulating. Changing this would have helped. I would have liked the teens to have a circulating zine collection from around the world...to share the teen voice would have been cool (Julia 3).

Collaborate. Clearly, an awareness of the community’s needs and wants is both desirable and necessary for a librarian doing zine programming with young adults. This community awareness is evident in the amount of collaboration that the participants described between libraries and other local institutions. Schools are one of the more obvious sites for collaboration with library youth services, and many zine librarians take advantage of this fact. At Robin’s library, young adult zine programs are held at the library in the summer, but “during the school year we try and take the programs to the schools” (Robin 5). Robin says that the content of the basic zine program doesn’t vary much between teen and adult audiences, or between programs that take place at the library or at a school, though she will bring zines that are tailored to a class assignment if the teacher asks.

For Laura, a local college provides a welcome opportunity to do programs with young adults, albeit older ones (in their late teens and early twenties). Laura believes that talking about zines in schools is important because students need to know how to get from arts education to employment, and freelancing and self-publishing are possible ways of bridging that gap (Laura 4).

Collaboration is certainly not restricted to schools. The teen zine workshops at the library where Kate works are hosted and funded by the library, but are actually facilitated by volunteers from a local art and media resource center. Librarians often attend these programs, introducing them and sometimes participating, but they do not actively teach.

Encourage DIY. Collaborations with community groups like the resource center described above exemplify another common trend described by the participants: involvement of teens and zinesters in facilitating programs. Kate feels that it's important to support the zine community by contracting with them. Not only are the workshops taught by local zinesters, the library also pays zinesters to speak at their events (Kate 2). Robin's library, too, will pay zinesters to do library events (Robin 6). And at the webzine program that Michelle oversees, the teaching assistants and teens work on the projects, while Michelle's main job with the program is to ensure funding so that the program can continue. One of the teaching assistants is a program alumnus, now in college. Michelle does note that hiring young teaching assistants can be hard, as they often decide to move on to other jobs (Michelle 1-2).

The young adults in the TAC at Julia's library took DIY to a new level: they were so invested in their zine that they wrote a grant to get money to support the program. "We helped them," Julia adds, "but a few of them did have to go in and meet

with the grant institution ” (Julia 3). She was impressed by the passion of the young adults and the way they made the zine come together: “It is really hard for me to convey to you how organic the whole zine process could be...really, I could have not shown up and they still would have made a zine; that is how much the teens seemed to like it” (Julia 2). The data suggest that the more control young adults are given over a zine program, the more enthusiasm they’ll exhibit.

Very few of the librarians described encountering disinterest from young adults. Of course, with the exception of classroom programs, teens who attend a zine program have *some* interest in the topic, or else they would not attend. But even perceived failure or disinterest can be a useful experience for a librarian doing programming with young adults. Robin describes a talk she gave to a group of “troubled teens”:

I felt like I was talking to a brick wall. No one was paying attention, no one was interested and I was frustrated. By the end I was sure that I had been a failure, but then about six people stayed behind to talk to me about a particular book or about getting a job at the library and I was just so proud I wanted to cry on the spot. It totally changed my definition of success. It became less about group happiness and way more about focusing on doing something for one or two people and really making differences (Robin 9).

Set up a support system. Making a difference is not always easy, especially without the support of others within the library. The administration at the library where Kate works was very supportive when the librarians made their proposal for a zine collection, and overwhelmingly positive patron response to the collection and programming continues to make the case (Kate 1). Julia describes support from the other YA librarians at her library, including the head of teen services, as well as help from the web services team, who assisted the teens in digitizing their zines (Julia 1). The founder

of the teen webzine program is still associated with the library where Michelle works, and she reports that the staff members are all very supportive (Michelle 1).

The administration at Laura's library is extremely supportive, and supplies the zine librarians not only with the necessary budget, but also with time to attend zine events, and the services of the library's marketing, art, cataloging, collection development and website departments. Laura adds, however, that the zine collection

is a circulating collection, so in order to continue getting support, the collection must exhibit its usefulness. So circulation has to be good, and people have to attend our programs and generally show an interest in the collection, or it will not be sustained. Which is reasonable, but can be tough because this is definitely a collection that appeals to a niche, and is never going to function like best-selling fiction in terms of demand (Laura 2).

Robin, too, worries about waning support from within the library. When the collection began, she says, it was given lots of support and funding. But as time passes, the administration is less excited about exploring possibilities and building a long lasting collection. "It's like the administration thought it was cute at first, but now that the sheen has worn off they are less interested in the tons of work that still needs to be done" (Robin 2). Maintaining staff for the zine collection and zine programs has become difficult. When asked what would enable her to improve zine programming, Robin responded immediately, "More help...I really wish that I had more staff members who were totally enthusiastic about zines and wanted to learn everything there was to learn about them" (Robin 9). It appears that while zine programs appeal to a niche, being a zine librarian appeals to an even smaller niche.

Though the issues and problems encountered by the librarians interviewed were plentiful and various, lack of funding was not one of them. In fact, both Robin and Laura mentioned the relative cheapness and ease of zine programs (Robin 5; Laura 5). A basic

zine program costs very little except for photocopies and staff time. Laura adds that with zine-making workshop programs, the library actually benefits because they get free zines and comics for the collection, as well as the participation of individuals from the program in future library zine events (Laura 5). Even the TAC that wrote a grant to continue their zine was already funded by the YA services budget (Julia 1).

Michelle was the only librarian who described any complications with funding, and this issue probably has to do with the fact that the teen zine program at her library is both high-tech and frequent (they meet twice weekly). The webzine program got started with funds from a grant, and it is currently sponsored by the library Friends group, to whom Michelle must submit a yearly proposal and evaluation (Michelle 1-2).

Evaluate. The evaluation Michelle performs is supplied by the Friends group and was, by far, the most specific and consistent evaluation process described by any of the librarians interviewed. Evaluation methods and attitudes seem to vary just as widely as program content. Some librarians see evaluation as necessary, useful, and routine, while others simply don't have the time to evaluate programs in addition to their other duties.

At Kate's library, they evaluate all their programs, including the young adult zine programs, based mainly on attendance and participant feedback (Kate 3). Laura's library evaluates using the same factors, though they occasionally employ a survey or patron feedback cards (Laura 7). But for Julia, direct participant feedback is the only way she can be sure of young adults' feelings about the program because the library doesn't perform any evaluation (Julia 3). Robin doesn't do any official evaluation either. "The help has always been so minimal [that] the reward for me doing something like that has been non-existent," she says.

I think I would do more of that if the culture at my library was different. The administration are so clearly not interested in anything but the most basic info—the number of people who show up, I think, is the only question I am ever asked....really I could be teaching everyone about satanic arts and unless one of the attendees complained, no one above me would know (Robin 7).

The purpose of evaluation, beyond justifying a program's continued existence, is to hear from program participants about what is working and what isn't, and to implement changes accordingly. Michelle has noticed that, as web workshops become more popular, attendance has dropped for the teen webzine program. To attract more young adults, some changes have been made to the program—specifically, more field trips have been added, because teens can use digital photos from these trips to make their own web pages in the zine (Michelle 2). Another new addition to the webzine is a blog, though Michelle admits it still needs work. Having a webzine means that the zine is accessible to a much greater number of people than a print zine would be, so the program facilitators must be watchful of the content posted by the teens. “We have to be very careful of the copyright issue,” says Michelle (3).

Copyright concerns were part of what inspired Julia to vary the content of the Teen Advisory Council zine program. She wanted to bring some new knowledge and inspiration to the group, so she invited someone from the library publicity department to give a talk about copyright basics and creativity without image theft. Another change to the program seemed to happen on its own: as time passed, the zine became more structured, with themed issues and regular features. The teens seemed just as happy with the structured process as they had with the unstructured process (Julia 2).

Robin reports changes more in attitude than in content. She says that when the collection was new, the programs were bigger and showier, so that the collection would

gain recognition and validation. But now that the collection is established, the programs have become smaller, more direct, and sustainable (Robin 6).

Certain aspects of the various programs are unlikely to change, as they provoke the most positive responses from young adults. Both Robin and Laura report that young adults respond strongly to the ideology of zines. According to Robin,

teens understand immediately that this gives them a voice. Seeing that light go off in their head is AWESOME. Once they understand that it is something they can do themselves, that they can be in control of all the content and the producing of the zine, it's like a whole new world opened up to them. They suddenly understand there are avenues of personal power out there that don't involve going through an adult and I love that. Hands down, that is the best part of zine programming to teens (Robin 8).

And while young adults enjoy the zine show-and-tell at Laura's library, they are also impressed by "the idea that this cool thing was actually at the public library, and that the librarian knows about DIY culture, and that the system cares to include creative, unusual materials hoping to appeal to them specifically" (Laura 6).

Provide tangible results. On the other hand, the young adults in the teen webzine program at Michelle's library are most excited when they're actually working on the zine, especially when they've got a new project or are learning new computer software (Michelle 3). And Julia says that after distributing their zine at school, the members of the TAC felt especially satisfied with the response to their tangible accomplishment: "They told me that they felt like stars at their high school," says Julia (3).

Inspiring such positive outcomes seems to be at the root of all the librarians' goals and ideals for young adult zine programming. Julia believes that a loosely-structured creative environment, with teen-selected music in the background, would be a good start toward inspiring teen zine ingenuity. She imagines something akin to a drug-free version

of Andy Warhol's factory, silver couches and all (Julia 4). Michelle envisions a program run by the teens themselves, and both Julia and Kate mention creative control on the part of young adults (Michelle 3; Julia 4; Kate 5). Kate's ideal program "would involve the library providing space and materials and only as much background and how-to as the teens wanted to know....the best thing [librarians] can do is create an environment that fosters creativity and get out of the way" (Kate 5).

But librarians, or some sort of staff, are still necessary for zine programs to truly be effective. Michelle suggests only one person to supervise the program; likewise, Julia suggests having one consistent teen librarian as a mentor to the young adults in the program. Robin would opt for a larger staff, as well a crew of volunteers: "And then when I get burned out there would be eight people to take my place and do a better job than I was doing" (Robin 10; Julia 4; Michelle 3).

Guests, especially zinesters, were also a part of the ideal programs described by librarians. Julia would invite guest artists and speakers to keep the program vital and interesting, and Robin would like to have zinesters teach the teens about all subjects pertinent to zines, from photocopying to comics to running a review zine. "By the end of the seminar the teens would have the coolest freaking zines ever, and they would know and understand exactly what to do with the finished product" (Robin 10).

Simply having a finished product was an important part of an excellent program for Laura. "I'd love to do a workshop so people could leave having started something tangible...and with the feeling that they can DO something." She hopes that this sort of activity will help to associate creativity and discovery with the library in people's minds (Laura 7).

Finally, both Julia and Robin would like their ideal programs to encourage interaction with teens and zinesters beyond those in the immediate community. Julia would like to add pen pal or stamp art element to her teen zine program in order to increase interaction with teens in other parts of the country and in other circumstances (Julia 4). Robin even imagines the library providing post office boxes to young adults, so that they could more safely and easily trade their zines with other zinesters (Robin 10). These ideal programs express not only the hopes of the various librarians, but also their service goals and priorities in the practice of zine programming with young adults.

Proposed Guidelines for Best Practice

The librarians interviewed in this study are only a small sample of the librarians who engage in zine programming with young adults. Librarians at public libraries without zine collections still do zine programs, as do school media specialists and academic librarians. The findings of this study are by no means generalizable, and the following guidelines are not rules but suggestions. Based on the data collected in this study, I propose the following guidelines for best practice in zine programming with young adults in the public library.

Know your audience. Start with a desired outcome for the young adults in the community, and make sure that the zine program is aligned with the needs and wants of those young adults. This is a good guideline for any program, but with a medium like zines, where the content can be quite extreme, it is crucial.

Collaborate. Support zinesters by contracting with them, spread the word by taking your programs to the schools, and work with local groups to encourage the zine

community in your area. This includes incorporating guest speakers and teachers in zine programs.

Encourage DIY. Zine programming is about giving young adults an opportunity to express and empower themselves. Librarians are there to provide the opportunity and then to stand aside and let teens do it themselves.

Set up a support system. Promoting and facilitating unusual programming takes unflagging enthusiasm. Librarians doing zine programming need the support of the library administration, and at least a few knowledgeable and understanding staff members.

Evaluate. Zines are still relatively new to libraries, and zine programming remains a largely uncharted field. The more information that is gathered about young adult zine programs, the better librarians can understand them, and the better the programs can become.

Provide tangible results. Whether it's creating a zine or handing them out for free, young adults should be able to enjoy the connection that reading zines offers, or experience the satisfaction of seeing themselves in print.

Of course, these guidelines are just a beginning. There are many unexplored areas of teen zine programming to investigate before any truly comprehensive guidelines can be established. For instance, we need to have a better understanding of the changing media environment. Even though print zine culture remains vital, webzines may have more appeal to the blogging, social networking teens of today. These new mediums for youthful resistance merit the attention of librarians doing zine programming with young adults.

Also, as a genre, zines are notorious for their disregard of copyright. This is mainly due to the anonymity of zinesters and the relatively small distribution of most zines. However, in a digital world where online zines are widely accessible and copyright laws are daily becoming more complicated, it is important to teach teens about copyright and intellectual property within the creative realm as well as the academic.

There is also cultural bias to consider. Chu reports that there is a predominance of “white boyz” within zine culture, and suggests that to truly engage *all* youth through media, avenues such as youth-produced music, video poetry, and graffiti art ought to be explored (83).

And of course, to really understand zine programming with young adults, it would be necessary to directly study the experiences and attitudes of the young adults themselves. If the goal of teen zine programming is to give young adults a voice, then the continued success of teen zine programming lies in listening to and fostering that voice.

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