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Zines Straight From the Stacks: Self-published Tracts From Library Workers

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ZINES FROM THE STACKS: SELF-PUBLISHED TRACTS FROM LADY LIBRARY WORKERS

by Alycia Sellie

Librarians interested in alternative publications have been getting together in the past few years to help each other create, organize, and manage collections of the ephemeral and unique materials known as zines. Designed in some ways to completely defy all of the rules imposed by librarians, catalogers, or organizational systems of any kind, zines can be challenging to collect in libraries. However, zine librarians are joining together to share their experiences and to provide more resources to those who want to read and preserve these self-published materials.

Julie Bartel recently released an excellent and instructional book that has been helpful to many a librarian (*From A to Zine: Building a Winning Zine Collection in Your Library*, published by the American Library Association), and Jenna Freedman began an email list a few years ago that only seems to grow with time (*zinibrarians*, at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/zinibrarians/>). A group of librarians have been talking about writing a book together on “zinebrarianship,” and members of the *zinibrarians* email list are putting together a website to collate resources and tips about all the details of getting zines into libraries of all varieties (<http://zinibrarians.info/>).

Besides the apparently increasing interest in zines and alternative press among library workers and library students, the number of women involved with zines both during the day in their libraries and after work at their own kitchen tables or local copy centers is increasing as well. Often these are women who are preserving zines as well as expressing themselves through them. In many of these zines made by library workers, there is rejection or even ridicule of the stuffy female librarian stereotype, and the women showcase themselves as critically thinking creators and consumers of media and art.

Below are a few reviews of current zines made by women who work in libraries (as professional librarians or otherwise). I discovered these titles through the process of starting the Library Workers Zine Collection, a collection of zines made by, for, and about people who work in libraries, at the School of Library and Information Studies Library at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. If you are a zinester

who works in a library and you write a zine about it, I would love to add your zine to our collection!

Similarly, if you are a librarian interested in starting a zine collection, please join Jenna’s list or get in touch! In my own experience, I have found members of the zine community to be extremely helpful and supportive, and zine librarians are no exception! They are almost always willing to share their knowledge and provide lots of information and support. Enjoy, and be sure to let these lady librarians know how much you liked their work when you are through reading (because the Number One love of a zinester is regular, old-fashioned mail!)

E-Zine: *Winter Solstice 2005*

Zine-Zine: *March 2005*

Biblio-Zine: *no.1 (January 2005), no.2 (January 2006)*

Elaine Harger explores both her personal life and her life as a high-school librarian in these three titles. *E-Zine* in this case does not refer to the common term “electronic zine,” but one can assume it refers to Elaine, as it is her personal zine that discusses the past year of her life and is addressed to family and friends. The *Winter Solstice 2005* edition’s cover announces the coming of Elaine’s fiftieth birthday (hurray for her!), and inside she highlights cherished happenings from the past year, books she enjoyed, and other anecdotes. This issue also includes a piece called “some b.s. that happened at school,” in which Elaine describes a battle with her high school’s principal over whether the book *On Bullshit*, a bestseller by Harry G. Frankfurt, was appropriate for the school’s library. She also gives a brief update on the progressive librarian work she has been up to with the American Library Association and other committees. As a whole, *E-Zine* is honest and peaceful, a charming look into Elaine’s life.

Elaine produced both *Zine-Zine* and *Biblio-Zine* for the high school where she works in Washington State. *Zine-Zine* was created for a local series of zine-making workshops that Elaine held at her library on topics including papermaking, zine binding, brainstorming, and the history of the medium. Photos show students from a number of schools engaging in the various stages of production. *Biblio-*

Zine is dedicated to the school's library, and in the first issue, students review their favorite reference books in the library's collection, from *The New Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock and Roll* to *The Washington Driver Guide*. Issue 2, also written mostly by students, includes "A Day in the Life of a ... High School Library Aide," the results of a few student surveys about the library, book reviews written by students, and photos of reviewers working in the library. Both *Biblio-Zine* and *Zine-Zine* are great examples of how to use zines in school libraries.

Elaine does not mass-produce or sell her zines. Readers in Madison, Wisconsin, may be able to borrow them from (or view them at) the University of Wisconsin's SLIS (School of Library and Information Studies) Library; elsewhere, try Interlibrary Loan.

Lower East Side Librarian Winter Solstice Shout Out:
latest issue (2005)

It's really a pleasure to read Jenna Freedman's zine. Jenna seems to be one of the busiest ladies in librarianship, with everything from zine activism and her collection at Barnard College (read all about it at <http://www.barnard.columbia.edu/library/zines/>) to her work with Radical Reference (<http://www.radicalreference.info>) and her role as an advocate for higher salaries and the status of women in librarianship. *LESLWSSO* is an annual zine covering the events of the past year of Jenna's life and her reactions to them. It also includes a large reading list — with reviews — that is a great read in itself. Each zine has some diary-style entries, as well as larger pieces (e.g., "Am I Your Jewish Friend?"), thoughts on such topics as anarchism and marriage, and random gripes as well as some amusing bits ("tattoos I am considering: one less kid, DNR and ronod nagro" — "organ donor" backwards). Jenna's zine is not to be missed if you'd like an honest, friendly view into the life of an intelligent, involved, and inspirational young librarian who is looking for both reality and change in a strange world.

Jenna Freedman, 521 E. 5th St., Apt.1D, New York, NY 10009; email: leslzine@gmail.com. Price: \$2.00–3.00 per issue or "library zine trade."

I Dreamed I Was Assertive: *no.6 (Summer 2004), no.7 (Winter/Spring 2005)*

"Sometimes I think it would be better to just be one of those adults who looks and acts and most importantly, feels the part. But I'm not, and I think it's safe to say that I never will be. This is me, a ball of contradictions — in the day

taking clomid to get pregnant and at night attempting to skateboard in a supermarket parking lot."

Celia has been making zines for awhile now (since the days of *Sassy* magazine), and *I Dreamed I Was Assertive* is a mish-mash of her daily life and travels, hopes for the future, and reactions to Chicago and life around her. From her personal life and attempts to have a baby ("I wanted to address this topic in my zine because...I have yet to read anything in a zine about someone who is struggling with infertility. Maybe it's taboo to write about this topic in the zine world because it isn't subverting the patriarchy or it's a sign of how society continues to dictate the women's roles, or because many people think it's irresponsible to bring a child into an already overcrowded world that is falling to pieces. I don't know, I'm not viewing this as a social-political issue, I'm just going with my heart"), to music appreciation via mix tapes, postal love, and interviews with fellow librarians (Jenna Freedman in #7), *IDIWA* is a sweet and varied little zine. Celia also includes a reading list filled with reviews, and one of the neatest things is that each of the issues I have (Numbers 6 and 7) have a tiny vellum pocket in the back filled with "Haiku Tributes to the Things I Loathe and Love." There's also a wish list at the back of each issue. Issue 6 longs for "more zines by Latinas and Latinos — where are you?!" The tricky thing about Celia's zines is that she makes them in a big run and "when they're gone, they're gone." So you might want to try distros (distributors) or other sources for back issues of these zines (and also keep an eye out for Celia's *Skate Tough You Little Girls*, a zine all about ladies' skateboarding!) Email: perezeeb@yahoo.com. Try these distros: My My Distro, <http://mymygirlswirl.net>; C/S Distro, <http://www.csdistro.com>; Sew True Distro, <http://sewtrue.org>. Price: \$2.00–3.00 per issue.

Ponyboy: *no date or numbering information*

"What follows is a sincere attempt to make coherent something quite small that felt so big as it was happening."

Told here is an "illustrated version" of events that happened when Torie was 21 ("indulge me. I was so young"), in which the new "sheriff" in town finds love with a "long-legged, apple-eating pony" that runs from her. It's about heartbreak and yet it doesn't take itself too seriously in hindsight. Torie's drawings are simple and great, and the text is short and good (so tempting to quote it all here!). Torie is in library school, and her zine does not have oh-so-much to do with libraries, but it is a great little read. Torie, P.O. Box 110467, Brooklyn, NY 11211. Price: \$1.00 per issue.

Durga: Winter 2006

Tracy explains here both her personal and political lives, as well as how her past is affecting her future. In “Eugene,” she writes about the activist landscape of Oregon, how she enjoys her home, but how she is frustrated by some of the more petty confusion within the local anarchist community. Other pieces are about her past, her sister’s struggle with MS and drug abuse, her relationship with her father, and her decision to remain “child-free” amid the pressures of being a married woman.

Durga’s latest issue marks changes for Tracy; she has begun library school, which is a struggle for her after a “tough time dealing with classism as an undergraduate,” and her cat (the namesake of her zine) has passed away. From a discussion of the Iraq war to mention of her own vulnerabilities with depression, Tracy is an open and refreshing writer who leaves you ready for the next issue of *Durga*.

Durga, P.O. Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405; email: durgazine@hotmail.com. Price: \$1.50 per issue or trade.

You Must Have Me Confused with Someone Who Cares: no. 1.38 (May 2005); and “The Practicum Issue,” no. 2.39.1 (December 2005)

I’m a high school teacher in a relatively large, progressive Midwestern city. My school is an alternative program in the public school system, and we are funded (uuuhhh, fiscally strangled) like all other public schools. Our students choose to come to our school because they just can’t make it work in the factory-like large high schools in the city. They need more attention, more direction, stronger creative curriculum, greater respect from staff and students and usually a more leftist (truthful) political outlook.

So begins *You Must Have Me Confused with Someone Who Cares*, a zine that takes a brief look into one woman’s life as a teacher in an alternative school. In *YMHM-CWSWC*, “School Librarian” talks a bit about her experiences teaching students at this high school about zines and the history of the underground press, but the majority of the zine is her own reaction to the state of her school and what she wishes for herself and her students. In “The

Practicum Issue,” School Librarian talks about her work in a required practicum program at her library school, which forces her to step outside of what she is comfortable with (high school students) and work in two schools where admittedly “it took a bit of mind-shifting to accept that I didn’t know it all.” All in all, within this work our School Librarian is able to see children as more than “loud, disorganized, illogical germ factories” and to grow more comfortable and appreciative of the librarians around her for the challenges they face in this environment of cutbacks and increased difficulties in public schools. The zine is well-written and enjoyable throughout. School Librarian is definitely someone to chat with if you are thinking of bringing the alternative press into your school.

Email: schoolzinibrarian@yahoo.com. Price: \$1.00 per issue; FREE to school libraries.

Sugar Needle: nos. 25 and 26

Sugar Needle is perhaps one of the most charming and fun zines put out by librarians. Subtitled “The zine all about weird candy and sugary products,” *Sugar Needle* discovers and reviews strange candy from throughout the world, from “gummy teeth” to absinthe-flavored breath mints. Also included are interviews (Jean Thompson, head CEO of Seattle Chocolates, in Issue 26, and Clint Johns, zine buyer for Tower Records, in Issue 25) and other delights. *Sugar Needle* is sweet; it comes in an unusual tall and slim format with great scans of candy packaging and hand-colored graphics; and it will probably give you the urge to pick up a toothbrush when you’re through reading.

Two addresses: “Up”: P.O. Box 330152, Minneapolis, MN 55408. “Down”: 1174-2 Briarcliff Rd., Atlanta, GA 30306. Price: \$1.00 + one stamp per issue, or “selective trades for zines or cool candy.”

[Alycia Sellie graduated from library school at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in May 2006. For the past two years, she has organized the Madison Zine Fest (<http://www.madisonzinefest.org>), a gathering of local and national zine creators that takes place in collaboration with the annual Wisconsin Book Festival. When she is not reading zines, watching trashy horror movies, or riding her bike, you may find her at the Wisconsin Historical Society, where she enjoys working in the Newspapers and Periodicals Department.]