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Anne Hays

ABSTRACT

Zine collections are becoming an increasingly popular addition to public and academic library holdings. Although academics have made strong arguments for the value of zines' inclusion as part of our cultural heritage, current research does not focus on zine authors' perspectives. How do the zine writers themselves feel about having their work—which is often highly personal—collected, shared, and sometimes circulated in the public and academic library sphere? This study will report the findings of a survey designed to uncover zine authors' attitudes about having their works collected, shared, and circulated—in academic libraries, public libraries, and institutionally affiliated archival collections across the United States.

Zine collections in public and academic libraries are a growing phenomenon. A quick search for the keyword “zines OR zine” in the database Library and Information Science Source reveals that librarians have published 33 academic articles about zines between 2013 and 2015. At least 113 public and academic libraries across the United States currently have zine collections, and this count does not include unaffiliated local zine archives.¹ Academics and historians have made strong arguments for the value of including zines as part of our cultural heritage, but current research does not focus on zine authors' perspectives. How do the zine writers themselves feel about having their work collected and shared (sometimes circulated) in the public and academic library sphere? This study will report the findings of a survey designed to uncover zine authors' attitudes about having their works collected, shared, and circulated—in academic libraries, public libraries, and institutionally affiliated archival collections across the United States.

1. This statistic was generated by counting the number of public and academic libraries in the United States that have zine collections on Barnard Library's “Zine Libraries” list (<http://zines.barnard.edu/zine-libraries>).

Definitions and Zine Library History

Although zines defy definitive categorization, certain elements set zines apart from other printed publications. Zines tend to be handmade paper publications with small print runs, are sold at or slightly above cost, and are intentionally nonprofessional. Authors write, edit, and publish the material themselves, which makes the material unique and personal to the author. This also means zines are complicated ephemeral materials for library collections—their authors are often hard to track down, issues come out irregularly, they often contain no bibliographic information, and they come in various paper sizes. Almost nothing about zines makes them easy for librarians to codify, yet dedicated zine collections are on the rise in libraries and archives across the United States.

When tracing the history of zine making, most zine historians credit science fiction fans of the 1930s with creating the first zines. Punk fanzines of the 1970s and riot grrrl fanzines of the 1990s instituted the DIY and countercultural associations that inform modern zine culture. Zine scholar Chris Dodge wrote in 1995 that “academic and research librarians must foresee that this era’s zines will one day be important historical sources. Future researchers will rely on materials like zines for evidence of cultural dissent and innovation in the late twentieth century” (26). Indeed, it was around this time that the first zine collections entered the library (San Francisco Public Library in 1991, New York Public Library in the late 1990s, Duke University in 2000, San Diego University in 2002, Barnard College in 2003, Colorado College in 2005), and collection creation has continued into the present decade (Brooklyn College, CUNY, in 2012; Texas A&M in 2012; University of Maryland in 2014). When considering this intersection between zines and the libraries that carry them, it is important to consider that although zine library collections began in the late 1990s, decades of zine production preexisted these collections. Zine authors whose works are being collected in libraries today are likely to be still alive and, perhaps more relevantly, are likely to have created their zines at a time when zine libraries were not common. Libraries who collect works by donation could be collecting zines from authors who did not conceive of libraries as possible landing places for their work, yet relatively little is known about zine authors’ attitudes, or even their awareness, about these collections. The ramifications of zine production in light of institutionalized zine collections will prove central to this study, which seeks to identify zine authors’ attitudes about their works being collected in institutions that may not have been the intended destinations or audiences of the works when written.

The Case for Collecting

So many articles were written about the worthiness of zines in library collections that a 2014 article was able to review the arguments made against the number of collections in North American academic libraries over the previous 20 years, “with the purpose to renew the call” (Tkach and Hank 2014, 14) for zine collections. Early articles advocate for appealing to nontra-

ditional library patrons, chronicling untold or undocumented histories (Hubbard 2005), providing alternative points of view, embracing individual expression, and holding up a mirror to pop culture (Stoddart and Kiser 2004). Julie Bartel (2005), author of *From A to Zine: Building a Winning Zine Collection in Your Library*, mentions the “hyper-democratic, ultra creative, highly inclusive conversation that you’ll not find elsewhere” (33) as a compelling reason to collect zines. She also makes an argument for attracting alienated and marginalized patrons, noting that the most alienated Americans tend to be “feminists, environmentalists, survivalists, fundamentalists, anarchists, libertarians, monastics, socialists—any of the ists or ians, really—racial minorities, gays and lesbians, homeschoolers, the poor, the homeless” (35) and teenagers; the very people who zines might appeal to the most. Zines contain accounts of personal histories one may not find elsewhere; an oft-cited example is the “riot grrrl” movement of the 1990s, whose participants used zines as a medium for self-expression and political movement building (Marcus 2010). New York University’s Fales Riot Grrrl Collection includes riot grrrl zines alongside letters, show fliers, and other ephemera that document this important cultural history. David Tkach and Caroline Hank (2014) follow this historical value-based argument to its natural modern conclusion: “To see the contemporary parallel of this situation in terms of the necessity of collecting, one merely has to think of the Occupy Wall Street movement . . . and the large number of zines produced by participants of that movement” (13).

Retaining unique documentation of cultural history is, for me, the most compelling argument for collecting. In an interview, Emily-Jane Dawson, zine librarian at Multnomah County Library, comments that “a lot of zines have either subject material that is difficult to find in other resources or they have an unusual perspective that is difficult to find” (Morgan and Dawson 2010, 21) and cites as an example a zine about James Chasse, “who was arrested and beaten and later died” and whose zine “has people’s memories, his friends’ stories, and those are very hard to get when you are doing research without a personal relationship” (22). Instruction, too, is a strong reason to collect zines in libraries. Kelly Wooten (2012), librarian at the Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture, describes using personal zines about gender by transgender authors as an excellent learning tool for students in gender studies classes, noting that “few of the students in this class had previously encountered materials of this nature or individuals who identified as transgendered” (11). Despite the numerous zine library mission statements speaking to inclusion and diversifying our collective cultural history (e.g., those of Barnard, Bingham Women’s Center, and ABC No Rio), some marginalized groups are still underrepresented. Specialized zine collections outside traditional institutions such as the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) and the POC Zine Project aim to fill the gaps in mainstream zine collections by collecting, respectively, queer zines and zines by people of color. Doing so is in keeping with ALA’s (2004) “Core Values”: “We value our nation’s diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve.” Zine collections help fulfill that mission.

The Stakes

Although much discussion and research has gone into the value of zine collections in libraries and archives, relatively little research has focused on zine creators and how those creators respond to having their works collected. Zines are not like monographs or serials (the two most commonly collected materials in libraries) in terms of the expectations their authors have for posterity. Authors of books traditionally published through major publishing houses can reasonably expect to see their works collected in libraries; the same is true of magazine, newspaper, and journal authors. A typical publishing contract includes dissemination through bookstores, subscriptions, digital repositories and databases, and sales to libraries. Zine authors, who create limited print runs and distribute through discrete methods (by hand or by post), had—until fairly recently—no reason to think about libraries as future homes for their zines when they created them. The stakes for zines in libraries are myriad and include personal privacy, a shift in intended audience from local to global, a possible merging of professional and zine-writing selves if the records appear online, and even the hampering of a type of freedom that the zine format allows: the freedom of discovering oneself through producing subsequent issues over time. Library collections make possible an entirely different set of outcomes for zines: potentially global public access, scholarly use, and classroom use, to name a few. As Jenna Brager and Jami Sailor (2012) write in an essay for the book *Make Your Own History*, “Like a whispered secret, the truths that zines contain may be ephemeral. They shift and change from issue to issue, like the identities, situations and addresses of their creators. The danger in archiving individual zines is that it cements a particular whisper. And the danger of publishing a book about zines is that you are projecting that whisper, far beyond its original and perhaps intended audience” (47). And although some zine writers do use Creative Commons licenses, the ways in which their works are used are not formally protected by the more concrete structure of professionally published writing, whose creators have access to assistance by literary agents, publishing houses, written contracts, and helpful associations such as the Author’s Guild. When one considers the range of aspects of zine writing that potentially change when moving from a localized cultural expression exchanged within a community to the open possibilities that institutionally held collections permit zine readers, it is only ethical to consider zine authors’ rights when collecting zines in libraries. As crucial as it is for libraries to collect works by marginalized voices, it is also crucial for librarians to consider how to protect marginalized subjects. It’s a catch-22 of zine archiving that zine librarians are aware of and are doing considerable work to address.

Indeed, the loudest advocates for zines as uniquely personal materials worthy of special care and consideration come from zine librarians, many of whom are current or former zine makers themselves. These seemingly disparate worlds—scholars, librarians, zine creators, and zine readers—are, in fact, closely interrelated and overlapping groups. In *Ephemeral Material*, Alana Kumbier (2014) explicitly references the interconnections between zine writers, zine

academics, zine librarians, and zine readers: “I’m aware that I’m one of these librarians with a zine-making history (and present, and future), and that I’m a scholar who’s taking up the zine and asking it to do certain work for me” (210). She pushes the point further by referencing another book, *Make Your Own History*, in which QZAP zine archivist Milo Miller, Barnard zine librarian Jenna Freedman, zine scholar Alison Piepmeier, zine creators (and critical theorists) Jenna Brager and Jami Sailor, and Kumbier herself all contribute pieces. Kumbier concludes, “Queer and feminist zine archivists, creators, scholars, and readers seem open to connection and mutual support, it seems” (210).

In addition to the fact that key stakeholders’ identities often overlap, numerous active zine creators today lead double lives—working as teachers or librarians or in office jobs under their given names and writing personal zines or running zine distros under truncated names or pseudonyms. This, too, leads to ethical issues regarding digital bibliographic records. “Perzine” (“personal zine”) content can cover wide terrain, but it is not uncommon to read detailed analysis of trigger topics: abuse, eating disorders, self-harm, depression, recovery from trauma, or alcoholism. Zine creators also frequently describe the creative freedom they feel to challenge difficult personal topics in their zines because of the format, context, and community that zine culture affords. For instance, Nyxia Grey (2015), author of the zine *Everything.Is.Fine*, comments: “There are not many spaces in this world where I can take up space and exist as I am without judgment or criticism. There are not many opportunities to create something without it being graded or shunned or expected to be perfect. Zines and collages for me are spaces that I own. Spaces that I can carve out that allow me to use my voice as loudly, passionately, and as frequently as I want/need/desire to” (13).

This sense of zines as a safe space where writers may write about trigger topics without worrying about who will read them is one of the biggest factors encouraging zine librarians to think carefully about digitization efforts. Kelly Wooten (2009), zine archivist at Bingham Women’s Center and one of the editors of *Make Your Own History*, engages the ethical debate around digitizing print zines in her blog post, “Why We’re Not Digitizing Zines.” She includes a particularly strong argument about privacy: the zines in the collection at Duke are “most often written by young women who never imagined that their deepest secrets and angsty rants would be archived in a research library. One could argue that other digital projects that post diaries and letters of historical significance also violate this right to privacy, but the now-adult women who created these zines are likely to be living, active Internet users whose personal and professional lives could be negatively (or positively) affected by someone else finding their zine online.” In an interview in *Fifth Estate* with Kathleen Hanna, Don LaCoss (2011) asked about her donation to the Fales Riot Grrrl Archive and whether it troubles her that the archive means limited access to her works. She replied that “because of the Internet, it really has to be like this because if it was opened up to everyone, people would just use digital cameras and put stuff on the internet which to me is kind of gross.” Hanna’s appreciation for limited

access speaks to the merit of print-only academic archives, but her fears about an erosion of privacy speak to the vulnerable and sensitive nature of the materials zine libraries become responsible for protecting.

A group of prominent zine librarians who produce the ZineLibraries.Info blog recently produced the *Zine Librarians Code of Ethics*, which makes the ethical stakes of zine collection clear: "As librarians and archivists, we have a responsibility to respect the professional and ethical traditions of reasonable and equitable access to materials. As cultural advocates who strive to positively and respectfully engage with the creative communities we document, we also have a responsibility to consider personal and private concerns of zine creators" (Berthoud et al. 2015, 8). The code addresses ways to handle complexities that invariably come up when handling zines in libraries, including issues of access, permission requests, copyright, method of acquisition, and cataloging. Because bibliographic records are the only aspect of a print zine collection accessible through the internet, the ways in which librarians deal with points of access become highly sensitive. As the code notes, "Librarians and archivists should consider that making zines discoverable on the Web or in local catalogs and databases could have impacts on creators—anything from mild embarrassment to the divulging of dangerous personal information" (16). To this end, in addition to the code of ethics, the zine librarians who run ZineLibraries.Info (n.d.) are working on a zine union catalog that, according to the website, aspires to "create a shared library catalog for zines from libraries with disparate metadata schemas and controlled (or not-so-controlled) vocabularies."

Given these ethical concerns, it is also worth noting evidence that zine writers hope to disseminate their messages widely and could enjoy knowing their works are being taken seriously in libraries and treated with care. Zine scholars tend to note the frequency of radical copyleft statements and a radical DIY ethos in zines as evidence that zine-making ideology shares much in common with ALA's (2004) Core Values, which state that "all information resources that are provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users." However, postulating about what zine authors might think or feel is less useful than directly asking them. This survey aims to fill a gap in formal research that will directly assist zine librarians in the very policy conversation that the *Zine Librarians Code of Ethics* thoughtfully initiates.

Methodology

As an investigation into the variety of standard library policies that could affect zine authors' comfort with their zines being included in library collections, this study aims to address issues identified from the literature review: issues of access (circulation policy, type of library, and proximity of location), research and instruction use, cataloging and online bibliographic metadata, privacy and anonymity (real names), and permissions and digitization.

Design and Administration

The research design consisted of an online survey created and administered from December 2015 through August 2016. The survey was completely anonymous and adhered to online confidentiality protocols to protect research participants and to prevent the disclosure of personal information. The survey design was approved by College of Staten Island's institutional review board in December 2015. The survey was then distributed through online and in-person channels likely to reach zine makers, including We Make Zines, an online social media community for zine writers; on a zine writers electronic mailing list; on Facebook pages dedicated to zine writing; and through the Twitter platform. It was distributed in person at several zine festivals, including the NYC Feminist Zine Fest and Chicago Zine Fest. Participants had to be older than 18 and had to self-identify as zine writers (determined through a question about age and a question about how many zines the respondent wrote). Although the focus of this study is US libraries, participants did not need to identify as living in the United States; libraries collect zines from writers who reside around the world. The survey generated 150 responses during its implementation.

Instruments and Measures

The questions targeted specific areas of zine librarianship to determine how zine authors felt about several factors of public and academic library collections. These factors were determined based on practices most common to academic and public library collections: circulation, access, cataloging, and online metadata. In addition, the survey included questions that address concerns zine creators are likely to raise based on the literature review: anonymity, digitization, research and instructional use, and permissions for acquisition. I excluded questions that would pertain to noninstitutional zine archives because these collections do not necessarily adhere to professional best practices defined by the American Library Association, which is the primary scope of this study. The final question of the survey is an open-ended comment section designed to allow participants to speak freely about any issue the survey brought up but did not resolve. Of the 150 respondents, 58 wrote a comment (39%). To quantify the content of these comments, I created a coding system that matches that of the survey questions, as described earlier. Therefore, the comments will be addressed in the findings alongside the data in an effort to include a nuanced interpretation of the data.

Limitations

This research design has three important limitations associated with sample size, selection issues, and lack of a comparison or control group.

Sample Size

This survey can be considered a convenience study; I restricted my sample to 150 participants and located participants where they are most visible and active. The size of the sample cannot

be truly representative of the zine population as a whole (indeed, there is no known count of how many writers are creating zines), which means the data may be useful only for descriptive and suggestive analyses.

Selection Issues

Because I located my participants through active zine writing channels, I cannot be certain I located zine writers from past decades who do not currently produce zines. Because of time and budget constraints, this study was not able to unearth former zine writers whose works may represent more vulnerable or marginalized voices and whose ethical concerns this study cannot fully address. Additional research needs to be done to fill this gap.

Lack of Control or Comparison Group

Because this is the first known published study about zine writers' attitudes about library collections, this survey is necessarily broad. The questions address all zine writers of all zine topics, and the study does not attempt to compare particular zine writers' experiences with any others.

Findings

Zine Authors Prefer Increased Access to Zine Collections

As evident in figure 1, the zine authors surveyed indicate a general preference for increased access, both in terms of circulation and the ability of the general public to access the collec-

Figure 1. Question 6, sections a, b, c, d, i, and j

tion. Participants slightly prefer circulating collections (55%) over noncirculating collections (35%), with the rest remaining neutral. However, results indicate a strong preference (83%) for publicly accessible collections in public libraries as opposed to academic libraries, which tend to be closed to the public (or accessible by appointment only). Participants did not tend to care where the collection was located (in their neighborhood versus far away); I anticipated zine authors might feel increased comfort when the collection was far from home, where they would have increased anonymity, but participants were largely neutral (68%) about location, which is perhaps unsurprising, given their strong preferences for access, discoverability, and use. These issues did not generate much discussion in the comments section; participants mentioned circulation and access seven times combined (12%) and proximity zero times.

General preference also leans toward comfort with professors and researchers using zines in lessons and in research (see fig. 2). Many respondents (89%) were neutral or preferred knowing that professors may use their zines as part of their lesson plans, and 90% of respondents were neutral or preferred knowing that researchers would use their zines as part of their research. Participants mentioned research and instruction issues in the comments section seven times (12%). These data are more positive than one might expect, given the often countercultural nature of zine production, but according to this survey, respondents prefer open collections available to the public and, if their work were housed in academic collections, show a general positivity toward research and instruction, which can be considered an extension of increased discovery by students and readers.

Figure 2. Question 6, sections m and n

Zine Authors Prefer Increased Visibility and Access in Cataloging and Online Bibliographic Metadata

Likewise, zine authors strongly prefer bibliographic records to be available online and not restricted to on-site searching. As is illustrated in figure 3, 95% of respondents were neutral or preferred their zines' bibliographic data to appear in an online library catalog, and to corroborate this finding, 93% were neutral or would be against their zines' bibliographic data being excluded from an online catalog. Again, this preference can be read as positivity toward access through discoverability. If zine records can be located online, this implies that more zine readers can find the existence of the zine before visiting the library and can perhaps intentionally seek it out. In terms of what the metadata reveal about the zine's content, surveyed zine authors were again positive about the library OPAC's inclusion of subject terms describing the topics addressed in the zine (98% neutral, comfortable, or excited) and about the inclusion of an online abstract (95% neutral, comfortable, or excited).

Although these results show a high level of comfort with online bibliographic metadata, it must be reported that 17% of the open-ended comments discussed this topic at further length. These comments reveal complexities and subtleties in opinion that the multiple-choice ques-

Figure 3. Question 6, sections k and l; question 7, sections a, c, and d

tions cannot quite address, especially regarding how online OPACs can affect privacy and anonymity. Catalogers do not, in general, reach out to the authors of the works they catalog to find out how they feel about the attendant subject terms, but considering the community nature of zines, zine librarians might take into account the added complexity of formalizing such personal works when applying authorized bibliographic terms. Those who were upset about online bibliographic data were most often upset about privacy issues. One upset respondent said, "I think before cataloging zine librarians should seek permission from the author. One of my zines has been publicly catalogued and I wrote it a long time ago. Since then I do not feel comfortable having my full name attached to it and emailed to request they change it but they refused to do so. It was really upsetting because the zine is my work and I am the author, and I felt like I had lost control over it." Another upset respondent commented:

I recently found out that zines I did 20 years ago were included in a searchable (via Google) library catalog with my full given name and location and detailed description of the contents of my extremely personal zine. I was super upset and not AT ALL into the invasion of my privacy this [information] provided to anyone who knew my given name/town of origin and wanted to Google. I would have preferred a choice in whether my zine was added to the library & at the very least I expected my full given name and location to be obscured in some manner.

Keep in mind that comments regarding online metadata came from only 17% of those who commented, or only 7% of the 150 participants overall. The survey data indicate that most respondents actively prefer having their zines' information in online library catalogs. However, these two comments indicate the severity of the stakes for those zine authors who strive to maintain personal privacy over how their vulnerable zine content is accessed, discovered, and shared.

Discomfort about Online Discovery with Real Names, Personal Information, and Pseudonyms

As figure 3 makes clear, although most of the cataloging questions reveal a preference for increased discoverability, there was one exception: nearly one third (29%) of participants strongly prefer that their real names not be included in the online catalog, which would make it harder for the general public to find zines when doing a Google search. Of the open-ended comments, this topic generated the most discussion, with 17 comments (29%). Many of these comments, like those above, addressed how easy it is to be found online. One respondent commented, "I just like using my pseudonym as I am too easy to Google using my real name." Another respondent added, "One of my zine's bibliographic info was put into Google Books without my knowledge or permission. I believe it is because it is in a zine library. The biggest issue I have

with this is that it uses my full name and personal email. It [the zine] was never intended to be documented on the internet publicly.”

However, considering that 30% of respondents reported writing under a pseudonym, it is possible that these respondents understood the question, “Rate your comfort level if the online bibliographic record of your zine’s inclusion uses your full ‘real’ name,” to mean, “How would you feel if the librarian included your real name despite your use of a pseudonym in the zine?” To account for this discrepancy (and this survey’s admitted limitation) with regard to real names and pen names, I ran the data against one of the independent variables, “Do you write your zine under a pseudonym?” with survey data for those who write their zines using their original, given names. Of those respondents (see fig. 4), 93% said that they felt neutral, comfortable, or excited to have their real names included in the online catalog, and 7% were uncomfortable or upset. Conversely, of those who write zines under pseudonyms, 68% responded that they would be uncomfortable or upset if their real names appeared in the online catalog. Therefore, most of those (but not all) who found it upsetting to see their full legal names appear in an OPAC are those who write under pseudonyms.

These results carry weight for any cataloger attempting to create consistent Library of Congress authorized terms for zine authors (Name Authority File for Authors), which enable users to find multiple titles written by the same person.² Zine authors change series titles often and sometimes publish different zine titles under different names. Diligent catalogers might reasonably hope to connect these records for users and researchers. Why might an author desire a barrier to increased discovery? To help clarify this point, one respondent commented, “I write under a pen name, but it’s not hard for folks to connect my real name to my zine name. I’m fairly transparent about my zine making but I would be upset about a zine library using my full name without my permission.” This clarification speaks to the complicated reality that many pseudonymous zine authors use barely concealed quasi-pen names. As another respondent commented, “As for the question about using my ‘real’ name in a record, I noted ‘upset’ because while I publish under my real first name, I do not use my last name in my zines & would not want my entire name listed in the record. Hope this clarification helps!” As natural as the idea of leaving an author’s last name out of a record may sound to a zine author, that same concept may sound surprising to catalogers. It is also worth noting that a zine librarian may have no idea how close the author’s pen name is to his or her real name, even though the author may seem to express complete comfort with the published name among the zine community. These issues are complex and, as is detailed in the aforementioned *Zine Librarians Code of Ethics*, require delicate handling from librarians.

One commenter spoke to the fact that some zinesters use real names and pseudonyms on different zines, creating additional complications, especially for diligent catalogers. “I wrote

2. For more details about the Library of Congress Name Authority File, see “Library of Congress Names” on the Library of Congress website (<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names>).

Figure 4. “Rate your comfort level if the online bibliographic record of your zine’s inclusion uses your full ‘real’ name” cross-referenced with those who write under pseudonyms.

my very first zines before the WWW became widely used, & I included my full (unusual) legal name. I feel differently about those being included in collections compared to later zines that don’t use my full names, but I still think it’s important to gain permission if possible.” This participant goes on to introduce another interesting point of discussion for future research:

It’d also be nice if zine libraries could somehow stress a code of conduct for people using the collection—I’ve had someone write an academic article (in an online journal!) about my zines, using my full legal name (which was not used in the zines in question, which means she got it from an envelope I sent her years ago) without telling me. I only found out by vanity Googling. Given that these zines included me talking about family abuse (which the article mentions), it was doubly horrifying that she used my full legal name (which, again, wasn’t used in the zine), presumably because she felt some kind of academic pressure to have “real” subjects with “real” names.

This last point is well made and is especially suitable advice for academic libraries. However, creating a set of ethical guidelines for academic use is beyond the purview of this article and is recommended for future research.

Zine Authors Express Discomfort Regarding Permissions and Digitization

Given most respondents' clear preference for publicly accessible collections, one might find it surprising that zine authors greatly prefer that their zines exist in physical print form only, not online, and also prefer that librarians request permission first before including their zines in the collection. Of these participants, 61% prefer print-only collections, and 55% find it not preferable or extremely not preferable to have their zines digitized for download (see fig. 5). However, in a second question about digitization preferences, 66% said they would be upset or uncomfortable to discover their zines available for download online, but 71% said they would be comfortable or excited to be asked permission to have their zines available for download. The discrepancy between those two numbers resides in the issue of permission; zinesters are more likely to be comfortable with digitization efforts if the librarian requests permission first (see fig. 6).

Zine authors also greatly prefer that zine librarians request permission first before including their print zines in any collection—81% prefer it, and 60% would be upset if they discovered their print zines in a physical library (see fig. 7). In the comments section of this study, 15 comments (26%) discussed issues related to permissions, and 11 comments (19%) addressed digitizing zines. Some of the permissions comments overlapped with comments about digitization; some participants would not want their zines digitized in any circumstance, but others simply would not want it done without prior permission. For example, one respondent com-

Figure 5. Question 6, sections e and f

Figure 6. Question 8

mented, “It is not ok to reproduce my intellectual property without permission, scanning zines w/ out permission would be very inappropriate.” Zine authors seem to actively want their works accessible to the public, but with the expectations that zine librarians will inform them of their zine’s inclusion first and that librarians will not digitize the zines (at least not without permission). As one respondent clarified, “I would only say no [to collection in a zine library] if I was required to give permission for the zine to be scanned for a digital archive. I would grant permission for physical copies to be placed in any zine library, however.”

A few respondents brought up the issue of payment regarding digital content (an issue this survey did not address) where the increased access would cut into both sales and control of content or readership for zine authors: “Regarding digitization—I would ALWAYS want to be asked first. Uploading a digital copy of my zine without permission would feel disrespectful, as they are distributing my work without my permission and may result in less people buying my zines, if they can just get them for free via an online link. This is different to being able to check a paper copy out of a library, as anyone can receive a link to download a digital copy, whereas in-person visits are going to be less frequent/accessible.” This point will be familiar to all acquisitions librarians who work with digital book licensing and vendors who limit downloads or dramatically increase pricing when the library makes an e-book accessible to the public.

Another participant comment speaks to the issue of maintaining control of the publication: “If I had a digital version already and it was free (or pay what you want including nothing), I would rather be contacted for the digital version” as opposed to allowing the librarian to scan a copy.³ And finally, another comment reveals a nuanced approach to respect of zine cul-

3. Stephen Duncombe’s (2008) *Notes from Underground* and Chris Atton’s (2002) *Alternative Media* both describe aspects of zine culture that would compel this participant to suggest the zine could be “pay what you want including

Figure 7. Question 6, sections g and h

ture and zine creators as legitimate authors: “I think if the library wanted to digitize the zine, they should 1. Pay for that privilege—the artist/author is no different from any professionally published author—they worked hard to create the zine & deserve compensation and 2. MUST ask for written permission from the artist/author first.” In this respect, at least one zine author’s concerns align with those of book authors who balked over the Google Books Project (and ongoing lawsuit) of 2005 and beyond. Zine librarians considering digital collections might do well to heed these concerns about digitization.

Bottom Line: Positivity from the Zine Community

The final question of this survey asked zine authors whether they would always or never grant permission for their zines’ inclusion in public and academic libraries while taking into consideration all of the factors in the rest of the survey. It is striking that, despite the handful of critical zine-author participants who included thought-provoking comments, no participants said they would never want their zines included, and 59% said they would always want their

nothing.” For more information on how zine authors often hope to maintain control of their own production standards, see Alison Piepmeier’s (2009) *Girl Zines* and Sara Marcus’s (2010) *Girls to the Front*.

Figure 8. Questions 9 and 10

zines included, as is illustrated in figure 8. This conclusion is extremely positive for librarians who hope to either continue or start zine collections.

Conclusions

This study reveals that zine authors favor access over privacy, which is excellent news for zine librarians who might be concerned that their collections contribute to an erosion of privacy. The zine authors in this study tended to be comfortable with teachers using zines in class and academics using zines for research. The bottom line revealed very positive findings for zine librarians: no participants said they would never want their zines included in a library, given the factors under consideration. The fact that 59% of respondents said they would always want their zines included regardless of the above-mentioned factors is likewise positive about zine library collections and practices.

However, zine librarians might heed zine authors' significant preference for their works to remain in print only and not to be digitized without explicit permission. This study is especially relevant to archives with existing digitization projects or mandates from their institutions; it is also crucial news for existing online zine archives. This study reveals that, ethically speaking, zine authors prefer that institutions request permission before digitizing zines. In addition, the fact that zine authors greatly prefer that the library request permission before carrying the zine might be a disruptive revelation to many zine librarians. Librarians do not, in general, expect to gain permission before carrying books, but this study reveals that

zine content strikes an especially vulnerable and private chord with zine authors. Additional research would need to be done to reveal exactly why zine authors feel this way about permissions, but the comments in this study provide some hints. But when considering the fact that this study did not ask whether participants write personal zines (perzines), 81% preferring permission requests is truly high.

The fact that participants in this survey prefer their zines to openly circulate to the general public opens room, however, for zine librarians in academic libraries to consider ways to increase access to their zine collections. Alternatively, academic libraries might consider additional ways to engage the public in the form of presentations, instruction, embedded librarianship, outreach to professors, and public events using the zine collection. Public libraries with zine collections might consider any existing barriers to their zine collections that their locations, prominence, marketing efforts, or invitations to the public to engage with the collections present. Finally, as one participant eloquently stated (using a series of symbols meant to represent hearts), “<3<3 zine libraries <3<3.”

Limitations to Conclusions

Because this is the first widely distributed survey conducted on zine authors' attitudes about library collections, the questions included are necessarily broad. Future research may benefit from further specificity. Namely, a study focusing only on perzine authors whose works are most likely to be sensitive could yield different levels of comfort with highly accessible collections. As one respondent commented, “Mine is not a perzine. I’m the editor of a lit zine . . . so it was easy to answer yes to most everything because it’s not my content.” Another participant said, “These answers apply to my perzine; with my zines of d.i.y. & craft I have no hesitations in any field.” And yet another respondent put it especially well: “My answers would really depend on the zine. For example, is it a personal zine I wrote before digitization was really a thing and didn’t expect many people to read? Or a how-to zine that I made in the last year and want as many people to read as possible? Context is important.” The results of this research make it clear that future surveys addressing specific types of zines would further clarify these results. Likewise, a study that focuses only on zine authors who do not write under pseudonyms could be helpful—writing under pen names could clearly shift the results toward openness. Finally, because the survey was completely anonymous, it was impossible to ask any respondent for follow-up questions. The open response section revealed most of the subtlety and complexity needed to get at the gray areas that zines naturally have in their relationship to institutional collections. A qualitative interview-oriented study might truly allow the participants to express in greater specificity their comfort with zine libraries. Further research is recommended to cover these acknowledged gaps in this study.

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