

Pinko Vs Punk: a Generational Comparison of Alternative Press Publications and Zines  
by Jenna Freedman

### **Introduction**

In her article about the Salt Lake City Public Library zine collection proto zine librarian Julie Bartel quotes Chip Rowe's definition of zines as "cut-and-paste, 'sorry this is late'" publications (Bartel 232). That's also a good description of this essay. I'm putting it together in a last-minute deadline conscious frenzy, having read over a hundred articles. Therefore, I'd like to begin with disclaimers and explanations.

I wouldn't be a good iconoclast if I didn't take a moment to say that even though I'm contributing to a book about Generation X, I'm not crazy about the whole generations discussion. Tom Eland put it well in an email; "I consider the entire construct of 'generations' bankrupt. To lump people into categories of every 10 to 20 years regardless of class, race, gender, religion, political ideology, and geography and then extrapolate a common set of values and viewpoints is nonsensical." (Eland) Most of the conversation about "Baby Boomers" and members of "Generation X" is primarily about middle and upper class white people, and men more than women. Only when other groups are specifically referenced, can we assume the topic to include them. But such is much of recorded history, right? I just had to acknowledge it. As you'll see in my conclusion, I also think age has a lot more to do with behavior than generation. Even so, I have gamely attempted to make generalizations about people from the Baby Boom and Generation X.

There is a lot I would like to cover but have deemed out of scope in the interest of time and space. I'm not going to get into the specifics of establishing and maintaining a zine collection. I've written other articles on that; look 'em up. Inevitably in a discussion about zines, someone wants to compare them with blogs and "e-zines" [*quotes derisive*]. While examining the online underground is a worthy topic, that's just not what this paper is about. Once libraries start doing a better job of collecting that material and documenting their process, perhaps that article can be written.

What I will attempt to do in this essay is to compare zines, which were spawned from and are still rooted in anarcho-punk movements with their antecedents: the underground, alternative and independent presses, and little magazines, using alternative press most often as a catch-all

descriptor. The various alternative presses have characteristics more closely resembling communist and socialist principles and practice. In their 90s heyday zines were almost exclusively created by people born in this book's designation of Generation X, 1961-1981. Now there are Millennials in our midst (some of them are like, almost 30 now!) along with the occasional Baby Boomer (I can recall reading only two zines by members of the Baby Boom Generation: *The Visible Woman* and *The Ken Chronicles*).

Although the focus of this essay is on traditional academic and public libraries, I want give a nod to the many non-MLS librarians who have founded and maintained alternative press and zine collections. Among those who have lead and continue to lead the way are the English department at Temple University that called for the founding of the Contemporary Culture Collection there (Case 4), the English professor and the small press publisher who pushed for the zine collection at DePaul University (Chepesiuk 70), the Minneapolis psychiatrist whose experimental literature holdings launched the Little Magazine Collection supported by the English faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Kelley 154), Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research founder Emil Freed and the students and faculty members who supported the collection (Cooper 48), Joseph and Sophie Labadie, whose collected ephemera formed the basis for the Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan and the local anarchist Agnes Inglis who was its first curator (Cornell 12), the non-librarian librarians who guided the Rand/Tamiment collection until trained librarian Louise Heinze took over in 1948 (Danky 159), zine librarians at institutions like the Queer Zine Archive Project, the Independent Publishing Resource Center in Portland, OR; the ABC No Rio Zine Library, and the Zine Archive and Publishing Project in Seattle, the editors of the zine review zine *Factsheet 5*, and finally to the hardworking, multigenerational indexers at the Alternative Press Center who have been putting out the *Alternative Press Index* since 1969. I know that is a lot of name-dropping, but really, it's not enough. I hope in the future to write an article about these capable and inspired finders and keepers of public knowledge and picker-uppers of balls dropped or never even seen by degreed librarians.

## **The Alternative Press**

Most of this essay will be about zines and zine librarianship, but I want to provide some background on today's underground print culture's forerunners. Let's look at what exactly the

alternative press was in its days as the underground press. In "The Underground Press in America: 1955-1970" Donna Lloyd Ellis recounts Columbia professor Thomas Pepper's assertion that the papers had a local focus: providing event listings and artistic and political commentary, supported by ads, which made them not so different content-wise from suburban newspapers. (Ellis 121) The newspapers' viewpoints and perhaps which cultural and political events they addressed may have been widely divergent from those expressed in mainstream publications, but essentially they were just filling a void left by the corporate media. Talking of both national and local underground press titles, librarian John Van Hook said at a lecture at the Civic Media Center in Gainesville, FL, "So there had to be a *Rolling Stone*, there had to be a *Village Voice*, an *East Village Other*, because *The New York Times* had no idea what was going on. They weren't ignoring it, they were just ignorant of it – and nobody wanted to wait around until they caught up." (Van Hook) He went on to comment that there was a generational component, "...it felt like people who were twenty were communicating with people who were twenty all over the country for the first time." (Van Hook)

Presuming these twentysomething consumers of the 1960s underground press were hippies, it's important to note that while some of them were just in it for the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, others were deeply committed to effecting social change. Patricia Case gives examples of a newspaper handed out at the 1972 Republican National Convention, a publication by the George Jackson Brigade, and the Eat the Rich Collective's cookbook as some of the radical material in the Contemporary Culture Collection. (Case 4) She goes on to contend that the commercial press waited for the underground publications to cover new or potentially controversial topics first, and that they did so from entirely different viewpoints. "In 1982 [the alternative press] surveyed the state of the economy by looking towards the poor, women, and the middle class while the commercial press watched Wall Street. ... The Union of Concerned Scientists were documenting the sloppy inspection practices at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and accidents and safety defects at nuclear power facilities before the near-meltdown in Harrisburg when the commercial media discovered the question of safety of nuclear power." (Case 4)

Based on Ellis's rundown of underground press titles and their editors, and on the "Woman Question" chapter of *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s*, (Klatch 158-185) I contend that the movement was dominated by men (*The Village Voice*, *The Realist*, *The Los Angeles Free Press*, *The Berkeley Barb*, etc.), which would be in keeping with how business was done by 1960s and 70s Baby Boomer activists before women's liberation movement began to educate

them. (Alpert 10) I also observe that true to the communalist ethos of the era, some underground press titles were edited by one person backed up by staff writers and editors, but others had editorial collectives. (Ellis 103)

## Zines

Zines, in contrast, tend to be the work of one person, though there are some exceptions such as collective projects like *Grrrrls of Gotham* published by the NYC chapter of Riot Grrrl or edited anthologies called compilation zines, like Mimi Nguyen's *Evolution of a Race Riot*.

Most definitions of zines include one or more of the following descriptors: self-published, small print run, motivated by a desire to participate in or contribute to a community rather than for fame or profit, on activist or counter culture topics, and created in the do-it-yourself (DIY) tradition. The genre terms I use at Barnard, in addition to compilation or comp zine are art zine, DIY zine, fanzine, literary or lit zine, mamazine, minicomics, and perhaps most importantly personal or perzine. As 1970s and 80s punk fanzines morphed into what we now call zines, they became less subject oriented and more personal, or autonomous, documenting the writer's daily life along with political and social analysis, anarchist-style.

For those who think of punks and imagine only black-clad smashers of chain store windows and spiky-headed hardcore matinee moshers,<sup>1</sup> consider this definition of punk that better describes zine publishers' perspectives: "Being punk is a way of critiquing privileges and challenging social hierarchies. Contemporary punks are generally inspired by anarchism, which they understand to be a way of life in favor of egalitarianism and against sexism, racism, and corporate domination." (Clark 19)

Though characterized by an activist spirit and the desire for social change, punk zines embody the "personal is political" philosophy. While I'm spouting worn slogans, let me also say that for zinesters (a word to describe zine publishers that no one likes but that is widely used) the medium

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<sup>1</sup> I ran a LexisNexis search on <punk! AND anarchis!> to identify media portrayal and reporting of anarcho-punks. Of the subjects assigned to ten or more articles, other than those pertaining to music, or with broad headings such as "Humanities & Social Science," the remaining categories were Crime, Law Enforcement & Corrections (13); Criminal Offenses (10), and Government Bodies & Offices (10). The search returned merely three articles assigned to the subject Civic & Social Organizations, but there were also three results for Substance Abuse.

is the message. Zinesters choose to self-publish because they want total control of their work and don't want or need a commercial publisher's approval. "The act of creating a work without any financial motivation (any zine-maker will testify to the fact that 'zines are a great big hole into which you throw your money'), from materials that are cheap, commonplace, and often illicitly come by (many zine-makers are experts at scamming photocopies from big box stores), is a de facto critique of a materialist consumer culture, and also a rail against a taste culture that tends to esteem high production value. Further, zine-making, with its absence of editors, critics, and concerns for marketability assumes as implicit the idea that every voice has value, and factors such as money, status, and even talent are not limiting to the ability to create a zine." (Levanthal 3) The notorious riot grrrl media blackout, where young feminist punks refused to talk to a press that insisted on ignoring, misinterpreting, and fetishizing the movement also speaks to zinesters' disdain for the corporate media. (Rothenberg 826)

Some of the articles I read place zines in a continuum with the underground and alternative press, but others liken them to pamphlet culture from colonial America and 1930s science fiction fandom. (Bartel 232) Though many zines are serial in nature—published continuously, but irregularly under the same name and with numbered issues—they don't address the same topics from issue to issue the way a typical corporate or even underground magazine might. In the still-developing cataloging practice, many zine librarians (myself included) choose to catalog one-off and distinctly titled serial issues as monographs. Others (e.g. Salt Lake City Public Library) catalog all of their zines that way. (Bartel 237)

### **Zines in Libraries**

In public libraries, zines are often targeted to a teen audience. (Bartel 232) (Hubbard 351) (Thompson 1-10) and heavily programmed with readings and make your own zine workshops. "Zines can help you attract and serve an underserved population—namely teens and adults in their 20s and 30s—particularly those interested in alternative culture or who many feel that the library has nothing to offer them. ... Teenagers are attracted to zines because they feel they can relate to the authors, because the writing is on their level, on their terms. They feel marginalized. In zines, they find a reflection of their own voice, their own feelings and perceptions. (Thompson 2-3) Zine librarian Travis Fristoe's experience as a punk teen bears out Thompson's assertion. "Around the time I discovered punk (which I thought was just music and fashion), a friend showed me a zine he

had done. We were 15, and I was incredulous that someone I considered a peer had created such a thing. Never mind that all he did was photocopy some pages at the local copy shop—the important thing was that a new world seemed possible, and within our grasp." (Hoyer)

Public librarians do outreach to schools and to youth detention facilities. (Winter) Even as an academic librarian I host high school classes, giving them an overview of zines, giving them a chance to handle the materials for themselves to form their own idea of what zines are about. Some public libraries circulate their zines, and others don't. Some don't bother to catalog them. To be fair, cataloging zines is a struggle. There are rarely records to copy, and zine metadata is notoriously scant and inconsistent. The challenge is no excuse, mind you. Just because zines tend to cost only a dollar, doesn't mean they're not valuable. They are primary sources on the culture of groups otherwise underdocumented and underrepresented on library shelves. Typically, teenagers only appear in the stacks as fictional characters or case studies—rarely with the agency of authorship, as they have in zines.<sup>2</sup> Same with anarchists, young mothers, and sex workers. Their zines are more consciously wrought than diaries and more descriptive than scrapbooks. Academics are even beginning to catch on, partly because former zine publishers have gone to grad school. (Dodge 2008, 670) Also, as Dodge wrote in an earlier article, zines cover events that the mainstream media don't, "Is corporate press coverage severely lacking for events like New York City's Dyke March or the Transcontinental Peace Walk? Look to zines to cover these kinds of countercultural activities more thoroughly than the daily papers do." (Dodge 1995)

Academic libraries are more likely to treat zines as a special collection, though one that I know of (mine) circulates a discrete zine collection, as well as maintaining first copies in a climate-controlled, acid-free, retrievable by page archives collection. The archivists at the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke University have been particularly successful at engaging faculty and students with class projects. (Micham) In addition to outreach to faculty, academic zine librarians attract patrons with zine readings and exhibits, and table at zine fests, anarchist book fairs, Ladyfests, and other zine friendly events.

While the librarians who table at these events are likely to be from Generation X or Millennials, I want to be clear that some of zine librarianship's strongest proponents and practitioners were born

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<sup>2</sup> I currently have 275 zines cataloged at Barnard with the subject heading Teenage girls, typically meaning the zine was written by a teenage girl. I introduced that subject heading to the catalog fairly recently, so it doesn't represent all of our cataloged holdings, much less those in our backlog.

in the 1940s, 50s and early 60s. They include, but are not limited to Cathy Camper, who founded a collection at Minneapolis Public Library (Hubbard 353), Chris Dodge who, though he didn't preside over a public or academic library zine collection, has probably served as a mentor to nearly every zine librarian in the country, and who also did much to raise zines' profile during his tenure as librarian at *Utne Reader*, and whose comprehensive zineology was an important resource for zine scholarship until it disappeared with its GeoCities hosted website, may it rest in peace; Andrea Grimes who rescued the San Francisco Public Library's Little Magazine collection and expanded it with a slash to the Little Maga/Zine Collection. (Hubbard 352), Tom Eland of the Minneapolis Community & Technical College zine collection (MCTC), Cristina Favretto, who presided over zine collections at Duke (Editor's donation) and San Diego State (and also established a surfing focused collection at the latter) (Carlson2005) and finally Jim Danky, now retired from the Wisconsin Historical Society. Danky, who is renowned for collecting alternative press materials of all kinds, including from the radical right (Dodge 2008), collects zines because "They're the latest self-defined print genre that's produced." (Bradford) He doesn't think it's necessary to be part of a culture in order to preserve it. He doesn't even have to like it. Danky is interested in zines that speak to social change movements, but he's not that into perzines. (Bradford) Perzines, which personify the autonomy of anarchism and Generation Xers' separation from their Baby Boom and Silent Generation parents, are perhaps less appealing to a Baby Boomer like Danky. But just because he's not drinking the Kool-Aid, doesn't mean that he's not buying it.

### **Compare and Contrast**

One difference that strikes me right away, perhaps because I oversee a collection comprised almost exclusively of zines by women, is that zines are much more girl friendly than the underground press. Let us compare the program from the first Underground Press Conference (UPC) that focused on literary publications, and the print media programs from the 2010 Allied Media Conference (AMC), which is not exactly the UPC's exact successor, but as close as we're going to get. The 1994 UPC offered six workshops, and guessing the participants' genders by name and in the case of ambiguous names internet photographs (I know that's problematic, but this will give us a general idea), there were 30 male presenters and 8 women, one of whom is represented twice, both times as a moderator rather than as a panelist. (Wachsberger 54-55) I culled through the AMC's heavily online and audiovisual media oriented program and found six more or less print focused sessions.

They were led by 10 women and 3 men, though that count is too binary for the several of them that appear to identify as transgender. (AMC2010) Even in zine culture, until riot grrrl transformed things, you'd only ever hear about zines by men like *Cometbus* and *Dishwasher*. Both zines deserve their reputation, but if zines and the alternative press are to reflect the community from which they come, we need to talk about *Citronella* and *Doris*, too, not to mention the numerous zines by people of color, including *Evolution of a Race Riot*, which I mentioned earlier. The change in numbers of workshops, 13 down from 39, also gives us some idea of how the culture has evolved. The AMC workshops are less panel-driven and more participatory.

Although called "underground," the 1960s and 70s movement was if not mainstream, more popular than today's heterogeneous alternative culture. As Van Hook put it, "...I am a member of the largest generation in the history of the world and because we were all—almost everybody we knew—coming into maturity, becoming adults, becoming self-sufficient, and becoming part of the counter-culture at the same time. It was like everyone that you knew was, you could presume, interested in alternative ideas and alternative cultures." (Van Hook) Fellow members of Generation X, I ask you, has that been your experience? Not so much, right? Other than people I know from zines or political activism, very few of my friends would even know what a zine was if they didn't get one in the mail from me every year. As I wrote in my introduction, several alternative press library collections were originally suggested or supported by academic departments. So far that has not been the case with zine collections.

Because of the greater awareness of alternative culture when the Baby Boomers were in the power of their youth, they were able to create infrastructure such as the United Press Syndicate (UPS), which coordinated ads, subscriptions, and distribution for member publications. In exchange, members had to pay a small fee, agree to send other members copies of their magazines and to notify the UPS if it wasn't okay to reprint a particular article. (Ellis 112) The closest comparable operations we have in zinedom are distros, which are individuals and organizations that more or less buy zines wholesale from zinesters and sell them online and via mail order. The best known of these in English-speaking North America, and I suspect the world, Microcosm Publishing, has office space, a store, and a paid staff collective, (About) but most distros are kitchen table operations that don't sustain their proprietors.

Even with distros, along with independent bookstores and infoshops (and until it a few years ago



Tower Books), serving as intermediaries between zine publishers and some of their readers, in my experience nearly all zinesters also do their own distribution. Many if not most zinesters will trade their zines with other publishers. Occasionally zines are offered only for trade, requiring that the authors must deal with each other fairly intimately. Zine etiquette requires that the author include at least a short note with her zine, if not a letter. I haven't found anything to indicate that issues of the *Los Angeles Free Press* came with a handwritten greeting from the editor, written on Hello Kitty stationery, so I'm guessing that there was less intimacy between Baby Boom writers and readers. Of course the scale was completely different, so the pen pal relationships favored by zinesters, whose print runs are generally in the low hundreds, would not have been possible with a circulation of 68,000, as Ellis reported of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, presumably in 1970. (Ellis 107) With their higher circulation and production expenses, alternative press titles are more likely than zines to not only have, but to be dependent on, paid ads. For the most part, zine ads are free or for trade. They plug zines, distros, and small record labels. Per Ellis, underground publications' ads were for music and sometimes sex related items and dating services. They also ran classified ads. (Ellis 114) Their reliance on advertising made them vulnerable to exploitation by record companies that had figured out that underground press rates were cheap, and that the publications reached an important demographic. (Ellis 109) Zines aren't impervious to cooptation, but they rarely if ever rely on advertising to survive, so it's not much of a problem.

Returning to the issue of intimacy, an important element of many zines, especially since internet publishing became popular, is a handmade feel. Zines can have silkscreened covers (*The Borough Is My Library*), letterpress (*Ker-bloom!*), crayoned in graphics (*Sugar Needle*), intricate bindings (*Parfait*) and many other artistic touches that distinguish them from the one upload reaches all/blog template nature of online communications. That's not to say that alternative press titles don't sometimes feature cool covers and high production values. Leonard Kniffel observes that, "Other small press publishers operate elaborate letter-press machines, often producing handprinted and carefully designed texts on elegant paper. (Kniffel 13) Crafty zine girl Erin Fae writes about the tactile nature of zines and how it is passed from the creator to the recipient,

"On the back of a postcard I sent in 2005, I wrote, 'I'll hold this, then you'll hold this.' I didn't know at the time that the phrase would be something that would stay with me.

"...'I'll hold this then you'll hold this' also influences how I understand myself as an artist,

especially a book artist. It's important to me to make art that is tactile, that people can hold. I define the book as something with information however that may take shape. I want to make books that rip you apart. These books might make you feel enveloped and exposed, but will also feel like they belong to you once you hold them. You can give the book back to me, but you have it now, too." (37)

That quote just kills me because it reminds me that as I print, assemble, fold, staple, color in, and rubberstamp each and every copy of my zine, that inevitably a little of myself—some tiny bit of DNA goes out with each copy, and that most zines in the Barnard collection, too, were handled personally by their creators.

Another important distinction is that while both the underground press and zine movements are youth driven, zine youth are younger, or were in the 1990s. I've encountered fewer zines by 16-year-olds published in the 2000s, but in the 90s, it was common. High school zinesters even put together a zine yearbook zine called *School Schmool*, with issues published by Theresa E. Molter in 1996 and 1997.

Giving voice to teenagers and getting those voices unmediated onto library shelves is a crucial part of the mission of zine librarianship. Zines and alternative press publications also bring into the library other people who are underrepresented on our shelves—"Feminists, environmentalists, anarchists, socialists, racial minorities, gays, lesbians, and the poor..." (Bartel 234) Although alternative presses may be better than their corporate counterparts at including underrepresented groups, they're not perfect. Both movements are perhaps whiter than the population as a whole. My observation, especially of the alternative press, but also of zines is that minorities and women can be proportionately underrepresented in projects other than those specifically made by or marketed to their population.

Shinjoung Yeo accuses "libraries as social institutions—often an integral part of the dominant system—neglect knowledge that is not legitimized by the dominant knowledge culture and consciously or unconsciously whittle away the communities that they serve." (Yeo) Responding to the claim that zines aren't authoritative, Chris Dodge writes, "Dubious credibility? Since when have

popular novels (or magazines for that matter) been examined under bright lights? We're talking popular culture here, not medical reference sources."(Dodge 1995) Bartel wants public libraries to seek out alternative materials proactively and points out that most collection development policies exclude them by omission. "For example, a typical collection development policy often includes the following: 'select items useful to patrons' (but with no explanation of what is 'useful'); 'select based on demand for the material' (even though demand can be manufactured and people can't demand what they don't know exists); 'select based on the reputation of the author and publisher' (often not known in the case of alternative materials); and 'select based on popular appeal and the number and nature of requests from patrons.'" (Bartel 234)

Written about zines, but relevant to all alternative press materials Richard A. Stoddart and Teresa Kiser state that "A library's purpose is not to act as arbiter of culture, deciding what it is or not. A library is an access point to the information in a culture. As such, a library's holdings should encompass a wide range of materials to provide as accurate a picture of a cultural time period as possible. The print zine is well within such a range of materials." (Stoddart and Kiser 196) Numerous other articles in my bibliography question how anyone could write a reasonable history of Vietnam War era protests, for example, without the underground press and that if we rely on mainstream media to document today's music scene, all future historians will learn about is American Idol. (Carlson)

Small press publisher turned librarian Jason Kucsma underlines this point, "I ask you to imagine doing historiographic work on the social revolution of the 1960's without access to such print capital as the *Berkeley Barb* or the *Village Voice*. How complete would an analysis of the times be without the crucial dissenting voices that were amplified in the pages of underground newspapers and magazines. ... Unfortunately, today there are few academic libraries that could claim a substantial collection of the underground press of the 1960's, and we can learn some valuable lessons from the mistakes made by past librarians." (Kucsma) Me, I blame the administrators who can be reluctant to allocate time and money for alternative press and zine collections, and librarians without the imagination or temerity to suggest doing so. Alternative materials take more time and effort to acquire, process, and catalog than other items, and if not housed in a special collection they may be among the first to go in times of budget crises, due to comparatively poor use or the fact that they're less likely to be indexed in online databases.

Regrettably inclusion in a resource like the Alternative Press Index (API) is no guarantee of a title being held by even an Association of Research Libraries library. An MLS thesis case study reported on API titles held in any format by "Natick" University (presumably Duke). They were pretty good in certain areas, e.g. gender and multicultural studies, but lacking in more overtly political topics like anti-racism and class struggle. (Sylvain 33-39) I am painfully aware that shelf space and money are important concerns in libraries, but as Celeste West points out in a somewhat dated, but dead-on 1983 article, "Whatever our budget, we always have money and staff for some things and not for others. We can enshrine, for example, the 'ready-reference' function or the investor's services, but have no money for a database to provide local survival (life and death) information. Some things are simply more equal than others in our minds. We often use lack of funds as a cop-out for exclusion." (West 1651) To me this is particularly surprising when a small press magazine subscription might cost \$20 a year. I agree with West about reference materials. Don't buy the next \$1200 encyclopedia set or *Europa World Yearbook* for \$1400 and subscribe to all of the API publications you don't already have, or at least the twenty least held in your region, with the savings.

Unfortunately even when an institution does begin an alternative press collection, it doesn't always maintain it properly. When Joseph Labadie gave his political ephemera to the University of Michigan instead of selling it to the highest bidder, he asked only that they make it publicly available. The University left the materials sitting in boxes for 12 years after receiving it, until a local anarchist rescued the collection. After she died the collection went untended for nearly another ten years. Though it is now, as of the 2000 writing of the article I'm citing, tended by a dedicated and talented archivist, the university does little to promote their world-class collection. (Cornell 13) I have seen zine collections meet similar fates, due either to workplace dysfunction or lack of institution level buy-in. A collection is launched to much acclaim only to be forgotten or dismantled when the librarian who originally championed it falls into disfavor with or leaves the institution.

## **Conclusion**

The librarian as alternative press collection champion is a good segue into my conclusion. As we saw at the beginning of this essay, alternative press collections sometimes originate from faculty or

local support, but ultimately a collection's success or failure depends on the librarians and archivists who care for them—and to the administrators who allow them to, or at least don't get in their way. When I wrote my zine collection proposal, one of the pros in my pros and cons section was that if I was granted the collection, I wouldn't ever want to leave it. I learned later that this argument was one of the most convincing to my library dean. Unlike members of preceding generations, Generation X workers are not known for staying in one job for a long time, but our loyalty can be bought one \$2 zine at a time. What can't be bought, though, is our dedication. That's free. West advises "Hire librarians to do the job who have a taste for social change, primary sources. ... If you choose activists for the job, they will be cheerfully collecting resources even on their own time." (West 1653) Writing about sound archives in 1972, Carlos Hagen bemoaned that librarians' hesitation regarding new media was "doing immense damage to our cultural heritage." He goes on to complain specifically about how librarians failed to collect underground press publications despite how obviously important they were. He ascribes to librarians an attitude of "This is junk, and as such has no place in any respectable library." (Hagen 49) Chris Dodge claims to be able to put a face to the librarian associated with most of the alternative press titles sparsely represented in WorldCat. (Dodge 668). Juris Dilevko is concerned that subject specialists are honing their expertise at negotiating license agreements, at the expense of in-depth subject knowledge. (Dilevko 699)

Each library, and maybe every librarian, needs to pick a niche, perhaps one that supports (or expands!) its institution's mission statement, or one that they identify as not being handled anywhere else, and cover it. That is how you preserve the output of your generation, be it Generation X or any other. Two library school students observe an unfortunate change in the archives community's commitment to contemporary collecting, "...the 1955 Archivist's Code begins with an exhortation that speaks to the heart of how zine archives, in particular, emphasize a personal as well as professional commitment to the documentation of contemporary culture: 'the archivist has a moral obligation to society to take every possible measure to ensure the preservation of valuable records, not only those of the past but those of his [sic] own times, and with equal zeal.'" (Woodbrook and Lazzaro) (U.S. National Archives & Records Administration) The Society of American Archivists updated code doesn't reference contemporary collecting at all, which I can't imagine can have been accidental. The 1955 code was presumably written by members of the Silent or Greatest Generation, whereas I have to hope the bland 2005 update from the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Council that ends "Archivists must uphold all federal state,

and local laws." wasn't written by my fellow GenXers. It wasn't written by anarchists; that's for sure! Case reminds us that "Libraries can be and should be controversial, inspiring, and infuriating." (Case 5)

In an article about Jim Danky around the time of his retirement, Chris Dodge begged that the next generation produce another Danky. (Dodge 2008, 676) I hope there's not one, but a hundred Generation X librarians and archivists who go out of their way—and convince their institution to allow them to—collect the uncollected. We can't always wait for approval; in the internet age information has a short half-life, so we need to seize it as it comes. I also wonder if doesn't help to do it while we're relatively young. As I said earlier, I find the generations discussion to be problematic. The Baby Boomers who were supposedly all aware of and into the counterculture when they were in their twenties in the 1960s and 70s don't necessarily have their fingers on the pulse of the alternative music scene or the latest hip publications any more, and they're not always above telling GenXers that our cultural outputs are stupid or inferior. Those of us in Generation X are beginning to reach middle age. Not everyone can stay on top of every trend like the indefatigable retired cataloger Sandy Berman can. Some of us might not be able to or even want to hang out in bars seeing bands as late or as often. Some of us have kids or partners or parents who take our time. Some of us spend our money on mortgages and savings instead of music and magazines. Personally, I don't get to Critical Mass bike rides every month like I used to, and I've declared that this year's zine may be the last one I make. Our cohort will probably be just as annoyed at and mystified by the music, cultures, and operating styles of Millennial and the Internet Generation librarians as previous generations are of ours. It's important that we all remember what it's like to be young, and to value the contributions of the librarians who succeed us.

We must also remember that, as Stoddart and Kiser put it, "Information is a perishable resource. It can be forgotten, lost, deleted, or destroyed." (Stoddart and Kiser 196) It is up to each of us, working together like hippie Baby Boomers, or autonomously like GenX anarcho-punks, to apply our librarian superpowers to identifying, preserving, and providing access to the materials that define us as such.

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