Zines in Higher Education: A Multidisciplinary Survey of Faculty Practices

Zines: Exploring Projects and Perspectives across Institutions

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The Zine Project: Innovation or Oxymoron?

The Zine Project helps students and teachers consider the assumptions and expectations we have about how literacy functions in school and community contexts. In this article, Tobi Jacobi examines the relationships among composition theory, community literacy practices, and service learning, taking into account the complex possibilities and implications that arise when zines are incorporated into the classroom.
Multidisciplinary Literature Review

Disconnection between teaching faculty zine pedagogies and college and university libraries
I chose a qualitative study. I utilized snowball sampling, used when there is a difficult to identify or small number of qualified subjects. I asked respondents to share the names and contact information of other qualified respondents.
The purpose of this study is to uncover details about zines as pedagogical tools in higher education. To this end, six research questions were identified:

1. Which disciplines or professions are teaching and learning with zines?
2. Are faculty collaborating with librarians on zine assignments?
3. Are faculty utilizing library zine collections?
4. What motivates faculty to introduce zines in their classrooms?
5. Are students for the most part studying zines or producing zines?
6. How are teaching faculty assessing zine pedagogies?
Disciplines and Professions of the Courses Listed by Respondents

Art, Design, or Architecture  49%
Literature or Composition   15%
Gender or Women’s Studies  13%
Media                      9%

67 courses were listed
Librarian and Teaching Faculty Collaboration

“TWO THINGS I LOVE, TOGETHER”
Zine by Alex Decarli and Adrienne Garbini, personal collection
Did you collaborate with a librarian at your institution in the creation of the zine, chapbook, or pamphlet assignment?

- yes
- no

53% 47%
Teaching Faculty Describe Collaboration

KU Libraries adds nearly 1,000 zines to radical lit collection
Wed, 03/09/2016

KU Libraries acquire Solidarity fan zine collection

LAWRENCE — By their very nature, zines were almost meant to be enjoyed briefly, then fade away. The University of Kansas Libraries is now home to a substantial collection of fan-made, self-published magazines — better known simply as zines — that provide a window into politics, fandom, music, community, history and the idea of “do it yourself” communications both before and after the Internet became a dominant vehicle for communication and expression.
Amazing *zine librarian* helped me put together an introductory info session for my students, in which we pulled an array of zines that tackled human rights themes from various genres.

I met with a *Digital Humanities librarian* earlier in the process of developing the assignment (who showed me some software students could use to produce zines, which I offered as a choice alongside creating manually), and I worked with the *Special Collections librarians*, who created a one-day display of zines and artbooks.

One of my campus’s *Special Collections librarians* helped by selecting and locating a number of pamphlets from the library's collection so that the students could compare the zines they were working with to political pamphlets from other historical eras.

Couldn't do it w/o [names of librarians]. They were instrumental to the whole process. I learned from them! In fact, [name] introduced the idea of the assignment and I ran with it using a social justice framework.

*Director of the library* attended *Library City class*, and *13 Zines* class regularly, offering information and critique. *Director of library* attended *Small Books and Zines* for the final critique.

I worked with *librarians* to both make the assignment part of the work of processing the zine collection (producing metadata) and introducing students to the archival sources available at the library.
Of all 57 respondents, 77% utilized zines from their personal collections

40% utilized zines from the library at their institutions;

Various zines from LIU Brooklyn’s Zine, Chapbook, Pamphlet collection
Use of Library and of Personal Zine, Chapbook, or Pamphlet Collections

- **lib. collection**: 20 (Collaborators), 3 (Non-Collaborators)
- **only lib. coll.**: 5 (Collaborators), 0 (Non-Collaborators)
- **own collection**: 17 (Collaborators), 29 (Non-Collaborators)
- **only own coll.**: 2 (Collaborators), 14 (Non-Collaborators)

- **Legend**:
  - № of Collaborators
  - № of Non-Collaborators
Motivation

**Form**—the print format and materiality of zines; making zines.

**Alternative Media**—zine publishing and distribution as political activism.
Motivation

Self—personal interest in zines or history making them

Student—students develop agency, voice, and critical thinking

Content—zines as sources of unique subject matter and perspectives

60% (34) indicated that zines were composed, made, or produced in classes.

18% (10) described zine assignments that were interpretation only, such as:

“making connections between critical essays we had read about eighteenth-century practices of pamphleteering and modern-day zine production.”
Assessment Methods and Activities

Almost all chose to define assessment as the process of evaluating the quality or success of the students’ zines, not of the assignment itself.

Eleven respondents noted that they use rubrics or peer-evaluative tools.
Zine Rubric for course

*Sex, Gender, and Religion*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REL 225 Final Project Assessment</th>
<th>Earned</th>
<th>Possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational and/or artistic sophistication</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence and examples</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>Influence of academic methods, analysis, and sources</td>
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<td>Complexity of explicit or implicit argument</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Only one respondent included some assessment of their own zine pedagogy, indicating the need for additional design skills and a better plan for managing the production of zines.

Most respondents did not provide an answer.
The zine form dominated the survey results, but **pamphlet pedagogy** was described by 14% (8) of the respondents, half of whom teach art and design courses.

Image credit: University of Aberdeen Library (accessed 2016). The Brown-Lindsay and Christ's College pamphlets have been catalogued and added to the Catalogue as a contribution to the Pamphlet and Polemic Project (1999-2002).

Chapbooks

Only four respondents described chapbook pedagogies; 3/4 also assigned pamphlet assignments.
Which teaching faculty turn to librarians for collaboration?

Only 30% of art and design respondents reported collaborating with a librarian.

50% of literature and composition or gender studies courses did so.

Among the courses in programs with little survey representation: Librarians were tapped to collaborate with 80% of Media (4/5), 67% of Education (2/3), 0% of Architecture (0/3), and 50% of Religious Studies (1/2).
Non-Librarian Faculty and the ACRL Framework

The Framework specifies frames and concepts central to information literacy, knowledge practices for students, and dispositions they should achieve.

Many practices or dispositions are described by non-librarian authors in the literature review and also in survey responses, for example:

* authority must be deeply examined

* information creation and delivery be recognized as a process

* audience be considered

Image credit: website for graphic design publisher True True True
http://www.truetruetrue.org/
The results of this study suggest that art and design librarians may find success pursuing collaborations—instruction, collection development, exhibition—*with faculty from art and design, whose teaching praxes include zine and pamphlet pedagogies, but also from disciplines that are not inherently creative.*

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**Zine-Making as a Pedagogical Tool for Transformative Learning in Social Work Education**

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Thanks for listening and reading!

If you’d like to learn more, my article, “Zines for Teaching: A Survey of Pedagogy and Implications for Academic Librarians,” will be published in April in portal: Libraries and the Academy, or I can send you a pre-pub copy.

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Image credit: Nick Relph’s zine “American Photography #1” (2010)