Digitizing Local Zines in Public Libraries

By Jenny Bossaller, Dylan Martin, and Seth Smith

Has your library considered beginning a local history collection? If so, have you wondered what types of materials to include? This article will take you through the development of the new Community History Archive (CHA) project at Daniel Boone Regional Library (DBRL), a library system in mid-Missouri that serves two counties. The project began with a few small collections of photographs of the library and of a local one-room schoolhouse, but when the opportunity arose to digitize a local zine, we thought that it would be an excellent test for the system while also expanding the scope of the CHA.

What Are Zines and How Do They Fit Into the Library?

Zinewiki, which is an "open-source encyclopedia devoted to zines and independent media" defines a zine as "an independently- or self-published booklet, often created by a single person."[1] [QY: Need a citation] They are most often low-tech, handmade productions that are photocopied and stapled by the author. Many are political, in the sense that their single-authored, hand-penned, and unedited pages offer a form of resistance against mass-production and commercialization. Kate Eichhorn, Associate Professor of Culture and Media at The New School (NY), notes that science fiction zines first appeared in the 1930s alongside the mimeograph, though zines became prolific due to wide availability of modern photocopy [illegible]hines and the rise of punk scenes during the 1970s.[2] [QY: Need a citation] However, as the extensive list of zines on Zinewiki demonstrates, the topics in zines now cover the gamut—from bikes to food to sci-fi; they really can be a crafty and fun creative outlet for anyone.

Many public libraries have zine collections. San Francisco Public Library's Little Maga/Zine collection dates back to the 1960s. According to the library's website, the library began collecting zines in 1991. The library produced a flyer asking for donations from creators, readers, and collectors, which yielded "an immediate and enthusiastic response" from the community. Today the collection includes [illegible]er 4,000 little magazines, zines, and ephemera."[3] [QY: Need a citation] The New York Public Library, which lists 136 zines in its current periodicals, explains that "Collecting zines in libraries is important because they document contemporary popular culture, making them important primary source mat[illegible] for future scholarship, plus they're a lot of fun!"[4] [QY: Need a citation] The Jacksonville (FL) Public Library has a growing zine collection of close to one thousand titles, which claims to be "the largest zine collection in a public library in the Southeast, and one of the few circulating collections."[5] [QY: Need a citation] The authors point out that "These represent an often-overlooked and unknown media that would increase the diversity of viewpoints available to the public. The collectio[illegible]s also seen as a way to attract young adults to the library."[6] [QY: Need a citation]

Perhaps the most cogent arguments for including z[illegible]in libraries include the p[illegible]sion of alternative viewpoints, [illegible]ir unique subject matte[illegible]d because they "embrace individual expression. Zines are not filt[illegible] through an editor . . . [and they] can be artistic."[7] [QY: Need a citation] Zinelibraries.info provides

About the Authors

JENNY BOSSALLER is Associate Professor, School of Information Science & Learning Technologies, University of Missouri. **DYLAN MARTIN** is Institutional Repository Librarian, Lincoln University of Missouri. **SETH SMITH** is Public Services Librarian (Adult Services), Daniel Boone Regional Library.

Contact Jenny at bossallerj@missouri.edu.
Contact Dylan at martind2@lincolnu.edu.
Contact Seth at ssmith@dbrl.org.

Jenny is currently reading *Corporation Wife* by Catherine Gaskin. Dylan is currently reading *Play Anything: The Pleasure of Limits, the Uses of Boredom, and the Secret of Games* by Ian Bogost. Seth is currently r[illegible]ng *Angela Merkel: Europe's Most Influential Re[illegible]r* by Matthew Qvortrup.

all kinds of good advice about how to create physical zine collections.

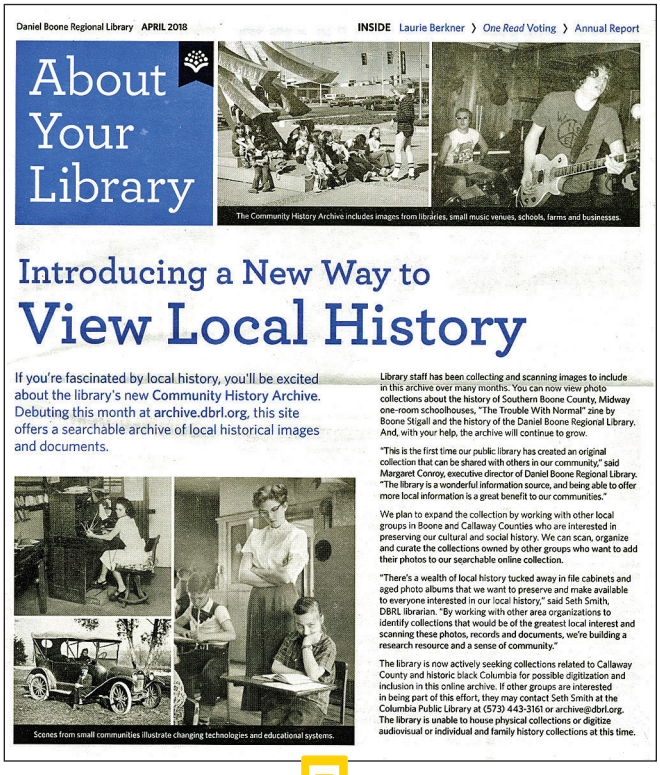
By digitizing and describing a local zine, or any other unique local media, a public library expands its offerings, preserves primary-source accounts, and provides access points to a new perspective. Libraries have always collected both unique and prolific materials, with their core value coming from the facilitation, location, and provision of information. When public libraries digitize unique, local materials, it contributes to the construction of community memory by offering free access to a material that may otherwise be prohibitively expensive or otherwise unavailable.

Starting a physical collection requires a lot of considerations (e.g., space, shelving, physical preservation, access). Digital collections come with their own set of concerns and problems. After a few false starts, the library [QY: which library?] had settled on a platform. This particular digitization project proved to be an excellent case study for establishing standards for metadata, discussing privacy concerns, and formalizing intellectual property policies and guidelines.

The Community Archive

DBRL [QY: Daniel Boone Regional Library?] is a medium-sized library system that serves two counties in mid-Missouri. The CHA (http://archive.dbrl.org) is part of a larger mission of the library system that helps connect disparate parts of the area, which is made up of rural areas, small and large towns, and one city. The area includes several colleges and universities, including the state's flagship university, the University of Missouri–Columbia (UMC). The library is actively recruiting additional collections—large and small—from community members in order to build an online representation of its diverse service area. As with all projects that are part of the library's organization, the thrust of the effort is in disseminating knowledge throughout the service area, and/or assisting community members in telling their story. The digitization project serves a vital purpose in offering a voice in telling the community's story.

In an interview with a local radio host, Seth Smith described the budding CHA Collection at DBRL as a "hyperlocal" initiative.[8] [QY: Need a citation] The archive includes collections featuring photographs of one-room schoolhouses, images from a local historical society, a community yearbook archive, and thousands of photographs from the library's own archive. The latest collection added was *Trouble with Normal* (*TTWN*) by Boone Stigall, a zine covering music and politics that was created in 1992 and which Stigall still produces today.



Daniel Boone Regional Library APRIL 2018 INSIDE Laurie Berkner › *One Read* Voting › Annual Report

About Your Library

The Community History Archive includes images from libraries, small music venues, schools, farms and businesses.

Introducing a New Way to

View Local History

If you're fascinated by local history, you'll be excited about the library's new Community History Archive. Debuting this month at archive.dbrl.org, this site offers a searchable archive of local historical images and documents.

Library staff has been collecting and scanning images to include in this archive over many months. You can now view photo collections about the history of Southern Boone County, Midway one-room schoolhouses, "The Trouble With Normal" zine by Boone Stigall and the history of the Daniel Boone Regional Library. And, with your help, the archive will continue to grow.

"This is the first time our public library has created an original collection that can be shared with others in our community," said Margaret Conroy, executive director of Daniel Boone Regional Library. "The library is a wonderful information source, and being able to offer more local information is a great benefit to our communities."

We plan to expand the collection by working with other local groups in Boone and Callaway Counties who are interested in preserving our cultural and social history. We can scan, organize and curate the collections owned by other groups who want to add their photos to our searchable online collection.

"There's a wealth of local history tucked away in file cabinets and aged photo albums that we want to preserve and make available to everyone interested in our local history," said Seth Smith, DBRL librarian. "By working with other area organizations to identify collections that would be of the greatest local interest and scanning these photos, records and documents, we're building a research resource and a sense of community."

The library is now actively seeking collections related to Callaway County and historic black Columbia for possible digitization and inclusion in this online archive. If other groups are interested in being part of this effort, they may contact Seth Smith at the Columbia Public Library at (573) 443-3161 or archive@dbrl.org. The library is unable to house physical collections or digitize audiovisual or individual and family history collections at this time.

Scenes from small communities illustrate changing technologies and educational systems.

Need image caption

The CHA was envisioned as a way to connect people who might not normally cross paths or to shed light on overlooked community history. Most often we think of genealogists and local and public historians as the end-user of archives, but the collections that are sought for this project might be of wider interest; the zine project might pique the interest of musicians or teens, offering them a glimpse of UMC's culture that is unseen in the slick productions supported by the local Chamber of Commerce.

This particular project came to fruition through a partnership between Stigall, the iSchool at the University of Missouri (UMC), and DBRL. The iSchool faculty wanted to see his [QY: Stigall's?] work digitized, and connected him with Dylan Martin, who was involved in both local music and archives who wanted to work on the project. At the same time, DBRL was in the midst of getting the CHA collection off the ground. The connections and timing for this project were serendipitous but the lessons are widely applicable.

The Trouble with Normal

TTWN is Stigall's twenty-five-year (and running) account of the local and regional punk and independent music scene. *TTWN* features coverage of shows of local and touring bands throughout the city and region, interviews with musicians, and political commentary. Many of the shows he photographed and wrote about happened in underground venues; *TTWN* uniquely preserves this part of the city's culture. *TTWN* is highly personal; it is, like many other zines, a hand-drawn, messy, and unedited account of the local music and political scene.

The personal and colorful political narrative, along with occasional use of expletives, did give us pause because we were hesitant about drawing negative reactions to the CHA in its infancy. The rest of the collection is highly curated and is generally uncontroversial; photographs from the one-room schoolhouse offer fodder for walking down memory lane with grandchildren, but *TTWN* provides unfiltered

views from a punk, feminist, political music fan. Its presence is magnified by its prominence on the website and its volume; the newness of CHA means there is a relatively small amount of other content to counterbalance its perspective.

Because of its sheer size (25+ years of material) and appeal, though, *TTWN* made an excellent test project for taking the CHA to a new level. It offered us the opportunity to develop workflow processes related to scanning photographs and papers and to develop a strategy related to metadata and organization of the wider collection.

Including Zines in Local History Archives

In 2013, Julie Edwards, Melissa Rauseo, and Kelly Unger wrote a piece for *Public Libraries* about why the library is "t most important place in town."[9] **[QY: Need a citation]** Community archives are a growing part of public librarianship, and they offer several points that speak to the inclusion of zines, and especially digital access to zines:

- "Archives preserve historic artifacts, oral histories, digital history projects, and monographs relevant to the community, in ng minority groups" (#4) **[QY: What do these #s refer to?]**
- They are "places where people come to know themselves and their communities" and "Libraries, which champion, promote, and reflect important democratic values, are a part of the community's political life." (#5, #7)
- Many zines focus on the experiences of marginalized or underground issues: "Libraries provide information, resources, and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexed, and questioning (LGBTIQ) patrons (#12) . . . [and] libraries provide access to nonmainstream points of view and give voice to local artists (#14).
- Finally, "Libraries offer opportunities for remote access, making it possible for those who can't get to the library to still access the library's cultural and educational offerings (#18).

Any library considering a similar project should look to the mission, strategic plan, and staffing to ensure that the project is a good fit and that the library has the resources (or can find the resources) to be succ l. This project **[QY: referring to the CHA project?]** fit under several parts of the strategic plan, as follows:

- Our community will value DBRL as an essential resource, a place of possibility, learning and community where everyone can discover resources that build understanding and evoke joy, imagination, adventure, empathy and insight.
- DBRL will facilitate the public's understanding of local issues, needs and goals through increased communication and interactions in our communities.
- DBRL will increase and leverage its online presence through the digital branch and social media to cultivate online communities that foster civic and regional connections and promote the library as an essential resou and community partner. **[QY: Need a citation here? Are you quoting from a published source?]**

DBRL has invested considerably by creating a space for community archiving in its tech-lab, and in dedicating staff time for the community archiving project. They have also committed recruiting efforts for collections by advertising the project in a wide variety of venues and targeting those that reach minority communities in the area.

How We Did It

This digitization project arose from a grant application that the library did not receive. While the grant application was not successful, writing the grant provided the inspiration to develop both a tech-lab (presently called "The Studio") and a local history digitization project. Early discussions about the digitization project surrounded the content manager. First experiments involved using ContentDM; however, early testing showed the software's limitations for this project, mainly because of its poor rendering on mobile devices. The project members also wanted to utilize open-source software. The team began by uploading all the images from the archive to a WordPress site, but that proved inadequate for the library's ambitions as well because of the limitations of WordPress on mobile devices and lack of searchability and audiovisual hosting capabilities.

DBRL's web designer, Caitlin Waters, explored other options, finally deciding on Collective Access. This software was chosen because it is (1) open-source and therefore free; and (2) had possibilities for very user-friendly and robust hosting of many types of visual and text media as well as videos and audio clips. It is preconfigured with several library metadata standards, integrated with Library of Congress subject headings, and includes mapping tools and plugins to support visualizations. The Collective Access website provides excellent examples of current featured projects, including well-known names like the Smithsonian Channel and more obscure collections, like the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre in Vancouver. These illustrate the variety of materials that the platform can accommodate. So far, Collective Access has integrated seamlessly into the library's website and DBRL has had very positive feedback from patrons.

There were stumbling blocks that arose during the initial phases of the project. There was neither a culture of archiving or digitization in the library, nor a firm understanding about what it took to get a project like this off the ground. This experience is reflected in results of a survey administered by the State Library of South Carolina, which asked public librarians in the state abou ir digitizing practices.[10] **[QY: Need a citation]** Fifty-nine percent of the twenty-two responses were not actively digitizing, because they needed "training, equipment, staffers/ nteers, financing, and time."[11] **[QY: Need a citation]** This is a common dilemma for many librarians with good intentions at public

libraries without an institutional history of digitization. It took DBRL several years to get the CHA off the ground and onto the website. However, in the last crucial year of launching the project, DBRL was extremely lucky in hiring a very talented web designer who was able to retool one of the Collective Access templates and import all the old images and data from the original WordPress site. The current product is the result of unwavering support from DBRL administration and managers in addition to the talent and perseverance on the part of a small core team of people who really believed in seeing this project come to fruition.

Seth Smith, the digitization project manager and public services librarian at DBRL, offers some recommendations to public librarians who are considering starting a community archive and digitization project:

1. Try your best to educate administration and managers on the kind of workflow, technical infrastructure and workspaces you will need from the outset.
2. A project like this will not look professional or even work at all without the very least a couple of nice scanners, photo editing knowledge, a working knowledge of HTML/XML, OCR and content management systems, and a realistic long-term plan.
3. A long-term plan that is realistic is very simply not a plan that is just 6 months or a year; the plan should extend out 3 - 5 years. It takes time to get digitized materials onto the website.
4. The final (and most important) component is access to unique collections that offer the chance for community connection and the showcasing of under-represented groups or regions of the library's or library system's service area.

Issues with Digitization

Some of the issues that we ran into involved copyright and censorship. Stigall was presented with several options for copyright, including granting individual permissions, and with the various levels of licensing afforded by Creative Commons, which allow creators to retain their copyright. These licenses range from least restrictive (such as CC BY, which allows for distribution, performance, remixing, and tweaking and only requires attribution to the creator) to the most restrictive (CC BY-NC-ND) which requires attribution, stipulates non-commercial uses, and restricts users from creating derivative works. There are a range of licenses available that mix and match each type of restriction and can be found at on the Creative Commons website. As anyone embarking on a digitization project will encounter, the rationales around licensing are myriad and can be complicated. This collection was no exception; despite Stigall's ideological proximity to anti-copyright and free-as-in-freedom conceptions of intellectual property, the collection was ultimately licensed for digitization and display by DBRL under the most restrictive Creative Commons license, CC BY-NC-ND. Why? First, Stigall did not want to grant a blanket exemption to allow his creative expression to be used by others in ways he did not intend. Second, and most importantly, without the non-commercial (NC) designation there was the potential for a publisher, retailer, database provider, or another commercial actor to incorporate the materials in their entirety to their commercial offerings. With this license, it is ensured that he and only he retains the right to monetize and remix the archive he created.

Regarding content and censorship, TTWN does have some content that might offend some readers. The CHA is not yet large enough for the collection to blend into the background, or to be balanced by other viewpoints. The prominence of the zine on the library's website gave the team pause. Leaving parts of it out, though, seemed disingenuous at best. Administration fully supported the decision to present the zine in its entirety. However, the library did decide that the portal page of the collection should state that it contains "adult language and topics." The content is a reflection of the reality of culture and its author, just as the one-room schoolhouse project and library's own historical digitization project show those aspects of the town's history.

Reflections and Going Forward

Before the CHA project was started, DBRL had no infrastructure to support digitization. However, individual librarians did have some technical background in large-scale projects. For instance, Smith, CHA team leader at DBRL, came to the project with knowledge of digitization from previous work. In a previous position he had worked on the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP), a large-scale grant funded digitization project co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress. Working on the NDNP grant was extremely helpful because it helped Smith identify stumbling blocks that the team might face, and to look at technical solutions to those problems.

The partnership with the LIS program has been fruitful as well. It has provided DBRL an enthusiastic and dedicated student, Dylan Martin, who has current knowledge and expertise regarding best practices in digitization efforts to work on the project. Part of the student's assignment was to document the workflow and produce a report, which will be useful as the library moves forward. Additionally, the graduate student has been invaluable as he has offered his expertise with scanning and creating text-searchable PDFs of the older editions of the zine.

In the future, DBRL hopes to continue partnering with UMC's School of Information Science & Learning Technologies (SISLT) in order to continue to develop the archive, especially in the areas of metadata and cataloging. In addition to engaging with other community organizations and stakeholders to upload more content, the project team also wants to eventually take full advantage of the features of Collective Access such as georeferencing, uploading audio-visual content and creating a full-text searchable index. One of the remarkable aspects of creating "hyper-local"

content such as that found in the DBRL's CHA is that, while being explicitly regional, local digitization content can now find a larger-scale home in state level digitization consortiums such as the Missouri Digital Heritage Initiative and eventual integration into the Digital Public Library of America. The site is getting a lot of use; DBRL is tracking statistics for the CHA as a whole, and found that, to date, there are 801 total users for the site, with 1,102 sessions and almost 10,500 pageviews. We anticipate that as we add more collections, use will rise. As the following interview demonstrates, public libraries are not necessarily the first place that people might think of for digitization projects, so cultivating relationships with potential donors and establishing trust is a key aspect of growth.

References

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Interview with Boone Stigall

PL: Can you tell us about the zine?

BS: *The Trouble with Normal* is a punk/underground rock fanzine that also covers political topics, occasionally some personal stuff, etc. I started publishing it in fall 1992 and [the zine] recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. In 1992, I saw that Columbia had a vibrant music scene and that it was, for the most part, not being covered by any journalism whatsoever [in the community]. Something had to be done and for better or worse, it was up to me. I also covered shows that were around Columbia—there were times that I wanted to see a show that wasn't coming through Columbia so there were a lot of road trips.

Sometimes I incorporated other people's reviews as well when I couldn't get there, so *TTWN* covers a wide range of shows [from both] local and touring bands that were in the area during this time. I did a lot of interviews with touring bands as well . . . *TTWN* always tried to mix the touring bands with the local bands. Sometimes it was easier to talk to the touring bands than the local bands. I would just go up and ask them if I could talk to them—sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't. In the early years, I didn't know how to contact people at the record labels to set stuff up . . . I was flying by the seat of my pants. I probably failed to get interviews as much as I succeeded. Even in the later years, with email interviews. Emails can be hard—I can't keep track of how many times I've sent out emails and never gotten a response.

I jumped into this, I knew fanzines weren't journalism in the traditional sense, that it was DIY learning along the way, and that is what I did. Some interviews went well, others—well, you just try to do the best with the equipment you've got. I was using a really cheap jambox to record some interviews, and the tape decks didn't work. I've had the really hulky ancient mono tape recorder, some pretty weird stuff to use that made me conspicuous. It's not like today when you turn on the recording app [on the phone] in your pocket. If someone had told me that you could have something as powerful as your computer in the palm of your hand I [like many people] would have said that was science fiction.

People forget that for the first half or two-thirds of the decade, the internet didn't exist for most people. Even on college campuses if you weren't in computer science or something you didn't really know that much about it. Businesses didn't have websites. Downloading took a long time. It [was] like people my parents' [and] grandparents' age talking about life before television. The internet made things easier and more difficult. It's important to realize that at that time the internet was going to be this great

The Trouble with Nor by Boone Stigall
[QY: image credit needed]

tool to bring cultures together and make the world a better place. It seems funny that we thought that at one point in time. I wish it had come about that way. Unfortunately it can be the perfect tool for anonymity, and people can say things online that they would never say to their faces without fear of reprisal.

PL: How did you feel about putting TTWN online? How has the archiving process been for you?

BS: This is really cultural history . . . it is a way of preserving the history of the culture—especially culture that a lot of people in this town might not have known existed. It's kind of easy to gravitate towards people like you and live comfortably and not realize that there are a lot of people who don't know what you do. [Digitizing it] gives people the option of learning about what was going on at that time. It's also interesting looking at the finished product—it's a nostalgia thing. I'm a little amazed, how did I do that, running on pocket change. [The period of] 1992-95 is kind of a blur to me

now, I was doing a lot of things at once and I'm amazed at how much I could get done. Now, the online presence of *TTWN* and the website is a way to put things in there that don't fit into the print version because of space constraints. I still believe that the internet is a great tool, but you're still dealing with human beings and the tendency of people to want to filter out the things that they don't want to hear, and we're really dealing with that in today's social/political sphere.

To me, it's interesting seeing what I've contributed and I hope that I've helped this town's cultural history in some small way, even if it's just providing local bands with some coverage that they wouldn't have had otherwise. You can talk to a lot of people who played music in the early '90s and the chance of getting covered by any journalists or even the *Maneater* [the University of Missouri's student newspaper] was low. There was a lot more going on with local music and culture than people were aware of. For younger people—some of the people who might have just discovered the scene in the past few years—seeing how it evolved is interesting. Some might wonder why bother to keep doing this, and the older you get, the more you have to realize, not everyone is going to like what you do. You pick yourself up, and realize that you're not going to please everyone, and you move on.

PL: Would you have thought of partnering with the public library if we hadn't approached you?

BS: In honesty it never occurred to me. I wish I could have said that it had, but it never occurred to me until you and Dylan brought it up, and it happened to be at the right time in my life to do this. It turned out to be an interesting project and I'm glad you asked me about it.

PL: Did you have any reservations about the project?

BS: Maybe some slight reservations, but it's because I was handing over a quarter century of my life's work, you have to just take a deep breath and trust people you're working with, and for the most part I've been at peace with it. It was a big leap, handing over a quarter century of archives. I wish I could say that I didn't have any reservations. I trusted both of you, I knew you, but the weirdness of 25 years of material and a project this size: I was honored that I was thought of for it, but it was kind of weird.

PL: Was it weird because of the physical or intellectual content?

BS: Some of it was physical materials, but it was at the right time in my life. Handing over the materials made me nervous, but I knew you and trusted you so I assumed everything would be okay.

PL: What would you tell other zine creators about this project?

BS: Being archived in this way is kind of interesting, a little scary at times, there are a number of emotions that go with it. Even the bigger fanzines out there, there's blood, sweat, and tears going into it. If the opportunity arises, you just have to figure out if the people you're working with are the right fit. I am in the fortunate situation because I'm working with people I trust, but I understand not every situation is going to be the same. If someone is reaching out to zine editors, if they don't know the culture, the two sides might not meet each other at a place of mutual respect and understanding. There is a whole world of people who don't know that this culture exists, there is this whole world out there who are under the radar, and some people, especially personal zine editors, deal with personal topics and issues and they might be really hesitant to put online because if experiences they have had with the internet. Due to their perceived anonymity, some people to respond to the zine creators in comments in a way that they would never say to their face. They think it's some kind of game. If you think it's good for you, go for it. I do think that [digitizing the zine] can help bring about an understanding of where other people are coming from. People who are running zine libraries as part of a library, they'll understand the culture. You have to have a great deal of mutual trust. PL

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