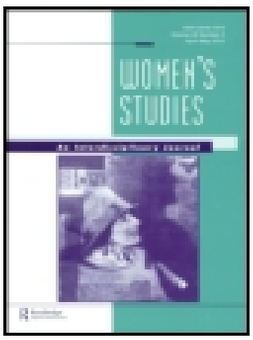

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D.I.Y. COLLECTORS, ARCHIVING SCHOLARS, AND ACTIVIST LIBRARIANS: LEGITIMIZING FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION SINCE 1990

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In early 2009, I attended a conference on "feminist practices of the archive" at Columbia University. Although the conference program described the archive "as a *living* repository of knowledge about the past, present and future" (emphasis my own), as well as a site of "critical reflection on the ways different cultures and sub-cultures approach the transmission, revision and contestation of their heritage," the majority of papers focused either on the "recovery" of women's and other marginalized voices from the archive, or the need to create a space for historically marginalized subjects in the archive.[1] The scope of the papers may have had less to do with the presenters' own understandings of "feminist practices of the archive" than with the organizers' framing of the conference's central questions. The first panel sought to explore several questions, including, "How do archives change when women are the subject? How have feminist archival practices engendered new historical narratives and new political agents?" However legitimate these questions may be, one must also ask who the agents are who fostered feminist archival practices in the first place, and where is their locus? If we accept the fact that feminist practices of the archive cannot be easily disentangled from the rich histories of community-based organizing that witnessed women, often with no formal archival training and

[1]"'Archiving Women,' a one-day conference bringing together scholars and archivists to examine feminist practices in the archive" was sponsored by Columbia University's Center for Critical Analysis of Social Difference as part of the three-year project entitled, "Engendering the Archive, Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women." All references to the conference program in this article refer to conference program posted at http://www. socialdifference.org/events/archiving-women-0

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few resources, accumulating and preserving the documentary traces of their private lives and public activism,[2] we can conclude, at the very least, that the locus of these agents was not the Faculty Room at Columbia's Low Library, where few archivists and no representatives from community-based archives were invited to speak. The questions framing the second panel were underscored by a similar set of assumptions. A question such as, "How do archives need to be transformed, recreated and created to accommodate feminist questions and women's collections?" assumes that the archive is never always already a feminist practice, space, or phenomenon that might be developed, fostered, and bequeathed from generation to generation of feminist activists and scholars.

Since the "archival turn" in the Humanities and Social Sciences,[3] it has become commonplace to understand the archive as something that exists well beyond the boundaries of the institutions that have historically authorized their existence. However, for most of the presenters, "archiving women" (also the official conference title) appeared to have less to do with women archiving their own lives than with women being archived. "Archiving" was not being read as an adjective describing an active subject (women) but rather "women" was being read as an object of an action (archiving). The emphasis, in other words, appeared to be on understanding women as potential subjects rather than central agents of the archive. When I decided to articulate this observation at the end of the final panel and to further ask, "What is the relation between 'unruly' community-based feminist archives and the institutionally based feminist archiving practices we have been discussing here?", the response to my question confirmed several things I have been observing and researching for the past decade. Only one panelist responded directly to my question, and only to let me know that community activists have not done a particularly "good job" preserving documents. Following her comment, the discussion turned back to the panelists' own pending "arrival" in the

[2]See in particular Ann Cvetkovich's discussion of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (240–251).

[3]The preoccupation with the archive since the early 1990s is frequently described as the "archival turn." See, for example, Ann Laura Stoler discussion in "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance. On the Content in the Form" in *Refiguring the Archive* (83–100).

archive—namely, the acquisition of their papers by the Brown University Pembroke Center Archives' newly established Feminist Theory Papers Collection.[4] As an observer (young enough to have considered many of these scholars "established" theorists when she first encountered their work as an undergraduate Women's Studies student in the early 1990s), I was left with the impression that for most of the presenters, the archive continued to function symbolically as a place where "important" documents are housed.

While my question may have solicited little response from the conference presenters, my question did solicit considerable interest from a younger generation of feminist scholars who were present but not necessarily invited to speak at this conference. After the final panel, several of these younger scholars came up to speak to me and the colleague who had invited me to the conference—Jenna Freedman, a reference librarian and the founder of the Barnard College Zine Collection (coincidentally, Freedman was presumably the youngest panelist and one of the only working librarians or archivists invited to speak at the event). One doctoral student, who had spoken during a discussion period about her own research, which involves, among other practices, understanding YouTube videos and curious ephemera purchased on eBay[5] as "legitimate" objects of study for her dissertation, noted that it is somewhat surprising that "we" women born during and after the rise of second wave feminism frequently embrace and uphold what appears to be a second wave feminist commitment to community-based forms of knowledge production. If her comment resonated with me, it is because I have made the same observation on several occasions over the past decade as I have engaged in the making and research of feminist archives of "our" own making—archives of second and third wave feminist documents and artifacts established and overseen by professional and "do-it-yourself" feminist archivists of my own generation. Her comment also prompted me to further consider the conditions under which a woman born in 1971 (me)—when the second wave feminist movement was already well under way—could find

[4]For more information on The Feminist Theory Papers Collection at the Pembroke Center Archives see http://www.pembrokecenter.org/farnham_archives/ftp.php

[5]For further discussion of eBay as an archive and source of archival documents and artifacts see Zoe Trodd's discussion in "Reading eBay: Hidden Stores, Subjective Stories, and a People's History of the Archive" in *Everyday eBay: Culture, Collecting, and Desire* (78–90).

herself reminding a room full of women who were *there* that it is essential that we not forget that "feminist practices of the archive" began in communities with the efforts of feminist activists and that many of the coveted collections of women's papers that now exist in university archives are only there because community activists made a conscious decision to become archivists long before most institutionally sanctioned collections recognized women's history as important or legitimate. But why would I feel the need to defend the grassroots efforts of a generation that has sometimes accused my own generation of feminists of being irreverent, ungrateful, and historically myopic? Perhaps, more importantly, why would women ten to fifteen years my junior be so deeply engaged in the making and use of archives now?

My observations at the "Archiving Women" conference confirmed much of what I already suspected about feminist archives and archiving practices. For a younger generation of feminists, the archive has never been a destination, an impenetrable barrier to be breached, but rather it has always been a site and practice integral to our knowledge-making and cultural production and our activism. It is precisely where our academic and activist feminist work converge. The creation of archives is part and parcel of how we produce and legitimize knowledge and make our voices audible in the public sphere. Rather than a destination for knowledge already produced or a place to recover histories and ideas placed under erasure, making archives is frequently where our knowledge production begins. Perhaps, more surprisingly, for many feminists of my generation, the archive is also a site of pleasure and even entertainment. As one of the doctoral students I met at the conference explained, her archives are both her "porn" and the "legitimate" objects of inquiry at the center of her dissertation research. However, the archive is also where we have come to terms with our ressentiment towards second wave feminists—an effect of feeling, as Astrid Henry observes, that "the second wave already lived through all the big battles, making us merely the beneficiaries of their efforts" (147). It is where we have proven ourselves to be the very good rather than very ungrateful "daughters of the movement,"[6] often more preoccupied with

[6]This term is borrowed from Julia Creet's 1991 article "Daughters of the movement: The Psychodynamics of Lesbian S/M Fantasy," *Differences*, 3, 2 (Summer 1991): 135–56.

preserving, sometimes in embarrassingly nostalgic ways, a previous generation's achievements than running roughshod over their histories of struggle. Why else would we be on eBay bidding for copies of *Sappho was a Right-On Woman*, second wave feminist t-shirts, LP compilations of "women's liberation" music, and programs from feminist conferences that happened when we were still in diapers or not even born? We no longer have any pressing need for these guides and slogans nor directly identify with these forms of cultural expression, yet many of us feel compelled to "rescue" them and to accumulate archives of second wave feminist texts and artifacts alongside archives documenting our own political and cultural legacies as not quite second wave[7] and third wave feminists. Although our archives are "archives of feelings" deeply structured by sentiments, emotions, impulses and desires (Cvetkovich 7), we also archive out of curiosity and for pleasure, as a form of activism, and most importantly, because the legitimization of our knowledge and cultural production has become deeply entangled in the archive.

This article examines the centrality of the archive and practices of archiving in the everyday lives, activism, and scholarship of a generation or two of feminists born during and after the rise of the second wave feminist movement. That the archive has become central to our lives and work in so many realms not only says something about the importance of the archive at this particular historical juncture but also offers insights into a series of important shifts in how younger generations of feminists understand, make, and legitimize knowledge and reconcile the tensions between their activist and academic work. While many factors need to be taken into account, I maintain that the centrality of the archive in feminist activism, knowledge-making, and cultural production in the new millennium may be directly traced to the

[7]Before the rise of the so-called "third wave" feminist movement in North American, there was a much smaller group of "Generation X" feminists present but not always visible in the feminist movement. Many of these women, now in their late thirties to late forties, trace their feminist activism and scholarship to early encounters with second wave feminists, identify with the sexual politics and cultural production of third wave feminists, and feel ambivalent locating themselves in relation to either "wave." Describing this generation as a "sandwich generation," Susanne Luhmann suggests that while benefiting from second wave feminism's gains, these women often suffer from a profound sense of having been born "too late" (35).

demise of second wave feminist institutions in the early to mid 1990s, specifically the collapse of the extensive network of feminist presses, publishing collectives, and bookstores established to support the legitimization and circulation of an earlier generation's ideas and writing. However, as I further argue, even if our archives are inherently linked to loss, they have not been constructed exclusively as repositories to preserve *what was* but rather been deployed as the primary apparatus through which we have continued to authorize new forms of feminist knowledge and cultural production at a time when prevailing political forces have often suggested that feminism is no longer relevant or necessary.

Third Wave Feminist Collectors, Archivists, and Librarians

My current research on feminist archives was instigated by a move in 2006 when I found myself, for the fifth time in a decade, packing up a large collection of feminist zines, books, and ephemera. Like those of the young women I met at the "Archiving Women" conference, my own archive originated while carrying out research for my M.A. thesis. At the time, I accumulated a large collection of riot grrrl zines[8] in the process of writing a thesis on textual communities. However, a much larger portion of my "archive" had been acquired since the completion of this project and most of the materials were only tangentially connected to my current research interests at the time. Among other things, the collection included a nearly complete run of the *Lesbian Ladder* purchased on eBay from an unemployed librarian who, I would later discover in correspondence, had acquired the publications while writing her thesis but now needed to sell to meet an overdue car payment. The collection also included a rather eclectic

[8]There is now an extensive body of theorizing and research on zines and other forms of self-publishing. Cultural Studies scholars have examined zines as sites of subject formation (Bailey and Michaels), instances of the tactical redeployment of technology (Eichhorn "Sites Unseen"; Knobel and Lankshire), and examples of communication networks that preceded and even anticipated digital networks (Duncombe; Sabin and Triggs). Women's Studies researchers have drawn substantial attention to zines as primary documents that can be used to chart the emergence of a third wave feminist movement (Radway; Licona; Kerney). Zines have also been examined in the context of broader studies on life writing (Smith and Watson; Poletti), as well as book art and mail art (Saper). Notably, this represents only a small sample of the theorizing and research on zines that has been published since the mid 1990s.

range of books "rescued" from used bookstores and abe.com in my endless search for lesbian and feminist "guides" offering advice on everything from how to establish a consciousness raising group to how to terminate a relationship through, what the authors of *Sunday's Women*, describe simply as an "alternative three-way ending"—all this was advice I neither wanted nor needed but loved to collect nevertheless. At the center of my archive were approximately seven boxes of lesbian pulps published between the late 1970s and early 1990s by a dozen or so lesbian feminist presses, by this time all defunct. These books had been acquired "in bulk" from a former professor who no longer had the desire or space to house the books but was reluctant to sell them and knew of my interest in the history of feminist and lesbian publishing. Mixed in amongst my second and third wave feminist zines, magazines, and books were other cultural artifacts ranging from the "Dyke Deck" (a set of playing cards featuring Cathy Opie's photographs from the early to mid 1990s produced by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art) to a video shot on a Fisher Price video camera featuring several riot grrrl bands. But as my partners, past and present, would persistently ask, "Why would someone who prides herself on being a minimalist and whose aesthetics favor the avant-garde over the popular insist on accumulating and carting around a collection of this nature?"

Reflecting upon my cycle of accumulation, I began to search for a potential public home for my private archive, which I already understood as a collection that held the potential to provide researchers with insights into the history of small press lesbian and feminist publishing in the second half of the twentieth century. It was during my search that I realized my archiving impulse was by no means unique. In 2006, there were already several established university libraries with large collections of third wave feminist materials. While some of these collections, such as the Barnard College Zine Library,[9] had been established by activist librarians and archivists seeking to extend their activism to the workplace, other collections, such as the Bingham Center Zine Collections in the Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library at Duke University, had been created in response to

[9]For more information on the Barnard College Zine Collection see http://www.barnard.edu/library/zines/

requests from feminist collectors and archivists of my generation seeking safe public homes for their personal collections. Rather than bequeath my own collection to a university archive at this time, I chose to carry out research in and about these collections. My first research trip was to Duke University in July 2006.

The Sarah Dyer Collection, donated in 2000 by Dyer, herself the former owner of Action Grrrl Comix, is comprised of 2050 items. Among the collection, I discovered several zines also in my own collection (significant because most of these zines circulated in print runs of only 25 to 100 copies). A few of these zines were by young women with whom I had corresponded during my study on textual communities in the mid 1990s, so I knew just how remarkable it was that they had already found a home in the Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library at Duke University. The migration of a text from the writer's desk to the archive or rare book collection is usually a long and highly mediated process contingent upon the decision making of editors, publishers, reviewers, critics, and librarians. The migration of a text by an unknown writer, let alone a teenage girl, from the writer's desk to the archive or rare book library is usually a much longer process. When the unpublished diaries, journals, scrapbooks, and letters of young women end up in an archive, which is rare, it is usually decades or centuries later and generally only if the writer achieved a certain level of notoriety in her adult life as a writer or public figure. That titles such as *Slut Magnet* and *Geek Girl*—hastily written, photocopied, and self-distributed zines produced by young women in the mid 1990s—had found a permanent home in a rare book and manuscript library seemed unprecedented, raising the question, under what circumstances was this possible, and what might it say about my own generation of feminist scholars, cultural workers, and activists' relation to the archive?

As my discussions with Kelly Wooten, an archivist in her late twenties who was at the time just beginning her position at Duke University, revealed, it is highly unlikely that Duke University's zine collections would have been acquired had Dyer not approached the library first: "Sarah Dyer contacted the director of the center at the time in 1999 to let us know that she had all these zines but she didn't have a home for them . . . this is how it

began."[10] Wooten emphasized that since acquiring Dyer's collection, other private collectors, mostly women in their late twenties to mid thirties, had also contacted them about donating their collections. By 2009, their initial stand-alone zine collection had grown to include six additional zine collections. The biographical notes and collection overviews provide insights into what I have come to read as a pattern of collecting integral to feminist knowledge and cultural production and activism in the 1990s and beyond. In the finding aid for the Amy Mariaskin Zine Collection, we learn that Mariaskin, the author of two zines, "began collecting and trading zines with other women as a member of the Pittsburgh, PA, Riot Grrrl Chapter from 1995 to 2002."[11] Although her collection is much smaller in scale than Dyer's collection, its scope is similar:

> Collection consists of about 150 zines, mostly self-published by women and girls in the United States. Subjects include feminism, riot grrrl, body image and consciousness, music, mental health, depression and mental illness, film, poetry, rock and punk music, comics, violence against women, sexual identity, homosexuality and bisexuality, transgender issues, and race.[12]

The finding aid for the Sarah Wood Zine Collection, which also consists of approximately 150 zines, explains that Wood, along with her friend Kelly Curry, "founded and owned GERLL (Girls Empowered Resisting Labels and Limits) Press, a zine distro based in Chicago, Ill., in the early to mid 1990s."[13] Their collection includes zines "submitted to Wood and Curry by their authors to be considered for sale through the distro" on the subjects of feminism, the riot grrrl movement, body image and consciousness, women's health, women athletes, sexual abuse, television and film, poetry and short stories, rock music and punk music, violence against women, sexual identity, homosexuality, and bisexuality.

Significantly, Dyer, Mariaskin, and Wood were all involved in the production and/or distribution of zines by grrrls and women

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[10]Kelly Wooten, personal interview, 23 July 2006.

[11]For more information on the Amy Mariaskin Zine Collection see http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/zines/

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

at some point, but they are also cultural producers with a keen sense of awareness of why it may be important to house self-published works by young women in an established archive. While Dyer's motivation was at least partially about preservation, preservation is by no means the only reason a younger generation of feminists is donating zines and other cultural artifacts to archives only a few years after their creation and in some cases, simultaneous to their production.[14] Dyer, Mariaskin, and Wood recognized that locating their zine collections within a larger collection of first and second wave feminist publications and manuscripts was also a way to "authorize" and historically contextualize the writings of a new generation of feminists. In short, they understood the recontextualization of their collections as a form of *authorization by association.* As Wooten explained:

> A lot of the materials we have in the collection are similar [to the zines]. They are self-published by individuals or often by feminist collectives or other organizations, so a do-it-yourself ethic is represented in that way. We have many periodicals in the ALFA [Atlantic Lesbian Feminist Archives] that are similar. To me, the zine collections are the next generation's version of that.[15]

This is also what makes the zine collections at Duke University unique. As part of the Sallie Bingham Center, which has a mandate to acquire, preserve, and make available "published and unpublished materials that reflect the public and private lives of women, past and present,"[16] the zines are housed side-by-side with materials ranging from women's diaries and letters from the late nineteenth century to meeting minutes and newspapers

[14]Shortly after publicizing the Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, Wooten began to receive "donations" of current zines from young women across North America, sometimes with letters requesting that she preserve their zines (personal interview, July 25, 2006). Considering the fact that many of the established feminist theorists at the "Archiving Women" conference appeared genuinely surprised to learn that their personal papers would have a permanent home in a university collection, it is by no means insignificant that these young women, most in their late teens to early twenties, feel both authorized and compelled to seek legitimization for their writing in a university archive. Although it may suggest that they are simply more empowered than previous generations of women, it also implies a radically different understanding of the archive's status and function.

[15]Kelly Wooten, personal interview, 23 July 2006.

[16]See the website for the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at http://library.duke.edu/specialcollections/bingham/

produced by second wave feminist collectives. In this context, the zines are reconfigured as valuable manuscripts offering insights into women's lives as well as documentation integral to understanding the feminist movement across the decades. Notably, in a short essay on the donation of her zines to Duke University, Dyer emphasizes how she was led to the Sallie Bingham Center in part through her desire to place her collection in context:

> I was attracted to the Sallie Bingham Center the most because of the collections they already had—there was an emphasis on ephemera and one of a kind items like diaries that made me feel like they would know what to do with my zines. So at the end of 1999, I sent off a blind "hey, do you think you might want this stuff I have" email and got a resounding YES back right away! After a few exchanges, I felt sure that my zines would be respected and well treated there, and that it really might serve some useful purpose, so in 2000 I began shipping the archive box by box (something that continues to this day as I continue to unearth more zines and comics!). (Dyer 2009)

On my initial research trip, I also met Jenna Freedman for the first time. In contrast to Wooten, who was overseeing a collection of donated third wave feminist materials in a rare book and manuscript collection, Freedman, a zine producer, activist and reference librarian, had made a conscious decision to start a collection of zines by girls and women at the Barnard College Library. Although she initially established an open stacks collection of current zines, the Barnard Library Zine Collection is actually comprised of two parallel collections reflecting aligned but distinct mandates. On one hand is Barnard's open stacks collection, which exists in the center of the library and contains current zines. On the other hand is Barnard's "archive" of zines, which contains a copy of every zine in the open stacks collection as well as several donated zine collections. As Freedman explained, since the creation of the Barnard Library Zine Collection in 2003, several collectors, again, mostly women in their mid twenties to late thirties, have approached her about housing their personal collections of zines.[17]

In addition to balancing the challenges of access and preservation by maintaining both an open stacks collection and archive

[17]Jenna Freedman, personal interview, 25 July 2006.

of zines, Freedman is engaged in work that may be less visible but is no less important to feminist knowledge production. As the founder and custodian of a large collection of third wave feminist materials, Freedman has come to play an important role in networking a growing group of mostly emerging and early career feminist scholars, often through email introductions and discussions on her blog dedicated to exploring subjects such as, "zines and alternative press publications in libraries, cataloging, library activism, open source technology applications and culture, and lolcats."[18] Notably, Freedman's location in the place where research begins (the library) enables her to connect researchers with intersecting interests who, under other circumstances, would typically not be aware of each other's research until post-publication. As a librarian now responsible for cataloguing thousands of zines, most never produced with the expectation of being catalogued in a library, she is also actively working to change the categories through which printed materials come to be accessed and understood. Specifically, she has been engaged in lobbying the Library of Congress to introduce new subject categories, among them "third wave feminism." Such work means that Freedman is not simply responsible for facilitating access to or preserving documents but also working in collaboration with feminist cultural workers (including small and micro press publishers), activists, and academics to foster new sites of feminist collaboration and most importantly, new frameworks through which to render feminist knowledge visible.[19]

Although Wooten and Freedman are among the most high-profile zine archivists and librarians in North America due in part to their affiliations with established university librarians and frequent invitations to speak on feminist zine publishing and zine archiving and librarianship, there are countless other women engaged in similar work across the continent. In 2006 and 2007, I visited collections in Seattle, Olympia, and Portland. These collections were housed in used bookstores, non-profit organizations, and collectives. Some of the volunteer archivists and

[18]See Jenna Freedman's Lower East Side Librarian blog at http://jenna.openflows.com/

[19]Notably, Jenna Freedman's blog regularly includes posts that either seek to illustrate the absurdity of attempting to catalogue zines in accordance with existing Library of Congress subject headings and/or to solicit advice from other librarians and archivists on potentially suitable subject categories.

librarians[20] I encountered also worked in public and university libraries or were in the process of becoming professional librarians. Nearly all of the volunteers had some experience accumulating their own private collections of self-published materials. Their articulation of archiving was invariably about knowledge and activism, work and pleasure, affective attachments and public life. As Abby Bass, a volunteer at Richard Hugo House in Seattle explained when I visited ZAPP (Zine Archive and Publishing Project)[21] in May 2006:

> As part of my job, I get asked to do zine workshops. High schools and colleges ask me to do workshops and even public libraries. I'd never done a zine workshop before I became a zine librarian. Sometimes people come in and see the library and then make a zine and put it into the library then and there. We're a resource that is so there and has to become everything. . . . People come here to find out where they can find zines, buy zines and how to make them.[22]

Although Abby spoke as a volunteer, the scope of her position shared much in common with the scope of work carried out by many of the professional archivists and librarians I met, including Freedman and Wooten. Volunteer librarians and even private collectors are often surprisingly invested in preservation, taking care to store materials in archival quality containers, and often collecting with the view to building significant and enduring collections that might be handed over to "professionals" at a later date. Similarly, professionals, such as Wooten and Freedman, often express deep concern not only for preservation but also access. Like most volunteers, they understand the archive and library as sites of community-building and social networking—in short, they recognize their workplaces as spaces integral to generating new forms of feminist knowledge, cultural production, and activism. For this reason, it is difficult to separate their professional work as librarians from their activism. Wooten, for example, is presumably the only rare book librarian in North America

[20]The terms archivists and librarians are often used interchangeably in volunteer collections but rarely without intentionality on the part of the people fulfilling the positions.

[21]For more information on Richard Hugo House's Zine Archive and Publishing Project see http://www.hugohouse.org/house/zapp/

[22]Abby Bass, personal interview, 10 May 2007.

who regularly attends events such as Girls Rock Camp as part of her paid work. Notably, like Abby's at ZAPP, part of Wooten's role at such events is not only to talk about the zine collections she oversees but also to conduct zine workshops. Freedman, who is also frequently asked to speak about zines at community events and scholarly conferences and to carry out workshops on zine making, collection, and preservation, extends her work as an activist librarian through her involvement in Radical Reference—a network of librarians who use their professional skills to support social justice causes by accessing and disseminating information to activists and the media.[23] Significantly, many of the professional archivists and librarians I met during the course of my research started their careers as volunteers in community-based archives and continue to be affiliated with these collections. For example, as Abby at ZAPP explained, her predecessor left her position to pursue a degree in Library Science but continues to support the collection and to bring her commitment to promoting self-published materials into her professional work.[24] Wooten and Freedman also emphasized that they had followed similar professional paths and remained committed to blurring their professional and activists work in this respect.

In a myriad of ways, the archive has become a central link between feminist activism and scholarship—the place where feminists of my generation are finding ways to resolve the tensions between theory and praxis, the university and the community—tensions that proved highly divisive and even irresolvable for a previous generation of feminists. Before considering some of the possible explanations for the archival turn among feminists born during and after the rise of the second wave feminist movement in the 1960s to 1980s, I must emphasize that my intention is by no means to imply that women are only beginning to recognize the importance of documenting the traces of their private and public lives. That we have archival genres, such as commonplace books and bundles of letters from the Renaissance detailing women's intellectual lives, and scrapbooks from the nineteenth and early twentieth century documenting women's domestic activities as well as their public forms of resistance, suggests that the link

[23]For more information on Radical Reference see http://www.radicalreference.info/

[24]Abby Bass, personal interview, 10 May 2007.

between feminist activism and archiving is by no means new. Even more significantly, there is no doubt that the centrality of the archive for younger generations of feminists is deeply informed by the existence of community-based feminist and lesbian archives established by a previous generation of activists and scholars. What is unique to this generation of feminists, however, is the necessity to adopt the archive as a central rather than peripheral part of our scholarship, cultural production, and activism—in short, the recognition of the archive as the practice and site upon which these forms of resistance hinge.

The Archive as Authorizing Agent in the Decline of Feminist Publishing

Between the late 1960s and 1980s, second wave feminist activists, cultural workers, and academics developed an extensive network of feminist publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, literary journals, and bookstores. In "The Women in Print Movement: History and Implications," Trysh Travis observes:

> A product of Second Wave feminism, the Women in Print Movement was an attempt by a group of allied practitioners to create an alternative communications circuit—a woman-centered network of readers and writers, editors, printers, publishers, distributors, and retailers through which ideas, objects, and practices flowed in a continuous and dynamic loop. The movement's largest goals were nothing short of revolutionary: it aimed to capture women's experiences and insights in durable—even beautiful—printed forms through a communications network free from patriarchal and capitalist control. (276)

Focusing on the history of Canadian feminist periodicals, Barbara Godard notes that "Since the late 1960s, there have been more than 300 feminist publications in Canada" (212). Like Travis, her observations on the feminist publishing movement foreground its status as a radical alternative to commercial publishing networks:

> Feminist periodicals exist outside the dominant mode of capitalist publishing, on the margins and in opposition, both through their borderline position with respect to the marketplace and their commitment to contestatory ideology. These periodicals are developed to further feminist ideologies: they create new circuits for disseminating among women knowledges and practices that seek to transform the feminine condition

> under which women have been subject to systemic oppression. The periodicals are not in the business of producing commodity-texts to maximize the profit of a corporation. Signifying practices which challenge the symbolic order, feminist periodicals establish counter-institutions that would legitimate alternate ways of knowing and structures of editing. (213)

Notably, Travis and Godard emphasize that the success of the feminist publishing movement in the late 1960s to 1980s rested largely on the ability of women to deploy and re-imagine the economic and technical foundations of the publishing industry from a feminist perspective. Describing these women as "book historians of the present," Travis notes that Women in Print activists took it upon themselves to analyze "late twentieth-century publishing institutions, the political economy that supported them, and the identitarian norms—in this case, norms of gender and sexuality—that inflected their workings" (295). As she further observes, the ability to understand the capitalist and patriarchal underpinnings of the book trade were integral to their success in establishing, however briefly, an alternative print culture in the name of the movement. But as Godard's article emphasizes, such analysis would ultimately prove inadequate in the face of neoliberal restructuring in the 1990s and beyond:

> Advancing knowledge and art for its own sake, not for some instrumental end, is a critique of disinterested practices, which feminism exposes as always haunted by economic and political interest. But disavowal of profit also poses a potential for recuperation since, performed ever at a loss, women's altruistic labour is open to exploitation and further devaluation. (213)

While at least some of the presses, publications, and distribution networks that appeared during the feminist movement in the 1960s to 1980s had understandably outgrown their mandates by the 1990s, many others were unable to survive the massive restructuring of the publishing industry and book trade during this decade. On the one hand, independent bookstores struggled to compete with the rise of "big box" retailers, many with surprisingly large but not necessarily eclectic Women's Studies, Queer Theory, and GLBT Literature sections. On the other hand, many small presses struggled to keep up with the demands these retailers notoriously place on presses to produce larger print runs in

order to fill orders for books that these retailers often appear to have little interest in actually promoting or selling. As small presses would discover by the late 1990s, "big box" bookstores' orders are frequently returned, often in damaged condition, many years later, leaving them to deal with the surplus and financial loss (Godard 221–222). However, the rise of these bookstores as well as online book distributors was fueled by a series of broader economic, cultural, and technological shifts that historian David Harvey characterizes as part of the "creative destruction" that typifies neoliberalization with its belief that the "social good" does indeed lie in extending the reach of the market economy to all aspects of life (2–3).

Neoliberalization rests on the state's complicity in promoting and protecting individual entrepreneurial "freedoms." As such, even nations with strong state-sponsored arts programs are by no means immune to the effects of neoliberalization. As Godard notes, in the 1990s, Canadian arts funding became increasingly focused on the need to produce "marketable" products. Similar shifts were observed around the world, and feminist presses and publications proved to be at a distinct disadvantage. In contrast to other groups who have at times effectively disavowed short-term profit (e.g., avant-garde artists) for long-term symbolic gain,[25] feminist cultural workers' anti-economic behavior does not necessarily lead to long-term cultural prestige (Godard 211). In fact, in the "feminist sub-field," anti-economic behavior has historically proven extremely perilous for two reasons. First, with few exceptions, feminist cultural workers and activists enter the field with less symbolic and economic capital than other groups who have historically risked anti-economic behavior. Second, when feminist cultural workers and activists disavow short-term profit for long-term symbolic gain, their gains tend to be far less significant. As Godard explains, "Undertaking the work of producing a periodical in order to contest the very assumptions of what constitutes 'politics' and 'culture,' feminists bring with them no accumulation of capital, either economic or symbolic, which might be reconverted into support for their cultural productions" (211). The inability to "convert prestige . . .

[25]See in particular Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of avant-garde artists in *The Field of Cultural Production* (33–73).

into power in the political arena" made feminist publishing initiatives especially vulnerable to neoliberal restructuring in the 1990s, leading to the demise of the vast majority of feminist presses and publications in Canada and other countries that had established feminist publishing networks in the preceding three decades. However, Godard's analysis of feminist publishing overlooks one significant consideration: as opportunities to circulate feminist work were slipping away, a new generation of feminist cultural workers and scholars continued to find ways to publish, disseminate, and even authorize their writing throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium.

As Gail Chester remarks in an article on feminist anthologies published in a special issue of *Women's Studies International Forum* in 2002, "Mainstream publishing has always tended to marginalize the more radical perspectives within society, while radical publishing has always found outlets in the interstices of the system" (193). As such, "Just as the last wave of progressive publishing was fuelled in the 1960s and 1970s by the introduction of small offset-litho printing machines, so the decline in price of short-run book printing combined with the widespread use of desk-top publishing and cheap copy printing for zines and pamphlets could herald a new wave now" (193). The existence of feminist zine collections (primarily comprised of materials published during the 1990s and into the new millennium) suggests that the "new wave" of feminist publishing anticipated by Chester had in fact already arrived by the time her article appeared in 2002. No longer easily able to legitimize their voices in traditional print-based media, younger feminists—with or without the approval or acknowledgement of their feminist "foremothers"—turned to various forms of self-publishing to disseminate their ideas in the form of zines and eventually online journals and blogs. However, despite the fact that many of these zine producers and bloggers shared much in common with the women who established small presses, publishing collectives, bookstores, and distribution networks in the 1960s to 1980s, including a D.I.Y. ethic, commitment to collective labor and a relative lack of cultural and economic capital, their zines or digital publications appeared to carry significantly less symbolic currency than a previous generation's printed texts. As such, much of the feminist writing produced and disseminated in the 1990s initially eluded recognition by second wave feminists,

including Godard and Chester whose 2002 articles either ignore or underestimate the prevalence of zines and web-based productions. Thus, print and digital self-publishing efforts appeared to lack "prestige" not only on the basis of content but also on the basis of form, resulting in their marginalization both within the broader public sphere and feminist intellectual, cultural, and political contexts. If publishing itself served as the central authorizing mechanism for second wave feminists, for new generations of feminists in the 1990s and beyond, publishing has proven inadequate on its own. Yet, as I have argued throughout this article, this demise has by no means prevented a generation or two of women born during after the rise of second wave feminism from finding ways to legitimize their voices and gain symbolic currency. In fact, their strategy may, in the long run, prove even more enduring than a previous generation's deployment of print-based economies.

Although professional archivists frequently worry about the increasingly hazy distinction between the terms "collection," "library," and "archive,"[26] one cannot deny the fact that to label something an archive remains a powerful authorizing act and *not* because it implies a site of collection and preservation. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault refers to the archive as first and foremost a "system" invested with the power to "establish statements as events . . . and things" (128). For Foucault, the archive is an authorizing apparatus—a structure that determines which statements can and do *act* in and upon the social world. This recognition of the archive as a system that establishes what discourses matter—what discourses will be invested with a certain degree of illocutionary force—has driven the archival turn in contemporary feminist activism, scholarship, and cultural production. For a generation or two of women born during and following the rise of the second wave feminist movement, inaugurating private and semi-public collections as archives, donating these collections and even individual self-published works to established public and university library collections, and claiming the library and archive as sites of feminist activism have become central to how

[26]In "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," Marlene Manoff notes that today, "Even librarians and archivists have become somewhat careless in their use of the term [archive]" (10).

they legitimize their voices in the public sphere. In this respect, the archive plays a role parallel to a previous generation's alternative print economy.

While my own research suggests that the archive is an especially important authorizing mechanism for younger generations of feminists, in the past two decades, the archive has also emerged as a central site of resistance for other groups concerned with social justice and equity. As Antoinette Burton observes in the introduction to *Archive Stories*, many "archive stories" now exist on the borders of the academy and the law and the archive is no longer the sole domain of historians and professional practitioners (2). There is now a myriad of "archive enterprises taken up by groups who believe that their histories have not been written because they have not been considered legitimate subjects of history and hence of archivization per se" (2). Nevertheless, I maintain that feminists born in the 1960s and beyond may have a particularly unique relationship to the archive. What distinguishes their deployment of the archive (understood as a concept, place, and practice in this case) from other emerging archival projects is that they are making archives and tactically redeploying existing archival spaces not only to ensure their histories are preserved but also more importantly, to authorize their legacies *in the present*. However, the rise of the archive is not entirely surprising. As I have argued elsewhere,[27] with the emergence of the web, the archive now infuses our everyday discursive practices in previously unimaginable ways. If the desktop is recognized as a type of archive, writing begins with entry into the archive. To write in a digital age is to write *in* the archive. Where writing and archiving meet, practices of making history naturally become deeply entangled with practices of documenting and preserving history. The archival turn in feminist activism, scholarship, and cultural production over the past decade and half, then, may both be a response to the demise of a previous generation's publishing networks and a consequence of entering a public sphere radically restructured by new tools for communication and preservation.

[27]See in particular my discussion of the archive and desktop in Eichhorn, "Archival Genres."

Archives of Resolution

I opened this article with an account of intergenerational tensions at a conference on the archive. Throughout, I have admittedly highlighted more differences than lines of continuity across generations of feminists. However, as previously suggested, the archive may also be where such tensions and differences are being resolved.

Over the past decade, the intergenerational dynamics of the feminist movement have been explored in numerous anthologies and special issues of feminist journals.[28] Much of this theorizing, published by women born during and after the rise of the second wave feminist movement, has sought to correct the perception that younger feminists are the ungrateful daughters of the movement who suffer from a deep-rooted historical myopia. But this "corrective" literature also reveals the extent to which younger feminists frequently experience and express their feelings of envy and resentment, adoration and love for older feminists *through* their attachment to this generation's books and ephemera. Take, for example, the narrative with which Astrid Henry opens her essay, "Enviously Grateful, Gratefully Envious: The Dynamics of Generational Relationships in U.S. Feminism":

> A few weeks before graduating from college in the spring of 1989, I stole a book from my school's library. It was a book that I had read for hours in the library stacks, checked out numerous times to enjoy in the privacy of my dorm room, and wish was still in print so I could buy my own copy. It was a book that shaped my feminism. The book was the 1973 anthology *Radical Feminism* . . . (140)

Henry assures her readers that she did eventually (five years later) find a copy of *Radical Feminism* at a bookstore and duly return the stolen copy to her alma mater's library. Significantly, there was something deeply important to Henry about possessing this book despite the fact that its essays were published in a different era for women facing an entirely different set of obstacles. As she states, "*Radical Feminism* excited me," but it was also the source of more complex feelings. Both the text and the theory the text described

[28]See among other publications *Hypatia*'s special issue, "Third Wave" Feminisms (12.3) published in Summer 1997.

evoked feelings of "envy and gratitude," which Henry explains included, "envy for all that I had missed by accident of birth and gratitude for all the feminists before had accomplished" (141).

Like Henry's account of stealing *Radical Feminism*, my own account of collecting feminist books and ephemera is not simply a story about cathecting to an object or set of objects but also a story about the complex, often contradictory, affects that shape our collecting practices. I was excited by the risk-taking and optimism many of the second wave publications in my collection convey but also bemused by and envious of the conditions that made this risk-taking and optimism possible. As such, my collection was both utopian and a constant reminder that my "political 'cathexis' has been interrupted" (Henry 145). However, in the archive, new arrangements frequently give way to unexpected couplings, surprising alliances, and even alterative narratives. As emphasized, one of the unique features of the zine collections housed at the Sallie Bingham Center is that they place riot grrrl zines side-by-side with the diaries of southern women dating back to the nineteenth century as well as the manifestos, minute meetings, journals, and newspapers of lesbian feminist organizations from the 1970s. On a much smaller scale, my own collection afforded similar juxtapositions. In 2008, as I was preparing to deliver the eight boxes of materials that comprised my collection to the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections at York University, for the first time, I started to recognize relationships that had previously remained obscured. For example, many riot grrrl zines contain ironic redeployments of second wave feminist slogans and images. In my original research on zines (Eichhorn *Sites Unseen*), I read these collages and commentaries as mere parody. Reading across several generations of feminist and lesbian periodicals, books, and ephemera, I came to appreciate that such texts may be read as acts of mimicry rather than mere parody. Just as second wave feminists frequently redeployed the imagery of suffragettes for humor and as expressions of their debt to earlier generations of feminists, the parodies of second wave feminists in riot grrrl zines may be more accurately read as expressions of appreciation, nostalgic yearning, love, and even envy (for a era marked by feminist political gains) rather than an attempt to execute a violent break with this generation's ideologies and practices. In the end, donating my own collection to a university

archive, chosen in part because it was already home to several other donated collections of feminist and lesbian books, periodicals, and music, represented many things but in no way represented a desire to enact a break with the histories of struggle it documented. Donated with the permission and in the name of the professor who entrusted me with part of her own collection of feminist and lesbian books over a decade earlier—and upon agreement that we both wanted students and researchers to have access to our shared archive—my donation was most explicitly an expression of appreciation and an act of community-building.[29]

To a generation of feminist activists and scholars who, unlike my own generation, once talked about revolution *without* irony, making the archive central to one's activist work understandably may appear at least somewhat defeatist. To begin in the archive is to acknowledge that progressive social change is *never* an evolution. To begin in the archive is to admit that gains, even those that appear most entrenched, are always at risk of slipping away. However, while our impulse to preserve our own voices alongside the voices of earlier generations of feminists may speak to an inherent paranoia or entrenched skepticism, such archival impulses also point to lessons learned from a previous generation. In this respect, the centrality of the archive in our everyday lives, activism, knowledge-making, and cultural production may be read as an expression of solidarity bridging different generations of feminists, and the generational conflict enacted at the "Archiving Women" conference may say as much about our differences as the depth of our inheritance.

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[29]For more information on the Didi Khayatt collection see http://www.library.yorku.ca/ccm/ArchivesSpecial Collections/index.htm

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