

Unravelling Zine History
Exploring Origins, Evolution, and Cultural Significance

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I hereby declare that I have composed the present thesis myself and without use of any other than the cited sources and aids. The thesis in the same or similar form has not been submitted to any examination body and has not been published. This thesis was not yet, even in part, used in another examination or as a course performance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nina Jacobson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Nina Jacobson

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Abstract

This paper explores the world of zines, investigating their origins, evolution, and enduring significance within alternative publishing. It offers a thorough examination of zine production processes, including both traditional analog and modern digital techniques, as well as various binding methods. By situating zines in different historical contexts, the study highlights their role in reflecting and influencing socio-cultural movements, showcasing their adaptability and impact over time. The research delves into the intricate relationship between zine-making and broader socio-cultural dynamics, emphasising the creativity, resilience, and activism inherent in zine culture. Furthermore, the paper addresses the challenges associated with preserving zines within institutional archives, exploring methods for archiving historical ephemera and assessing the relevance of zines as artefacts of independent publishing. By integrating discussions on production techniques and archival practices, this study aims to illuminate the stories behind these unique publications and evaluate their cultural and historical value. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of zines and their significance in the landscape of alternative media.

Keywords: fanzines, ephemera, DIY culture, independent publishing, subculture

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I. The World of Zines: A Comprehensive Introduction

A. Defining and Outlining the Research

So... what is a “zine”?

Zines, short for "magazines" or "fanzines," are self-published, small-circulation publications that focus on niche topics, personal experiences, creative expression, or alternative perspectives. They occupy a unique space in the media landscape, characterised by their tangible, intimate nature and their ability to integrate a wide range of subjects, historical insights, and community engagement. The essence of a zine lies in its independent production, which is free from corporate funding. This independence is critical to defining what constitutes a true zine, distinguishing it from other publications that may use the "zine" label purely for marketing purposes. Unlike magazines produced by large corporations like Vans or Nike, which may adopt the "zine" label to appeal to alternative markets, genuine zines are not driven by commercial interests but by a commitment to authentic, community-centred expression.

The diversity of topics covered in zines is one of their defining features. From personal anecdotes and creative writing to in-depth explorations of social justice issues and niche subcultures, zines offer a platform for a wide array of voices and narratives, and “It is these relationships between the self and the “Other” that allows for greater understanding among people to unite in the spirit of democratic thought” (White and Cooper). This diversity is not merely a superficial characteristic but a fundamental aspect of zine culture. Zines provide a space where marginalised voices, those often overlooked by mainstream media, can find expression; "Zines demonstrate a critical literacy in which writers are more than passive consumers of social expectations and late capitalism" (Jacobi). The critical literacy which Jacobi mentions here is that which directly pertains to the relationship between power and language. One must here consider the value of expression and its implications. This underscores how zines function as a medium for alternative viewpoints, reflecting a broad spectrum of experiences that challenge dominant narratives.

The rise of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture has been instrumental in shaping the zine movement. DIY principles emphasise self-reliance and creativity, fostering a direct and personal connection between creators and their audience, “To paraphrase William Morris: Owning the means of production is a way to gain back pleasure in work, and this, in return, serves as a prerequisite for the production of (applied) art and beauty” (Klanten et al.). This hands-on approach to content creation results in zines that are both physically and conceptually intimate. The ethos of "taking matters into one's own hands" is reflected in the diverse ways zines are produced. They can range from simple photocopied pages folded into booklets to more elaborate handbound volumes featuring custom artwork. Each zine is a testament to its maker's vision and creativity, highlighting the individuality of its production process.

In recent years, technological advancements and the rise of digital platforms have further influenced the zine landscape. The transition from physical to digital formats has introduced new opportunities and challenges for distribution and accessibility. Zine creators now navigate online platforms and social media, expanding their reach and engagement with global audiences while grappling with issues related to digital presence and sustainability. While I will briefly touch on the digital realm as well as e-zines, it will not be a major focus of this paper as I am more concerned with the physical zines and their presence in archives and libraries.

Zines also serve as a counterpoint to mainstream media, which often prioritises commercial interests and broad appeal over depth and diversity. By focusing on what is considered "alternative," zines provide a crucial space for creativity and expression that is not typically available through conventional media channels. They amplify marginalised voices and offer insights into subcultures and social movements that might otherwise remain invisible, where "Zine histories are narratives of origins that reveal much about the identifications, orientations, and conflicts of contemporary zine culture" (deGravelles). The role of zines in documenting and reflecting the diverse and often radical elements of contemporary culture is therefore intrinsic.

The non-commercial nature and freedom of expression inherent in zines make them particularly accessible and inclusive. This accessibility allows for a more personal relationship with the

content, one that is potentially unmoderated and unrestrained by the constraints of mainstream media. Zines often function as a form of grassroots media, where creators have full control over their work, from content to distribution, operating as a “network built on enthusiasm, idealism, and pragmatism” (Klanten et al.). This freedom enables a level of experimentation and innovation that is less feasible in more commercially driven media. Zines have never been limited to one format or binding method. Some examples of the interesting possibilities of formats of zines are found in the publication *Le Carnet de Curiosité*¹ by Benjamin Pingouin. It includes descriptions of zines like *Hackordion*, 2019, by Joe Furlong, an accordion book revealing bug and virus mutations in a post-apocalyptic future. Or *Töner kebab*, a fanzine in which each page represents an ingredient of kebab, all served in its own sachet. The world of zines is wide and beautiful.

The aesthetics of zines, including their distinctive visual styles and design choices, further contribute to their unique identity and impact. The evolution of zine aesthetics reflects broader artistic trends and personal expression, adding another layer to their cultural significance and it has already been said that “Historically, librarians and academics acknowledge that zines hold potential value for researchers, in part due to their anthropological efficacy” (Wee). Given the diverse forms and democratic ethos of zines, their preservation becomes essential for maintaining their historical and cultural significance. Zines are ephemeral by nature, and are often produced in limited runs and distributed in small, localised circles. This transience poses challenges for their preservation and study. Archiving practices are crucial in ensuring that these materials are preserved for future generations, allowing continued appreciation and scholarly examination, a crucial point as “the archives of cultural memory consist not only of the stories, images, or documents of the past but also of the ‘acts of transfer’” (Chidgey). As we transition to exploring the role of archiving in preserving zines and similar ephemera, it becomes evident that effective archiving practices are necessary to safeguard the unique contributions of zines to cultural and historical narratives. The preservation of these materials ensures that their impact is

¹ This catalogue was produced at La Fanzinothèque by Benjamin Pingouin during the period of one month, and includes some of the library's examples of “non-normative” fanzines and graphic objects.

not lost and that future researchers and enthusiasts can continue to engage with the rich tapestry of voices and perspectives that zines represent.

B. The Development of Zines

Zines have existed in one form or another for hundreds of years. If we are considering zines as they exist today, their origins can be traced back to the early 20th-century science fiction fanzines and “[...] are typically single-authored, handmade, do-it-yourself, creative publications centered on themes and issues that explore the personal and the political, the extraordinary and the mundane. As countercultural artifacts, they are often situated in direct opposition to canonical literature and dominant discourse and work to celebrate difference through multigenre creative expression” (Jacobi). Of course, the notion of canonical literature can no longer serve as an umbrella term in an age where fundamental notions of culture and experience are expanding. To reiterate, here I am referring to the commonly agreed upon ‘original’ zines. These pioneering publications were driven by passionate fan communities and laid the groundwork for the modern zine movement. Initially, the term “fanzine” underscored the fan-driven and non-professional nature of these publications. Early fanzines were produced manually using typewriters, carbon paper, and other rudimentary tools. Science fiction fans, eager to share their enthusiasm, created these zines and exchanged them through informal networks. The science fiction fanzine community began to expand beyond its original circles. As fanzines gained popularity, their scope broadened to include discussions on fantasy, horror, comic books, and other niche subcultures. This expansion reflected the evolving interests of fans and the growing diversity within the zine community. The increasing variety of content and artistic styles became evident. Some fanzines featured intricate hand-drawn illustrations, while others incorporated collage art or experimental typography. This creative freedom allowed fans to express themselves in unique ways and connect with others who shared similar passions; “... most zines share some family resemblance: combinations of handwritten text, typewritten text, and drawings; cut-and-paste layouts; writing in multiple genres; the occasional (or sometimes not occasion) smudges or faint spots of a photocopy; a tendency to approach most topics through the lens of personal

experience; and an orientation toward some version of alternative culture or politics, broadly defined” (deGravelles, 3). This eclectic mix of elements, manifested in the diverse and personal nature of zines, is what distinguishes them from mainstream publications.

The notion of a community approach soon led to the formation of organised Amateur Press Associations (APAs). In APAs, members contributed their own zines, which were then compiled and circulated among the group. This system allowed fans to read and respond to each other’s work, fostering a strong sense of community and interaction with the content. As technology advanced, the accessibility of mimeograph machines in the 1940s and 1950s marked a significant shift. These machines enabled creators to produce and reproduce zines more cheaply and efficiently. By writing or typing content on stencils and then transferring ink through the stencil’s cutouts onto paper, creators could produce multiple copies with relative ease. The printed sheets were often folded in half and secured with staples, resulting in the familiar booklet format.

Zines played a crucial role in fostering a sense of community among fans. They provided a space for exchanging ideas, reviews, and recommendations, allowing enthusiasts to connect over shared interests and “[...] individuals [are] free to be who they want and to cultivate their own interests, while simultaneously sharing in each other’s differences. It allows people the intimacy and primary connections they don’t mind in a mass society, but with none of the stifling of difference that usually comes with tight-knit communities” (Duncombe). This emphasis on personal expression and community building became a defining characteristic of zines.

Zines grew in popularity, they began to serve as a vital source of information and alternative perspectives. They provided a platform for challenging mainstream media narratives and offering viewpoints that were often marginalised or overlooked. The evolution of fanzines from simple fan publications to influential media artefacts reflects their ability to adapt and respond to changing cultural and technological landscapes.

In the broader context, the evolution of zines mirrors shifts in media production and consumption, reflecting broader societal changes. From their origins in the manual production of early fanzines to the mechanical advances of mimeographs and beyond, the development of zines

reveals a trajectory marked by innovation and diversification. This evolution demonstrates not only the historical depth of zines but also their continued relevance in today's media landscape. As we probe further into the zine phenomenon, it becomes evident that their history is emblematic of the power of independent media in nurturing community, fostering creativity, and presenting alternative viewpoints. To deepen our understanding, it is essential to turn our attention to existing scholarship, which provides critical insights into how zines are perceived and studied. This exploration of the literature on zines will not only illuminate their impact but also identify the gaps and opportunities for future inquiry, thereby enriching our appreciation of their role in media and culture.

C. A Note on Existing Literature

When delving into the world of zines, it's essential to engage with the scholarly and critical discussions that have shaped our understanding of these unique publications. Zines, often viewed as niche or marginal, have garnered significant academic attention, reflecting their role as cultural artefacts and forms of resistance. This body of literature provides valuable insights into the significance of zines and the various theoretical frameworks that have been applied to them.

I refer to a number of existing texts throughout this paper. Stephen Duncombe's *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Underground Culture* is a cornerstone of zine studies. Duncombe, a Professor of Media and Culture at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study and the Department of Media, Culture and Communications at the Steinhardt School of New York University (Duncombe), explores the intersection of culture and politics through the lens of zines. His work is pivotal in understanding how zines function as platforms for political and cultural resistance, capturing the essence of the DIY ethos that characterises the zine community. It is a source that is included in most academic publications about this topic. Duncombe's analysis situates zines within a broader context of alternative media, emphasising their role in challenging mainstream narratives and providing space for dissenting voices. However, it's important to note that Duncombe's insights, while foundational, were developed in the late

1990s. The rise of digital platforms and e-zines since then has introduced new dimensions to the zine landscape that his work doesn't fully address.

Most of the literature used for this thesis was published within an American-centric context, especially with reference to existing library collections or archiving projects. A notable account of such projects includes Kate Eichorn's paper *D.I.Y. Collectors, Archiving Scholars, and Activist Librarians: Legitimizing Feminist Knowledge and Cultural Production Since 1990* which details the zine collection at Duke University Library and the Barnard Library Zine Collection. However, the zines I will be referring to do not originate in that particular geographical area, as I myself am located in France. As such, I have included zines that I have been able to access directly through their creators. I have also interviewed mainly French zine makers in order to balance the perspectives gleaned from the academic works I have been able to refer to.

Considering the inclusion of zines into collections, I have also focused on Julia Bartel's book *From A to Zine: Building a Winning Collection in Your Library*. This book is Bartel's experience with creating the zine collection in the Salt Lake City Library in the United States and gives a comprehensive definition and history of zines while detailing the techniques of cataloguing and processing zines into a publicly accessible collection. Another relevant text is Anne Hays' study on the attitudes of zine-makers towards library collections offers another crucial perspective. Hays' research investigates the increasing presence of zine collections in libraries and explores the challenges and opportunities this presents. Her study predominantly pertains to the unique issues related to zines, such as irregular publication schedules and limited bibliographic information, which complicate their integration into institutional settings. Hays' work is significant for understanding how zines contribute to cultural preservation and access. By focusing on zine authors' perspectives, her study sheds light on the role of zines in documenting alternative histories and providing educational resources, especially for marginalised communities. This was particularly useful when constructing my interview questions to various zine makers, especially taking into account privacy concerns. Despite its pioneering nature, Hays' research acknowledges the need for further exploration, particularly through qualitative

interviews with zine authors who use pseudonyms or are less represented in library collections. This study supports the thesis by illustrating how zine collections in libraries can enhance cultural heritage and inclusivity.

Ethical considerations in zine documentation and dissemination are another important aspect of the literature. Teal Triggs' *Fanzines* is a notable example, though it has faced criticism for not obtaining permission from the zine artists featured. Triggs' book, while offering a valuable collection, serves as an example of the complexities of using zines without proper consent, raising questions about copyright and ethical practices. The debate surrounding her work underscores the importance of respecting creators' rights and maintaining ethical standards in zine scholarship, and "People were also mad that she didn't ask for permissions before taking pictures of the zines, but it's basically someone taking pictures of their zine collection, so it falls into the fair use doctrine of copyrighted materials in the USA at least" (Wred Fright, 2020). In my own research, I have taken care to seek permission for the zines discussed, aligning with ethical practices and contributing to the discourse on responsible zine documentation. All the references I have included are either my own photographs or are scans of zines that I have purchased and asked creators for permission to be included. The interviews conducted among the zine makers also included a section where participants could specify if they wanted to remain anonymous, share their creator name, or share all their information. There was also a section where they could provide images that they were willing to share for this thesis.

The integration of zines into public and institutional spaces is another key area of discussion. There is growing recognition of the need to preserve and make zines accessible to a wider audience. Scholars emphasise the importance of cataloguing and archiving zines in a manner that respects their unique characteristics and cultural significance. Strategies for effective integration into public archives and libraries are proposed, advocating for the inclusion of zines as valuable cultural resources. This approach aligns with the goal of ensuring that zines are not only preserved but also appreciated and studied as integral components of our cultural heritage.

With the foundation laid by existing scholarly work and critical discussions on zines, it's apparent that while much has been explored, there remain untapped dimensions and emerging questions in understanding their full impact. This sets the stage for a closer examination of how zines continue to shape and reflect alternative voices and cultural narratives. Transitioning into an exploration of the core research questions and thesis of this paper, I will address these evolving themes, aiming to deepen our comprehension of zines' role and relevance in contemporary and historical contexts.

D. Research Question and Thesis Statement

My background as a printmaker deeply invested in bookmaking profoundly shapes my academic exploration of zines. This thesis seeks to bridge personal passion with scholarly analysis by highlighting the importance of zine creation and its accessibility. Through a detailed examination of zines' production, content, and dissemination, this research will illustrate how these DIY publications challenge conventional media structures and offer unique insights into independent publishing. I will be focussing on a variety of zines to illustrate printmaking techniques, content, context, and dissemination. With permission from the creators, this paper includes a digital component—a publicly accessible website—that enhances the exploration of zine culture. This digital object serves as an interactive extension of the thesis, offering a more tactile engagement with zine contents and providing additional resources and insights into the world of zines. By complementing the textual analysis with this online platform, the research aims to offer a multifaceted view of zine creation and dissemination.

The production and dissemination of zines offer critical insights into how alternative voices emerge and how cultural expressions are shaped outside traditional media frameworks. Zines often reflect democratic and cultural values through independent production, which allows for a more authentic representation of marginalised groups and underrepresented movements. They stand in contrast to mainstream media by offering alternative narratives and serving as a form of resistance against dominant societal norms. According to Carvalho et al., “distribution can occur by handing them at shows, concerts, universities, libraries and cultural centers. Another option is

to send copies by mail, if the edition is more elaborate, with seams, binding or high relief, or to make them available online, in digital format” (Carvalho et al.). This conveys the diverse methods of distribution that contribute to zines' role in fostering counterpublics and challenging the status quo.

Research Question: How do zines function as significant cultural artefacts within the context of alternative publishing? In what ways do they preserve and reflect grassroots movements, and what are the most effective strategies for integrating zines into public and institutional archives to ensure their preservation and accessibility?

Thesis Statement: This paper provides a thorough examination of zines, tracing their historical development and evaluating their role in alternative publishing. It delves into zines as forms of ephemera, exploring their historical ties to small presses and their impact on preserving and expanding cultural heritage. The research includes an analysis of printmaking techniques, interviews with zine creators, and case studies to highlight the diverse production methods and creative processes involved. Additionally, the study presents a digital object—a website designed to interact with the thesis content—further illustrating the zine-making process and its significance. By investigating zines’ socio-cultural roles and proposing effective strategies for their preservation and integration into public and institutional archives, this research underscores their value as dynamic expressions of creativity, activism, and grassroots cultural movements within the broader cultural landscape.

This exploration is enriched by my Master’s studies in Rare Books and Digital Humanities, which focus on descriptive bibliography, digitization, and digital humanities. This program provided me with a more comprehensive understanding of rare and early books, digital preservation techniques, and the theoretical and practical skills necessary to analyse and integrate zines into broader cultural and archival contexts.

II. Zines in Culture and History

A. Historical Context and Development of Zines

The origins of zines as we know them today can be traced to the science fiction community in the 1930s, as has previously been touched on. If we rewind some years to the aforementioned science fiction fans, who were deeply passionate about the genre, we can outline the first editions of what morphed into the zine as we know it today. These “sci-fi” fans began to create small, amateur publications that contained their writings, discussions, and reviews related to science fiction literature, movies, and other media. These were mostly documents typed out with a typewriter and circulated among the science fiction fanbase, containing information about characters, and alternative theories, and plot developments. These early science fiction publications were dubbed "fanzines", a portmanteau of "fan" and "magazines." The term fanzine is still used today but is often shortened to “zine” in most of the English-speaking places I have encountered. According to Carvalho,

The zine, as it is seen now, emerged decades ago in a different form. It appeared in the United States in the 1930s, firstly being called fanzine a junction of the words fanatic and magazine. The first fanzine known is *The Comet*, by Ray Palmer, released in May 1930.¹⁰ It focused on science fiction and, from that point on, spread throughout the world. Although they already existed, the term fanzines was only properly coined in 1941 with Lewis Russ Chauvenet's publication *Detours*

Zines emerged during periods of social and political change and it is also clear that they have been tied to cultural developments since their first appearance. Where originally fanzines were conceived for fans to contribute to the universes provided by science fiction writings, they have since expanded to encompass a broad array of topics stemming from a variety of writers. By analysing their production and distribution methods one can ascertain a window into the historical context in which they were created, thereby shedding light on the social movements and countercultures they were associated with. Contribution to media and communication studies

offers insights into alternative forms of media production, distribution, and consumption and are relevant because “as a form of alternative media, zines inevitably create different modes of production, representation, and consumption to those found in mainstream media industries” (Chidgey). This informs broader discussions about media democratisation and participation.

As zine culture expanded, it started influencing and being influenced by other fandoms and subcultures. Notably, music scenes, especially punk in the 1970s and 1980s, embraced the ethos of zines, along with the agency of Do-It-Yourself. Punk zines became a powerful medium for expressing countercultural ideas, independent music reviews, and alternative lifestyle perspectives. The book *Punkzines: British Fanzine Culture From The Punk Scene 1976 - 1983* by Eddie Piller and Steve Rowland explains this link in the space of British punk culture and the milieu of social change occurring in this period. This book is a fully illustrated document which accounts for the main zines produced and distributed at the early stages of the punk movement in Britain. Piller and Rowland explain that fanzines were and are still a way of expressing social change, archiving, and recording the social milieu of any given space. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the widespread availability of photocopiers and xerography further revolutionised zine production. Xerography allowed creators to experiment with layouts, visuals, and text, while photocopiers made it easier to duplicate and distribute zines to a larger audience. Zines offered a platform for marginalised voices to be heard. They provided an avenue for women, LGBTQ+ communities, and people from diverse backgrounds to express themselves and find like-minded individuals, creating a rich tapestry of perspectives within the zine world.

It is important to note that zines are largely associated with the term “marginal literature”. Carvalho’s 2019 study, *Literature From The Margins: a study on the relevance of zines*, reflects on the relevance of zines in terms of its publishing market, format, and insertion into certain social spheres

It is possible to reflect that zines are a product of marginal literature and, at the same time, they might inspire it, because their format encompasses a great freedom of production. The world of zines can be widely expanded to various

formats and styles because what really matters is creativity. There is no fixed model to create one. They are independent productions for people interested in its essence, the underground culture

What is crucial to understand is the cultural context and non-relevance of mainstream media which ultimately means that the zine becomes a vessel for true reflection and expression, serving as outlets for countercultural movements, dissent, and resistance. This allows creators to challenge mainstream ideologies and offer alternatives to widely accepted viewpoints, thereby “expressing ideas that the mainstream might find inappropriate, dangerous, challenging, radical, explicit, or in general just unimportant” (Metcalf). What follows is the adaptation to a DIY ethos, emphasising self-production, independent distribution, and a rejection of corporate or institutional control. This ethos allows creators to have direct control over the content and distribution of their work.

While we have explored the development and impact of modern zines from the 20th century onwards, it’s worth considering that the concept of self-published, independent media might have roots extending much further back. This broader historical perspective prompts a deeper look at how zines are preserved. The practice of defining and archiving ephemera becomes crucial in this context, allowing us to understand and maintain the significance of these unique publications across different periods. As we move forward, examining the methodologies and importance of archiving provides valuable insights into preserving the legacy and cultural contributions of zines throughout history.

B. Archiving Ephemera

The practice of archiving zines fits within the larger tradition of preserving ephemera—printed or written materials intended for short-term use or immediate consumption. Ephemera has a long history, dating back to the early days of printing, when broadsides, single-sided printed sheets, were used to disseminate news, proclamations, and announcements. These broadsides, often discarded after serving their purpose, share a key characteristic with zines: both are typically produced in limited runs, capturing the fleeting thoughts, culture, and

perspectives of their time; “Before the reader thinks that such a comparison between the high and mighty pamphlet and the lowly zine sullies the reputation of the former, they should be aware that many pamphlets *were* scurrilous, abusive, and seditious.” (Duncombe). Ephemeral items have existed as long as written or printed materials themselves. Indeed, items such as chapbooks by Shakespeare or pamphlets by Thomas Paine² could even be considered examples of zines (Bartel). In the early days of printing, these items were not created with the intention of being preserved for posterity. They were designed for immediate, practical use, often for a specific event or period. Just as broadsides served as a means to quickly disseminate information before being discarded, zines operate similarly within the modern context. Zines are often produced using low-cost materials such as photocopies, newsprint, and simple binding methods—materials not meant to withstand the test of time. This impermanence is intrinsic to their nature, as they are frequently created in response to specific cultural or social moments, making them reflective of the time and place in which they were produced.

Zines are considered a type of ephemera due to their transient and often short-lived nature. They are usually produced in small quantities and are often handmade or self-published, contributing to their ephemeral nature, as they are not mass-produced like mainstream publications. Their time-specific content, which frequently addresses current events and cultural trends, makes them representative of a particular moment in history. A common issue most archivists have when considering how to include zines into their collection is often linked to the lack of bibliographical information. As zines are produced outside of the more conventional world of publication, it may be hard to identify certain information such as authorship or publication date. Unlike books or archival materials that are produced with durability in mind, zines are often created with the expectation that they will be consumed, shared, and discarded after a certain period. This contributes to their ephemeral status and underscores the importance of archiving them to preserve their historical significance and cultural impact.

² This in addition to such items as leaflets, posters, or postcards. Although they may be lost to history due to poor records.

Understanding zines as a form of ephemera not only enriches our appreciation of these unique publications but also underscores the need for careful preservation to maintain their legacy across different periods, as indeed “Retaining unique documentation of cultural history is, for me, the most compelling argument for collecting” (Hays). Despite their ephemeral status, zines hold immense cultural and historical significance. They frequently engage with countercultural, subversive, and niche topics, reflecting transient cultural trends and perspectives. These topics often reflect transient cultural trends and perspectives, adding to their status as ephemeral artefacts. This is also evident in their origins, where “fanzines emerged influenced by the movement of marginal literature [...] marginal literature is at the margin of canonical literature, addressing issues of a marginal reality, in a different way from classic works of the canon usually do address” (Carvalho et al.). Zines, in this sense, operate outside the mainstream, offering alternative narratives that challenge dominant societal norms. This makes them particularly valuable as historical documents that capture the voices and concerns of those who may not be represented in traditional media or historical records.

The limited and non-traditional distribution methods of zines, often through informal networks, zine fairs, events, or even by mail, further contribute to their status as ephemera. These methods ensure that zines are circulated within specific communities, often those on the margins of society, where mainstream publishing may not be able to reach. However, this also means that zines may not be widely accessible or widely documented, which poses challenges for their preservation and archiving. A challenge outlined by Bartel is that “Because zines are inexpensive, even cheap, it’s easy to dismiss the need to process or catalog them - and there are completely valid arguments to be made for not doing either”. Bartel goes on to argue that in a library setting it can become expensive to process and catalogue each document in a collection. Indeed, because a zine may not have the same monetary or historical value as for example, an incunable³, it is rightly deemed less of a priority to catalogue in the same way. Because they are distributed in such an informal manner, they are often hard to track down, and many zines may be lost over time. This impermanence adds another layer of urgency to the task of archiving, as

³ An incunable, or incunabulum, would be an early example of a printed book, specifically dated from before 1501

each zine represents a unique cultural artefact that offers insights into the time and community in which it was created.

The ephemeral nature of zines does not diminish their value; rather, it enhances it. By capturing the thoughts, feelings, and creative expressions of particular communities at specific moments in time, zines provide a rich source of material for understanding cultural history. Their value lies not only in the content they contain but also in what they represent—voices that are often overlooked or marginalised in mainstream culture. This is particularly important when considering the role of zines in documenting subcultures, countercultures, and alternative forms of creative expression. These are areas of cultural production that are often underrepresented in traditional archives and libraries, making the preservation of zines even more crucial.

In the article *Ephemera, Archives, and Another View of History*, Jim Burant outlines the nature of ephemera and its definition and meaning within a broader historical framework—one that includes marginal perspectives, not just a single-sided narrative. Burant emphasises the archival value of these ephemeral materials, a value that can also be applied to the production of zines. Archiving zines within the broader context of ephemera allows us to preserve these voices and ensure that they are not lost to history and so “We collect because ephemera casts a brilliant light on parts of social history that often get neglected” (Rickards in Burant). Zines, produced by individuals who may not have had access to money, fancy technology, machines, or political power, were created because they needed to be made—whether for personal reasons or external motivations. These publications give voice to those who needed to be heard, forming part of the greater narrative of human history and culture.

Zines document the lives and experiences of those who exist outside the mainstream; they offer a unique and valuable perspective on the world, one that challenges the dominant narratives and provides alternative viewpoints. By archiving zines, we ensure that these perspectives are not lost, and that future generations have access to the diverse and rich cultural history they represent. The preservation of zines is not just about saving paper and ink; it is about

safeguarding the voices and stories of those who might otherwise be forgotten, maintaining the integrity of the cultural and historical record.

C. The Alternative Press

In this spirit of independence, the alternative press emerges as a vital force within the media landscape, operating beyond the reach of mainstream outlets and major commercial publishers. It provides a platform for voices, perspectives, and topics frequently underrepresented or ignored by traditional media. Understanding the role of the alternative press is essential for contextualising the significance of zines within this broader movement as “... the zine is still a part of the alternative press tradition extending back at least 200 years in American history” (Chepesiuk). This sector is essential for promoting diverse viewpoints, encouraging grassroots activism, and holding power accountable.

Typically distinguished by its independence from corporate ownership and commercial interests, the alternative press is free from the financial pressures that often shape mainstream media content. Unlike large media conglomerates, alternative press publications are usually independently owned and operated, with funding that relies on small-scale advertising, grants, donations, or subscription models (Klanten et al.). This financial independence allows these publications to cover topics and present perspectives that are not dictated by the cultural zeitgeist or commercial imperatives. This can serve as a platform for a broad array of voices, often including those marginalised, in the minority, non-conformist, or deeply involved in activism. These outlets are known for their focus on investigative journalism that delves into issues like social justice, human rights, environmental concerns, and political controversies such as corruption. However, the scope of the alternative press extends beyond political and social issues to cultural coverage, embracing underground music scenes, emerging subcultures, and independent art. This wide range of coverage underscores the press's commitment to offering content that mainstream outlets might neglect.

The alternative press has historically embraced a variety of formats, both in print and digital forms. These include newspapers, magazines, online publications, blogs, and zines,

In essence, the blanket term “alternative press” is used to identify small press, independent, and underground publishers who produce books, periodicals, films, music, and zines on the fringes of the mainstream publishing industry. Alternative press publishers differ from mainstream publishers in many ways, perhaps most notably in the subjects they cover and in their critical appraisal of mainstream culture and the media that perpetuates it (Bartel)

Each format serves a distinct purpose within the ecosystem of alternative media, catering to different audiences and fulfilling diverse needs for information and expression. The distribution methods employed by the alternative press often reflect its local origins. Print publications might be sold directly at local events, independent bookstores, or through mail subscriptions, while digital publications leverage the reach of websites and social media platforms to disseminate their content widely and efficiently. This blend of traditional and modern distribution channels ensures that alternative press outlets can reach audiences who seek information and perspectives beyond those offered by mainstream media.

The alternative press has deep historical roots, with significant contributions from various movements and subcultures. One of the most influential periods in its development was the Underground Press movement in the USA of the 1960s and 1970s. During this era, the press played a pivotal role in the counterculture movement, offering anti-establishment views and covering issues like civil rights and opposition to the Vietnam War. Publications like *The Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone* became iconic, shaping the landscape of alternative journalism and cultural commentary. Zine culture, another cornerstone of the alternative press, emerged prominently in the punk scenes of the 1970s and 1980s and later in the Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s. Zines emphasised DIY ethics, personal expression, and a rejection of mainstream publishing standards. This culture fostered a sense of community among creators and readers, solidifying zines' place within the broader alternative press movement. Political movements,

particularly those associated with anarchist, socialist, and feminist ideologies, also significantly influenced the alternative press. Publications affiliated with these movements often adopted radical stances, using the press as a tool for activism and social change. The legacy of these politically charged publications continues to shape the ethos and content of the alternative press today.

In the digital age, the alternative press has continued to evolve, leveraging new technologies to reach wider audiences and remain relevant in an increasingly crowded media landscape. Modern examples of the alternative press include online platforms, which often take the form of websites or blogs that provide investigative journalism and critical analysis from perspectives that challenge mainstream narratives. Independent magazines and journals continue to offer in-depth commentary on politics, culture, and society, maintaining the tradition of the alternative press in a modern context. Additionally, alternative news networks provide independent news coverage and feature in-depth interviews, often focusing on stories and viewpoints neglected by mainstream media.

The alternative press serves to challenge mainstream narratives, amplify marginalised voices, and encourage public discourse. By offering alternative viewpoints and critical analysis, it ensures that public debate is enriched with diverse perspectives. Providing a platform for voices and issues often ignored or misrepresented by larger media outlets can lead to a more informed and engaged public. This function is particularly vital in an era where media consolidation and corporate influence over mainstream outlets are increasingly prevalent. Zines, as a part of this broader landscape, exemplify the DIY ethos and personal expression that define the alternative press. While zines are distinct in their approach and often hyper-focused on niche topics, they share the same foundational principles of independence, diversity, and resistance to mainstream norms. The act of preserving such documents reiterates “how historical moments are cited in increasingly stereotypical, fragmented, divorced traces, to the point where media representations, historical truth and cultural fantasy become utterly entangled” (Chidgey). Understanding zines

within the context of the alternative press accentuates their role as a powerful tool for intercommunity communication and cultural expression.

D. DIY (Do-It-Yourself) culture and its influence on zine production

The DIY ethos gained significant momentum as individuals sought to reclaim agency over their own lives. This movement is not merely about an arts-and-crafts mentality but is rooted in the belief that individuals possess the ability and competence to achieve their goals independently and “informal networks of exchange and the DIY ethic of zines means that young people are able to successfully by-pass the official networks put in place by publishing companies and magazine distribution conventions” (Knobel and Lankshear). If traditional avenues for publication are inaccessible, for instance, one can take matters into their own hands and publish their own work. This empowerment restores a sense of ownership over one's life and creative potential.

This ethos fosters a deep sense of satisfaction and pride in knowing that one can create and accomplish tasks independently. It resonates with the notion that the act of creation itself is empowering - perhaps akin to the surge in home baking, such as sourdough making, during the COVID lockdowns. The process of making something tangible reinforces the feeling of personal agency and the power of self-reliance. Exploring the DIY ethos inherent in zine production is a way of uncovering the power of creative expression. It showcases how individuals can take control of their narratives and contribute to cultural conversations outside traditional media structures, especially as “the zine community is busy creating a culture whose value isn't calculated as a profit and loss on ruled ledger pages, but is assembled in the margins, using criteria like control, connection, and authenticity” (Duncombe). So following on from this, one can see how DIY culture's influence on zine production is both profound and transformative. Zines embody the DIY ethos of self-expression, inclusivity, and resistance. They celebrate individuality, promote community-building, and provide a powerful avenue for marginalised voices. Zines serve as important documents of subcultures, reflecting the attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies of their creators and communities.

The historical roots of DIY culture can be traced back to several key movements and periods, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Arts and Crafts Movement which developed around the British Isles in the late 19th century⁴, for example, emphasised the importance of handmade goods and rejected mass production, laying the groundwork for the values of self-reliance and individual craftsmanship that would later define DIY culture. In the 20th century, the punk movement further cemented the DIY ethos, as it championed a do-it-yourself approach to music, art, and publishing in response to the commercialization of popular culture. Punk zines, created and distributed by fans, were a direct outgrowth of this movement, embodying the idea that anyone could create and share their work without relying on mainstream approval. Feminism continued on this momentum and by “Deploying both residual and emerging media forms, such as analogue and digital technologies, these feminists mobilize low-budget resources to create participatory political cultures and to preserve activist memory” (Chidgey) These historical precedents helped shape the modern DIY culture that has become central to zine production, fostering a spirit of independence, creativity, and resistance to established norms.

The methods and modes of creation and dissemination offer insights into the evolution of subcultures and alternative movements. The combination of DIY culture and zines has fostered a vibrant and diverse underground publishing scene, shaping alternative media and cultural expression for decades. The characteristic of the specific medium for zines has been characterised as being that which is “self published, small and self-distributed print run, outside the mainstream, low budget, motivated by expression and not with intention to profit” (Freedman in Metcalf, 4). The DIY culture has had a profound and lasting influence on zine production since its inception. The core principles of DIY emphasise self-sufficiency, creativity, and community building. Red Chidgey’s articles *Developing Communities of Resistance? Maker Pedagogies*, *Do-It-Yourself Feminism*, and *DIY Citizenship* and *Hand-Made Memories: Remediating Cultural Memory in DIY Feminist Networks* explain the creation of the structure of

⁴ Said to have been pioneered by artists and printmaker William Morris, who started his own small press enterprise to printed such things as wallpaper and other small publications of his choosing

the DIY ethos and its mode of creating a cultural citizenship through production and expression. Chidgey illustrates how important this ethos became for marginalised and unrepresented or underrepresented groups to be able to take agency to create and distribute their own narratives. DIY culture encourages individuals to take matters into their own hands and create things themselves rather than relying on established institutions or mainstream media where “cultural production (and boycotting) become sites for advancing one’s politics and a means to establish alternative networks and economies: to form loose channels of citizenship practices, or what is affectionately referred to in zine parlance as creating “DIY democracy” (Chidgey). Zines embody this idea of democracy as they are a medium which can empower creators to express their ideas, thoughts, and emotions freely without the need for external validation or gatekeeping. Zine production is accessible to anyone with basic tools like paper, a pen, and a photocopier. This low barrier to entry enables people from diverse backgrounds and economic means to participate in zine-making. DIY culture fosters inclusivity, amplifying voices that might otherwise be marginalised or overlooked.

However, it is important to consider the ethical implications of DIY culture, particularly in terms of representation, ownership, and access. While DIY culture empowers individuals to create and share their narratives, it also raises questions about whose voices are amplified and whose stories remain unheard. The ease of access to zine production tools can sometimes lead to a homogenization of perspectives, where dominant voices overshadow marginalised ones, particularly if the discourse around zine-making is not inclusive. Additionally, the notion of ownership in DIY culture prompts consideration of intellectual property and the rights of creators. As zines often incorporate various influences and materials from other artists and cultures, it becomes crucial to navigate these waters respectfully and ethically, ensuring that creators are credited and that their work is not appropriated without consent. Engaging with these ethical considerations can strengthen the integrity of DIY culture and ensure it remains a space that genuinely represents a diverse range of voices and experiences. This kind of culture is often a reaction against consumerism and the corporate-driven mainstream and can be read as being anti-commercialism, where “Remediating political memory can also help alleviate strains of

amnesia and déjà vu under late capitalism” (Chidgey). Zines, as non-commercial and independent publications, operate outside the commercial publishing world. This independence allows zinesters to explore unconventional and alternative topics, challenging societal norms and offering alternative perspectives. DIY culture and zine production have historically been platforms for subversion and resistance. Through zines, creators can critique authority, question dominant narratives, and challenge the status quo. Zines have been instrumental in various social and political movements, voicing dissent and advocating for change. The aesthetics which emphasise handmade and imperfect creations, resonate strongly in zine production. Zinesters often embrace cut-and-paste collage, hand-drawn illustrations, and other analog techniques, adding a unique and personal touch to their zines. DIY culture encourages collaboration and collective creativity. Zinesters frequently collaborate on zine projects, combining their skills, ideas, and perspectives to produce innovative and multifaceted publications. Making zines involves learning and honing various skills, such as writing, design, layout, and production. The process of creating zines can be educational, enabling creators to develop new abilities and refine their existing ones. As we explore the intersection of DIY culture with the practical aspects of zine production, the traditional techniques used in printmaking play a crucial role. These methods not only contribute to the distinctive aesthetic of zines but also reflect a broader continuum of resistance against digital homogenization.

III. Printing and Aesthetics

A. Early Printing and Analog Techniques

Traditional printmaking techniques have been pivotal in shaping the aesthetic and tactile qualities of zines, infusing them with unique textures and artistic expressions. While these techniques may be costly and time consuming, they are still in use today. This is considered to be a reaction to the rise of digital culture, where the specific qualities of analog techniques offer qualities that make the printed word tangible once more; “Bringing the printing room back into use provides the means to learn about the historical production of print media but also allows

questions to be asked of the digital” (Archer-Parré and Mussell). Here, I will be discussing some of the techniques of printing and the tools used to realise print-based media, specifically that which has been used for printing ephemera and zines, before the inclusion or digitisation of these various technologies.

1. Woodcut Printing (circa 200 AD)

Woodcut printing is one of the earliest known relief techniques, with its origins tracing back to ancient China around 200 AD. There is some dispute over exact dates but according to printmaker Gabor Peterdi, “In China the Paul Pelliot Expedition discovered prints made in the ninth century. The first European woodcuts were produced much later—at the beginning of the fifteenth century”. This method involves carving a design into a wooden block, inking the raised surfaces, and pressing them onto paper. Woodcuts can be printed using a press or by hand, using a rubbing motion (Peterdi). The resulting prints are characterised by their distinctive wood grain textures and bold, expressive quality. This technique’s deep historical roots and dramatic visual impact make it a compelling choice for creating striking illustrations and patterns in zines.

2. Letterpress Printing (15th Century)

In China, around the 2nd century AD, there is already evidence that a printing system based on movable type was already in use (Dunn, Hester, and Readman). Letterpress printing, as we are more familiar with, emerged in the 15th century, and its popularisation was credited to Johannes Gutenberg around 1440 (Dunn et al.). This technique involves pressing inked, raised surfaces—such as metal or wooden type—onto paper. Initially designed for books and newspapers, letterpress soon found its place in early zines and pamphlets. Known for its tactile quality and crisp impressions, letterpress became the dominant mode of textual reproduction in the West for over 500 years (Archer-Parré and Mussell). Its complex and costly nature was offset by the unique, handmade charm it added to publications.



Fig 1. A Gutenberg Press as displayed in the collection of the Musée de l’Imprimerie et de la Communication Graphique, Lyon. Image is the author’s own.

3. Etching (16th Century)

Etching, an ‘intaglio’ or ‘gravure’ technique, was developed in the 16th century. Intaglio means “Printing from the crevices and grooves engraved or etched into the plate” (Peterdi, xxxi). This method involves incising a design into a metal plate using acid, then filling the incised lines with ink and transferring the design onto paper under pressure (Dunn et al’). Etching is celebrated for its ability to produce intricate illustrations with rich tonal values. Zine makers appreciate etching for its capacity to enhance the depth and texture of their publications, adding a layer of detail that resonates with readers. Commercially, the process has been adapted to use screens which recess areas on the plate to create continuous tones (Dunn et al.).

A way that this process has been adapted into a more affordable and accessible way of printing is by using tetra pak (a material used for boxed beverages such as juice, plant milk, UHT process milk and cream, etc.) and then ‘engraving’ the material with a pen or similar pointed stylus. The

resulting print is reminiscent of a drypoint process etching but follows a more DIY mode of creation.

4. The Lithographic Printing Press (19th century)

The lithographic printing press (figure 2) basically transformed the manual process of lithographic printing into something much faster, operated by a press. The press “consists of a steel bed traveling under a leather-faced scraper. The scraper exerts the printing pressure and can be adjusted” (Peterdi). Lithography is a technique based on the principle that oil and water repel each other, discovered “accidentally” by Alois Senefelder in 1799 (Dunn et al.). It is a technique that lends itself to capturing the tones and textures of drawing materials, such as pencils.



Fig 2. A Lithographic Printing Press, or Star-Wheeled Press, as displayed in the collection of the Musée de l’Imprimerie et de la Communication Graphique, Lyon. Image is the author’s own.



Fig 3. View of the Lithographic Stones on the star-wheeled press bed (Fig 2), as displayed in the collection of the Musée de l’Imprimerie et de la Communication Graphique, Lyon. Image is the author’s own.

5. Linocut Printing (Early 20th Century)

Linocut printing, akin to woodcut but using linoleum blocks, became popular in the early 20th century. This technique involves carving a design into a linoleum block, inking the raised areas, and pressing them onto paper. It is a technique used by itself or something that can be combined with other printmaking techniques to add depth and texture “As linoleum is cheap and easy to cut, it is excellent for underprinting colors to in-taglio plates or wood blocks” (Peterdi). Linoleum is a cheap material and therefore can be accessed easily by many printmakers. It is a material sold in most craft or hobby stores. Linocut printing is favoured for its simplicity and

striking results, producing bold, graphic illustrations with expressive lines and textures, and its advantage is “In working on linoleum, one can cut freely in any direction, for it has no grain. Because linoleum is soft, and offers very little resistance to the tools, you must guard against slips, never cutting toward your hand” (Peterdi). It’s a go-to method for zine creators seeking to produce cover art or decorative elements with a distinctive visual appeal.

6. Silkscreen Printing (20th Century)

Silkscreen printing, or screen printing, became prominent in the 20th century, especially through the pop-art movement of the 1960s. Basically, “The process got its name from the fine-mesh silk that is tacked to a wooden frame and serves as a support for an intricately cut paper stencil. The printing was based on the simple principle that the open mesh of the silk lets the paint through, while the paper stencil glued to it blocks the paint out” (Peterdi). It is a versatile technique which results in vibrant and detailed prints. Silkscreen is particularly effective for handling multi-colored designs and complex overlays, making it a popular choice for zine covers, posters, and inserts. Its ability to create bold, eye-catching visuals makes it a favoured method among artists who want to make a strong visual statement.

7. Mimeograph and Hectograph (Late 19th and Early 20th Century)

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the mimeograph and hectograph became important tools for zine production. The mimeograph, introduced around the 1890s, used stencils and a drum mechanism to enable rapid and cost-effective reproduction. Its efficiency and affordability made it a popular choice among zine creators. The hectograph, utilising a gelatin pad to transfer aniline dye, was slower and less popular but still contributed to the evolution of zine production.

Traditional printing techniques not only provided practical means for producing zines but also enriched the medium with artistic possibilities. From the tactile charm of letterpress to the vibrant versatility of silkscreen, each method has played a role in shaping the unique character of zines. These techniques show how traditional methods have influenced contemporary zine practices and continue to impact the creation of independent publications today.

B. More Modern Technology and Digital Techniques

From the mid-to-late 20th century to the present, technology has evolved rapidly, profoundly influencing how zines are produced. I have already discussed analog technology and how it has been adapted to modern day use, specifically by zine makers. But in this section the technological progression discussed reflects a broader societal shift towards faster, more advanced methods of communication and production. As technology advanced, so did the means by which zine creators could bring their ideas to life, blending traditional analog methods with modern digital techniques.

1. Typewriter (Mid-19th Century to 20th Century)

The typewriter, invented in the mid-19th century and widely adopted throughout the 20th century, was a key tool for writers and zine creators long before the advent of digital technology. Typewriters allowed for the efficient production of text documents, offering a level of consistency and speed previously unavailable with handwriting. For zine creators, the typewriter provided a means to create clean, legible text for publication.

Before the widespread use of desktop publishing and digital printing, zine makers often used typewriters to prepare their content, which would then be photocopied or printed using other analog techniques like mimeographs. The tactile, mechanical nature of the typewriter also contributed to the DIY aesthetic that many zines are known for, with the imperfections of typewriting (like uneven spacing and visible corrections) becoming part of the zine's character.

As desktop publishing and digital printing technologies emerged in the 1980s, the use of typewriters began to decline. However, the typewriter's influence persisted, with many zine creators continuing to use it for its nostalgic appeal and the unique aesthetic it brings to their work.

2. Offset Printing (Early 20th Century)

Offset printing, also known as offset lithographic printing, emerged in the early 20th century and revolutionised high-volume printing, completely replacing the letterpress process in the domain of book production (Dunn et al.). Offset printing works by transferring images to a metal plate using a photosensitive emulsion. After dampening the plate, ink adheres only to the image areas, which are then transferred onto a rubber blanket and, ultimately, onto paper. By the 1960s, offset printing had become widespread, offering sharp, professional results that appealed to zine makers seeking a polished finish (Dunn et al.). Its efficiency and ability to produce large print runs made it ideal for creators looking to distribute their work widely.

3. Photocopying (1960s)

The advent of photocopying in the 1960s, particularly with the rise of the Xerox machine, marked a significant shift in zine production. Photocopying, also known as xerography, uses light and static electricity to transfer toner onto paper. The introduction of the photocopier once again changed the printing process by making it affordable, fast, and accessible. Zine creators, especially during the punk and DIY movements of the 1970s and 1980s, embraced this technology for its ability to produce and distribute content quickly and cheaply. Photocopying allowed for an explosion of creativity, as there was virtually no limit to the amount of work that could be reproduced and shared.



Fig 4. A Rank Xerox 660, as displayed in the collection of the Musée de l'Imprimerie et de la Communication Graphique, Lyon. Image is the author's own.

4. Collage (1950s - 1960s)

Collage techniques became increasingly popular in the production of zines and other ephemera, especially in the context of avant-garde and countercultural movements. Artists and zine creators used collage to combine various visual elements, including drawings, photographs, and printed letters, to create distinctive, often handmade, aesthetics.

5. Desktop Publishing (1980s)

Desktop publishing emerged in the 1980s, further democratising the production process for zines. Although it did not become widespread until the late 1990s to early 2000s, with the advent of personal computers equipped with graphic design software, desktop publishing allowed zine creators to produce content digitally. This technology enabled the use of various fonts, images, and graphics, lending a more polished aesthetic to publications. The rise of desktop publishing was closely linked to the development of digital printing techniques, which allowed for high-quality prints to be made on demand. As personal computing technology became more accessible, zine creators gained unprecedented control over the design and production of their work.

6. Digital Printing and Laser Printing (Late 20th Century)

Digital printing, encompassing both laser and inkjet technologies, became increasingly popular in the late 20th century for producing zines. This technique allows for high-resolution prints directly from digital files, enabling full-colour prints at reduced costs. Inkjet printing is particularly well-suited for small to medium print runs, offering vibrant colours and sharp details. It allows zine creators to experiment with various paper types and sizes, making it a flexible and cost-effective option for independent publishing projects.

Laser printing, another popular digital printing technique, is known for its fast speeds and consistent quality. Laser printers use toner cartridges to apply toner onto paper, creating crisp text

and graphics. Although laser printing may have higher initial costs than inkjet printing, it becomes more economical for larger print runs. Laser printers also offer duplex printing capabilities, allowing zine creators to print on both sides of the paper easily.

7. Risograph Printing (1980s, Popularised in 2010s)

Developed in the 1980s, Risograph printing only became widely popular among artists and zine makers in the 2010s. Initially used as an eco-friendly and efficient office copier, the Risograph printer was valued for its speed, capable of printing around 150 pages per minute. The Risograph machine is unique in that it combines elements of screen printing and photocopying, using a digital duplicator that prints one or two colours at a time. This process involves creating a digital master stencil, known as a "master," to transfer ink onto paper using a rotating drum. The ink used in Risograph printing is made from rice-bran oil, and the process does not require a heater, making it more energy-efficient than traditional digital printing.

Risograph printing became popular among zine makers for its unique aesthetic, cost-effectiveness, and environmentally friendly process. It produces vibrant, textured prints that are ideal for artistic and experimental zines. Although Risograph printing is not as widely available or affordable as other digital printing methods, it offers zine creators an opportunity to experiment with alternative techniques and achieve distinctive, retro-inspired results.

I discussed risograph with Alexander Branczyk, one of the founding members of a studio called Drucken3000, one of the first risograph studios in Berlin, established in 2014. They print using Riso MZ1070E and ME9350E machines, and have over 50 drums, and 30 colours. Their studio has 10 risograph machines and consists of a team of three people. Branczyk prints using only custom typefaces, which he creates himself. On average, the studio prints between 80 and 100 jobs per week and has over 4000 clients which are both local and international. They print a variety of media including zines, comic books, band posters, wallpaper, and immersive environments. They now also run workshops which are open to the public, including introductions to the technique of riso printing, production of posters for activists at rallies, and using a new machine called a Mi-Screen, a machine produced by Riso Japan that is designed to

print small (maximum size a4) “silk screen” devices which they often use for mobile workshops. According to Branczyk, risograph was not a popular medium when they originally opened their studio. When they expanded their colours and began mixing their own colours as well as offering more typographic choices, they were able to expand their production and offer variety to creators who approached them to produce work. Drucken3000 often puts out calls for collaboration for zinesters who are looking for spaces with which they can create their own publications. Zine printing at these events often takes place in two sessions: the actual printing and editing of the document, and the binding. Drucken3000 offers makers a simple option of staple binding, done with a machine. If makers wish to use a different binding technique, they are also able to do it themselves or through a separate bookbinding studio with which Drucken3000 collaborates.

8. On-Demand Printing (Late 20th Century)

On-demand printing, also known as print-on-demand (POD), emerged in the late 20th century as a digital printing technique that allows zines to be printed as needed. This eliminates the need for large print runs and excess inventory. With on-demand printing, zines are produced individually or in small batches, reducing upfront costs and storage space requirements. This approach is particularly beneficial for zine creators who want to test the market or offer personalised, customised zines to their audience. On-demand printing services typically provide a range of paper options, binding methods, and finishing options, enabling creators to meet various zine requirements.

9. DIY Digital Printing (Present Day)

In the current era, many zine creators opt for DIY digital printing methods using standard home printers or copiers. While DIY digital printing may not offer the same professional quality as commercial printing services, it allows zine makers to retain full control over the production process. This hands-on approach enables creators to experiment with different printing techniques and materials, making it an accessible and affordable option for independent zine production.

C. Comparing Analog and Digital Printing Techniques and Tools

In the realm of zine creation, the choice of printing technique is pivotal, as it directly influences the zine's aesthetic, accessibility, and production dynamics. Both analog and digital printing methods offer distinct advantages and limitations that shape the zine's look and feel and impact the production process; ultimately it is “the printed result is all that counts—with all its flaws and unique beauty” (Klanten et al.). Yet in understanding these methods' pros and cons, zinesters are able to align their choices with their creative vision and practical needs.

Analog printing techniques, such as offset printing, letterpress, and risograph, are celebrated for their tactile qualities and distinctive visual effects. Offset printing involves transferring ink from a plate to a rubber blanket and then to the paper. This method excels in producing high-quality images with a broad colour gamut, making it ideal for intricate designs and vibrant artwork. It offers a professional finish that can rival commercial publications. However, offset printing requires substantial initial setup costs and ongoing maintenance, which may be a barrier for zinesters with limited budgets. Additionally, it demands access to specialised equipment and technical expertise, which can be challenging for some creators.

Letterpress printing is prized for its unique texture and depth, created by pressing inked type or images into the paper to produce a debossed effect. This technique adds a physical dimension to the printed material, lending an artisanal charm and historical resonance that many zinesters appreciate. The tactile quality of letterpress printing enhances aesthetic appeal and provides a sensory experience that digital prints often lack. However, the process involves significant setup time and specialised skills, posing challenges for those new to letterpress printing. Its manual nature and the need for precision make it both an art form and a craft, requiring patience and dedication.

Risograph printing is noted for its vibrant, semi-transparent inks and the ability to produce limited-edition prints with a screen-printed feel. The stencil-based method allows for distinctive

colour overlays and textures, making it popular among artists who want their zines to have a unique visual appeal. Risograph printing's capability to produce striking, layered colours and its cost-effectiveness for small print runs make it a favoured choice for zinesters aiming for a visually dynamic product. However, risograph printing can be cost-prohibitive and time-consuming, particularly for large print runs. The setup and printing process require careful handling and can be labour-intensive, potentially affecting the production timeline.



Fig 5. A spread from *J'EMMERDE LES GRANDS ESPACES AMÉRICAINS*, 2024.

In contrast, digital printing methods, such as laser and inkjet printing, offer speed, efficiency, and lower costs, catering to modern needs. Digital printers provide high-quality outputs with minimal setup time, making them ideal for short print runs or on-demand production. This efficiency is particularly beneficial for zinesters who need to print quickly and economically. Digital printing

excels in precision and consistency, allowing for sharp, clean images and uniform colour reproduction. The ability to make quick adjustments and revisions digitally enhances the flexibility of the design process, enabling zinesters to experiment and iterate with greater ease. This accessibility lowers the barrier to entry for new creators and facilitates greater experimentation with design. This is evident in zines by Carriola editions, such as *J'EMMERDE LES GRANDS ESPACES AMÉRICAINS* (figure 5). These zines combine graphic design elements with photography, meme collages, and digital illustrations.



Fig 6. Cover of the zine *Susurimrimpression* by Christian Corbinus. Cover has been silkscreen printed with three different colours. Image is the author's own.

However, digital printing's uniformity can result in a less distinctive look compared to the unique textures and imperfections of analog prints. While digital methods are cost-effective and practical, they may lack the artisanal quality sought by some zinesters. The precision and consistency of digital printing, while advantageous, can lead to a more generic appearance that

may not align with the desired aesthetic. The emphasis on efficiency and reproducibility in digital printing can sometimes overshadow the personal and artistic touch that characterises many zines produced through analog methods. This can be countered by creating an original zine with analog techniques, such as linocut, which is then photocopied into the final zine document. This means that the technique used within the zine has an aesthetic lent by an analog technique while being less costly and time consuming to produce. Another option, along a similar thought process, would be to produce only one aspect of the zine with an analog technique and then to print the rest using a digital technique. This means that each copy will have a unique aspect offered to it by the handprinted, while the rest of the zine will be uniform and produced more cost effectively. Such is the case with Christian Corbinus's zine *Susurimpression* (2023) (figure 6). The techniques used to create this zine combine the analog and the digital, where the cover has been screen printed with three colours and hand bound using Japanese stab-binding, the inside has all been printed using a conventional printer, but integrates sketches and photographs taken by the author.

The choice between analog and digital printing often reflects the zinester's artistic vision and production goals. Analog methods are favoured for their handcrafted feel and the ability to experiment with materials and techniques, allowing for high customization and personal expression central to the DIY ethos of zine culture. Zinesters who value the tactile and visual richness of analog prints often choose these methods to imbue their work with uniqueness and authenticity. Conversely, digital printing's practicality and scalability make it a preferred choice for those who need to produce zines quickly and economically. Digital methods provide a streamlined process and cost-effective solution, catering to modern creators who prioritise efficiency and flexibility.

Some zinesters opt for a hybrid approach, combining both analog and digital techniques to achieve a unique blend of features. For example, a zine might feature digitally printed pages for consistency and affordability, paired with a hand-printed cover for added personal touch and visual impact. This combination allows creators to leverage the strengths of both methods,

creating a final product that embodies the best of both worlds. By integrating digital and analog elements, zinesters can craft zines that are both visually compelling and aligned with their artistic vision. The choice of printing technique not only affects the production process but also significantly influences the zine's visual and tactile character. Each method contributes distinct qualities, from the textured richness of analog prints to the streamlined precision of digital outputs. As creators navigate these options, they shape an experience that resonates on multiple levels, blending production choices with visual impact. Understanding the nuances of each printing method helps zinesters make informed decisions that enhance their creative projects and align with their goals.

The evolution and interplay of printing techniques significantly impact zine aesthetics. This interplay highlights how different methods contribute to the overall visual and tactile experience of zines. The transition from traditional to modern printing techniques reflects broader trends in media production and artistic practice, influencing both the creation and reception of zines.

D. The Impact of Aesthetics

The aesthetics of zines extend far beyond mere decoration; they are central to shaping how a zine is experienced and understood. The zine as an object contributes significantly to the overall experience of interacting with its contents, involving both spatial and temporal dimensions, “the three-dimensional structure of the book, with its sequence of pages, indicates the element of time is present in the reading of a book, bringing the book into both the realm of the spatial and the temporal” (Blake). This observation underscores the integral role that physical form plays in the reading experience, particularly in the context of zines where the tangible aspects of design interact with the reader's sensory perceptions.

The visual appeal of a zine—including its cover art, colour schemes, and layout—significantly influences how it captures and maintains attention. Zines are often characterised by their bold and eclectic designs, which distinguish them from more conventional media, “zines constitute

primary documents with immense visual importance. Accessing print culture through digital visual representation allows for an appreciation of these print mediums that would have otherwise remained invisible to most library users” (Metcalf). This emphasis on visual aesthetics not only enhances reader engagement but also contributes to the zine’s ability to create a memorable and distinctive reading experience.

Design choices in zine production serve as a powerful vehicle for self-expression and creativity. Zinesters—those who create zines—often use typography, illustration, photography, and other visual elements to reflect their personal style and thematic interests. This creative freedom leads to a wide range of aesthetic approaches, from minimalist and DIY designs to elaborate and experimental layouts where “zines are becoming works of art, enhanced by means of photographs, glitter, feathers, seashells and other found objects glued in; hand-stitched bindings; mini-zines within mini-zines; coloured and textured papers; old maps; hand-coloured diagrams from old medical or geological textbooks, and so on” (Knobel and Lankshear). Each design choice contributes to the zine’s unique voice, showcasing the creators' individuality and collective creativity.

The impact of aesthetics is not limited to visual appeal; it also encompasses the emotional responses that zines can evoke. The use of colour, imagery, and design elements can provoke a range of emotions, from nostalgia to rebellion. For instance, a zine that incorporates vintage typography and sepia-toned images might evoke a sense of nostalgia, while one with neon colours and avant-garde graphics might challenge conventional norms and provoke feelings of rebellion. These aesthetic choices help set the tone and atmosphere of the zine, influencing how readers perceive and connect with its content. As Knobel and Lankshear point out, “despite [t]heir often participatory nature of and desirable blurring between reading and writing that occurs in zine practices, zines are often controversial, visually and mentally confronting, and regularly deal with topics taboo to classrooms”. This capacity to evoke specific feelings enhances the reader’s overall engagement and immersion in the zine’s world.

Examining the evolution of zine aesthetics provides insight into broader artistic and cultural trends. Zines often mirror societal changes, technological advancements, and artistic movements, serving as visual records of their times. For instance, the shift from analog to digital techniques in zine production reflects the broader transition in media and communication technologies. Early zines, produced with cut-and-paste methods and manual printing processes, embody the tactile, hands-on nature of pre-digital publishing. In contrast, contemporary zines often incorporate digital elements, such as computer-generated graphics and digital printing, which expand the possibilities for design and production. This evolution highlights how zines both influence and are influenced by changes in the wider cultural and technological landscape.

The transition from analog to digital printing techniques has had a profound impact on zine aesthetics. Traditional printmaking techniques, such as screen printing, letterpress, and risograph printing, offer distinctive textures and finishes that are often embraced by zinesters. These methods provide a tactile quality that digital prints may lack, and they often involve a degree of hands-on craftsmanship that adds to the uniqueness of each zine. For example, risograph printing, with its vibrant colours and textured appearance, has become a popular choice among zinesters for its ability to produce limited-edition runs with a distinct visual appeal. In contrast, digital printing techniques have democratised the production process, making it easier for zinesters to produce high-quality, full-colour zines with relative ease. The accessibility of digital tools allows for greater experimentation with design elements, enabling zinesters to explore complex layouts and visual effects that might be challenging to achieve with traditional methods. This shift has also led to the proliferation of digital zines, which, while lacking the physicality of print, offer their own set of aesthetic possibilities and have become an integral part of the zine ecosystem.

The interplay between analog and digital aesthetics in zine production highlights the ongoing dialogue between tradition and innovation. Zinesters often blend these approaches to create hybrid forms that combine the tactile qualities of analog techniques with the versatility of digital design. This fusion reflects a broader trend in contemporary media, where boundaries between traditional and digital methods are increasingly blurred; “a process of print re-enactment: a

renewed engagement with the history of a work, in which the processes of publishing as much as the text itself —its authorship, context, and editorial ancestry—become both media for new art-making and venues for cultural historical inquiry” (Klanten et al.). By embracing both analog and digital techniques, zinesters continue to push the boundaries of print media, creating works that are both visually compelling and reflective of their creators' unique visions.

Ultimately, the aesthetics of zines are integral to their creation and reception, blending design and content to enhance personal expression and cultural commentary. The interplay between visual elements and thematic content shapes the zine’s identity and influences how it is experienced. Whether through traditional printmaking techniques or modern digital processes, the design choices in zines offer a rich narrative that captures the values, trends, and artistic sensibilities of their times. As such, zines remain a dynamic and evolving medium, continually shaped by both the creativity of their makers and the broader cultural context in which they are produced.

IV. Zine Creation and Production

A. How to Make a Zine

Creating a zine is a process that embodies the spirit of DIY culture and personal expression. The act of making a zine is multifaceted, rooted in both creative vision and technical execution; it is an endeavour to produce a “self published, small and self-distributed print run, outside the mainstream, low budget, motivated by expression and not with intention to profit” (Metcalf). At its core, zine creation involves several key steps: conceptualization, design, production, and distribution. Conceptualization begins with the generation of ideas and themes, driven by the creator's passions and perspectives. This initial stage often involves brainstorming and sketching out content, which will later be refined into a coherent narrative or collection of artworks.

Design follows, where the creator translates their conceptual ideas into a tangible format. This includes layout design, typography, and visual elements, all of which contribute to the overall aesthetic and readability of the zine. With the advent of digital tools, the design process has become more accessible, allowing creators to experiment with various formats and styles. Despite the technological advances, many zine creators continue to embrace traditional methods such as cut-and-paste techniques, which preserve the personal and handmade quality of the zine.

The production phase involves printing and assembling the zine. Depending on the scale of the project, this can range from DIY home printing to professional printing services. Each choice in this stage affects the final appearance and distribution of the zine, whether it's through the choice of paper, binding, or colour quality. The physical act of assembling the zine—collating pages, binding them together, and preparing them for distribution—adds a tactile dimension to the work that is integral to its character.

Distribution is the final stage, where the zine reaches its audience, “In some cases, distribution might even boil down to a suitcase or two on a plane—like a modern-day salesman peddling his wares in a hard-to-reach market” (Klanten et al.). Traditionally, zines were circulated through independent bookstores, zine fairs, and personal networks. Today, digital platforms also play a crucial role in the distribution process, allowing creators to reach a global audience. The act of sharing zines can foster community and dialogue, extending the impact of the creator's message beyond geographical and social boundaries.

The process of creating a zine, while seemingly straightforward, is rich with possibilities and personal touches. Of course, there is no one way of making a zine. I have interviewed several zine makers⁵ about this and each answer, like each zine, is unique. Each zine is a unique reflection of its creator's voice and vision, demonstrating the inherent versatility and expressiveness of the medium. As we delve into what messages zines can convey, it becomes clear that the methods of creation are deeply intertwined with the messages they carry. The

⁵ These interviews can be found in full on my digital object, under the section “Interviews”

exploration of content and themes in zines reveals a broader landscape of creative expression, one that is both diverse and reflective of the creators' intentions.

B. Crafting The Message and Examining Content and Themes

Zines are a medium characterised by their vast and varied range of messages, offering a platform for nearly any subject under the sun. This diversity of content underscores the inherent flexibility of the zine format, allowing creators to explore and communicate a wide array of themes and ideas. From personal narratives and political commentary to artistic explorations and niche hobbies, zines serve as a canvas for a multitude of expressions.

The scope of messages within zines reflects the diverse interests and concerns of their creators. Some zines focus on personal experiences, offering intimate glimpses into the lives of individuals. Others may tackle broader social or political issues, using the zine format to advocate for change or provide commentary on contemporary events. The beauty of zines lies in their ability to cater to specific audiences, often addressing topics that are marginalised or underrepresented in mainstream media.

Creating content for a zine is not merely an exercise in artistic expression but also an opportunity for dialogue and engagement. The process of content creation involves selecting themes that resonate with the creator's perspective and purpose. This selection process is often guided by a desire to share personal insights, provoke thought, or connect with like-minded individuals. As such, the content of a zine can be deeply personal, highly political, or a blend of both, reflecting the complexity of human experiences and viewpoints.

Understanding the nature of zine content provides insight into the broader implications of zine culture. The messages conveyed through zines are often reflective of larger cultural and social dynamics, capturing the zeitgeist of their time. This rich tapestry of themes and ideas highlights the role of zines as a medium for both personal and collective expression. As we move forward,

it becomes apparent that the collaborative nature of zine culture further enriches this landscape, blending individual creativity with communal interaction.

C. Creating Collaboratively

Collaboration within zine culture is a testament to the communal and inclusive nature of the medium. Collaborative zines and exchanges between creators highlight the dynamic interactions that occur within this creative space. These collaborative efforts often manifest as response zines, where creators address or build upon the work of others, fostering a sense of dialogue and continuity within the zine community.

One notable aspect of collaborative zine culture is the way in which it facilitates the sharing of ideas and perspectives. Response zines, for example, allow creators to engage with and respond to the work of others, creating a dialogue that extends beyond individual publications. This process not only enhances the depth of content but also strengthens the connections between creators and their audiences. In addition to response zines, collaborative projects often involve multiple artists working together on a single publication. These collaborations can range from joint artistic endeavours to thematic compilations, where each contributor brings their unique voice to a shared vision. The result is a multifaceted zine that reflects a blend of individual perspectives and collective creativity.

A zine that operates on collaboration is Carriola éditions. A recent zine, *J'EMMERDE LES GRANDS ESPACES AMÉRICAINS*, contains contributions from multiple different contributors. This is their way of working “Quand on a une idée de ce type, on lance un appel à projets sur nos réseaux sociaux (tout médiums acceptés tant que ça peut être imprimé), on en parle à nos potes et aux personnes qu'on rencontre en exposant sur des salons de micro-éditeurs par exemple” (An organiser⁶ of Carriola éditions, in response to an interview question⁷) [translation: *When we have an idea of this type, we launch a call for projects on our social networks (all mediums accepted as long as it can be printed), we talk about it to our friends and*

⁶ Who has opted not to share their name

⁷ This interview is available on the “Interviews” section of the digital object

*to the people we meet while exhibiting at trade fairs for micro-publishers for example]*⁸. The theme for the following zine is either proposed in the published zine, or proposed at a later date. In this way, it is open for all to contribute, and those who want to participate are free to do so.

The collaborative nature of zine culture underscores the importance of community and interaction within the medium. By working together, creators can explore new ideas, push creative boundaries, and contribute to a larger discourse within the zine community. This spirit of collaboration enriches the zine culture, creating a space where diverse voices and perspectives can coexist and thrive.

As we consider the impact of collaborative efforts in zine culture, it becomes evident that this communal approach extends the possibilities of the medium. The interactions between creators not only enhance the content of individual zines but also contribute to the evolution of zine culture as a whole. This interconnectedness highlights the ways in which zines can reflect and shape the broader cultural and social landscape, bridging personal and collective experiences through creative collaboration.

V. Zine Dissemination

A. An Explanation of Distribution Networks and the Various Methods Employed for Disseminating Zines

Understanding how zines reach their audiences involves exploring the diverse distribution channels through which these unique publications travel from creators to readers. This section delves into both traditional and modern methods of distribution, drawing on interviews with zinesters and industry experts, as well as detailed case studies and real-world examples. These insights reveal how zines navigate various pathways—whether through physical channels like zine fairs and independent bookstores, or digital avenues such as online

⁸ Translation is my own, as the interview language is in French

shops and social media platforms. For example, *Laer_98* is distributed in local spots in their city, *Les Ciseaux Fanzine* distributes their zine mainly via instagram, and *Esprit Frappant* can be purchased on Etsy. One should consider the dynamic between consumer and producer, as it is central to the operation of dissemination. In the most basic sense, as described by Knobel and Lankshear,

Consumers, [...], are marked by their consumption of resources, media, images, vocabularies, social orders, representations, and so on, produced and circulated by those in power. And, they are also marked by their creativity in making use of resources at hand, and in producing their own meanings and practices within the regulated contexts—or “places”— generated by producers. Thus, in order to understand consumers, we need to focus on and analyse their *ways of using* things, not just their types of consumption.

So, following this logic, one could assert that effective distribution is essential not only for increasing visibility and accessibility but also for fostering community and supporting the ongoing efforts of zine creators. By examining these methods and their impact, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how zine culture is sustained and evolved in today’s diverse media landscape.

1. Traditional Distribution Channels

Historically, zines found their audience through hands-on, physical distribution methods. Zinesters would bring their works to concerts, festivals, and local community events, often selling directly from tables or booths. Many also placed their zines in independent bookstores, record shops, and other alternative spaces, relying heavily on word-of-mouth and local networks to spread the word. These channels were crucial for creating strong community bonds and enabling direct engagement between creators and their audiences. However, they were naturally limited by geography and scale—zines only reached as far as their creators could physically carry them.

2. Zine Fairs and Conventions

Zine fairs and conventions have long been cornerstones of zine distribution. These events are more than just sales opportunities; they are spaces where zinesters can connect with readers, fellow creators, and potential collaborators. Face-to-face interactions at these events foster a deep sense of community and belonging, essential elements of the zine culture. Notable fairs, such as Les UEF in Poitiers which will be discussed in more detail shortly, illustrate the importance of these gatherings in sustaining and growing the zine community. They allow zinesters to showcase their work in person, often in settings that encourage dialogue, creativity, and the exchange of ideas.

3. Independent Bookstores and Shops

Independent bookstores and specialty shops have also played a significant role in the distribution of zines. These spaces, while more professional than a casual zine fair table, offer zinesters a storefront presence that can attract a different, often broader audience. The relationship between zine creators and store owners is typically collaborative. Creators might sell their zines on consignment, where the shop takes a cut of the sales, or work out other mutually beneficial arrangements. This local distribution method allows zines to reach audiences who might not attend zine fairs, while also helping to support small businesses that align with the DIY ethos.

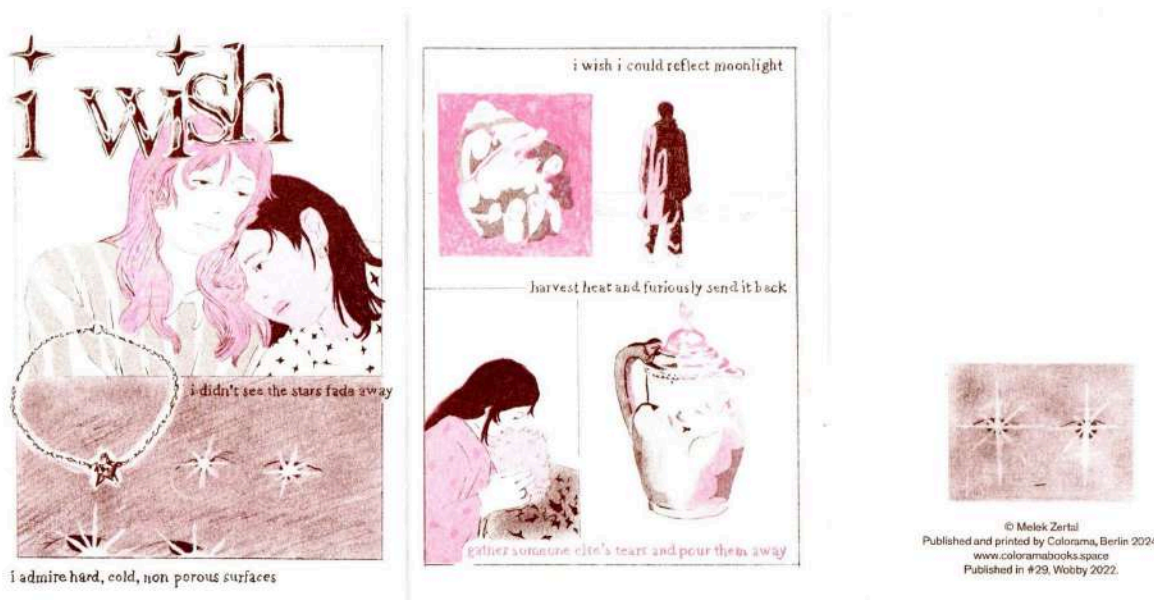


Fig 7. A spread from *I wish* by Melek Zertal, 2024, 14.5 x 10cm, 4 pages, printed by Colorama.

Colorama is one such space. This risograph studio and bookshop, based in Berlin, regularly produces work with artists. Their output includes zines, art prints, t-shirts, and other such merchandise. The zine *I Wish* (figure 7) is an example of a collaboration with an illustrator, Melek Zertal. It is a one page zine in an accordion fold⁹ printed with two colours.

4. Mail-Order and Subscription Services

Another traditional method is mail-order and subscription services. Zinesters have long utilised these methods to reach readers directly, aligning with the intimate nature of zine culture. Although less common today, these methods remain in use, particularly among those who value the tactile experience of receiving a zine in the mail. For instance, some zinesters continue to manage mailing lists and handle orders themselves, often including extras like stickers or personal notes to enhance the experience of receiving a physical zine, such as the collective *Esprit Frappant* (figure 8). This method also serves as a means for creators to finance upcoming issues, providing a steady stream of income and support. The relevance of mail-order and subscription services is illustrated in the *Contre Bande* exhibition discussed later in this thesis,

⁹ An accordion fold means that a single sheet has been folded in a zig-zag pattern, thereby creating something that can be expanded or folded in on itself, like an accordion

where the historical importance and continued use of these methods in zine dissemination are highlighted.



Fig 8. Esprit Frappant's zine *Turning 20*, including a selection of stickers from the creators

5. Modern Distribution Channels

With the advent of the internet and digital technologies, zine distribution has expanded beyond the confines of physical spaces. Online platforms like Etsy, Big Cartel, and personal websites now allow creators to reach a global audience.

An example here is Zine Panique (France). Zine Panique, found through a Facebook search for French zine collectives, represents a different facet of zine culture. While detailed information on their website is sparse, their focus on alternative publications, including zines and bandes dessinées, is noteworthy. They produce themed issues that reflect specific cultural and artistic interests. Their zines are promoted online and are not sold in physical stores but are purchasable

through their Big Cartel platform which is shared via both their Instagram and their Facebook. Social media platforms—Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok—have become powerful tools for promotion, enabling zinesters to engage with readers, build a following, and showcase their work to a wider audience. These platforms often use hashtags, collaborations, and influencer marketing to extend their reach, though they tend to attract a specific type of audience—one that is already inclined towards the digital and visual culture of social media.

6. Digital Zines and Libraries

The rise of digital zines, or e-zines, has further broadened the scope of zine distribution. These can be easily shared via email newsletters, downloaded from websites, or accessed through digital libraries like Issuu. These digital channels offer the advantage of instant, global distribution with minimal cost and logistical challenges. However, they also raise questions about accessibility, visibility, and the sustainability of digital content in a fast-paced online environment.

7. Collaborations and Pop-Up Events

In addition to online methods, collaborations with other artists, creators, and organisations can enhance distribution efforts. For instance, pop-up shops, art shows, and collaborative projects offer flexible and creative ways to distribute zines. These events not only help reach new audiences but also provide a platform for cross-promotion and community-building, which are key to sustaining the zine culture in an increasingly digital world.

Despite the opportunities presented by modern distribution methods, there are significant challenges, particularly for independent creators. The financial and logistical aspects of distribution—such as printing costs, shipping, and marketing—can be daunting. To mitigate these challenges, many zinesters turn to collective distribution networks, bulk printing, and crowdfunding campaigns. However, reaching diverse and global audiences remains a significant hurdle, as does ensuring inclusivity and representation in distribution strategies.

The variety of distribution channels available today is demonstrative of the evolution of zine culture from its grassroots origins to a more expansive, global reach. Understanding these methods provides a foundation for appreciating how zines are shared and celebrated in diverse settings. To fully grasp the impact of these distribution strategies, it's essential to explore the physical and virtual spaces where zines are found and engaged with. In the next section, we will delve into these spaces—examining how dedicated libraries, archives, markets, and community events serve as crucial venues for zine dissemination and engagement.

B. The Spaces in Which Zines Can Be Found

In the world of zines, the spaces where these works are stored, shared, and celebrated are just as significant as the zines themselves. These spaces are often physical archives, libraries, and exhibitions that act as hubs for the preservation and dissemination of zine culture. They provide an essential counterbalance to the digital realm, offering a tangible connection to the DIY ethos that lies at the heart of zine-making. In addition to this, “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” (Eichorn, 634). In this section, I will explore several institutions that exemplify the role of physical spaces in the life cycle of zines, each contributing uniquely to the accessibility, preservation, and ongoing vitality of zine culture.

La Fanzinothèque, located in Poitiers, France, stands out as one of the most significant repositories of zine culture worldwide. Established in 1989, La Fanzinothèque is home to an impressive collection of over 60,000 fanzines, making it a key institution for anyone interested in zines, DIY culture, and independent publishing. The library section of La Fanzinothèque is meticulously organised, allowing visitors to explore a diverse array of zines spanning multiple decades, cultures, and subcultures. The collection encompasses a wide range of topics, including music, art, literature, politics, feminism, and various countercultural movements. This extensive

archive not only preserves the rich history of zines but also reflects the global reach and influence of the zine movement.



Fig 9. A display of zines in the collection of La Fazzinothèque, Poitiers. Image is the author's own.

What sets La Fazzinothèque apart is its dual focus on both preservation and production. Beyond its role as an archive, the institution also includes a dedicated area for the creation of new zines, emphasising traditional printmaking techniques such as silkscreen and risograph. By providing access to these tools, La Fazzinothèque actively supports the continued evolution of zine culture, ensuring that the DIY spirit remains vibrant. This integration of archival and production spaces underscores the importance of physical environments in the dissemination and perpetuation of zine culture, offering a communal space where zine enthusiasts can gather, exchange ideas, and collaborate.

The Archiv der Jugendkulturen (Archive of Youth Cultures) in Berlin, Germany, offers a different yet equally vital contribution to the preservation of zine culture. This institution is dedicated to documenting the rich and diverse history of youth, pop, and subcultural movements. The Archiv der Jugendkulturen houses an extraordinary collection that spans several decades,

capturing the vibrant and often ephemeral nature of youth culture. The archive's scope is unparalleled, encompassing an extensive range of materials, including magazines, fanzines, books, textiles, posters, audio files, videos, buttons, stickers, and more. These items collectively provide a comprehensive view of the many facets of youth culture, from punk and goth to rave and queer-feminist movements.

One of the most distinctive features of the Archiv der Jugendkulturen is its commitment to preserving not only the publications and media of these subcultures but also the physical artefacts that accompanied them. The collection includes estates of punks, documents from the squatter scene, posters from goth concerts, photographs of ravers at the iconic Loveparade, and art from the graffiti scene. These items offer a window into the various subcultures that have flourished in Germany and beyond, providing invaluable insights into the ways in which marginalised groups have used self-publishing as a means of resistance, community-building, and self-expression.

In particular, the archive's collection of fanzines from queer-feminist movements stands out as a crucial resource. These zines document the experiences, struggles, and cultural shifts within these communities, offering a rich source of material for researchers and enthusiasts alike. The Archiv der Jugendkulturen's comprehensive approach to archiving underscores the importance of preserving the broader cultural context in which zines were created, providing a holistic view of the subcultures that produced these works. This institution is an example of the vital role of physical archives in preserving subcultural history, ensuring that the voices of these movements are not lost to time.

In addition to these institutional spaces, zines have historically found their way into more unconventional venues, as exemplified by the exhibition *Contre Bande: musique alternatives et culture cassette 1980-1999* at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon. This exhibition was part of a broader research and mediation project on alternative music culture in France during the 1980s and 1990s, supported by the DRAC AURA (Direction régionale des affaires culturelles Auvergne Rhône-Alpes). The exhibition, which ran from February 28th to August 19th, 2023, at

the Bibliothèque de la Part-Dieu Lyon 3e, aimed to illustrate the new means of creation that became available in France during the rise of DIY culture. This period was marked by a rejection of the dominant capitalist, elitist, and conservative culture that had prevailed in previous decades, as economic recession and the rise of neoliberalism in the early 1980s spurred a wave of creative independence and self-sufficiency.

The objects showcased in the exhibition, including audio cassette tapes, analog instruments like synthesisers and drum machines, portable tape recorders, and, crucially, photocopiers, are emblematic of this era. Among these tools, the photocopier stands out as perhaps the single most important device for the production and reproduction of fanzines. Zines played a vital role in spreading information about new music, underground scenes, political rallies, and local events, making them an essential part of the countercultural movements of the time. This exhibition made manifest the ways in which the mere accessibility of photocopying democratised the means of production, thereby allowing virtually anyone to become a maker and distributor of their own publications.

At a time when computers and the internet were still in their infancy and prohibitively expensive, the accessibility of photocopying and other DIY tools enabled a broad swath of society to bypass traditional publishing channels. This allowed individuals to create and distribute zines through networks such as the postal service, positioning themselves against the cultural and artistic institutions of the day, which remained exclusive and largely inaccessible to the general public.



Fig 10. Installation view of the exhibition *Contre Bande: musique alternatives et culture cassette 1980-1999* at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon. Image is the author's own.

As one can see, the spaces in which zines can be found—whether in institutional archives like La Fanzinothèque and the Archiv der Jugendkulturen or in exhibitions like *Contre Bande*—are crucial to the preservation and dissemination of zine culture. These physical spaces not only safeguard the rich history of zines but also foster the resources and community necessary for the continued evolution of this DIY medium. They provide a tactile connection to the past and a supportive environment for the creation of new work, ensuring that zine culture remains vibrant in a world increasingly dominated by digital media.

However, as the digital age progresses, the role of zines has also expanded into the virtual realm. Online platforms and social media have opened new avenues for zine dissemination, allowing creators to reach broader audiences while adapting to the changing technological landscape. In the next section, we will explore how the virtual realm has transformed the way zines are produced, shared, and consumed, examining the impact of online platforms and social media on the zine community.

C. The Virtual Realm and the Role of Online Platforms and Social Media

The omnipresence of the online world in contemporary life defines much of the twenty-first century. For today's youth and future generations, the digital landscape is a fundamental aspect of their daily experience. Online platforms and social media—ranging from Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and Facebook to LinkedIn—play a central role in this digital ecosystem. These platforms, accessible via phones, tablets, desktops, and laptops, offer various features such as user profiles, content creation tools, and interactive elements like likes, comments, and shares. They facilitate connections through friends, followers, groups, and direct or public messaging. Algorithms personalise content discovery, while privacy settings aim to safeguard user data. However, concerns about data privacy, such as the suspicion that devices might be “listening” to tailor advertisements, persist.

The evolution of online platforms has its roots in early forums and bulletin board systems (BBS) from the 1980s and 1990s, which allowed for basic message posting and information sharing. The early 2000s brought about Web 2.0, characterised by enhanced user interactivity and real-time communication. This period saw the rise of social networking sites like MySpace, which allowed users to create profiles, share music, and connect with friends. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have since become integral to daily life, each introducing innovations that have reshaped communication, content consumption, and global engagement.

The impact of these digital advancements on zine culture has been profound. Traditional zine distribution methods—such as zine fairs and independent bookstores—were effective within their limits but constrained by geographical and logistical barriers. The advent of online spaces and e-commerce platforms, such as Etsy and BigCartel, have significantly expanded the reach of zines. Creators can now sell their work globally, bypassing many of the traditional distribution constraints, using “strategies of remediation to bring their hand-made artefacts online, in ways which maintain (to some extent) the ‘feel’ of their cut-and-paste culture” (Chidgey). This digital

shift has democratised access to zines, allowing for a more diverse range of voices and perspectives to be shared and appreciated worldwide.

Social media platforms have become crucial tools for zine creators, facilitating marketing, community building, and collaboration and creators are able to promote their work through posts, stories, and hashtags. These platforms also connect creators with readers and fellow creators, fostering vibrant online communities where zine enthusiasts can engage with content, share feedback, and participate in discussions. Social media not only helps in building a following but also in creating a sense of belonging among creators and readers, reinforcing the communal aspect of zine culture.

Digital humanities, an interdisciplinary field that employs digital tools and methods to enhance the study and practice of the humanities, offers valuable insights into the intersection of digital technologies and zine culture. This field explores how digital tools can be applied to cultural production, historical research, and literary analysis. In the context of zine culture, digital humanities approaches can help analyse trends in zine content, track the evolution of zine culture through online archives, and explore how digital platforms shape the reception and interpretation of zines. Digital archives and databases can preserve zine collections in ways that were previously unimaginable, ensuring the longevity and accessibility of these works.

While online platforms offer numerous benefits, they also introduce new challenges. Transitioning from physical to digital formats can simplify aspects of distribution, such as eliminating the need for physical storage and handling. However, this shift brings with it complex issues related to ownership versus access, long-term archival concerns, and varied subscription models. For instance, as noted by Stevens,

Many serials have moved to the online environment. Ideally, this transition would simplify things for libraries. There are no issues to check in, bind, or store. Libraries can add a link to the online journal from a Web page and/or online catalog. However, while online serials solve some problems, they raise a new set of issues for libraries. These issues include the question of ownership versus

access, long-term archival concerns, means of online access, and subscription management. Vendors such as Ebsco now offer e-journal management services, but there are a bewildering variety of ways to subscribe to e-journals. Some are published by aggregates such as ScienceDirect or ProQuest, while others are available only through individual publishers

For zine creators, these challenges necessitate careful management of their online presence. Digital platforms require ongoing maintenance, and creators must consider the sustainability of their digital strategies. As Stevens points out, “Web publication does have its own publication issues. Web space may be costly, especially if readership grows and increases bandwidth.” These considerations highlight the importance of balancing the benefits of digital distribution with the practicalities of managing online content.

The global reach of online platforms has transformed zine culture by democratising access and allowing diverse voices to be heard worldwide. This expanded reach has not only changed how creators engage with their audience but also how they interact with each other, illustrating the significant impact of digital tools on creative expression. The ability to participate in global conversations about zine culture is a considerable advantage of digital distribution. However, this global reach also necessitates a thoughtful approach to inclusivity and representation. Zine creators must navigate cultural differences and ensure that their content is accessible and relevant to diverse audiences. Digital tools provide opportunities to address these challenges, such as translation services and international distribution networks. By leveraging these tools, creators can contribute to a more inclusive and representative zine culture.

Moreover, the digital realm’s influence extends to how zine culture interacts with broader academic and cultural fields. The integration of digital humanities into the study of zine culture offers valuable perspectives on these transformations. Digital humanities research can enhance our understanding of how digital tools impact the creation, distribution, and preservation of zines. It can also provide insights into the broader implications of digital technologies for cultural production and scholarly analysis. The advent of digital technologies has significantly

broadened the accessibility of zines, transforming how they are created, distributed, and consumed. The digital age has introduced new tools and platforms that offer both opportunities and challenges for zine creators and consumers. Here we can focus on the idea of building a digital archive. Metcalf argues that “Digitization does not take away from preserving the physical copies of the zines [...] However, digitization does alleviate concerns regarding the degradation of cheaply produced zines, and the mechanical damage that zines are prone to”. The evolution from physical to digital formats has allowed for greater reach and inclusivity, but it has also raised important questions about digital ownership, sustainability, and archival practices. As zine culture continues to adapt to the digital age, the interplay between online platforms and traditional practices will shape its future, highlighting the enduring relevance of zines in both physical and virtual realms.

The role of online platforms and social media in zine distribution has transformed the landscape of zine culture, broadening its reach and accessibility while introducing new challenges. The integration of digital humanities into the study of zine culture provides valuable insights into these transformations and the ongoing impact of digital tools on creative expression. As zine culture continues to evolve, the dynamic relationship between digital technologies and traditional practices will play a crucial role in shaping its future.

D. Events, Markets, Workshops, and Community Engagement

The DIY ethos intrinsic to zine culture has not only sustained its creative production but also facilitated the flourishing of zine fairs, festivals, and workshops. These events have become vital hubs for the zine community, where creators and enthusiasts gather to share, exchange, and celebrate their work. Zine fairs and festivals provide a unique platform that fosters a sense of community, offering zinesters the opportunity to network, collaborate, and engage directly with their audiences. These events are more than just marketplaces; they are cultural experiences that highlight the diversity, creativity, and activism within the zine world.



Fig 11. (left) Poster of the event for Les UEF (Utopie Estivale de Fanzines), 2023, hosted by La Fanzinothèque, Poitiers. (right) Fanzines produced by attendees of the event and printed in single-colour with risograph. Images are the author's own.

Case Study: Les UEF, Poitiers

One exemplary event is Les UEF (Utopie Estivale de Fanzines), a zine festival that embodies the spirit of independent publishing and DIY culture. The third instalment of Les UEF took place from August 24th to 27th, 2023, in Poitiers, France, hosted by La Fanzinothèque. This festival brought together a vibrant array of artists and zine makers, primarily from France, with notable contributions from Germany and Belgium. The event's diverse program included round table discussions, live performances, and hands-on workshops, creating a dynamic and inclusive atmosphere that attracted both seasoned zine enthusiasts and newcomers alike.

The round table discussions at Les UEF provided a platform for meaningful dialogue on topics ranging from the evolution of DIY publishing to the intersection of art and activism. These

conversations not only deepened the participants' understanding of zine culture but also encouraged the exchange of ideas and strategies for sustaining independent publishing in the digital age. Complementing these intellectual exchanges were live performances by musicians, which contributed to the festival's vibrant energy and fostered connections within the creative community.

Workshops played a crucial role in the festival, allowing attendees to engage directly in the creative process of zine-making. These workshops covered a range of skills, including monotype printing, silkscreening, collaging, and video projection. Participants were able to experiment with these techniques, gaining hands-on experience and insight into the various processes behind zine production. A particularly collaborative workshop involved collective zine-making, where attendees of an *apéro-zine* gathering contributed to a group publication. Participants worked together on a predefined theme, creating pages that were later scanned, reprinted, and compiled into a cohesive zine. The cover was silkscreened in the La Fanzinothèque's lab, and the final product was staple-bound and distributed for free to everyone who had participated. This process not only highlighted the communal nature of zine culture but also empowered individuals to take part in the creative process from start to finish.

The success of Les UEF was bolstered by its collaboration with Confort Moderne, a renowned cultural centre in Poitiers that provided a spacious and well-equipped venue for the event. This partnership extended the festival's reach to a broader audience, attracting a diverse group of attendees and ensuring that the festival was accessible to a wide range of participants. Through events like Les UEF, zine culture continues to thrive, drawing people together in a celebration of creativity, independence, and community.



Fig 12. (left and right) Interior view of Confort Moderne during Les UEF with the zine makers' tables installed. Images are the author's own.

Case study: Queer Market, Lyon

Another significant event in the zine community is the Queer Market in Lyon, a space dedicated to showcasing the works of LGBTQ+ artists. The second edition of this market, organised by Les Ciseaux Fanzine and hosted at Boomerang, Lyon, took place over the weekend of February 10-11, 2024. This market was not just a platform for zine creators but also a family-friendly event that fostered inclusivity and community within the LGBTQ+ creative scene.

With a modest entry fee of three euros, which went directly to the artists performing later in the evening, the Queer Market featured a diverse lineup of musicians, drag performers, and spoken word poets, many of whom had zines of their own to share. The event provided a welcoming and open environment where attendees could easily interact with creators, exchange ideas, and learn

about the processes behind their works. The artists were eager to share their experiences and tips, making the market an educational and inspiring space for all involved.

The market also facilitated the exchange of goods beyond traditional transactions. For instance, attendees had the opportunity to trade their own creative works, such as linocut prints and stickers, for zines from other makers. This bartering system reinforced the collaborative and non-commercial spirit of the event, emphasising the importance of sharing and mutual support within the zine community. The zines at the Queer Market covered a wide range of topics, reflecting the diverse experiences and perspectives of the LGBTQ+ community. From personal narratives and political commentary to art and poetry, the zines showcased at the market offered rich and varied content that resonated with the attendees.

Both Les UEF and the Queer Market illustrate the vibrant and diverse spaces in which zine culture is celebrated and disseminated. These events not only provide a platform for creators to share their work but also play a crucial role in building and sustaining the zine community. By bringing people together in a shared space, whether physical or virtual, these events foster connections, encourage collaboration, and ensure that zine culture remains a dynamic and influential force in contemporary society.

As we move forward, it is essential to consider how these physical gatherings and the sense of community they cultivate are being transformed and expanded in the digital age. The next section, "The Virtual Realm and the Role of Online Platforms and Social Media," will explore how zines are navigating the virtual landscape, leveraging online platforms to reach new audiences, and adapting to the evolving nature of communication and distribution in a digital world.

VI. Discussion and Analysis

A. Case Studies and Examples

The case studies presented in this section offer a glimpse into the diverse and evolving world of zines, showcasing how different creators and collectives use this medium to express unique perspectives. From *Weird Walk* in the UK, which intertwines folklore with a deep appreciation for the British countryside, to *Les Ciseaux* in France, which exemplifies the collaborative and community-driven aspects of zine culture, each example highlights the adaptability and creativity inherent in zine-making. Additionally, the Berlin-based Colorama collective and artist Melek Zertal push the boundaries of zine production with their innovative approaches to design and content, reflecting the medium's capacity for artistic experimentation.

These case studies not only demonstrate the varied themes and styles that zines can encompass but also underline the importance of zines as platforms for cultural expression and community building. By examining these examples, we gain insight into how zines continue to thrive as both personal and collective forms of art, communication, and cultural preservation.

Weird Walk (UK)

I found out about this zine through an instagram sponsored post for an alternative clothing / slow fashion and artisanal goods store that is based in the UK. It started as a collective of friends “formed in the hinterland between the bucolic and the eerie, Weird Walk began as three friends walking an ancient trackway across southern England wearing incorrect footwear” (<https://www.weirdwalk.co.uk/>). They were and are still interested in promoting the natural features of the British countryside and the mythology surrounding certain natural landmarks, kind of like from an ecotourism perspective but they get really detailed about the rituals and mythologies and cultural histories associated with specific places.

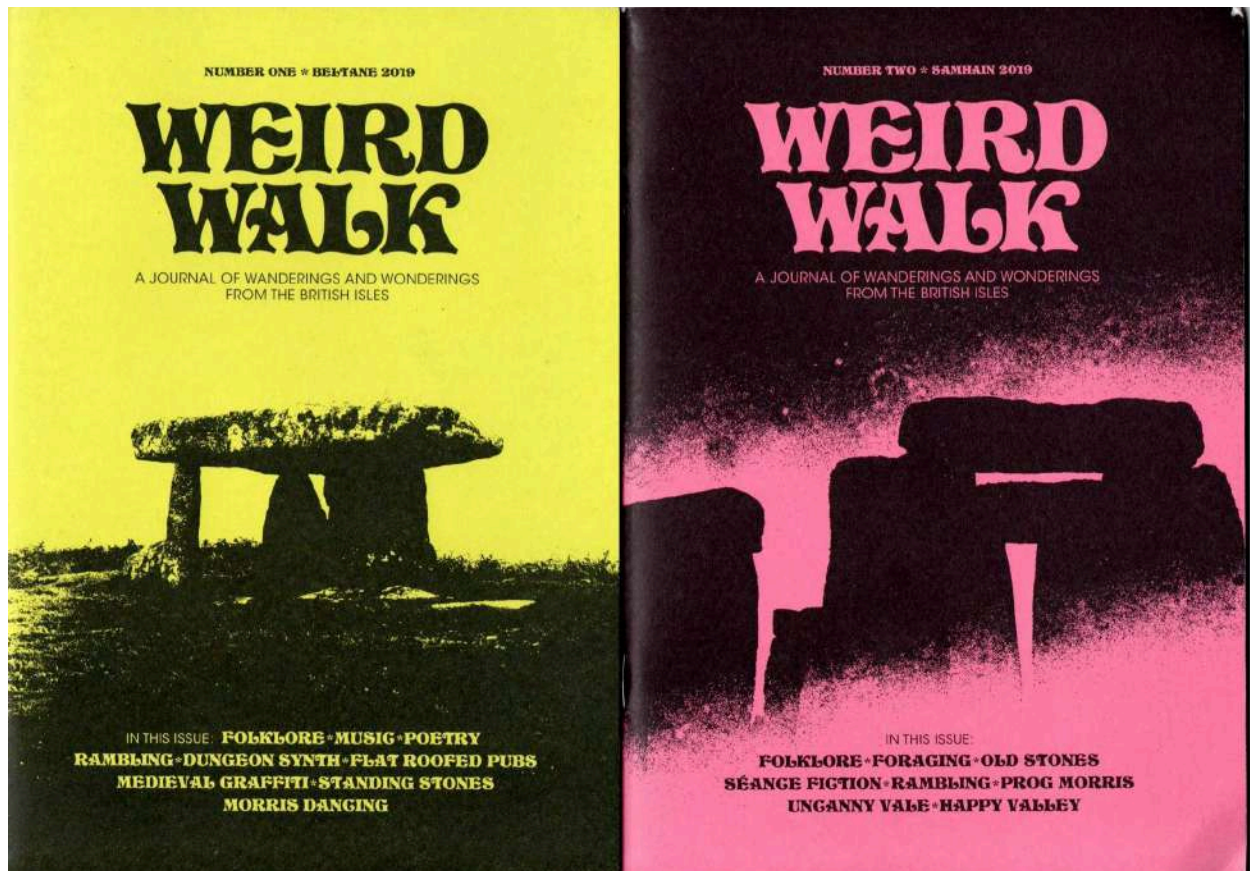


Fig 13. (left and right) Two covers of the zine *Weird Walk*.

Overview:

Weird Walk is a UK-based zine that blends ecotourism, folklore, and cultural history, bringing attention to the mystical and mythical aspects of the British countryside. The zine began as a project by three friends who explored ancient trackways across southern England, delving into the eerie and bucolic elements of the landscape.

Production:

Weird Walk is digitally printed and saddle-stitched, with issues typically exceeding 40 pages. The zine combines high-quality production with a DIY spirit, providing a tactile experience that complements its content.

Content and Themes:

The zine explores natural landmarks and their associated mythologies, offering detailed accounts of rituals, legends, and cultural histories tied to specific places in the UK. Over time, it has expanded to include seven issues and an off-shoot zine, *Peasant Zine*, which focuses on alternative music linked to the collective's ethos.

Impact and Reception:

Weird Walk has garnered a loyal following, particularly among those interested in folklore, history, and nature. The zine's reach has expanded through digital platforms like Instagram, where it connects with a global audience interested in alternative cultural narratives.

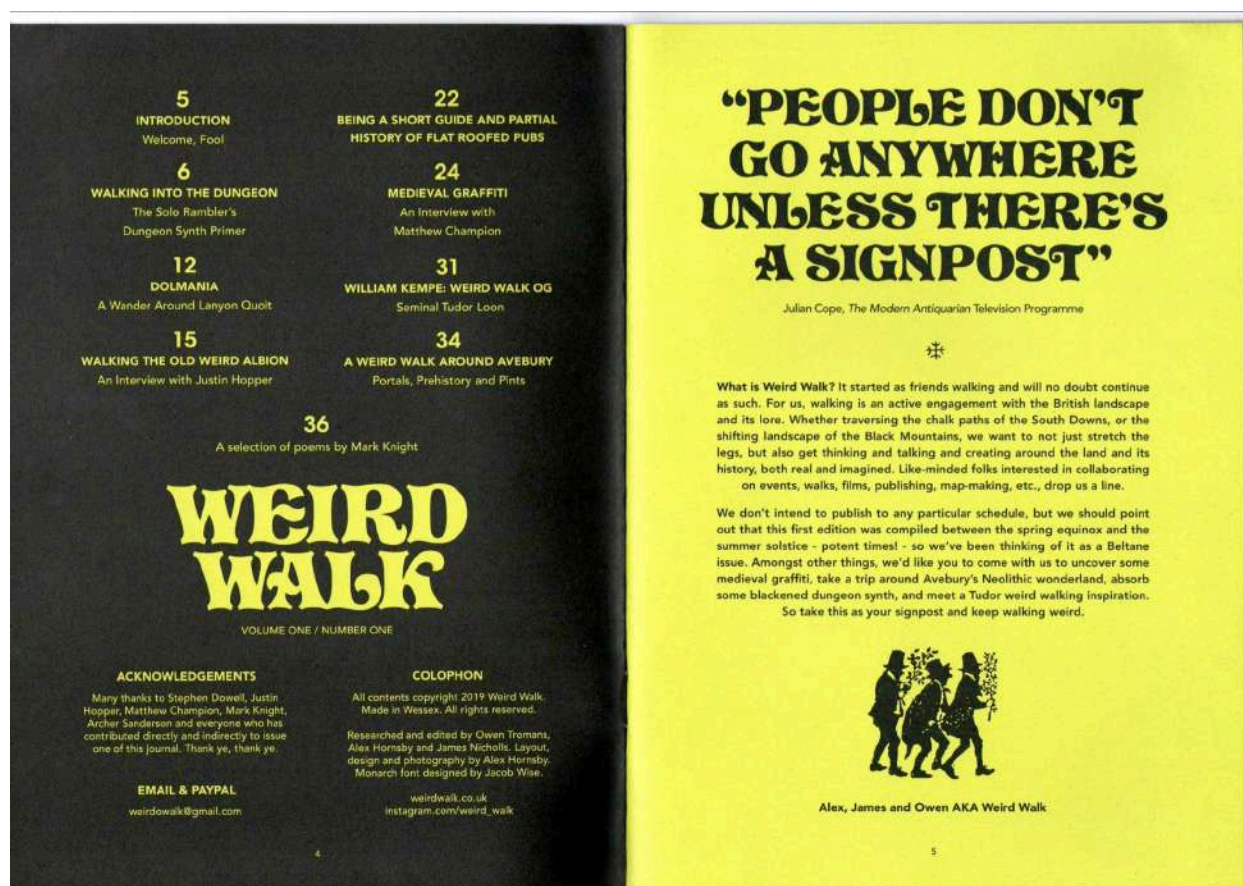


Fig 14. The contents page and the introduction to the first edition of the *Weird Walk* zine.

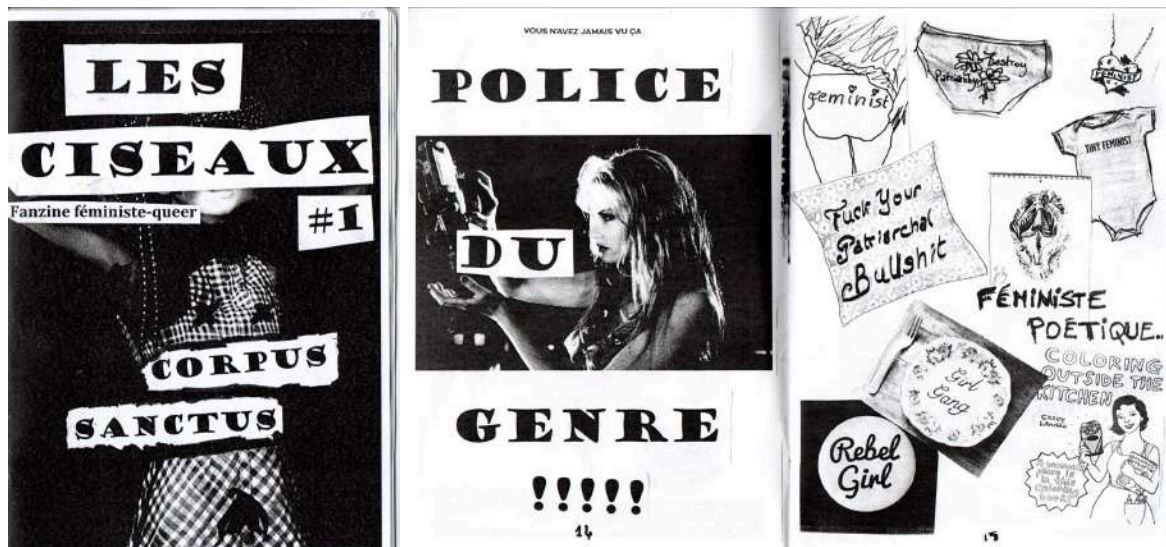


Fig 15. (left) The cover of the first *Les Ciseaux* fanzine. (centre and right) pages 14 and 15 of the fanzine *Les Ciseaux* #1.

Les Ciseaux Fanzines (France)

Overview:

Les Ciseaux is a predominantly French-language fanzine that embodies queer culture. The zine is rooted in the DIY ethos and reflects the collaborative nature of the French zine scene.

Production:

The fanzine is produced using a variety of analog and digital printing techniques, with a focus on maintaining the handmade quality that characterises traditional zines. The pages feature a mix of text, illustration, and collage, reflecting the diverse artistic backgrounds of its contributors.

Events and Distribution:

Les Ciseaux plays a central role in events like Les UEF in Poitiers and zine markets in Lyon. These events not only provide a platform for selling and trading zines but also foster community engagement, where artists exchange their work through sales or swaps.

Significance:

Les Ciseaux exemplifies the communal and inclusive nature of zine culture in France, where zine-making is as much about creating art as it is about building networks and communities. The

zine and its associated events highlight the importance of physical spaces in sustaining zine culture.

Colorama Print: Melek Zertal and Colorama Clubhouse

We present to you a collection of 5 different zines by Melek Zertal with previously published anthology contributions for Lagon Revue, LAAB, Wobby and Something Edited.

The zines are between 4 and 16 pages, have been partly reworked and newly interpreted for printing by Colorama.

The zines are available separately as well as a whole set in a special envelope. (blurb from colorama website)

Colorama Overview:

Colorama is a Berlin-based print studio that collaborates with artists to produce limited-edition zines using risograph printing. The studio is known for its emphasis on colour and minimalist design, which allows the artwork to take centre stage.

Melek Zertal:

Melek Zertal is an artist and illustrator who has collaborated with various print studios including Colorama. Zertal's work, specifically the zines produced by Colorama, includes the zines *I Wish* (figure 6) and *Crescent Hill* (figure 16), and showcase a blend of personal narrative and surreal illustration. *Crescent Hill* is a 16-page, stapled zine, measuring 19.5 × 14 cm, that explores themes of memory and place.

These two zines are taken from a newly released collection of 5 different zines by Zertal with previously published anthology contributions for Lagon Revue, LAAB, Wobby and Something Edited. The zines are between 4 and 16 pages, have been partly reworked and newly interpreted

for printing by Colorama. The zines included in the collection are *Norwegian Cruise*, *Algeria*, *Crescent Hill*, *Courtney*, and *I wish*. They are riso printed in two to five colours in an edition of 1000. The zine collection is available in an edition of 200 and is packaged in a silkscreen-printed envelope with silk-ribbon.

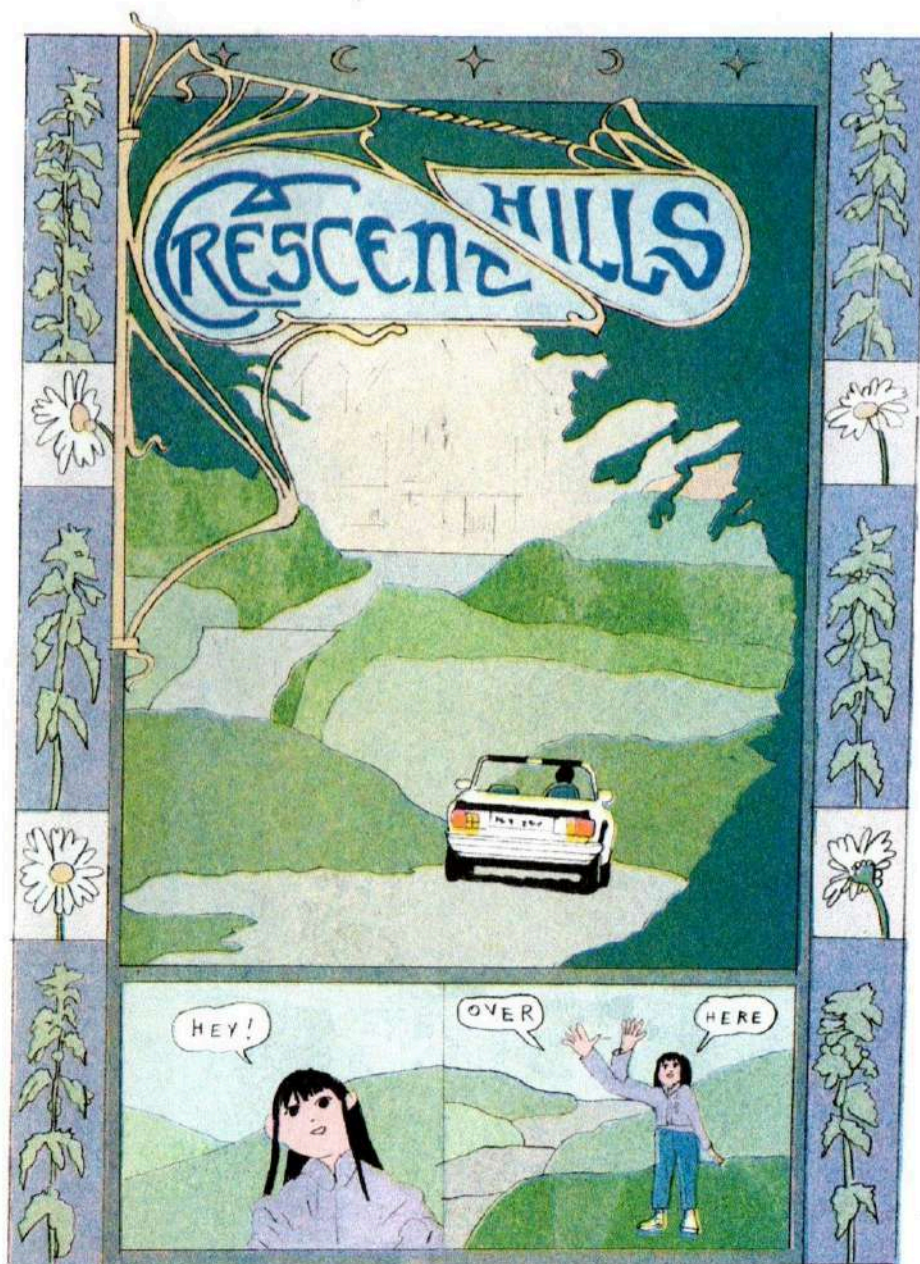


Fig 16. The cover of *Crescent Hills*, 2023, by Melek Zertal, printed by Colorama.

Production and Design:

These zines are part of a larger project where Colorama collaborates with various artists to reinterpret previously published works, offering them in new formats. The zines are sold individually or as part of a set in a specially designed envelope, emphasising the collectible nature of these works.

Colorama Clubhouse:

The Colorama Clubhouse project involves five Berlin-based artists who come together for a one-day workshop to produce limited-edition, riso-printed zines. Each artist contributes a unique style and content, resulting in five distinct zines, each printed in two colours and is folded simply rather than bound. The zine is produced on one page that has been printed on two sides, so the overall product is something that can be sold cheaply, thereby exposing people who buy the project to the different artists with an affordable product that can either be kept as a zine or hung up as a poster.



Fig 17. Edition number 18 of the *Colorama Clubhouse*; a plastic sleeve containing 5 zines all by different artists, printed by Colorama.

The eighteenth edition of this project (figure 17) includes contributions by Leonie Ott, Bernadette Schweihoff, Jo Rüßmann, Colleen Anderhub, Shenja Schittkowski. The illustration styles and content of each of these zines is different, something proposed by each artist.

Impact and Collaboration:

Colorama's approach to zine-making highlights the intersection of traditional and contemporary practices, combining the DIY spirit of zine culture with professional printmaking techniques. The collaborative nature of their projects, like the *Colorama Clubhouse*, underscores the importance of community and shared creative spaces in the evolution of zine culture.

The zines discussed in these case studies—*Weird Walk*, *Les Ciseaux*, and the works from *Colorama*—each highlight distinct cultural, geographical, and thematic contexts but share common threads that underscore zine culture's adaptability and significance. Both *Weird Walk* and *Les Ciseaux* emphasise community-building, though they cater to different cultural spheres: *Weird Walk* integrates British folklore and nature, while *Les Ciseaux* foregrounds queer culture within a more DIY scene. Despite their contrasting themes, both zines rely on the collaborative ethos of zine-making, using events, markets, and alternative distribution channels to foster engagement with their audiences. In contrast, the Berlin-based *Colorama* collective takes a more design-focused and professional approach, combining risograph printing and collaborations with artists like Melek Zertal to push the artistic boundaries of zines. However, like *Les Ciseaux*, *Colorama* retains a grassroots ethos by producing affordable, limited-edition zines, preserving the accessibility and DIY spirit of the medium. This comparative perspective illustrates how zines can serve as platforms for personal, cultural, and creative expression, while adapting to various social, cultural, and artistic contexts. The diversity and creativity showcased in each of these case studies underscore the significance of zines as vehicles for personal expression and cultural commentary. From local folklore to collaborative artistic projects, these zines highlight the unique ways in which creators engage with their communities and the broader cultural landscape.

B. Making a Case for Collecting and Archiving Zines

The archival turn in contemporary culture reveals a deep-seated need to preserve and legitimise alternative knowledge and perspectives. Archives can manifest in both personal and institutional forms. On a personal level, they may reside within one's home, containing objects and documents gathered for purely individual reasons or interests, reflecting the unique passions and experiences of their owner. These personal archives often hold sentimental value and offer a window into personal history and creativity. Conversely, on a more public scale, institutional archives—such as those found in libraries or cultural repositories—serve a broader audience, providing access to these creative treasures. In these public spaces, anyone can explore and engage with a diverse array of artefacts, ensuring that alternative voices and historical narratives are preserved and made available for future generations.

The archive has become a crucial site for understanding how feminist and activist groups frame and validate their histories and contributions. Julie Bartell's work, *From A to Zine*, illustrates that building a zine collection is not only feasible but can be done in accessible and innovative ways. Her approach highlights that building a collection doesn't require vast resources but rather a commitment to community involvement and creative curation. This perspective challenges the notion that archiving and collecting are reserved for those with significant means. At the same time, this also emphasises the role of the archive not just as a repository but as a system that establishes what discourses and histories are valued. In this context, collecting and archiving zines becomes an act of reclaiming and validating marginal voices and alternative viewpoints

“Although professional archivists frequently worry about the increasingly hazy distinction between the terms “collection,” “library,” and “archive,” 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” (Eichorn, 640)

By integrating zines into public archives and library collections, we not only preserve these unique cultural artefacts but also assert their significance within the broader historical and social narrative. This movement has largely been instituted across America, although I have found little research about the move to begin this in European libraries. According to Hays, “At least 113 public and academic libraries across the United States currently have zine collections, and this count does not include unaffiliated local zine archives. Academics and historians have made strong arguments for the value of including zines as part of our cultural heritage, but current research does not focus on zine authors’ perspectives”. The challenges of archiving zines—such as their informal production methods and diverse formats—highlight the need for innovative approaches to preservation.

The archival approach to zines must navigate issues of formal publication standards and the role of archival practices in preserving unconventional formats. This includes addressing practical considerations such as cataloguing protocols and the balance between preserving the original form of zines and adapting them for archival purposes.

Zines often contain minimal information about their authors, thereby making it extremely difficult to obtain permission to digitize them, and partly for this reason the digitization process will be greatly delayed. Also under consideration is the piecemeal digitization of zines per request by individual researchers. This would consist of digitizing individual zines, or articles, and emailing them directly to the user. However, more research into copyright and fair use laws is needed before a conclusion is reached.” (Hamel et al)

Unlike traditional collections, zines often lack standardisation in their creation and distribution, complicating efforts to catalogue and maintain them. However, this very diversity is what makes zines a valuable addition to archival collections, providing insights into alternative cultural practices and perspectives.

C. Future Directions for Research

Integrating zines into public libraries offers significant opportunities to enhance community engagement and diversify library collections. Zines, as self-published and often marginalised publications, align with libraries' core values of promoting intellectual freedom and inclusivity. This integration supports the idea that libraries should reflect and cater to the diverse interests and voices within their communities.

Key areas for future research include examining the impact of zine inclusion in public libraries on community engagement, addressing the challenges of cataloguing and promoting zines, and assessing strategies for acquiring and curating them. Methods for this research could involve interviews with library staff, community surveys, and analysis of circulation data. When it comes to collecting such objects, “[...] ephemerists are right to consider ephemera important in delineating and describing certain areas of popular thought and culture that may not be captured in other media and formats; to this extent, ephemera should have a place in cultural repositories, including not only archives, but also museums, galleries, and libraries” (Burant, 191). Exploring how libraries can incorporate community involvement in zine making and pedagogy, such as through workshops with local schools, offers additional avenues for enriching library collections and fostering community connections. The experience of hosting workshops and engaging with educational institutions provides valuable insights into the practicalities of integrating zine-making into library programming.

Embracing zines as part of public library collections presents a promising avenue for enriching library services, promoting diversity, and engaging with community members. This approach highlights the importance of continuing to explore and address the practical and theoretical

challenges associated with zine archiving, paving the way for further research and development in this area.

VII. The Digital Object



Fig 18. A QR code link to my digital object, a website hosted by Github

A. Purpose and Conceptualization

The digital object was conceptualised as an interactive and immersive companion to the thesis on zine culture. Effectively, it is an example of how zines themselves are being adapted to the digital age. This project aimed to transcend traditional academic formats by creating a digital space where the evolution of zine-making, the tools and techniques employed, and the diverse voices of zine creators could be explored in a dynamic and engaging manner. The primary purpose of this digital object is to extend the reach of the research, making it accessible to a broader audience, including those who may not typically engage with academic theses. This approach aligns with the broader trend in digital humanities to leverage technology in making

academic research more interactive and accessible, thereby engaging a wider and more diverse audience.

In the conceptual phase, it became evident that the digital object could serve as more than just a supplementary tool; it could be an integral part of the research itself. By offering an interactive experience, the digital object allows users to engage with the material in a non-linear fashion, reflecting the decentralised and often anarchic nature of zine culture. This interactivity not only enhances the user's understanding of the subject matter but also embodies the ethos of zine-making—a practice that thrives on participation, exploration, and personal expression. The integration of interactive elements also demonstrates the influence of digital humanities, which emphasises the use of digital tools to enrich scholarly research and present it in innovative ways. The conceptualization process began with a deep dive into the core themes of the thesis: the historical evolution of zine culture, the tools and techniques that have shaped it, and the personal and political motivations behind zine creation. It was crucial to identify which aspects of the research could benefit most from an interactive presentation. The decision to include elements such as interactive interviews, a timeline of zine-making tools and techniques, and a curated resource library was driven by the desire to create a holistic and immersive experience. These elements were designed to provide users with multiple entry points into the research, allowing them to engage with the content in a way that best suits their interests and learning styles. Incorporating digital humanities methodologies, the project aims to create an inclusive and participatory space where users can interact with the content and contribute their own perspectives.

In creating this digital object, the objective was to mirror the DIY ethos that is central to zine culture. This meant not only providing content but also encouraging user interaction and exploration. The design process involved several iterations of mindmaps, notes, and sketches to refine the structure and ensure that the user flow was intuitive and meaningful. The goal was to create a digital environment that was as accessible and inclusive as the zine communities it represents.

B. Structure and Content Overview

The digital object is organised into three main sections: interactive interviews, a timeline of zine-making tools and techniques, and a curated resource library. Each section serves a distinct purpose, contributing to the overall goal of providing a comprehensive and engaging exploration of zine culture.

1. Interactive Interviews

The interviews section is the heart of the digital object, providing direct access to the voices of zine makers. The interviews were conducted using a google form that was sent to participants via email, following responses on Instagram or physical interactions. The interview questions were sent out in both French and English, as most of the zinesters I have met recently are based in France, like myself. These interviews offer invaluable insights into the personal and political motivations behind zine creation, the challenges faced by zine makers, and the creative processes that drive this form of expression. By presenting these interviews in an interactive format, the digital object allows users to engage directly with the content, fostering a sense of connection and empathy with the interviewees.

Each interview is represented as an interactive circle on the main page. The circle changes colour and expands slightly when the user hovers over a specific interview, to make it more visible to the user which interview they are about to select. When clicked, the circle opens a modal containing the interview content, which includes text, hyperlinks, and images. The question posed is in bold and each individual's answer follows this question in regular text below the question. Hyperlinks included were provided by interview subjects. While each person received the same interview questions, respondents were free to choose which questions they wanted to answer. Questions which were left blank by an interview subject were consequently not included in their respective interview. There were also certain questions pertaining to personal information being shared that allowed respondents to indicate if they were not comfortable with their

information being shared. Images provided were also selected by respondents. The inclusion of multimedia elements in the interviews adds depth to the content, allowing users to engage with the material on multiple levels.

2. Timeline of Zine-Making Tools and Techniques

The timeline section serves as a chronological guide to the evolution of zine-making tools and techniques. It highlights key developments in the history of zine production. The timeline is interactive; it is arranged in a vertical line and users can scroll downwards to follow the chronological progression of each technique. It is designed along a dotted line with each event containing a title for the technique or tool, a date, and a brief description. It also has a hover feature which expands content from the original descriptive circle, allowing users to hover over different techniques or tools to learn more about their significance. This feature underscores the thesis's exploration of how technological advancements have influenced zine culture, providing a visual and temporal context for the written analysis.

It includes a little illustration alongside bullet points explaining the technique. This is a black and white image with some transparent parts to blend into the background colour of the post. I wanted to include bullet points rather than the full text that appears in this thesis as a short form summary of the technique that conveyed the essence of the technique. It is also more compatible with the hover effect that I have coded, as users will be allowed to briefly pause and be able to understand each element on the timeline without having to pour over a vast amount of text. By offering a historical perspective, the timeline helps users understand the broader technological shifts that have shaped zine-making over the years.

3. Curated Resource Library

The library section is a curated collection of resources related to zine culture. It includes a list of the zines discussed in this thesis, links to the zine libraries previously mentioned, a suggested further reading list, a bibliography, and a manual of how to create a zine, providing users with a

comprehensive toolkit for further exploration. Each resource is categorised and described, offering users a clear understanding of its relevance to the study of zine culture.

The resource library extends the reach of the thesis by providing users with the means to continue their research and involvement in zine culture beyond the digital object. It serves as a bridge between the academic research presented in the thesis and the broader zine community, encouraging users to explore zine culture in greater depth.

The resources in the library were carefully selected to represent a wide range of perspectives within zine culture. The resources included have also been discussed in this format, but by including them in this interactive platform there is an opportunity for users to interact with the resources in their own time or to conduct their own research into this topic. By offering a diverse array of resources, the library ensures that users can find information that is relevant to their interests, whether they are looking for scholarly analysis or practical advice. By including these resources in the digital object, the library helps to preserve and promote the rich history of zine culture, ensuring that it remains accessible to future generations.

4. Contact Page

The contact page is a basic form structure linked to my email address. Users can submit comments or questions or concerns along with their email address so that they can get in touch with me regarding the thesis. The brief author bio below this contact form gives some details about my qualifications and background and is accompanied by a quirky, self-portrait illustration of myself.

C. Technical Design and Development

The digital object was developed using a combination of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, chosen for their versatility, compatibility, and ability to create a responsive and interactive design. These technologies allowed for the creation of a web-based platform that is both visually

appealing and functional, with smooth transitions, animations, and custom elements that enhance the user experience.

A key feature of the landing page is a whimsical JavaScript animation of three dots, representing the cyan, magenta, and yellow (CMY) colours used in traditional printing processes. These dots float around the screen in a playful manner, reminiscent of the classic DVD screensaver, adding a fun and nostalgic element to the interface. This animation not only sets the tone for the interactive experience but also subtly nods to the physicality of print media, a core aspect of zine culture.

The design of the digital object was guided by principles of user-centred design, ensuring that the interface is simple and intuitive, with clear navigation and interactive elements that are easy to understand and use. The user experience is further enhanced by the careful selection of typography, which plays a significant role in conveying the ethos of zine-making. The primary font used on the landing page and for all H1 headers is a custom font based on my own handwriting, adding a personal and DIY touch that aligns with the zine aesthetic. For body text and other headings, the Courier monospace font is employed, evoking the typewriter's role in the early days of zine production.

Colour is another crucial element of the design, with each page of the digital object featuring gradients based on Risograph hex colour codes, corresponding to different ink drums used in Risograph printing (Goodman). This choice of colours not only adds visual interest but also connects the digital experience to the tactile and colourful world of zine production. The use of these specific colour gradients reinforces the connection between the digital and physical aspects of zine culture, bridging the gap between traditional print techniques and modern digital media. The dotted texture which is an overlay to all these gradients mimics the halftone texture of early silkscreen images, also known as 'raster dots'.

One of the main technical challenges in developing was balancing aesthetic appeal with functionality, particularly in the timeline and interview sections. The timeline needed to be both visually engaging and easy to navigate, while the interview modals needed to provide a seamless

user experience without compromising on the depth and richness of the content. This was achieved through iterative design, with feedback from users helping to refine the interface and ensure that it met the needs of the target audience.

Embedding multimedia content while maintaining fast load times was another significant challenge. To address this, images and code were optimised, ensuring that the digital object loads quickly and performs smoothly, even on slower internet connections. This optimization is crucial in maintaining user engagement, as slow load times can be a major barrier to interaction.

The technical design of the digital object also reflects the DIY ethos of zine culture. The use of open-source technologies and a focus on accessibility ensures that the digital object is in line with the principles of inclusivity and participation that are central to zine-making. This approach also allows for future updates and expansions, ensuring that the digital object can continue to evolve alongside the research.

D. Integration with the Thesis

The digital object is designed as an integral extension of the thesis, offering an alternative way to engage with the research. It complements the written work by providing interactive and multimedia content that illustrates key points discussed in the thesis. This integration is crucial in ensuring that the digital object is not just a supplementary tool, but a core component of the research itself.

For example, the timeline of zine-making tools and techniques visually represents the historical progression of zine-making, providing a temporal context for the written chapters. This visual representation helps to reinforce the thesis's arguments about the influence of technological advancements on zine culture, offering users a more immersive way to engage with the content.

The interactive interviews allow users to hear directly from zine makers, adding a personal dimension to the research. These first-person accounts provide invaluable insights into the motivations, challenges, and creative processes behind zine-making, enriching the user's understanding of the subject matter. By offering these interviews in an interactive format, the

digital object ensures that the research is not only read but experienced, creating a deeper connection between the user and the content.

The resource library provides additional context and resources, helping users to understand the broader implications of the research. By offering a curated selection of resources, the library extends the reach of the thesis, encouraging users to explore zine culture in greater depth. This approach ensures that the research has a lasting impact, providing users with the tools they need to continue their exploration of zine culture beyond the digital object.

The integration of the digital object with the thesis also reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the research. By combining elements of digital humanities, media studies, and cultural history, the digital object offers a comprehensive exploration of zine culture that goes beyond the limitations of traditional academic formats. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that the research is accessible to a wide audience, including those outside the academic community.

E. Reflection and Future Directions

Reflecting on the creation process, the digital object successfully achieved its goal of enhancing the thesis through interactivity and multimedia content. The challenges faced during development provided valuable learning experiences, particularly in the areas of responsive design and user engagement. The final product is a testament to the potential of digital tools to enrich academic research and presentation.

Looking forward, there is significant potential for expanding the digital object. By using a domain name and having it hosted on the web, it means that people will be able to access the research easily, away from the sphere of more formalised academia. Additional interviews could be conducted and added to the existing collection, providing a more comprehensive view of the zine community. The timeline could be expanded to include more tools and techniques, and the library could be continuously updated with new resources. There is also potential to develop new

interactive features, such as a zine-making tool or a community forum, which would allow users to actively participate in the creation and sharing of zines.

I am hoping to continue expanding this resource in the future. By using GitHub pages to host the webpage, it means that I could avoid domain name and hosting fees. So it will be feasible for me to edit and renew the page if needed. I am hoping to be able to adapt the page for viewing on multiple devices, as it primarily only works on a desktop for now. This was in part because of limited time to adapt the code for multiple devices. This became evident when generating the QR code for the printed version of this thesis. However, the interviews can still be accessed via a phone if needed. This was the main goal of the QR code.

The digital object also opens up new possibilities for the future of zines and interactive research. The project highlights the potential for digital objects to complement academic research, offering new ways to engage with and explore cultural practices. This approach reflects the evolving nature of zine culture in the digital age, demonstrating how traditional practices can be adapted to new technologies without losing their core values of DIY ethics and community engagement. This portion of the thesis represents a significant contribution to the broader discussion on digital zines and interactive media. By combining elements of digital humanities, media studies, and cultural history, the project offers a comprehensive exploration of zine culture that goes beyond the limitations of traditional academic formats. The website serves as a model for how digital tools can enrich academic research, offering new ways to engage with and explore cultural practices.

VIII. Conclusion and Implications

A. Summary of Findings

In examining the creation, content, and collaborative aspects of zines, this thesis has illuminated the multifaceted nature of zine culture and its significant role within independent

publishing. The research reveals that zines are not merely products of artistic expression but also manifestations of their creators' personal visions and societal contexts. Each zine embodies its maker's unique voice, demonstrating the medium's ability to convey individualised storytelling. The diverse content found in zines—spanning personal narratives, artistic expressions, political commentary, and niche interests—exemplifies the inherent flexibility and diversity of the medium. This diversity presents a challenge to mainstream narratives by offering platforms for voices and perspectives often marginalised or overlooked in traditional media.

The findings emphasise that zines serve as vital cultural artefacts reflecting the socio-cultural and political milieu of their times. This is captured in the alternative histories and mythologies contained in *Weird Walk*, or the queer experiences conveyed in *Les Ciseaux*. They are not just ephemeral publications but are integral to understanding more independent movements and alternative viewpoints. They offer a lived experience to be connected with; a voice of a life lived and a story being told. Zines offer a unique lens into the experiences and issues that mainstream media may overlook, thus contributing significantly to the cultural and historical record.

The collaborative nature of zine culture is a driving force behind its evolution, as well as being an aspect which enriches its value. Projects like *Carriola éditions* and *Colorama Clubhouse* not only blend individual perspectives but also foster an environment of collective experimentation. Such collaborations often lead to innovative formats and themes that push the boundaries of traditional zine-making, reflecting a broader spectrum of voices and ideas. By working together, zine creators can push creative boundaries, explore new ideas, and build connections among diverse groups. This collective approach enhances the richness and impact of zines, demonstrating their role as a medium for community engagement and shared expression.

The preservation and accessibility of zines pose significant challenges. Metcalf's assertion that "in preserving zines, archivists fulfil the core values of promoting the widest access and use, documenting and preserving a diversity of perspectives, and social responsibility" highlights the importance of dedicated archival efforts. The decentralised production and informal distribution

networks of zines present considerable obstacles to preservation. Specialised archives or integration into existing community repositories are crucial for preserving the unique cultural and historical insights offered by zines. Without such efforts, the documentation of such movements and subcultures may be lost, diminishing future understanding of these important aspects of cultural history.

The preservation challenges identified underscore the critical need for proactive and systematic archival strategies. Without dedicated efforts, the rich cultural and historical documentation provided by zines is at risk of being lost. Effective preservation strategies must address the unique characteristics of zines, including their decentralised production and informal distribution networks.

B. The Significance and Implications of Zine Culture and Its Evolution

Studying zines reveals their unique cultural value and the considerable challenges they face due to their decentralised nature. Unlike mainstream publications, zines often defy traditional distribution frameworks, relying on informal networks and word-of-mouth to reach their audiences. This decentralised approach fosters a sense of community and independence but introduces significant obstacles to their preservation and accessibility. The research highlights zines as significant cultural artefacts that challenge conventional media narratives. Their reliance on informal distribution methods underscores the need for innovative preservation strategies. Understanding the decentralised nature of zines and their impact on media landscapes provides valuable insights into the broader implications of alternative and independent publishing.

One major challenge in studying zines is accessing these publications and connecting with zine makers who may no longer be active. The ephemeral nature of zines—often produced in limited runs and distributed through non-traditional channels—means they can easily fall out of circulation. This underscores the necessity for establishing public access through institutional means such as libraries or médiathèques. As noted by Chepesiuk, “Given the ephemeral nature of zines and their value as a record of more contemporary culture, zine curators would like to see

more libraries make a more active effort to preserve zines.” Public repositories play a crucial role in ensuring zines are preserved and accessible for future research and appreciation.

Addressing this challenge involves developing strategies to enhance the visibility and accessibility of zines. Libraries and archives must actively seek out zines through outreach programs and partnerships with zine communities. Specialised programs should be developed to manage and promote these materials, including creating dedicated zine collections, hosting zine-related events, and collaborating with zine creators to ensure accurate representation and preservation. Public access initiatives will ensure that zines remain available for research and cultural engagement.

The lack of a standardised circulation pathway for zines exacerbates the issue. Unlike conventional books and journals, which benefit from established distribution networks and formal archival systems, zines often rely on grassroots methods of dissemination. This informal distribution can lead to zines becoming obscure or lost over time, making it challenging for researchers and enthusiasts to locate and study them. Creating dedicated zine archives or integrating zines into existing community archives—such as public libraries or cultural institutions—becomes essential. Projects like the *Colorama Clubhouse* demonstrate the need for such archives, as they offer a central platform for preserving and accessing diverse zine formats and collaborative efforts.

Establishing comprehensive archival systems for zines is crucial. This includes both physical archives and digital repositories that can accommodate the diverse formats and collaborative nature of zines. Centralised repositories will help mitigate the risk of loss and ensure zines are preserved for future generations. The establishment of a comprehensive online archive for zines presents its own set of complexities, particularly within the realm of digital humanities. The diversity of zine content, formats, and creators makes it challenging to create a unified digital repository that captures the richness and variety of the zine community. Each zine is unique, reflecting its creator's personal vision and employing unconventional formats and styles. This

diversity poses a significant challenge for digital archivists striving to create a cohesive and representative online archive.

Yet, developing an online archive for zines requires a balance between flexibility and inclusivity. Digital archivists must employ innovative approaches such as metadata standards that accommodate diverse zine formats, while also leveraging community input to ensure comprehensive representation. This includes addressing technical challenges and developing user-friendly platforms that facilitate broad access while respecting creators' rights.

Additionally, issues of copyright, ownership, and ethical considerations surrounding digital preservation complicate the creation of a universal online repository for zines. Many zine creators may not fully understand or navigate the legalities associated with digital preservation and online distribution. Establishing an online archive requires careful attention to these factors to respect creators' rights while facilitating broad access to their work. Therefore, clear guidelines and support for zine creators will help manage these concerns and ensure that zines are preserved and shared responsibly. Developing robust legal frameworks and providing resources for creators will be essential for the long-term success of online zine archives.

Exploring the complexities of creating a universal online archive for zines offers valuable insights into the broader landscape of digital humanities. It highlights the need for nuanced approaches to digital preservation and access, particularly in the context of alternative and independent publishing. Researchers and archivists must navigate these challenges while advocating for the inclusion of zines in public and digital archives. By addressing these issues, we can work towards preserving and disseminating this unique cultural heritage, ensuring that the voices and visions captured in zines are not lost to history.

This research makes a contribution to the field of digital humanities by offering a detailed analysis of zine culture and its preservation challenges. It provides actionable recommendations for creating inclusive digital archives and underscores the importance of preserving alternative

media. By addressing the unique characteristics of zines and their impact on independent publishing, this research supports the development of more robust archival practices and enhances the understanding of alternative cultural expressions.

C. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on zine culture should continue to explore the dynamic interplay between creation, distribution, and preservation. The hands-on nature of zine-making—characterised by its DIY ethos and personal creativity—offers valuable insights into independent publishing. Researchers are encouraged to delve deeper into practical aspects of zine production, from printmaking techniques to distribution strategies, to gain a comprehensive understanding of how zines are made and shared.

Investigating the practicalities of zine production will provide a more complete picture of the zine-making process. This includes studying different production techniques, distribution methods, and the impact of technology on zine creation. Such research will enrich our understanding of the technical and creative aspects of zine culture.

Future research should focus on developing effective archival practices for zines, including the creation of specialised archives and digital preservation strategies. Exploring successful case studies and models for zine archiving will help establish best practices and inform future efforts. Additionally, examining the impact of zines on contemporary media and culture can provide insights into the broader implications of this medium. Zines often serve as a counterpoint to mainstream media, offering alternative viewpoints and creative expressions. Exploring the interaction between zines and other forms of independent media, such as podcasts, webcomics, and social media platforms, can provide a comprehensive view of their impact on contemporary media landscapes. Research should examine how zines contribute to and are shaped by these media, as well as how they participate in broader cultural and social movements, thereby enhancing our understanding of their role in shaping modern discourse. Studying the impact of zines on contemporary media will shed light on their role as agents of change and innovation.

Building on the findings discussed throughout this thesis, future research should aim to celebrate and sustain the DIY spirit of zine culture by implementing the recommendations outlined. This includes enhancing our understanding of zine production techniques, developing robust archival practices, and exploring the broader media impact of zines. By aligning future research with these goals, we can ensure that zines continue to thrive as a vital form of independent publishing and cultural expression. Encouraging individuals to create their own zines and engage with the zine community will help sustain this vibrant medium. Building a supportive network for zine creators and encouraging collaborative projects and community-driven initiatives will continue to play a crucial role in the evolution of zine culture.

D. Potential for Preservation Efforts

The preservation of zines requires both innovative and traditional approaches. Libraries, archives, and cultural institutions should develop specialised programs to acquire, catalogue, and protect zines. This includes creating dedicated zine collections and incorporating zines into existing archival systems. Special attention should be given to preserving both physical and digital formats of zines, ensuring that these materials remain accessible for future generations.

Preservation efforts should involve a combination of physical and digital solutions. Establishing dedicated zine collections and integrating zines into broader archival systems will help safeguard these materials. Institutions should also consider creating digital archives to complement physical collections and enhance access. Collaboration between archivists, researchers, and zine creators is critical for effective preservation. Practical mechanisms for this collaboration include establishing advisory boards composed of zine creators and scholars who can provide insights into the preservation needs of zines. Workshops and joint projects can facilitate knowledge exchange, and partnerships with zine festivals and community events can help identify valuable zine collections for preservation. For example, Bartel's research illustrates an example of a successful collaboration model that has the potential to be replicated or expanded. Archivists should work closely with zine creators to understand their needs and preferences, ensuring that

preservation practices respect the unique characteristics of zines. Researchers can contribute by documenting zine culture and advocating for the inclusion of zines in archival collections. Building strong partnerships between archivists, researchers, and zine creators will enhance preservation efforts. Collaborative approaches will help address challenges and ensure that zines are preserved in ways that honour their unique qualities.

Educational initiatives can also play a role in promoting zine preservation. Workshops, seminars, and public awareness campaigns can help raise awareness about the importance of preserving zines and encourage individuals to contribute to archival efforts. While engaging the community and fostering a greater understanding of zine culture are crucial for long-term preservation, challenges such as limited funding, lack of awareness, and the need for specialised skills can hinder these efforts. Overcoming these challenges may involve advocating for increased funding through grants and sponsorships, partnering with educational institutions for in-kind support, and offering training programs for archivists and volunteers to build expertise in zine preservation. Addressing these barriers proactively will ensure that preservation initiatives are sustainable and effective. Educational programs and public outreach are vital for promoting zine preservation. Initiatives that raise awareness and encourage community involvement will help build support for archival efforts and ensure the continued appreciation of zines.

In conclusion, this thesis has thoroughly examined zine culture, elucidating its cultural significance, preservation challenges, and opportunities for effective safeguarding. The recommendations presented here are designed to address the specific needs identified throughout the research and align with the thesis's overarching arguments about the importance of zines in independent publishing. By implementing these strategies, we can ensure that zines continue to be recognized as vital cultural artefacts, preserved for future generations, and celebrated for their unique contributions to creative expression and cultural discourse.

IX. References

Note

All of the zines that I have referred to in this thesis are in my personal collection. I obtained permission from respective authors or studios to use scans from these zines in this thesis. This correspondence occurred over email. Photographs of various equipment that have been included with reference to printmaking techniques are my own unless otherwise stated.

Creating a bibliography for zine material is a challenge as there is sometimes a lack of crucial bibliographical information. That being said, I have tried to implement the following format in this reference list:

Author(s). (Year, Month Day). Title of the article or piece. *Title of the Zine*, Issue number

For publications who have more than one author, such as Carriola éditions, I have simply listed the name of the collective but for others, such as *Weird Walk*, I have included author names as published in the specific zine being referenced in this paper. For *Weird Walk*, I have not included “month” but have included the Pagan period which appears on the cover of each issue with reference to the “date” information.

Zines

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