# Introduction and Need

Zines are self­-produced and self­-published literature that often feature counter­cultural, political, and artistic content. Typically zines are produced in small print runs, and are often distributed directly by the author or through “distros” (i.e., specialized distributors of zines, crafts, and art prints). Zines provide a first­hand, intimate, and authoritative account of social, political, and art historical movements and provide evidence of knowledge production and dissemination within radical, queer, and other subculture communities.[[1]](#footnote-0) They are used by humanities scholars as primary source documents on a range of topics, and are regarded as a critical record of third wave feminism and the riot grrrl movement, punk rock and the punk aesthetic, popular culture and fandom, and local history in colleges, local scenes, and communities (small and large) around the world.

ZineCat serves educators, researchers, creators, librarians, archivists, and anyone in the general public with an interest in zines. Due to their ephemeral nature, it makes it difficult to identify where zines are collected as well as makes cataloging zine consistently across collections very difficult.[[2]](#footnote-1) Additionally, the information ecosystem grows ever complex as more information is produced both physically and online. Furthermore, because zines exist in a countercultural space, they have historically been collected and circulated first by independent collectors, then zine libraries and activist centers, followed later by research institutions. Over the last fifteen to twenty years, public libraries, special collections, and academic research libraries have begun collecting zines as scholarly resources, as well as part of leisure reading collections. This hybrid environment of zine collections translates into dispersed and sometimes erratic mechanisms for access (not all libraries describe material in the same, standardized way). Stoddart and Kiser state, “the[ir] informal survey of various libraries and zine repositories suggests that no standard approach exists for cataloging zines...Each library has developed its own system to meet its local needs and available resources.”[[3]](#footnote-2) Zine descriptions and metadata, thus discovery of zines, are scattered across library catalogs, archival finding aids, standalone databases, spreadsheets, and online platforms such as LibraryThing. This diversity of access points poses impediments to finding and using zines in aggregate for research, teaching, and learning in the humanities. The Zine Union Catalog (ZUC) seeks to federate metadata from these disparate sources

# Environmental Scan and Bibliography

Jenna and I have had an opportunity to spend many years working on ZineCat through our work in the MADH program. In our ITP coursework, we were able to identify two models for our work that do not exactly accomplish what the Zine Union Catalog strives for, but aspects of these two models can inform ZineCat’s development.

There are two primary models for the work we hope to accomplish with ZineCat:

## OCLC’s WorldCat: Union Catalog Model

OCLC’s WorldCat[[4]](#footnote-3) is a union catalog with 72,000 members in 170 countries and territories who contribute their metadata and collection holdings to the database. This tool provides ZineCat with a model for standardizing metadata and building a collectivized community of contributors to ZineCat so that users (researchers, scholars, students, zinesters, etc.) can discover information about zines, and zine collections, closest to them and in the world at large. It will also serve as a mechanism for reducing the time collectors spend doing original cataloging of zines in their collection.

It is important to note that the scale of ZineCat will be much smaller than OCLC. The number of cultural institutions looking to contribute to ZineCat is far fewer than the number of OCLC members. It is perhaps likely that there will be 1% of the members of ZineCat than there are to OCLC. According to [ZineWiki](http://zinewiki.com/Main_Page)[[5]](#footnote-4) there are 75 zine collecting institutions. However, this has not been updated since 2015[[6]](#footnote-5), so it is entirely likely that this number has grown or shrunk. (As an outgrowth of the work being done on ZineCat--and time permitting considering Jenna and Lauren are both graduate-students-with-full-time-jobs--project participants will update the ZineWiki and use WikiData to inform the development and growth of both projects.)

## The Digital Public Library of America: Aggregator and Project Development Model

The [Digital Public Library of America (DPLA)](https://dp.la/)[[7]](#footnote-6) is a discovery tool that provides information (metadata) from libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural institutions within (and beyond) the United States on their varied digital collections. The DPLA aggregates metadata from cultural institutions and makes them discoverable via their search platform. The data is aggregated through a networked model of nationally distributed hubs working with their regional institutions to standardize the transfer process of metadata records from institution to the DPLA.[[8]](#footnote-7)

Although few of the zines in ZineCat will be available in digitized form (in contrast to the materials discoverable in DPLA), the project development for DPLA will set a model for ZineCat development. In the sections below, we highlight the development and workstream models and how ZineCat will design its development based on the DPLA model.

Our bibliography explores writings on zines, zine libraries and librarianship, and union catalogs, but there is not significant literature on cooperative cataloging among libraries using disparate metadata schema to the extent that ZineCat does. We are concerned with building an accessible catalog, and so have included articles on that topic.

Though a niche speciality, the literature on zine librarianship is not scant with writings by and about academic, public, and community zine libraries. Scholars like Kate Eichhorn (New School: Culture and Media) and Janice Radway (Northwestern: Communication) have also examined zine librarianship, as well. Most of the librarian-authored articles are focused on practical aspects of zine librarianship--library profiles, how they fit in an archives, justifying collecting zines, cataloging, zine maker relationships with libraries, working with teens, and cataloging zines. *The Zine Librarians Code of Ethics*, a collaboration between sixteen zine librarians and archivists from academic, public, and community libraries and archives from all over the United States, is, while cited a dozen or more times since it was published in late 2015, is something of a thought leader in librarianship, where cataloger attitudes toward creators' rights to what happens to their work can sometimes be characterized by the sentiment, "[screw 'em](https://www.facebook.com/groups/161813927168408/permalink/2800654779950963/?comment_id=2800665216616586&reply_comment_id=2800715876611520)." Zine librarians Joshua Barton and Violet Fox presented a talk on "Cataloging the Living" at the American Librarian Association and found that taking creators wants and needs into account was surprisingly controversial.

Eichhorn and Radway, though not zine makers or librarians, have intentionally or not, taken an almost ethnographic approach to their work, becoming close with zine librarians and archivists, and presenting on panels with us. Eichhorn's co-edited a journal issue with riot grrrl archivist Lisa Darms, and Radway attended a Zine Librarians (un)Conference and referred to the discussions as "electrifying." They theorize zines and zine librarianship, contextualizing them within media and women's studies.

We have not yet fully absorbed the union catalog articles, but we expect them to be similarly practice-focused, "how to do it good" pieces that will inform our methodology. We are practitioners and teachers, who resonate best are at the how-to-do-it good end of the praxis spectrum. To that end, we intend to build our catalog carefully, with attention to accessibility best practices, hence the selection of articles on library accessibility and universal design.

# Resources

There are many resources already available to us in support of further ZineCat development. As a result of previous coursework, there is a working [prototype for ZineCat](http://browse.zinecat.org/#), that is hosted through 2020 on Reclaim Hosting. Funding for this was secured from a Micro ITP grant. After 2020, hosting will be renewed with contributions from the ZUC community, who is a main point of support for ZineCat. A major goal for our capstone is to build out the prototype so that it includes more than a sampling of items from various collections, but so that it includes the full set of zine holdings from each of the collections represented in the prototype. Additionally, we want to include a more holistic set of metadata fields in ZineCat so that there are more details included about each of the zines, i.e. zine abstract, subject headings, and genre.

In order to engage the current community, and to direct future and potential partners and contributors, the project maintains a [GitHub repository](https://github.com/zinecat/zinecat.org) where information about getting involved with the project is located, sample datasets that are included in ZineCat are kept in the repository, and by the end of capstone, it will contain updated datasets, updated documentation about ZineCat, and instructions for institutions that want to contribute their metadata to the project (which will include detailed instructions for ingesting the data). GitHub also operates as a project management tool and part “About Us” page for the project’s development. Furthermore, we use the [ZineCat Blog](http://blog.zinecat.org/) and social media to communicate progress, milestones, and ZineCat happenings.

In addition to the ITP micro grant, we have received other generous support from our MADH program, including the first year of Reclaim Hosting during our Digital Humanities Praxis and a MADH grant to convene a Hack/Doc session in October, 2019 so that we can meet with consultants from [Openflows](https://www.openflows.com/) who have done an assessment of ZineCat’s viability. This meeting will also give ZineCat community members a chance to meet in person in order to organize the documentation produced from the many years of work on ZineCat. This will be especially helpful to support this capstone as a main goal for this phase of the project, as we move closer to the end of work in the MADH program, is to organize the intellectual output from the years of work on this. As Jenna and I are both members of academic communities in our professional life--Jenna at Barnard and me at NYU--we have various institutional support to further our project from our institutions as well, such as the possibility for hosting support, use of facilities to meet with our ZineCat colleagues, and potential funding opportunities through support of grant applications.

Since 2009, zine librarians have gathered at an annual unConference (the Zine Librarians unConference) held in various locations throughout the United States, usually in the summer. Next year it is expanding to Canada and there will also be a second unConference this year. The unConference gives us a consistent opportunity to meet with our friends and colleagues to meet and discuss all things zine libraries related, but to also meet with the community to discuss the Zine Union Catalog. For the last two years, Jenna and I have presented on ZineCat’s development through our work in MADH which it is likely we will continue to use this time to present on and work on ZineCat.

# Work Plan

Jenna and I have identified three main goals for our collaborative capstone:

1. More **substantial prototype** which includes adding full zine collection sets from the six institutions in the prototype (ABC No Rio, Barnard College, Carnegie Library, Denver Zine Library, Queer Zine Archive Project, and Sallie Bingham Center) that include more metadata fields. At the very minimum, it will include the xZineCorex elements: Title, Creator, Subject/Genre, Publisher, Contributors, Date of Publication, Physical Description, Union ID, Language(s), Place of Publication, See Also, Freedoms & Restrictions. It will also include links to the permanent URLs for the holding collections (like in DPLA). We plan to audit the prototype (and Collective Access) for universal design and accessibility (i.e. alt text, color contrast, device responsiveness).
2. Organize **documentation** and publish it to be shared with community. After 3 years in our academic program, we have produced volumes of documents regarding ZineCat, but it is somewhat disorganized and not publicly shared. Through work on the capstone, we will aggregate, organize, clean, and publish our documentation in a systematic way.
3. **Plan** for moving forward after MADH that operationalizes leadership, shared decision making and funding apparatuses like membership and grant opportunities, establishes protocols for project management and commits to tools necessary to implement this. We discussed including the goal of applying for a grant during our capstone or at the end, but we have decided this would be better accomplished after the completion of the capstone. Nevertheless, we will continue to identify what funding opportunities are available to ZineCat and will include these in our documentation. Some opportunities are an IMLS [Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program](https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/laura-bush-21st-century-librarian-program), NEH funding opportunities such as the [Digital Humanities Advancement Grants](https://www.neh.gov/grants/odh/digital-humanities-advancement-grants) and the [Sustaining Cultural Heritage, Collections](https://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/sustaining-cultural-heritage-collections), [Knight](https://knightfoundation.org/apply) foundation, and [Awesome Libraries](https://www.awesomefoundation.org/en/chapters/libraries).

We will work collaboratively to achieve these goals, but understand that more individualized work will also take place. For example, we have discussed having weekly check-ins on the weekend, but will work independently during the school week. Since we are hosting a Hack/Doc event on October 6, I foresee this being the first major date of our capstone. Since the event will provide an opportunity to both improve the prototype and documentation, it is my expectation that the remainder of October will be spent updating the prototype and then November will be for organizing the documentation. December will then be when we work out a plan for moving forward after MADH. However, I am realistic about the fact that the work might not be as segmented as this since all these facets of the work are interdependent on each other and all inform each other's development.

A tentative work plan:

| **Task to be completed** | **Person Responsible** | **Due Date** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Digital Capstone consultation meeting with Stephen Klein | Jenna & Lauren | Meeting on Monday, September 9 |
| Draft of capstone prospectus to advisers for feedback | Jenna & Lauren individually | Monday, September 9 |
| Capstone prospectus | Jenna & Lauren individually (but written together) | Monday, September 16 |
| Digital Archive trial run | Jenna & Lauren | Friday, October 4 |
| Hack/Doc session | Jenna & Lauren w/ Openflows | Sunday, October 6 |
| Hack/Doc session after action review | Jenna & Lauren | October 12/13 |
| Prototype re-boot with more metadata, more records, and improved accessibility | Jenna & Lauren | November 2/3 |
| Documentation published to GitHub Repo | Jenna & Lauren | December 7/8 |
| Plan for moving forward after MADH posted to ZineCat Blog | Jenna & Lauren | December 21/22 |
| White Paper (15 pages each -- can we do this together?) | Jenna & Lauren together OR each submit our own | January 9, 2020 |
| Advisor-Approved Capstone due to MA Director | Jenna & Lauren | January 10, 2020 |
| Digital Archive final run | Jenna & Lauren | End of January, 2020 |
| Deposit Capstone | Jenna & Lauren | End of January, 2020 |

# Ethical use and privacy protection of project data statement

Work on this Capstone will adhere to the [Zine Librarians Code of Ethics](https://zinelibraries.info/code-of-ethics/). The Preamble to the ZLCoE states:

“We, the community of zine librarians and archivists believe that:

“Because zines are often produced by members of marginalized communities,

“Because we strive to respectfully engage with and represent those communities,

“Because librarians/archivists are often part of the communities that make/read zines,

“Because the material itself, so beautifully and wonderfully varied, is often weird, ephemeral, magical, dangerous, and emotional,

“Because we reject the myth of library/archival ‘neutrality’

“Therefore we want to be accountable to our users, our institutions, our authors, donors, and communities.”

In addition to adherence to this code of ethics, data protection is further outlined in our Data Management Plan in the next part of this prospectus.

# Data Management Plan

The Data Management Plan is outlined on this [ZUC DMP for Capstone document](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1l3PZePYJLI8vhdeNMLK0g3IQVXA2e7UWVD7C30nvnd4/edit?usp=sharing).

# Storage and Sustainability

After meeting with Stephen Klein, we propose that ZineCat should be digitally captured and preserved through the following mechanisms twice; once prior to October 6 before the ZineCat prototype is rebuilt and then another time near completion of the capstone in December/January to capture the project’s development at the end of our degree progress:

* Capture the source code for ZineCat
* Perform a “database dump” through Collective Access and Reclaim Hosting and output to SQL file
* A web crawl WARC file using [Webrecorder](https://webrecorder.io/) (to be completed by Jenna and Lauren)
* A web crawl completed by Stephen Klein using [Heretrix](https://github.com/internetarchive/heritrix3/wiki)

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2. Stoddart, Richard A. and Teresa Kiser. 2004. "Zines and the Library." Library Resources & Technical Services 48 (3) (07): 191-198. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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