



To Be Zine or Not To Be Zine. That is the Question: How to create Zine related programming for Teens in Public Libraries.

Well I don't care about history
Rock, rock, rock'n'roll high school
'Cause that's not where I wanna be
Rock, rock, rock'n'roll high school
I just wanna have some kicks...

"Rock N' Roll High School" - Ramones

One of the greatest challenges facing Youth Services Librarians and public libraries in general is a lack of teen involvement and enthusiasm about library programs and services. The challenge is to develop and offer meaningful and relevant teen programs that respond to the diverse interests of teens, while meeting their developmental and information needs as a distinct community group. Possibly an even greater challenge, and one that is often ignored or forgotten, is to create programming that is fun. We have all been through it and have lived to tell the story, so we understand that adolescence is a very intense time, and a good library program for teens should balance enjoyment and fun with educational value. Zines offer libraries a treasure trove of programming opportunities and outreach activities that promote reading and information literacy for teens, as well as offering them a fun and creative outlet that appeals to their need for independence and self-expression.

Punky, edgy, alternative, radical, dissident, anarchist - all words used to describe zines and the counter-culture that is

associated with them, but not words typically associated with libraries or library programs. Now, you may be thinking to yourself "Why would I want them to be?" and that is a valid question. These words can be a little scary and intimidating, and when teenagers are added into the mix...well, it can be downright frightening. On the other side of the coin, this may be the answer to the eternal question that has eluded librarians for years: how do we get teens interested in the library? Simple...give them a little anarchy, with some edgy and alternative culture on the side and you have yourself a great teen library program.

The following is a list of zine-related programs that have been offered in public libraries, as well as being recommended by both librarians and teachers.

1. Zine Awareness Open House

A great place to start would be to have a program to introduce the history and culture of zines for teens, because, although many teenagers read and write zines of their own, it should never be assumed that every teenager has his/her finger on the pulse of alternative culture, or even has an interest in the medium. Recruit local zine authors or representatives from a zine library to give a presentation about zines. This initial introduction to the medium will give teens an appreciation of the philosophy behind zines and will hopefully sell them on the benefits of creating one of their own. To give the program less structure and more teen appeal, make it an Open House or Drop-In program, where teens can come and go as they please and ask questions and view the materials at their own leisure.

2. "Create Your Own Zine" Workshop

Another, more hands-on, program is a zine-making workshop for teens. You could use the initial Zine Open House as a hook, a way of gaining the interest and enthusiasm of the teens in zines, and publicizing the workshop. It would be beneficial to have a staff member or member of the zine community who has some knowledge about zines and zine-making to facilitate the program, but the DIY mentality that drives zine culture does not require a fine tuned skill set. That is the great thing about zines. It is a free style and accessible medium that does not need to take a certain format or style, and originality is highly encouraged. This is why it is a great activity for teens because it encourages independent and creative thinking. It would be an added bonus to have some sample zines available to inspire and encourage the teens.

A "Create Your Own Zine" Workshop would be an inexpensive library program, considering most of the supplies would be readily available at the library.

Photocopy paper, scissors, glue, old magazines, staplers, drawing and writing tools, use of the photocopier, and computers would essentially be all you would need to supply.

3. Outreach

Partnering with schools is an excellent way to both advertise the library and its services to students, and to foster awareness about the value of zines and zine culture. Both the Zine Awareness program and the workshop could be adjusted to take into a Language Arts or English class to teach information and media literacy. Junior high and high school students would definitely be the target audience, but Julie Bartel suggests that going into the higher grade levels in elementary schools is even worthwhile.

Some ideas for using Zines in the Library.....

- Zine Booklists for YA Literature—Zines offer a fresh and innovative format to standard library publications, such as Booklists and Information Guides, that would be appealing to teens
- Library Zine—Encourage teens to create a library zine that would be published and authored by teens in the library and could include book reviews and relevant articles, and could publicize teen library programs and services.
- Creative Writing—A zine that showcases art and creative writing created by teens

Zine Resources

There are many valuable and informative online and print resources available to aid librarians in developing their own "zine awareness." All of the programs mentioned can be offered in public libraries, regardless of whether or not the library has a zine collection, and, in fact, these programs could be the first step towards gaining administrative and library patron support for building a zine collection in the library. The following resources are helpful for librarians who want to become better educated about zines and zine culture.

- **Broken Pencil:** Broken Pencil is both a print magazine and a website that provides booklists and reviews of zines, a handy search feature that allows users to search for local zine published in their community, and advertisements for zine conferences and fairs. www.brokenpencil.com

- **Zineresource:** Zine Resource is a Wiki that provides a wealth of information about zines. It provides links to writings about zines, reviews, lists of zines published by and written for library workers, and a directory of zine libraries and collections. <http://zineresource.pbwiki.com/>
- **Baltimore County Public Library:** The BCPL houses a zine collection and their zine page on the library website provides a number of helpful links and resources that are relevant to public libraries.
<http://www.bcplonlineFrlm.org/centers/library/zines.html>
- ***From A to Zine: Building a Winning Zine Collection in Your Library* by Julie Bartel:** This book is essential for anyone interested in building a zine collection in the library or interested in zine-related programming ideas. (See Recommended Reading section for full bibliographic information)

