

TEACHING INFO.
LITERACY WITH ZINES

21 July 2011
(Zine Library Day!)

Hello! My name is Kelly + I am the Undergraduate Services Librarian at the University of Iowa. I made this zine to accompany a staff development session on the first-ever Zine Library Day, 21 July 2011. I've been thinking a lot about instruction + zines, and various discussions at the Zine Librarian (un)conference this month inspired me to put together some lessons. If you have comments or other ideas, please let me know! Kelly-mcelroy@uiowa.edu
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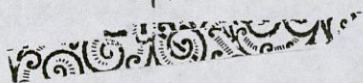


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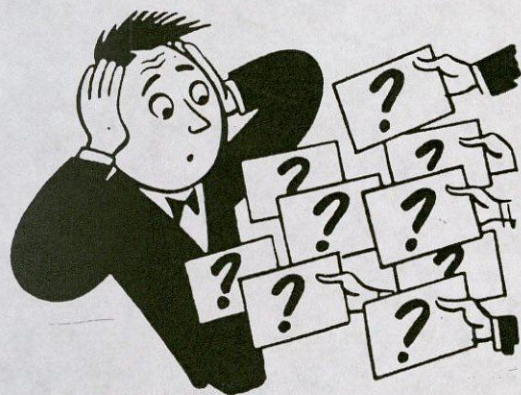
More Resources

+ room for your notes!



INTRODUCTION: why Zines + IL = ♡

You may be asking yourself, what the heck is a zine, again? You can find a lot of differing opinions on this, but I like to crib the definition used by the IPRC* in their Zines 101 classes:



A zine is a self-published work created for passion rather than profit.

So, this includes punk + riot grrrl + DIY, but zines trace back at least to the 1930s, when sci fi fans started to get their mimeograph on. The content in zines varies just as much as the passions of their creators—however, it is fair to say that zines often include perspectives underrepresented in mainstream media—whether news or fiction or scholarly works. Zines are chock full of info for researchers looking, say, at queer vegan subculture, Doctor Who fandom, or the narrative voices of adolescent girls.

But! The heterogeneous, dissonant, inconsistent, maddening forms of zines are a wonderful avenue for introducing information ^{also!} literacy concepts.

* Independent Publishing Resource Center, www.iprc.org

In case you need a refresher, IL is:

"a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed + have the ability to locate, evaluate, + use effectively the needed information."*

Librarians teach these skills to help folks navigate our increasingly information-rich world.

So! Why do Zines + IL = ♥?

- ♥ Zines may be physically + formally very strange (photocopied, handbound, lacking bibliographic info), in addition to unusual in
- ♥ content — they inspire curiosity.

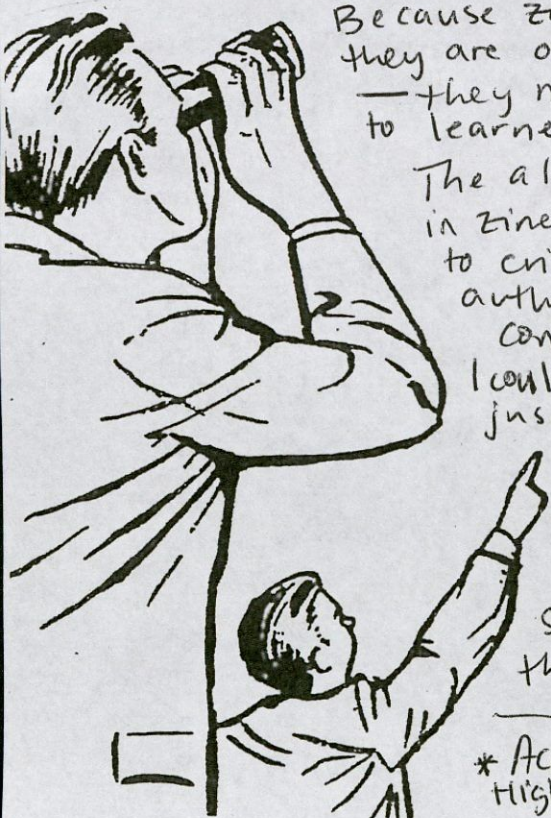
Because zines are self-published, they are often informal documents — they may be less threatening to learners.

The alternative views captured in zines offer opportunities to critically discuss authenticity, reliability, + context of information.

I could go on + on, but here's just one more, + it's a

doozy: Zines demonstrate another, very accessible way for learners to synthesize + compile their own knowledge.

* ACRL IL Standards for Higher Education, 2000



LESSON IDEAS

At the Unconference, a few people lamented having to always do "Make A Zine" workshops. While it is great that people like to make zines, it gets old teaching the same old thing when there are so many other opportunities hiding in our zine collections! So, the following 3 lessons are ways to branch out from "Make-a-zine." I've mapped them to ACRL's IL standards for higher education, namely to the following:

Standard Three

The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

Standard Five

The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Also, these really are "ideas," not "plans." It's up to you to flesh 'em out w/examples drawn from your collections.

Lesson 1: Authority Without an Author

One of the performance indicators for standard 3:

The information literate student articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources.

When we teach students to seek out reliable, valid, accurate, authoritative, + timely resources, we often teach about formal elements of documents. By examining the citations, the table of contents, learning about the author's credentials, + the background of the journal that published a work, we seek to establish the context in which the information was created + disseminated. Many zines lack some or all of these indicators.

For this lesson, you'll need a stack of zines on some shared topic: women's health; mental illness; agrobusiness; racism in the punk community; _____.

If you can find some academic sources (books or journals) on the same topic, great!

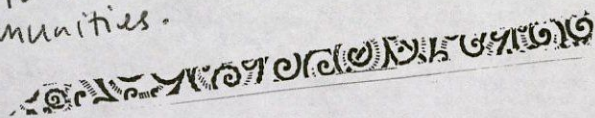
Pass out the zines + ask students about their identifying characteristics. If you use a tool (like the CRAAP test) to help students find academic sources, try applying it here. Why might you read these sources? Why might you write a zine anonymously or pseudonymously?

Then, pass out the journals/books, and ask again. What are the

differences? What values do the sources have? For example, you can discuss why someone may prefer to read a personal narrative about getting food stamps, rather than a government pamphlet about the process.

Variations:

- ask students to compare a zine + an article in depth. Is the information different? Does it matter? What is the audience?
- Compare zines to blogs. The "gay girl in Damascus" blog scandal could be a good way to talk about trust in blogging/zine communities.



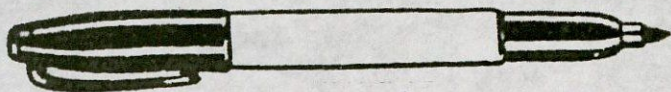
Lesson 2: Copy what?

Standard 5 includes this performance indicator:

The information literate student understands many of the ethical, legal and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology.

with this as one of the outcomes:

Demonstrates an understanding of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of copyrighted material



For this lesson, you will need Zines with a variety of copyright statements:

- copyleft ©
- copy at will
- creative commons
- and none at all.

Explain the basics of copyright: what it protects and why; that it is automatic; that it only applies to fixed media, not ideas or facts.

Introduce fair use + discuss the reasons behind it: to allow reproductions of copyrighted works for criticism, commentary, scholarship, news reporting, teaching, research, etc.

Discuss the vague guidelines for evaluating fair use.

Then, pass out the zines! Have students look for fair use appropriations from other works (e.g. cut + paste collages). Talk about alternatives to copyright: why would zinesters encourage others to use + remix their work? Do they see disregard for copyright?

Variation

- Bring in books of clipart, or Craphound. Talk about what makes something fair use, + how to find materials in the public domain.



Lesson 3: Zines + Free Speech

Standard 5 also includes this outcome:

Identifies and discusses issues related to censorship and freedom of speech

For this lesson, you'll need some raunchy or controversial zines. You may wish to focus on one topic—politics, police brutality, erotica—or you might just want to pick zines with rude language.

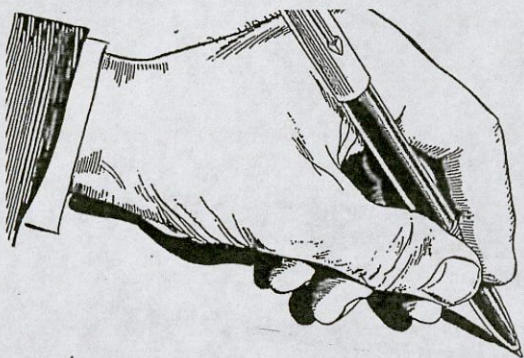
Start out by asking students to define Freedom of speech. You can talk about the first amendment or Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Have learners consider the zines w/in this framework. Are these kinds of info. available in other media? Where would you have to go to find these topics covered (a the language used)?

Variation

— This would tie in well w/ a discussion of the bias of search engines. Talk about the differences between censorship + selective algorithms. How can you ensure you are searching through all the info out there?





CONCLUSIONS

As you can probably tell, that's just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. I plan to

develop more zine-related LH activities, including more solid lesson plans. Will be posting instruction information on zinelibraries.info, so keep your eyes open, + pass along anything you come up with yourself!

Resources

Zinelibraries.info - home^{of} all things zine-library

Zinewiki.com - like wikipedia, but for zines!

nicolepagowsky.info/zines-instruction.html
- lesson plan comparing zines, blogs, + magazines

yearofscience2009.org/about/zine-contest.html
- awesome contest held to promote science literacy through zines

my notes

