QUEER ZINE LIBRARY





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Queer Zines Library is a UK-based diy mobile zine library celebrating radical LGBTQIA+ self-publishing.

Queer Zine Library officially began in July 2019. During the last year we've toured the UK taking the mobile zine library to queer gigs, festivals, public libraries, shelters, community spaces, museums, universities, history fairs. We've added 600 zines to the library collections, catalogued over 200 of those zines, established a volunteer collective, created a manual for cataloguing zines, hosted workshops, given talks, created a web series of online queer zine readings, and there's still so much to do!

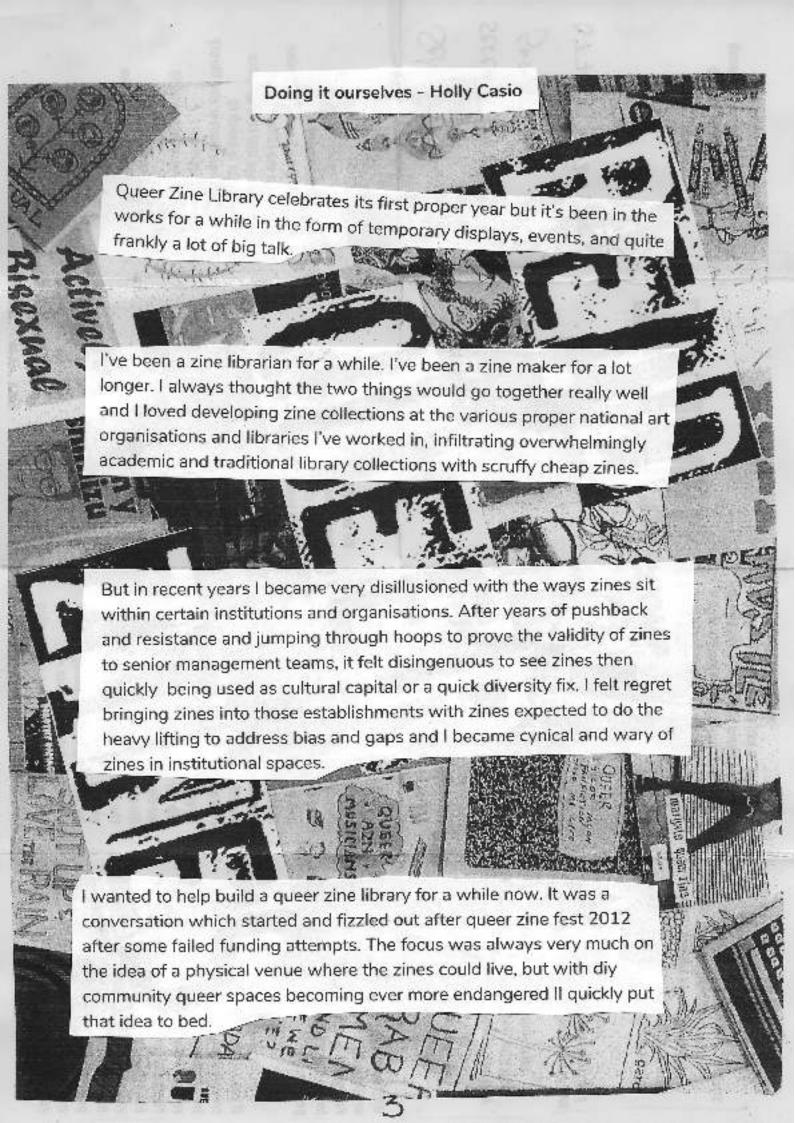
We believe that Queer Zine Library is political. In times of fascism we want zines to be viewed as vital living breathing tools for self preservation, activism, and a rejection of capitalist mainstream publishing, rather than just as art objects which *Look Nice*.

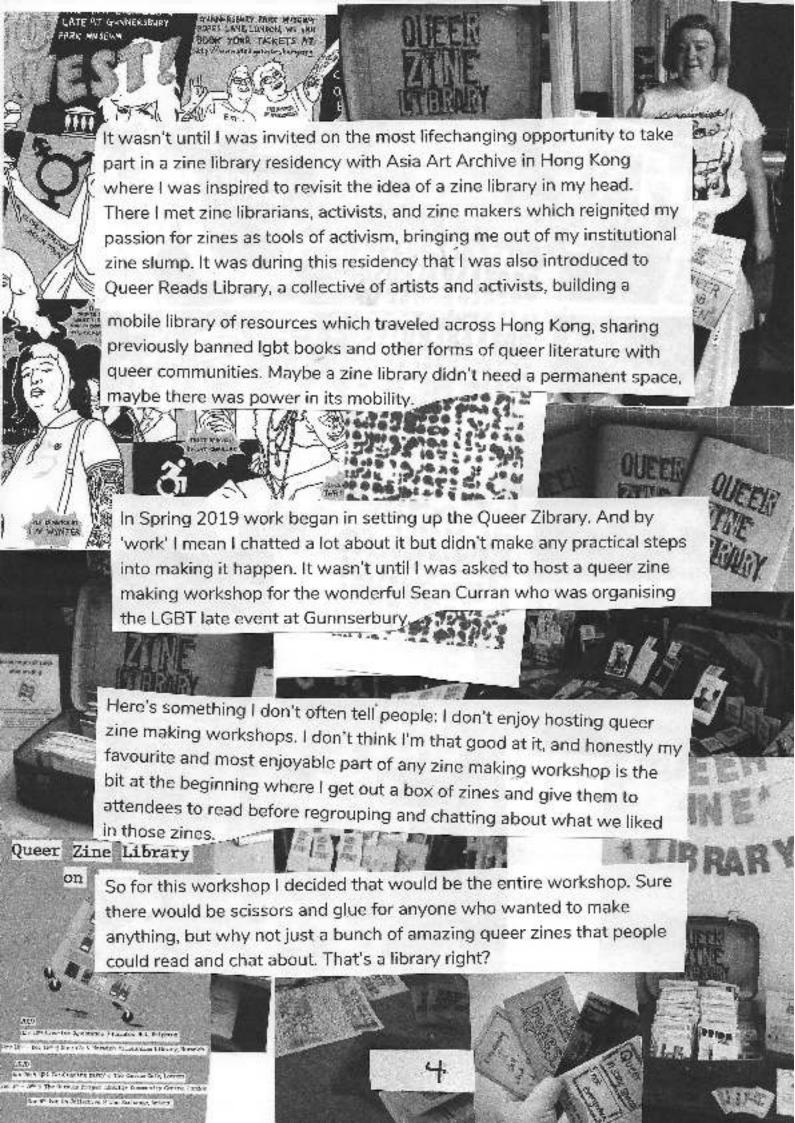
This zine is split into two parts: the first part celebrates the first year of the queer zine library in action, reflecting on the way we work and imagining future plans. The second part of the zine collects contributions from volunteers, zine collaborators, visitors to the library as we ask what do queer zines mean to you?

Our current summer tour is cancelled and our future touring plans are on hold for now as we ask ourselves what place is there for a touring mobile queer zine library when movement and public access is restricted more than ever before?

We don't have answers but we will continue to grow. Our collective is open to anyone wanting to join and we are continuing to make the zines accessible online during lockdown. We are also actively seeking zines for the library, so please send us your zines.

Queer Zine Library July 2020







Queer Zine Library wants your zines!

If you are a queer zine maker or have collections of queer zines and want to support the Queer Zine Library then get in touch!

queerzinelibrary@gmail.com

What we collect

Queer Zine Library collects queer-centered queer-authored zines and self-published material including perzines, fanzines, photozines, art zines, chapbooks, as well as other self-published or diy publications such as small press comics, pamphlets, as well as independent magazines with queer content or made by queer creators.

What we define as zines

Zines are diy publications made by individuals or groups of people rooted in a history of radical political self-publishing. Zines are often motivated by passion and self-expression rather than profit, they are cheap to make and require no skills to create. Zines are a way to document histories and experiences outside of traditional or capitalist publishing.

If you call your zine a zine, then we'll treat it like a zine. Queer Zine Library isn't interested in laying down strict rules to define zines for now, we recognise that self-published material blurs boundaries and the definition of zines will continue to shift and grow.

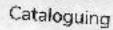
What do we mean by 'queer'?

Queer Zine Library collects both self-published material with queer content by queer authors as well as zines which have been created by queer makers but which might not necessarily have explicit queer focused content.

Within a term as massive as 'queer' we are inclusive of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Non-Binary+ and all genders.

QZL doesn't collect general non-queer made zines or other types of zines outside of this queer focus. We leave 'queer' open to self identification by zine makers.

Wondering your zine is suitable for the library? If you identify with any of the inclusive queer identities mentioned then no matter what your zine is about we will be happy to add it to the collections.



Over the last year Queer Zine Library has developed a collective of volunteers and catalogueers helping the collecting to grow and develop.



Cataloguing is the act of creating a database of zines for our readers to browse and search remotely. Cataloguing documents the key points of the zine – its title, its author, where it was made and when. Cataloguing also documents the physical aspects of the zine – it's size, page number, format, appearance etc. But the hard part about cataloguing is deciding what the zine is about.

Traditional library cataloguing can be rigid and very un-queer. We wanted to make sure we weren't deadnaming authors in the library, that we weren't emphasising our own views and opinions above the zine makers themselves. And so our cataloguing sessions are a useful way for each of us to consider how the zine sits in the library and document the zine in a way that collaborates with zine makers. Cataloguing as a collective means we can challenge our internal bias and collectively make decisions.

Some of our collective have a background in libraries and ma catalogued previously, others have never worked in libraries before. We believe that cataloguing is for everyone and that learning how to catalogue shouldn't be an elite skill which costs any kind of money to learn. We have published our cataloguing manual online for free for anyone to use and adapt. We are very grateful to the zine library community for giving us the confidence and skills to do this and can't recommend enough resources like the Zine Librarians code of ethics and the UK and Ireland Zine Librarians group.

You can find our cataloguing manual here: tinyurl.com/qzlcataloguing

Meet some of our cataloguers!

Jess.

MOSSAMO

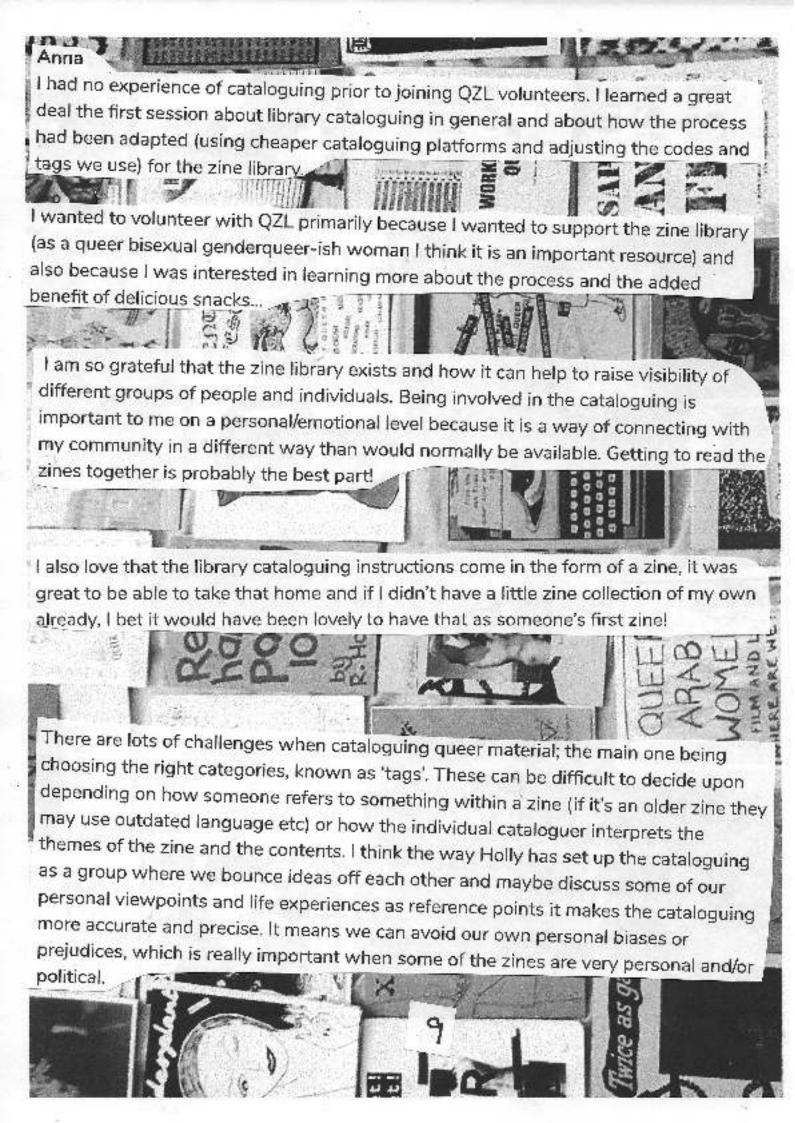
Cataloguing at QZL has been really rewarding-I've catalogued items before in my job as a library assistant but I've never had the chance to work with zines, so this has been a great opportunity for me! As a queer person who makes, collects and wants to work with zine/small or alternative press collections in libraries, volunteering at QZL

has been really wonderful; I'm really passionate about making libraries as accessible and diverse as possible, so working with a DIY catalogue without the fear of inundating users with library jargon is really refreshing.

Cataloguing this kind of material is always really interesting-I've been able to find really special zines from zinesters I may never have heard of before and about topics I may never have looked into otherwise; firm favourites include Kirsty Fife's 'Hard Femme' series and pretty much anything created by Daikon collective. Creating the catalogue has been challenging at times considering the nature of zines- they often don't contain the information you'd find in a published work (author, date and place of publication etc.), so there's often a lot of research involved. Additionally there's often also ethical issues to consider (e.g. with inclusive terminology in subject tagging)- but working collaboratively with the QZL family through discussion, debate & with an arguably excessive amount of snacks has made it easier to solve any issues we find! Brainstorming ideas and making decisions together has definitely made constructing the catalogue far more manageable and a really enjoyable experience.

Kyle

Before cataloguing with Queer Zine Library, I had never catalogued anything before! I wanted to try something new, and liked the idea of doing it socially, and getting to meet new people, as it's something I've found harder to do as I've gotten older. It's made me think about how much time I could realistically give to other voluntary roles, in areas I enjoy and think are important, like LGBT+ History. I've catalogued a whole heap of zines that I've enjoyed reading afterwards! My most recent favourite is probably 'Rumours'- it's an anonymous exploration of the gay scene in my home town area of Thanet. It made the place look so much more exciting than I remember it being growing up! I really enjoy talking with others at the cataloguing parties about what tags to use when cataloguing zines, particularly ones that don't have a lot of text – it can be really challenging, because you want to respect what the author is trying to convey, but sometimes it's not clear or obvious, and it's led to some really interesting conversations about people's perceptions and how we all identify with zines differently.



Holly

In my day job I'm a librarian and I have experience of cataloguing zines but I've often felt frustrated with the limitations of zine cataloguing based on cataloguing rules and standardised language depending on the institution. I was excited to try and think about cataloguing as more of a collective activity and to feature voices from the queer community with no previous library experience as part of the library catalogue. No

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cataloguing is ever perfect and zines are always at odds with some of the ideas behind cataloguing, but it's been fun to think of it from a collective perspective and hopefully try to make these zines more visible. Having a catalogue is also going to be really useful for us as we start to plan future tours and zine residencies and will help us manage the circulation side of things, keeping an eye on what zines are on loan at any given time.

We've had some really interesting discussions about the ways we describe zines, the tags that we use, and we've come up with collective solutions around problems of deadnaming in some specific catalogue records. We avoid a one-size fits all approach and I'm very grateful that we are able to challenge each other, reach out to zinesters where possible, and consider viewpoints other than our own during the process. Also we eat a lot of really great snacks, I'm only in it for the food to be honest.

CIN P

I came to the introduction to cataloguing workshop which was run by the Queer Zine Library not really knowing what to expect. Everyone was so friendly and fun and it didn't matter that we didn't have experience of working in libraries before. All that mattered was that we care about queer sel-publishing.

Queer zines mean everything to me. It was really interesting learning how to catalogue and the importance of making these zines available. It was nice to know that we could work as a group to catalogue, making collective decisions about what words we use to describe things.

We looked at a zine together and discussed how each of us might catalogue it. We suggested terms and looked at the existing list of subject headings. I thought it was very powerful that we were able to come up with our own terms rather than use words decided by non-queer librarians. We are the authority of our culture and it feels good to be making up our own rules. I can't wait to catalogue with the library again.



Want to host the Queer Zine Library in your town?

Queer Zine Library tours the UK by collaborating and lending part of our collections out to libraries, community spaces, music venues, schools, and other venues in the form of a pop-up library. Queer Zine Library can loan up to 250 zines from the collection as a residency in your space or as part of a display, workshop, talk, exhibition, residency and other events.



We will loan part of our library to you or your collective from one day to anything up to but not exceeding a total of 3 months. You can select zines from our collections to appear in your space, or you can let our library volunteers select hidden gems in our library for your event.

Get in touch!

queerzinelibrary@gmail.com

As well as bringing the library to gigs, festivals, and other one day events, we also took the mobile library on longer residencies and pop-up libraries across the UK. These are just some of the places we went to.



Going on tour! - Holly Casio

The first time we left the suitcase full of zines in a public space felt very scary. Up until this point the zines had always had a QZL volunteer in the same room. But the aim of this tour was to leave the zines alone, put them out for everyone to see and hope for the best.

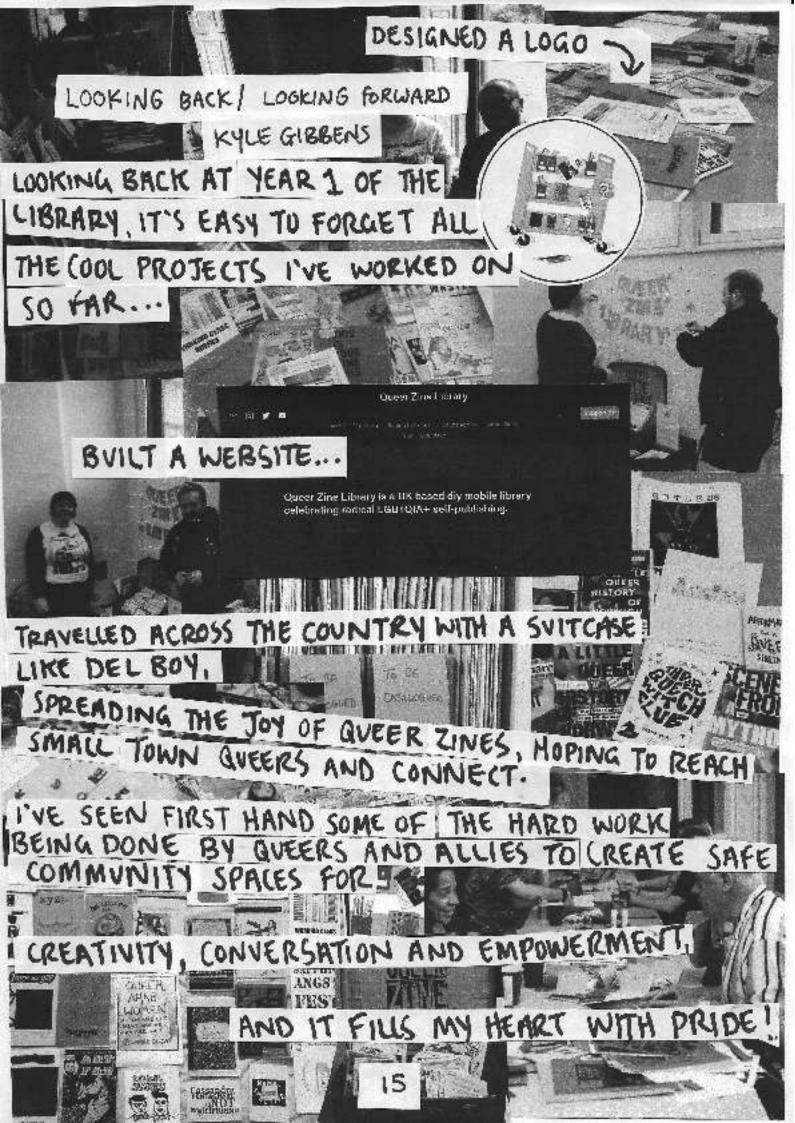
Would the zines go missing? Would people be offended by them? Would any get damaged?

We had lots of conversations before the tour as a group and prepared ourselves to potentially lose some titles. We decided early on that we prioritised access over preservation. Some venues offered to display the zines from our library behind glass and in locked display cabinets but we were adamant that the library wasn't an exhibit. Zines were meant to be read and shared and that means risking some zines going missing. Although we wouldn't be able to replace any zine which did go missing we were all in agreement that if someone did take a zine from our library without putting it back, perhaps they needed it more than we did.

It's an easy thing to say but in practice I still remember feeling scared as we left the zines unattended for the first time.

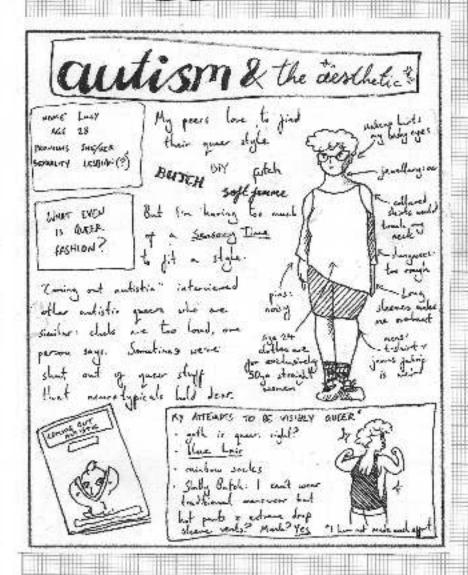
Our residencies in Norwich and The Outside Project were two of my favourite ones and challenged us to think about queer zines in open spaces.

Norwich public library is a huge and beautiful library with the highest footfall across the UK. Apryl and Rachel who work in the library were incredibly enthusiastic and knowledgeable about zines as they prepared to launch their own collection of zines in the library. They were adamant that the Queer Zine Library would be situated in the middle of the ground floor by the main entrance so make it as visible and accessible as possible. Going from having the zines under constant supervision from our collective to leaving it in the middle of the UKs busiest library was nervewracking but INCREDIBLE. We received almost daily feedback from new readers discovering zines for the first time and finding connections with zines and queer communities. I'm glad that Apryl and Rachel brought us out of our comfort zone. It was all very well and good us saying that zine library was accessible, but it forced us to really think about what that means and it was an experience which has forever shaped the future of the zine library.





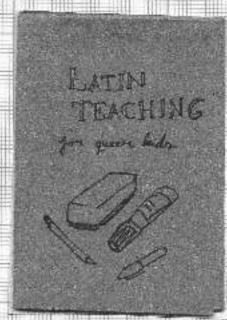
During our tour we held workshops asking readers to respond to specific zines in the library as well as thinking about queer history and communities. Here are some of the pieces contributed during these workshops.



HOW TO ANSWER



INVASIVE QUESTIONS



Fuck your Pride



the Life and times of

by Elaisa Aquini



Butch Dykes

Can built's history please be added to the plational Curriculum? Maybe we wantone have so runch solf however if to bearing built initially and surremade nymes much applicational builts near from a grung age. Makes the builted is highly who I will just near provious about a highly who I will just near provious about





QUEER ZINES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by Apryl Markham-Uden & Rachel Ridealgh

2019 was significant for us in a number of ways; our library hosted Desire, love, identity: a traveling exhibition from the British Museum which took items from its collection and shone a light on their queer histories to highlight those narratives which had been overlooked or deliberately erased. We worked to build an entire programme of events around this, one which celebrated queer identities generally while also platforming the long history of LGBTQIA+ communities within our small rural city. Part of this included the establishment of a new LGBTQIA+ section within our heritage archives, increasing the archival representation of the wideranging lives of people of Norwich and Norfolk.

Establishing our own zine library had been a continually discussed dream for us, something about which we felt very strongly and hosting the touring BM exhibition had given us the chance to pursue this in a more focused way. Zine making and sharing was one of the events we embedded into our wider programme, understanding that the medium goes hand in hand with giving those under-represented or marginalised communities an avenue with which to make their voices heard. We worked with a group of young people and local artist David Shenton to produce 'Godly Teabag' (an anagram of 'glad to be gay', a slogan found on a badge featured in the exhibition), a zine creatively responding to the exhibition and wider LGBTQIA+ themes. We were amazed at how well this group of teens responded to and engaged with zine-making with little prompting, most of them arriving to us with their own knowledge of zine history and with their own unique styles. After this, we began to lay the groundwork of establishing the Norwich Zine Library; putting out calls to local creators to submit their work, planning our first zine fair, while also beginning to curate our own collection behind the scenes.

All of this is to say: when the opportunity to host the Queer Zine Library for a month-long residency presented itself, we immediately leapt at the chance to have the collection visit our public library space.

The combination of the exhibition, our on-going outreach work, and our personal (and professional) interests in zines meant that we were able to put forward a positive case for having the collection visit our library space and the impact it had for those four weeks went above and beyond what either of us could ever have envisaged.

When it arrived in November, we made a real point of placing it prominently on a display cube on the ground floor of our library, visible and easily accessible by anyone who would want to come along and have a browse. It was incredibly galvanising to see people stopping to engage with the collection; as public library staff, we're always encouraged to evaluate and "measure the impact" as a means of justifying anything we're delivering and on a daily basis, this assuaged any concerns. We were also fortunate to receive a wide range of positive feedback across social media; photos shared, tweets highlighting visits to the library specifically to see the QZL. A member of a library writing group - inspired by the zines they'd read- wrote and shared a poem about their struggle to be open about their own sexuality, something they'd not verbalised widely.

Our intentions with hosting the QZL weren't necessarily objective based, they weren't aimed or bullet-pointed. We just wanted to give people access to stories beyond what they may usually encounter, to gain perspective on what it's like to be a queer person in the world. One of the biggest indicators that inviting the QZL to visit was a positive move was my (Apryl's) mum asking if she could come and see it, and if I would show her round. She spent time reading through some of the zines we'd placed on display and she asked lots of questions, encouraging conversations I never thought we'd have together. The impact this had on me personally was immeasurable and felt like a perfect encapsulation of why the existence of the QZL - and the work it does by simply existing!- is so important.

It can be difficult when working within local government to find a balance between the personal and the political; it often feels like you're encouraged to compromise and hold-back from vocalising how you really feel about things for fear of stepping out of line with policy or general,

seemingly arbitrary rules.

Hosting the QZL for us wasn't a radical decision, but in retrospect, it was subversive in a lot of brilliant ways. Now more than ever it feels important to use your privilege to platform the voices of those within society who would otherwise not be given the chance to share their stories and their lived experiences, and we would really encourage other libraries to open their doors to the QZL to do just that.

twitter/IG: @aprylhm & @rachelridealgh



Queer zines in the library
I look, I long
to pick one up, take it home
read it cover to cover, and return it
just like the signs say

but what if I touch it and they know? the closet itsn't kind, but it's safe

...maybe I'll take the one with the excellent meme.

By Kate Ricci

Behind the zines

In March our zine library tour ended and we celebrated the end of a lot of hard work with an open meeting and cataloguing training session with our growing collective of volunteers. We had done it! Our zines had been accessible to so many people across the UK, we had infiltrated proper spaces, we had celebrated queer zines and self-publishing and now we were about to start a 2 month cataloguing project as a collective before our summer tour began.

The day after that meeting the UK went into lockdown. We cancelled our cataloguing project, we sadly cancelled our spring and summer, and autumn tours and resigned ourselves to the fact that that Queer Zine Library would remain in storage for the remainder of the year, inaccessible to readers as well as many of our volunteers.

What good is a mobile zine library when the country is in lockdown?

What's the point of queer zines if they have become the shelved museum objects we never wanted them to become?

How do physical zines fit into our lives when the idea of touch and materiality is suddenly a risk?

We had some big questions to ask ourselves. Could the zine library turn digital? Would we start a digitisation project and scan zines to make them available to our readers? We decided against this. There's no need to reinvent the wheel when the incredible Queer Zine Archive Project already does this, and does it so well.

We thought about hosting an online event instead. Maybe an evening of zine readings?

Prior to lockdown we had collaborated with OOMK on an exhibition at Freeword Centre in London displaying a selection of 5 zines chosen by our collective in a new reading room. This event was now

cancelled but maybe we could find a way to make these 5 selected zines accessible instead.

We focused on these 5 zines and contacted those zine makers to record themselves reading from their zines and it quickly grew. What started off as 5 zine readings turned into a weekly series featuring 13 zine makers over a period of 3 months.

The first season of Behind the Zines finished in July. It was a huge amount of work and we are very grateful to everyone involved who made this happen. What was going to be a short way of making the zines accessible for a month became something we've decided to continue with in the future. We always intended the zine library to tour for 9 months of the year, with the zines going into storage for cataloguing work for the other 3 months. We'd never given much thought into how we would create access to the zines during those three months but we'll now be creating more episodes and seasons of Behind the Zines during any future lockdown periods.



Queer Crush Zines! bymelissa.

I SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE NOT BEING OUT/SORT OF BEING OUT. READING QUEER ZINES WAS (STILL IS) SO IMPORTANT .. IT FELT LIKE EVERYONE AROUND ME WAS MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THEIR QUEER-NESS, AND HAD BEEN OUT FOR AGES. ZINES ARE A GETAWAY, A WAY TO TAKE UP SPACE... GWEER ZINES, ESPECIALLY CRUCH ONES

ARE MY ABSOLUTE FAVES. HERE'S SOME THAT INSPIRED ME TO MAKE MY OWN!

BODY IMAGE FATNESS BLACKNESS - BY JACO BY AMY BLUE. APPLEBEE.

THE ZINE COMMUNITY IS SO WHITE; SO ZINES BY IT'S A ZINE I LOVE TO READ OVER

BOVER; IT MIGHT BE ONE OF THE FIRST I READ AND FELT TRULY SEEN (

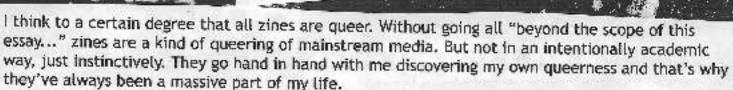
WHEN I WAS TO CRUSHES -

THIS ZINE IS ABOUT CHILDHOOD CRUSHES THAT YOU DIDN'T NECESSARILY THINK QUEER POC ARE JUST SO WOF AS CRUSHES AT THE TIME- IT IMPORTANT. IM BLACK, AND W. DEFINITEY VALIDATED SOME OF RENDING JACO'S ZINE HAD A WAY MY OWN (WINONA, SARA GILBERT, DEEP EFFECT ONME! THEY NEOTE ANNA CHLUMSKY ...) IT'S SUCH ABOUT NAPPY HAIR, GENDER IDENTITY, A CUTE ZINE. I LATER THEY EVEN WROTE A SHORT PIECE OF MADE MY OWN CRUSH EROTIC FICTION-ALL IN ONE SMALL ZINE WE THAT A QUEER RITE OF PASSAGE ?!)

KISSING ZINE-GEMMA FLACK. LITERALLY A FULL COLOUR ZINE OF PEOPLE KISSING, IT'S SOFT & HOT AT THE SAME TIME. IT DEFINITE'S INSPIRED ME TO MAKE A ZINE FOR MY GF ABOUT OUR BEST KISSES.



Underlined in Eyeliner By Bob Chicalors



In 1997 - before the internet, or atleast before the internet was in my home, at my disposal, in my hand - there was Teletext. Teletext is to the internet what zines are to Vogue Magazine (not a read). It was a pages of text accessed through the television and it looked homemade but was lovingly constructed out of clunky pixels, largely to sell package holidays, give weather updates, bits of news. I used to read the music pages and loved playing Bamboozle (an interactive general knowledge quiz). I had just started reading Melody Maker and NME avidly - Bis had graced the cover of one or the other, championed as the best new band ever. Then they were savagely slagged off the following week. Such injustices did not go unnoticed. And then I found a weekly page called UFO "Unidentified Fanzine Object" on Teletext. They were zine reviews. They were brief, and induced the costs (50p + SAE, standard) and published the home addresses of the zine writer. In an age of GDPR this seems insane, but all my 90s zines track and publish home addresses, it was what we did.

I sent off my 50 pence piece and stamped addressed envelope and fell in love with what fell through my door. Once I saw my first ever indie music zine, I made my own one. I had no idea what I was doing. I thought I was an NME journalist and found out that a band mate from The Pecadiloes (the first band I ever saw live at The Roadmender in Northampton, crowd: about 40 people) had a brother at my school. I found out where he lived, then got his house phone number from direct enquiries. I called him after school and did my first over-the-phone interview. It's so funny to me that I went on to work for Gay Times magazine for a decade and would do the same thing with popstars of varying fame... but I never had the same tenacity as when I didn't know what I was doing. The world of publicity and PR companies eventually killed my love of writing, until I left and then started making zines again.

Anway, zines gave me a space to know queers existed before I even had the concept of what queers were, let alone that I was one. One of my best zine friends (i.e. penpal) was Gurdeep from Leicester, he wrote Spineless and Sublime - a Placebo fanzine. We wrote every week and updated each other with coy flirtatious confessions. "I think I might be bi..." "I really fancy this boy in my drama class" - looking back I think I ramped up all my unconsummated sexual experiences in these letters. We talked about Rachel Stamp, recommended bands, swapped make up tips. Gigs and concerts became our training ground for gay clubs. Stickers, letters sprayed with perfumes, mixtapes. We wove these love letters into sycophantic zine reviews so that other readers could pick up a 'fab', 'sparkly', zine. We codified our gayness but it screamed off the page. I got to meet these bands as a relative child, and looking back I missed all the cues to talk about queerness. Subcircus, Annie Christian, The Junket - bands who I think had queer members, but we only ever hinted at our shared sexuality, underlining it with eyeliner.

Zines were - still are I hope - an escape from a shared bedroom in a tiny house in a small town that straddled the border between Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. That other people around the UK were biding their time before they could come out, sharing the same obsessions. Queerness leaks out of zines in the way they're made and from the minute I saw my first zine Heatshrink I knew, wanted and did make my own. I instinctively knew I could make something else, an alternative, another way of doing things. And that's kinda queer, right?

& QuerZines &

When I first discovered queer zines, they were an awakening as I was coming into my queerness there was a beauty and allure of the tangibility, as my fingers brushed against the pages of words, images, everything in between and beyond what was once unimaginable and unattainable was now in the palms of my hands as a euphoric utopia. I was in control of my desires and the narratives and voices that I had spent so many years searching and seeking, caressed my skin like waves.femmeness, south asian identity, radicalness and so much more rose and bloomed from the heart of the queer zines I devoured they were moving beings.multiple selves.free spirits.multiple things can be true and co-exist at once and this was the affirmation that I could embrace and claim all these parts of myself as pertinent to my queerness.the multidimensionality of queer zines not being singular, fixed nor tied to one form or subject matter undoes the restrictions and boundaries enforced on creative expression.the rejection of the system and its control, rules and order queer zines are vessels of knowledge building and gueer worldmaking on our own terms. ABOLISH POLICING OF QUEERS. ABOLISH QUEER CENSORSHIP.it is the declaration of new vocabularies and new meanings, to attribute to the spectrum of our experiences the dismantling of structures and enclosures gueers have been put into boxes and cages for too long under the scrutiny of the heteronormative gaze.let us own and stand by the rich culture of queer zines that is ours and solely ours.us queers may be on the margins of society, but the continued circulation of queer zines serves to keep our existence and histories alive the intimacy the poeticism the disruption.the defiance.the mourning.the joy.the rebellion.all that cannot be defined this is for those who have come before us, those in the collectivity of the present and those who will come after us.our stories will continue to be told they paint the world with revolution and our right to be public. to be messy and entangled queer zines celebrate DIY culture as an act of survival to just be we don't need the elitism of the commercial mainstream.creators, readers and supporters, queer zines have survived this long.we will prevail.our space will prevail.this is sacred.



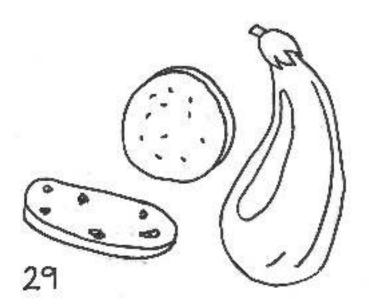
First queer zine - Ren Wednesday

The first queer zine I read was a vegan cook-zine. I didn't really know what a zine was, but I wanted vegan recipes that were more exciting than Rose Elliot, and in the mid-late 2000s a lot of those were in zines.

They were full of doodles, and radical politics, and told you cheap alternatives to fancy ingredients and what metal to listen to while cooking. I loved them a lot, and carted their flour and soy-sauce stained pages around for years.

One of these zines included a recipe for fried eggplant, and alongside the instructions was a piece of lesbian erotica about two women cooking the recipe, and fucking on the kitchen floor amongst the scraps of salted aubergine. I was 18 when I got this zine, and extremely tentatively considering my sexuality. I'm pretty sure this was the first erotica I ever read, in-between instructional essays about the uses of nutritional yeast, and recipes for dumpster-dive curry.

I eventually lost the zine in a house move, but I'm very glad I stumbled upon this random piece of hot, queer filthiness, and I still think about this zine whenever I fry aubergine.



what do gueer zines mean to me? by el affleck (@elaffleck)

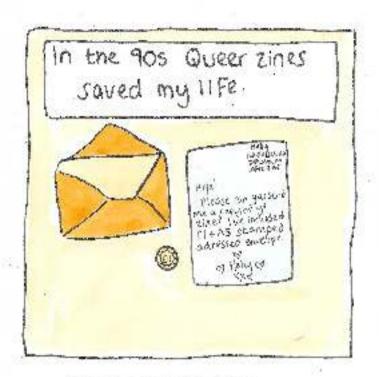
queer zines have been so important to me for navigating my own identity, learning to express myself, & finding a community. queer zines, queer zine libraries and queer librarians mean so much to me, in a way that is sometimes hard to articulate! but i've done my best here

the first time i really encountered queer zines was at a workshop led by samar ziadiat when i was at uni. samar was working in the centre for research and collections & had pulled a bunch of copies of different material from the archive, and we had a workshop to make zines out of this material. i got assigned the edinburgh lgbt+ switchboard collection and spent the next hour enthralled! ive always loved drawing and collage & when i was wee one of my favourite activities was doing "cutting out." i had kind of disengaged from that part of me as a late teen (i was disengaged from a lot) and it was so nice to be in a gentle, low pressure environment which let me play with that again, and which also felt immediately relevant to my own history and identity. it was such a softly affirming experience and ever since then i've wanted other people to be able to have the experience that i had in that workshop with samar.

i've learned so much about building community from all my friends at edinburgh zine library. the library started right around the time that i'd been getting increasingly frustrated with lack of queer representation & how my own identity was being treated at my work. (i don't work there any more and am almost finished a masters in queer history in an attempt to fix the issues at my work, or that's what i started off trying do anyway...... i don't know where i am with that any more, it's a whole other discussion). but now that i don't live in edinburgh i miss everyone so much! i miss just hanging out w other queer folk and making wee zines with them. it was one of the first spaces i felt really comfortable using they-them pronouns!! huge!! it really made me realise that queer zines are so much more than queer zines — they're also queer instant coffee & queer biscuits, & queer whatsapp chats, & queer train journeys! and with that came learning how to navigate the difficult discussions that come with organising and building a community space too. how to work out safer space policies, safeguarding contributors and members, how to commit to anti-racist action, how to be activist and political in your archiving.

it's all been so accessible – and again i've learned so much about community and DIY archiving & collecting. and im still learning and don't think I'll get it right every time but it's rly good to know I'm amongst folk who I can talk to about this & who will call me out when they think i'm doing something daft!

my queerness definitely features in the zines i have made, and i think a lot of them do function to in some way explore that part of me. i've been quiet on the making front for a while now & while i understand that's ok, i miss it, and am hoping i'll be in a place where i can get back into it soon. i want to do more drawings about growing up in the kirk of scotland & how that affected how I think about my gender and my sexuality. i want to write about vaginismus more. i want to write about all the wildflowers i've seen during lockdown. i'm excited about the future!!







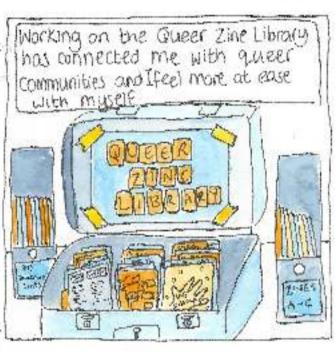














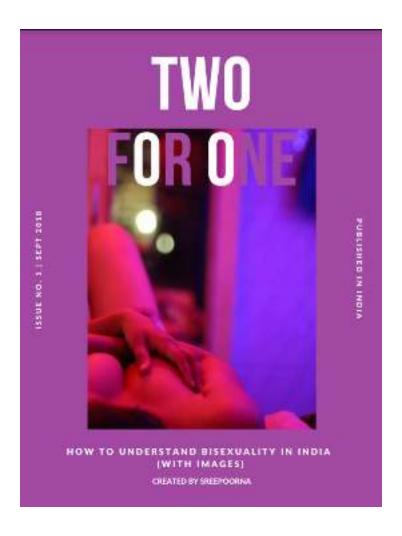




Coming out with zines - Sreepoorna Majumdar

It was 2018 and consensual same-sex was made legal the same year in India. A historic moment that I spent alone in my one-room apartment crying happy tears and wishing I could scream from the rooftops.

A week later I made my first zine. I was so proud of it, I wanted everyone in the world to see it. It felt like making the zine was a superpower I acquired just then. But mostly, I wanted everyone to ask why I made it so that I can tell them how queer I am.



Is it possible to be proud of a creation and still be too anxious to show it to anyone? I started the chain with my partner who encouraged me, then my

friends who pushed me and finally my mother who said she was proud of me. On the day I put the zine up on my Instagram, I felt a sense of relief.

It had been years since I had been "coming out" to friends, family, some colleagues. But I had never made an announcement as such. Every conversation was an explanation of "terms" and "lingo" rather than my identity and my uniqueness. I felt an extreme need to explain my bisexuality to people. So of course, that is what my zine was about. I wanted the questioning to stop, I wanted to shut every presumptuous prick who called it a "phase" and asked me if I wanted to join them for a threesome.

I named the zine 'Two for One' and gave them out for free, practically anyone on the internet got one. Quite quickly some media houses picked it up, wanted to write about me, my bisexuality, and my zine. I enjoyed the attention of my friends and the media but I didn't anticipate the hate that the internet brings with it.

The zine had photographs that I clicked earlier the same year in it, it was a visualisation of the bi flag itself, but in photographs. A joy to shoot with one of my dearest friends. The colours of the flag merging into the skin, a depiction of how light tells a story of its own. The images drew the attention and brought unsolicited DMs and invasive questions about my bisexuality. But it confirmed to me that it was important to make more.

It's been two years and zines have become a part of my identity in a way, and I wholeheartedly identify as a zine maker. Ordinarily, labels irk me but over the course of making Two for One, I have grown to love the power of words and labels that can convey meaning in a way no other visual art can.

To me, a zine is a symbol of power. It gave me the power to express my sexual identity, the power to showcase my photography, and the power to control my own narrative. I used the zine to come out to the internet and people on the internet used the zine to come out to their friends.

1 V QUEER ZINES

Queer zines have helped me so much by giving me the space to accept that my queerness is valid, in spite of my straight-passing relationship.

Afraid of taking up queer space I didn't deserve to occupy, zines made me confront my feelings & led me to celebrate my own queerness rather than feel like a massive fraud.

I love queer zines so much. I laugh,
I learn, I feel fuzzy, I get angry, Icry,
I smile & I am inspired by them to do
more & make queer zines & also to
engage more & educate myself.

Thank you queer zines for being the voice I've needed to hear on somany occasions. Thank you queer zine makers for making the zines I hold so dear. Thank you Queer Zine Library for all the amazing work you do.

Reading a Zine for the First Time - Saurabh Sharma

Before this I had never heard of the term "zine." I had a very distinct ideas about literature, specifically about its forms. Not knowing zine was clear that it's not literature for me. Even when I learnt about it, I had my doubts.

Abhay Pratap Singh, someone whom I can call a friend now, introduced me to zine and had me convinced through his art that zines are literature, too. We've just chatted on social media. We've never met. I planned to pay a visit to an exhibition in Saket: Hia Elia: The Regimes of Truth organized by Shaunak Mahbubani in 2018. I later learnt that Abhay's zine was going to be displayed there, too. It was a well-curated place, and hanging on unplastered wall was Abhay's zine: "Diary of Discrimination from — Digital Gay Dating Spaces."



Diary of Discrimination at Kalakar Theater, Saket. Pic courtesy: Author

This was the very first zine I was going to read. But it's quite different. It didn't contain usual illustrations. It was an anthology of art of sorts, an anthology by a single author. It had survey analysis on racism, screenshots of dating-app chats, nude photography, works of art, a letter, etc.

I was intrigued by the title itself, it's that what drew me toward itself. Works on discrimination are close to me. And gay-dating spaces were new for me, I joined a gay-dating app in November, 2017. I was terribly late into this scene, but well aware now how the "business as usual" looked like using them. Depending on who you are,

your caste, your sexuality, sexual orientation and where "you're basically from?," your experiences on dating apps can be favorable to devastating. Mine were somewhere in between. Many, mainly south Delhi gays, whom I'd interact with would shoot an array of questions at me: "You don't look like an east Delhi guy?" "Shahdara is in UP, right?" "How come your English is so refined? Where is Shahdara by the way?"

These were experiences in Delhi, but I never had experiences abroad. My limited worldview was expanded by Abhay and I was shocked to learn the existing realities in the West. And that's what made this zine extremely special for me. First, it outlined queer experiences abroad. Second, it's an exquisite work of art that presented a blend of culture, discrimination and inquiries in one's everyday life when one is negotiating one's sexuality in the West.

The zine began with an arresting quote by George Orwell with a twist. The quote read: "All animals gay people are equal, but some animals gay people are more equal than others."

It's prefaced with notes on what this zine means to Abhay and why it's called a "diary." This 27-pages zine deftly describes in detail and with poignancy the everyday racism that exists in the West and how it takes a different form altogether, almost naked, when you're using a dating app.



Chat Screenshots from the Diary of Discrimination © Abhay Pratap Singh

Your skin color, among other details as I outlined earlier, is a crucial part of a transaction online. But what's fundamentally wrong is when this fetishization of a "brown skin" or a person from India is expected to be appreciated in the West.

People don't realize it's a different dehumanization when you reduce someone to just their skin.

Abhay makes a noteworthy point, almost academia level, which is why I said that this zine changed my perspective of what constitutes as literature: "I started speaking about how I feel fetishised quite often when someone expresses interest in me in a condescending fashion; and that the gay community has a Race problem. The demeanour of the said gentleman, changed immediately and he started defending this very act of fetishisation as something that was an issue I made up in my head rather than being an actual problem. He said that conceptualizing this Zine was a meaningless endeavour and went further on to say that he was not criticizing the idea of this Zine, but merely saw no point in working on it as the problems I was talking about were some isolated incidents and they were not an objective phenomenon that others were necessarily suffering from as well. (sic)"



Digital Art from the Diary of Discrimination © Abhay Pratap Singh

Reading this zine I realized how deeply personal and political, a perfect blend of fiction and nonfiction a zine can be without losing its authenticity. And I'd forever thank Abhay for introducing me to this form.



Queer Zine Library 2020