

The Zine Union Catalog

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INTRODUCTION

So now that you're convinced that zines are right for your collection and you've read about starting a collection of your own, where to acquire zines, how to catalog and describe zines, and how to run programming for zine collections in your library, you might be interested to learn about the Zine Union Catalog, aka ZineCat or ZUC.

ZineCat (<https://zinecat.org>) is the home of a union catalog dedicated to zines. A union catalog is a resource that helps libraries to share cataloging and holdings information and metadata from their individual collections. ZineCat is like WorldCat, but for zines exclusively. The Zine Union Catalog will facilitate the discoverability of zine holdings by searching a single catalog interface to locate zines and zine collections throughout the United States and beyond. It will help catalogers to copy records, and it will facilitate the lending of materials between libraries. ZineCat will serve educators, researchers, zine creators, librarians, archivists, and anyone in the general public who has an interest in zines.

Jennifer Hecker and Honor Moody drafted an NEH grant application for the Zine Union Catalog's development in 2016. In the application they stated that:

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). They 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. 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. (Zine Union Catalog 2017)

Because zines exist in a counterculture space, they have historically been collected and circulated first by independent collectors, then by zine libraries and activist centers, and 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 (Chudolinska 2010). This hybrid environment of zine collections translates into dispersed and sometimes irregular mechanisms for access: not all libraries describe zines in the same, standardized way, and not all libraries add their zines to their own catalog or to WorldCat.

Zine descriptions and metadata, and thus the discovery of zines, are scattered across library catalogs, archival finding aids, stand-alone databases, spreadsheets, and online platforms such as LibraryThing. This diversity of access points—and the resulting diversity of description—poses obstacles to finding and using zines in aggregate for research, teaching, and learning in the humanities. The Zine Union Catalog seeks to harmonize and federate metadata from these disparate sources in order to make the discoverability of these valuable resources easier for anyone interested in locating and learning more about zines. Furthermore, ZineCat will ensure that catalogers can access consistent and reliable metadata for their zine collections.

WHY IS ZINECAT IMPORTANT?

ZineCat is important for several reasons. First, it will provide one search interface to locate zines throughout the world, and this in turn will improve our knowledge of, access to, and understanding of zines and their cultural impact on society. Second, it will allow zine catalogers to share metadata, thus making

it easier to consistently and harmoniously describe zines, therefore making it easier to find zines. Finally, it will facilitate the sharing of zines between users and collections, much like interlibrary loan for other materials discoverable in resources like WorldCat. Madeline Veitch of SUNY New Paltz points out that once zines are integrated into an institution's ILS, their discoverability is "significantly enhanced" (Veitch 2016). Just imagine: if all zines were added to each institution's ILS and then shared with ZineCat (or if the institution copy catalogs from ZineCat), their discoverability would be enhanced exponentially.

It must be said, though, that the process of cataloging zines by any one institution is a laborious endeavor that requires considerable skill, time, and interest in zines. Many libraries rely on resources like WorldCat to perform the copy cataloging of commonly held collections like books and serials, but it is not yet a uniform practice for zines to be added to WorldCat or other such resources. Cataloging zines would be easier if there was a shared and cooperative resource for catalogers to go to when adding zines to their collections. ZineCat will reduce the effort needed for cataloging zines and will provide support to its contributors and members.

Anne Hays states that "zines are complicated ephemeral materials for library collections—their authors are often hard to track down, issues come out irregularly, they often contain no bibliographic information, and they come in various paper sizes. Almost nothing about zines make them easy for librarians to codify" (Hays 2018). Furthermore, Freedman and Kauffman point out that "cataloging zines can be time-consuming, as can cataloging musical scores, websites, or video recordings, or doing any original cataloging" (Freedman and Kauffman 2014). Because zines are complicated and ephemeral materials, and are often time-consuming to describe, ZineCat will make it easier for catalogers of them in libraries and other cultural institutions to copy catalog and share their metadata. ZineCat will cooperatively harness and harmonize the metadata from disparate zine collections to enhance the discoverability of zines.

If one barrier you're facing in starting a zine collection is their complicated characteristics and difficulty of description, isn't it great to envision that there will be a centralized place to locate zine name authority files, zine title authority files, zine abstracts, and subject headings, among other descriptions? Wouldn't it make starting a zine collection more realistic if you knew there

was a resource that you could use to ensure a consistent description of the zines in your collection? Sharing authority and metadata will make it easier for collections to describe zine materials in a standardized way and will allow for a more holistic view of where zines are located and collected.

It is worth stating here that although standardization would tremendously help libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural organizations to describe shared zines more consistently, and would allow for better discoverability across collections, there is something about standardization that goes against the ethos of the zine community. How is an anarcho-punk, DIY, anti-establishment community supposed to conform to the rules of cataloging standards? Furthermore, many zine collections have developed their own approach to cataloging based on their institution's needs and resources. While this chapter does not attempt to solve these dilemmas, it does want to acknowledge the tension they pose to developing the Zine Union Catalog and to suggest that these complications only emphasize the need for a shared union catalog of zines.

In 2014, ZUC collaborators surveyed zine library workers and potential Zine Union Catalog users to see what their priorities and concerns were. The surveys were completed by thirty zine librarians and nine researchers (Freedman et al. 2017). The responses were generally pro-union catalog, with the primary concerns being about patron privacy. As shown in figure 9.1, thirty zine librarians responded about their interest in sharing zine collection records with a union catalog: 86.7 percent of respondents were in favor, while 13.3 percent answered, "It all depends . . ." In figure 9.2, nine researchers were surveyed

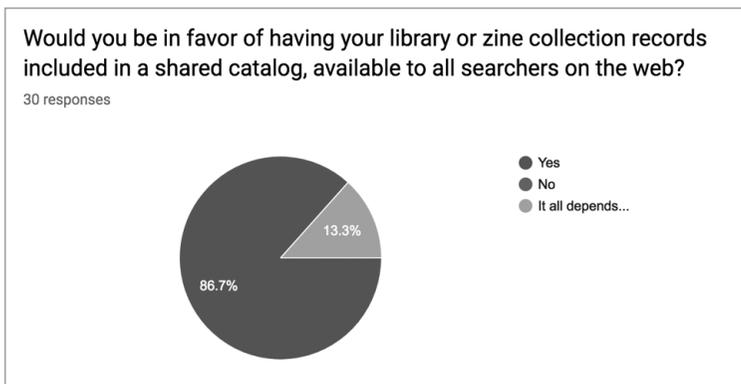


FIGURE 9.1
Library survey response about zine records included in a shared catalog

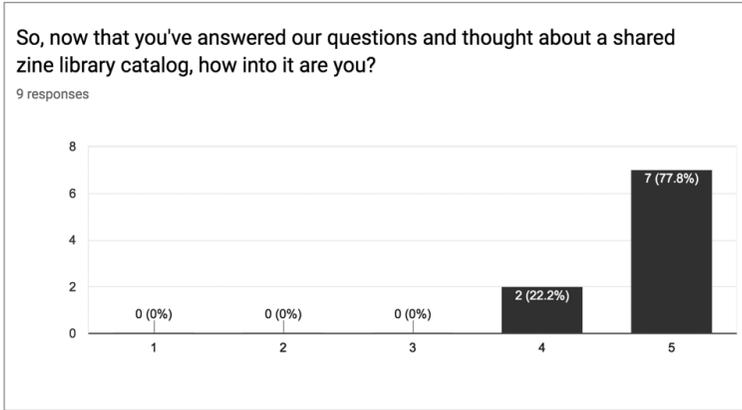


FIGURE 9.2
Researcher survey response about zine records included in a shared catalog

about their interest in a Zine Union Catalog on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not interested and 5 is most interested. All the respondents replied that they were interested in a shared catalog.

The ZUC survey is validated by a more formal survey administered by Anne Hays, assistant professor and instruction librarian at the College of Staten Island, CUNY, who administered a survey to 150 zine creators from December 2015 to August 2016. Overwhelmingly, they were in favor of their zines being discoverable to the widest user group possible and were in support of being included in publicly searchable library catalogs. “If zine records can be located online, this implies that more zine readers can find the existence of the zine before visiting the library and can perhaps intentionally seek it out” (Hays 2018).

HISTORY OF ZINECAT

Discussions about developing a union catalog officially began in 2009 at the first Zine Librarians unConference (ZLuC) held in Seattle (Zinelibraries.info 2009b). In the first ZLuC meeting regarding a union catalog for zines, the brainstorming included what metadata fields should be included in a holding record: cover images, bibliographic information (zine title, author, format, pages, pub date, etc.), description/summary, table of contents (if included in the zine), list of zine libraries that carry it, link to electronic download (if

there is one), LOC subject headings, tag suggestions (like LibraryThing), and zine thesaurus tags (based on the Anchor Archive Zine Library). Additionally, the attendees discussed platform selection, and some early considerations in this regard were Drupal and MediaWiki. The title of the union catalog that was listed for these discussions was ZineCatWiki (Zinelibraries.info 2009a).

Later on in the first unConference, several attendees presented on different content management systems that should be considered in addition to the ones suggested earlier in the conference, including Biblios.net, ZineWiki, Athenaeum, and LibraryThing, with the pros and cons outlined for each one. At the conclusion of the session, it was decided that a working group should be formed to pursue the possibilities for a union catalog. Since that first unConference, this working group has been making incremental progress on developing the union catalog.

A major breakthrough for ZineCat's development came in 2013 with the establishment of a metadata standard for zine description based on Dublin-Core: xZINECOREx (Zinelibraries.info 2013). This standard will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, but essentially, it was decided that certain cataloging fields would consistently be used to describe any particular zine and that this would become the standard that zine collections could adopt.

As already stated, a group of zine librarians, metadata specialists, and web developers has worked to continue ZineCat's development since 2009. They eventually drafted an NEH grant proposal in which the project's aspirations were outlined as follows (Zine Union Catalog 2017). The catalog and its associated tools would provide:

- A cross-repository resource for zine research, providing access to metadata about as many zines, and in as many ways (linked open data, links to digital content, etc.) as possible
- A collaborative platform for cataloging zines and creating authority files for their creators, by persons both within and external to the library profession
- A hub for zine research, where partners can seek inspiration and collaboration
- A promotional and educational resource for the zine genre
- A tool capable of supporting projects to incorporate digitized (and born digital) zines (and zine-related) material into other platforms such as the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA)

- A model for bringing together data from disparate schema, one that is replicable by developers working with other types of materials, such as
 - » ephemera from dispersed protest movements like #BlackLivesMatter or Occupy Wall Street
 - » menus from archives and special collections
 - » alt-right materials that are not widely held in research collections

The ZUC, as a reference resource for the zine genre, will contain three primary components:

- Catalog records for zine titles (descriptive metadata), which give both identifying (e.g., title, creator name, production date and locality) and contextual information (e.g., subjects, genres, abstracts, biographical and historical details)
- Holdings information (details about libraries that hold specific issues, and how to access them)
- Digitized and/or digital content when available

Since September 2014, the ZUC planning team has held regular virtual meetings and undertaken preparatory work for the development of an online platform that aims to be a fully inclusive metadata aggregation and discovery interface that would enhance free access to information about zine holdings across the United States.

In 2017, Jenna Freedman, who has been a pioneering member of the union catalog working group, proposed to her classmates in the Digital Humanities Program at the City University of New York Graduate Center (CUNY GC) that they work on developing a union catalog prototype. Over the course of four months in the spring 2017 semester, a group of four graduate students, including the author of this chapter, worked on building the prototype. It was at this time that the group decided that the catalog would be built using the digital asset manager CollectiveAccess (CA). This decision was reached based on work that Milo Miller and the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) had undertaken in determining the platform on which their collection of zines would be hosted.

After a review process of some of the platforms mentioned earlier in this chapter, QZAP decided to use CollectiveAccess. Their collection required a platform that could handle large quantities of digital files (they provide digital access to many, if not most, of their zines) and a robust cataloging system. CA fit that profile. When it came time for the Zine Union Catalog team to choose

a platform on which to build their prototype, they were able to clone QZAP's instance and to rely on Miller and QZAP for technical assistance and guidance. In addition, a major consideration for the Zine Union Catalog team was to choose a platform that allowed the most access to a diverse group of institutions. CA can be used by public, academic, and barefoot libraries, museums, and archives alike (Zinelibraries.info 2013).

Upon cloning QZAP's instance of CollectiveAccess, the team was able to begin adding sample records, with minimal metadata, from four collections—ABC No Rio, the Barnard Zine Library, the Denver Zine Library, and QZAP—in order to experiment with batch ingesting disparate metadata from different collections. These collections were chosen for their variety in metadata formats (xZINECOREx, xZINECOREx-inspired, MARC, and LibraryThing) and because they represent different kinds of institutions (academic, public, and barefoot libraries) that are collecting zines. Figure 9.3 shows ZineCat's functionality as created by a group of zine librarians at the library cataloging event, Mashcat 2016, held in Boston, Massachusetts.

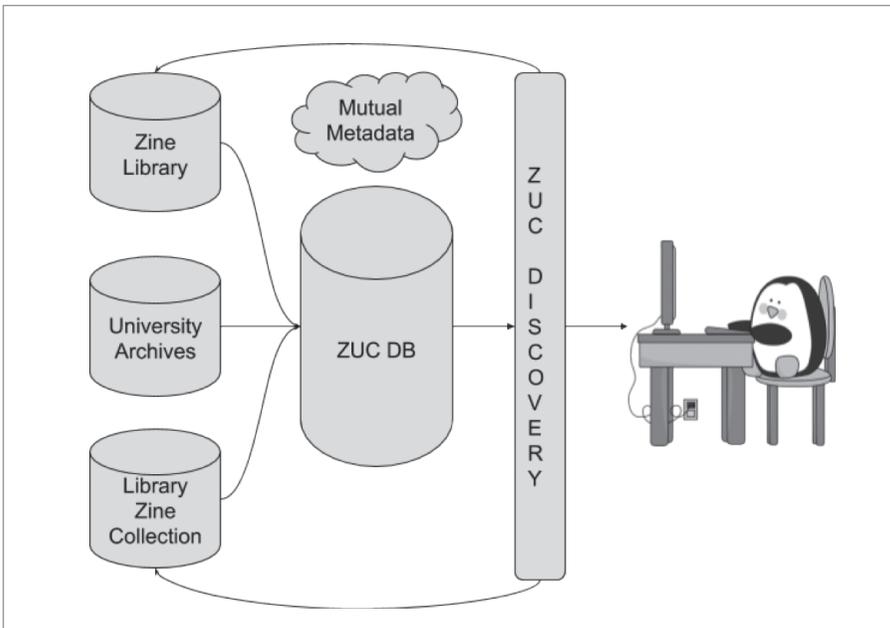


FIGURE 9.3
Zine Union Catalog functionality

Designed by Amber Billey

CURRENT STATE OF THE ZINE UNION CATALOG

Prototype

As of this publication, the ZineCat prototype contains a sampling of records from six zine collections, with a limited number of fields represented in each record: creator, title, non-normalized date, non-normalized publication location, holding collection(s), and a link to the collection(s) if available (Zine Union Catalog, n.d.). The current collections represented are from ABC No Rio, Barnard Zine Library, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Denver Zine Library, QZAP, and Sallie Bingham Center at Duke University. When the ZUC is more formally launched, contributions will be open to any library, and the scope of the ZUC will grow to represent zine collections and zine metadata across the globe. Figure 9.4 shows an example of the ZineCat record for Alana Kumbler’s “Because the Boss Belongs to Us” zine.

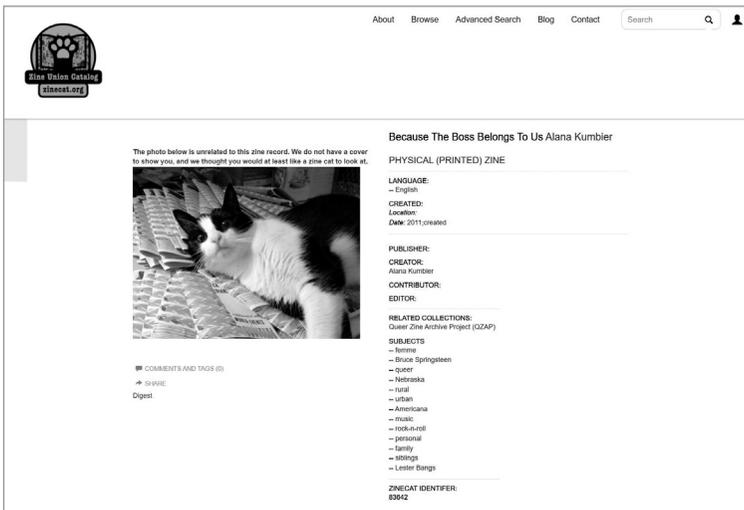


FIGURE 9.4
“Because the Boss Belongs to Us” ZineCat record

Image from <https://zinecat.org/index.php/Detail/objects/92475>

After building the prototype in 2017, Jenna Freedman and Lauren Kehoe continued to work on ZineCat through additional coursework at the CUNY Graduate Center. For their final paper in the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy course in 2018, they outlined some of the implications for aggregating and ingesting metadata. The following two sections summarize their work.

Metadata

The access aspects of documents include physical and digital access, but also how an item is retrieved intellectually: in other words, its description (metadata). Librarians have been known to say that if an item isn't in the catalog, it may as well not exist. Historians make similar claims about materials and topics about which nothing has yet been written. But what is the good of having a thing or even a book-length analysis of a thing if that thing cannot be found? Archivists would add that the thing needs to be contextualized to be understood. Who is the creator, what are the forces that influenced them, what things are similar or different, how did the thing come to be in the archive? Cataloging and finding aids are the methods that librarians and archivists use to describe their holdings, making them visible.

ZineCat, which currently has fields only for creator and title, and links to related and source collections, will eventually contain other descriptive fields, both structured and free, to facilitate discoverability. The two primary schema for the metadata are MARC (AACR* and RDA) and xZINECOREx, but the whole point of this exercise is that there are many other descriptive structures that exist in zine libraries and collections, including MARC, the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Resource Description and Access, and ZineWiki. Perhaps the biggest challenge of this endeavor is to map the conflicting schema without losing the unique personality of each participating zine community. Many academic libraries use the Library of Congress subject headings for content description. However, the Anchor Archive in Halifax, Nova Scotia, has its own subject thesaurus, which has since been adopted by the Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC) and added to the Open Data Registry by MCTC librarian Elissah Becknell. As there are multiple sources for description and standards used, ZUC collaborators will work to harmonize disparate metadata about zines and zine creators.

ZUC collaborators have looked to linked open data (LOD) systems as theoretical models for automating catalog ingests, including subject descriptions, but at this point they are still mostly in the “scratching their heads” phase of exploration. Projects and networks to consider include Linked Open Data in Libraries, Archives and Museums (LODLAM), Linked Data for Libraries (LD4L), Bibliographic Framework (BIBFRAME), and Linked Jazz.

Ingesting Metadata

It was important during the prototyping of ZineCat to acquire a set of metadata records from several collections that would represent the diversity of collections that would be contributing to the Zine Union Catalog. The format of the records came in different file formats: .xml, .csv, .mrc, or .txt. This allowed for experimentation with ingesting records from different collections in different formats. How will ZineCat harmonize metadata that comes in different formats from different places? Essentially, the catalog can handle ingesting metadata in a variety of formats, but .csv is the best file type. ZineCat can either accept records in this format or convert other file formats to .csv through a data-cleaning-and-transfer process.

After the metadata records are cleaned and standardized for ingesting, they are added to the Zine Union Catalog through a mapping/crosswalk tool that instructs the database to take the metadata information from the .csv file and insert it into the designated fields in the ZineCat database. CA maintains a fair amount of documentation on this process, but to simplify, CA explains it like this: “At its simplest, the import mapping is essentially a schema crosswalk: for every data source you list, you declare a target ‘destination’ for where the

ID	Collection	Zine Title	Zine Creator(s)	Year C	About
58	Queer Zine Archive Project	Library Crushes	Becca Sorger; Jane Sandberg		<p>Kate Huh → Rebel Fux #1</p> <p>PHYSICAL (PRINTED) ZINE</p> <p>CREATED: Location: New York City Date: 1998/1998</p> <p>CREATOR AND/OR PUBLISHER: Kate Huh</p> <p>RELATED COLLECTION Queer Zine Archive Project Barnard Zine Library</p> <p>LINK TO SOURCE COLLECTION: http://archive.cpa.org/index.php/</p> <p>LINK TO SOURCE COLLECTION: https://ojs.columbia.edu/catalog/779585</p> <p>ZINECAT IDENTIFIER: 1312</p>
99	Queer Zine Archive Project	Some Boys Bleed	Samb		
100	Queer Zine Archive Project	Chaos Order #1	Sarit		
101	Queer Zine Archive Project	Womyn Who Masturbate #5	The Womyn Who Masturbate Collective		
102	Queer Zine Archive Project	Rebel Fux #1	Kate Huh		
118	Queer Zine Archive Project	Rebel Fux #12	Kate Huh		
175	Queer Zine Archive Project	Dildos Not Bombs #2	Greebo Greebo Greebo		
176	Queer Zine Archive Project	Judy #1	Miss Spentyouth		
192	Queer Zine Archive Project	LGBTQIA Survival Guide	Russel Yost; Allen Martsch; Brielle Munizzi;		
203	Queer Zine Archive Project	Hello Pussy! #1	Mimi		
224	Queer Zine Archive Project	Homobody #5	Rio Safari		
245	Queer Zine Archive Project	Sassyfrass Circus #3	Jenna B.		
246	Queer Zine Archive Project	Boobular #2	Thami	199-	
252	Queer Zine Archive Project	Pathologize This #1	Sarah Tea Rex		
260	Queer Zine Archive Project	Gender Beginner	Lisa		

A	B	C	D	Options
Rule type	Source	CA table element	Group	
Mapping	1	ca_objects.description		
Mapping	2	ca_collections		
Mapping	3	ca_objects.preferred_labels ca_entities		
Mapping	4	ca_objects.date_dates_value		
Mapping	5			
Mapping	6	ca_objects.external_link	URL	
Mapping	7	ca_objects.coverage		

FIGURE 9.5
ZineCat metadata CSV sample from the Queer Zine Archive Project and corresponding crosswalk map

Figure 9.5 shows a metadata set on the top, a map/crosswalk on the bottom, and then a zine record discoverable in ZineCat, with the corresponding metadata information in the appropriate fields as designated by the map.

data should end up in CollectiveAccess” (CollectiveAccess, n.d.). So, for any set of metadata that is shared with the Zine Union Catalog team, a map will be created to crosswalk the zine metadata into ZineCat.

Eventually, this process will be handled by the contributing collections through facilitation; that is, ZineCat will provide training and documentation support on how to contribute metadata records to the union catalog by using an appropriate map. For now, this is handled by giving the metadata information to the Zine Union Catalog team, which cleans the data, writes the map, and runs the ingest.

xZINECOREx

In order to establish a standard metadata schema for zines, a group of Zine Union Catalog contributors has created xZINECOREx, which is based on Dublin Core (Zinelibraries.info 2013). The elements of xZINECOREx are as follows:

- Title(s), including volume/issues(s)
- Creator(s)—zinester, author, creator, etc. This might not always be an individual, but a group or organization. It could also be anonymous.
- Subject(s), Genre(s)—what is the zine about, and what kind of zine is it? This element will use the Anchor Zine Archive subject listing as a base.
- Content Description, notes
- Publisher—could be the same as the creator at times, but could also be different
- Contributor(s)—those who help make the zine happen but aren’t its creators
- Date (of publication)
- Physical Description
- Union ID (unique to the Zine Union Catalog)
- Language(s)
- See also(s)
- Place of publication
- Freedoms and restrictions

If this metadata standard for zines is adopted widely by zine collections, it will facilitate the easier sharing and discoverability of zine information through the Zine Union Catalog.

Technical Implications

The technical backbone of this project is a software package called Collective-Access that is built on php and has a complex graphical user interface. Library catalog data in formats including but not limited to .csv, .mrc, and .xml are stored in a GitHub repository (GitHub, n.d.). Collaborators clean and map the data in the process of ingesting it into the ZUC. It is our hope that one day the information in ZineWiki can be harvested to harmonize name and title authorities, and Wikidata is another tool that collaborators plan to explore.

Collaboration has so far taken place via e-mail, Etherpad, Google Documents, a Google site, a Slack channel, and GitHub, as well as in person at the Zine Librarians’ unConferences. In order to structure and formalize the project, collaborators will begin using the project management tool available through GitHub. Figure 9.6 is a visual schema map of ZineCat created by Milo Miller of QZAP.

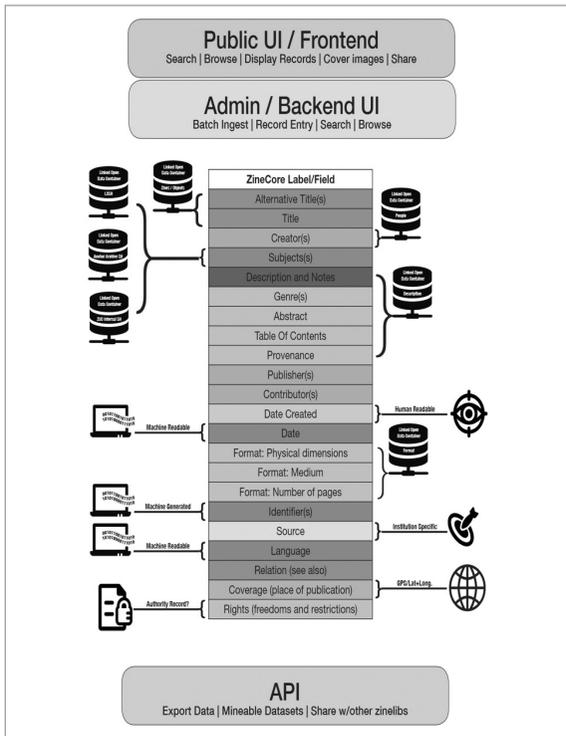


FIGURE 9.6
Zine Union Catalog visual schema map

Image by Milo Miller, co-founder of QZAP, from https://github.com/MiloQZAP/xZINECOREx/blob/master/visual_schema_map.pdf

THE FUTURE OF ZINECAT

There is still much to be worked out for ZineCat to thrive as the shared resource for zine cataloging and discoverability. The working group has identified several priorities for development, but they are always open to community suggestions (see the contact information at the end of the chapter). The priorities are:

- Articulate the ZUC project’s organizational or decision-making structure: shared decision-making; identify the stakeholders, governance, and advisory board.
- Draft policies and document standards and workflows.
- Secure developers to build out ZineCat.
- Continue metadata aggregation and normalization tools and workflows: add more records, get more collections involved, build templates for ingest to ZUC.
- Secure funding, which includes working out a membership contribution model that could work on a sliding scale for those institutions contributing to ZineCat. It is clear that ZineCat will need to secure grant funding to propel the project forward, but ongoing conversations are needed to ensure that the sustainability of ZineCat is secured through a variety of funding streams. Alternatively, ZineCat can start a crowdsourcing campaign, or simply ask for donations from the zine and library communities.
- Adhere to principles of universal design, and make ZineCat universally accessible. So far, despite thinking deeply about zines and zine cataloging with regard to race, gender, gender expression, sexuality, class, and other marginalized identities, ZUC collaborators have not yet deeply considered how to make the catalog more accessible to people with physical, emotional, and cognitive disabilities. Doing this will now be a priority, beginning with an accessible design literature review and analysis (“Zine Union Catalog: Meeting Notes”). There was a brief discussion in a CollectiveAccess forum about ADA accessibility in 2014. We have not found any follow-up on more recent updates of the software.
- There have also been preliminary discussions about legal issues. Recognition and knowledge of the myriad legal issues involved in providing access for intellectual property in an online environment is essential to

the success of ZineCat. The Digital Public Library of America’s planning initiative wiki defines this very well: “how to approach and influence the legal and copyright environment in order to support equitable knowledge distribution in a digital world” (“DPLA,” n.d.). The rights and privacy of zine creators are a top priority for the Zine Union Catalog, as elucidated through the “Zine Librarians Code of Ethics” (Berthoud et al. 2015). In 2016, Jenna wrote a blog post titled “Favorite Copyright/Fair Use Statements in Zines” on the Zine Libraries blog that highlights many of the statements in zines that refer to copyright (Zinelibraries .info, n.d.). The post also refers to the digitization of zines through a link to Kelly Wooten’s discussion of this issue (Wooten 2009). The Zine Union Catalog will not be a digital repository of zines, but it will provide access to zines that have been digitized ethically with permission from the rights holders. Essentially, as a community of individuals responsible for the dissemination of knowledge, we uphold the rights of the creator and will do everything within reason to secure and uphold those rights. Additionally, we will make it clear that our partners should hold a similar respect for intellectual property. However, we recognize that the legal issues surrounding copyright, both nationally and internationally, are often a messy and confusing landscape. The DPLA and Europeana have worked together to develop a clear and straightforward explanation of the various rights statements that are available for materials in today’s information landscape. Additionally, the RightsStatements.org website “provides twelve standardized rights statements for online cultural heritage” (RightsStatements.org, n.d.). The Zine Union Catalog will make it a point to follow this clear model and include rights information within the details of the materials that are discoverable in ZineCat. Furthermore, any requests to remove content from ZineCat will be handled promptly. Simply put, there will be clear instructions on zinecat.org that provide information on takedown requests if creators are so inclined.

So, as you can see, there is much to be done and more development to be undertaken. If you are interested in joining the Zine Union Catalog team, want to know more about the project, or just want to share your thoughts about the union catalog, please reach out to us:

Project site: <https://github.com/zinecat/zinecat.org/blob/master/README.md>
 Social media: @zinecat
 E-mail: zinecatproject@gmail.com

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