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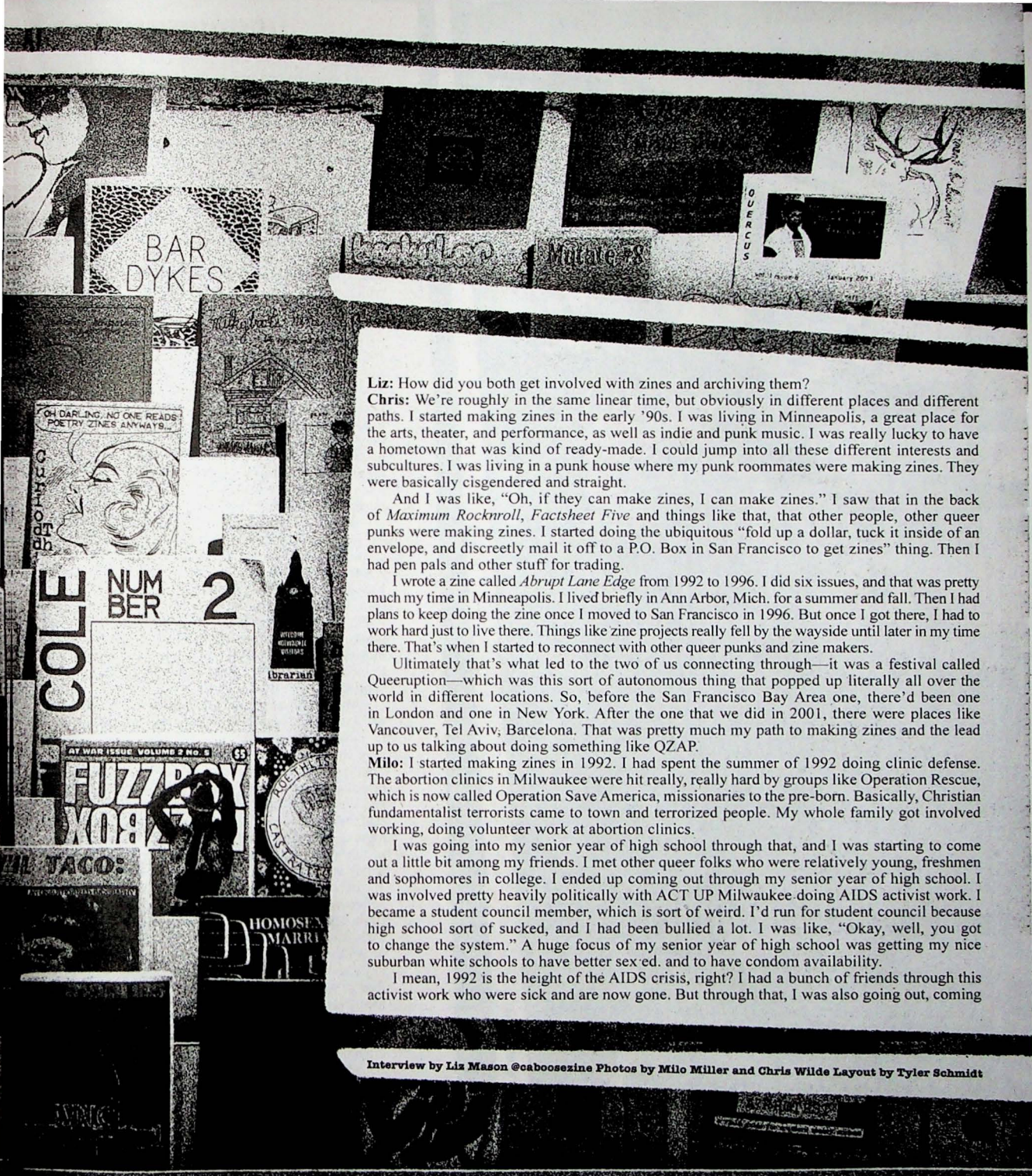
QUEER ZINE ARCHIVE PROJECT

ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO EXPLORING PUNK'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ALCOHOL

Chris Wilde and Milo Miller founded the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) in 2003. Their project is both a physical collection of queer zines and also an online collection at QZAP.org. I've known both of them for years. They've stayed with me during Chicago Zine Fest, and I've visited their archive in Milwaukee, where a few years ago I helped Milo collate, fold, and staple a reprint of their zine *Queer Space Communism: An Illustrated Manifesto*. Seeing the physical archive is a treat. Items are stored in flat file drawers, pull out files, and magazine racks. Visitors are encouraged to poke through the drawers and take things out to read them. The DIY nature of zine culture is reflected back in the way zines are housed in the QZAP collection. No gloves are necessary to look at the items, and they're constantly running out of room for their thousands of periodicals.

I've also rung up zines Milo and Chris have consigned at Quimby's for customers buying them, and I've tabled at many of the same zine fests as QZAP in the Midwest, because I'm only an hour away in Chicago. Zines like Chris's *5th Grade Atelier* and Milo's *Rumpy-Pumpy* are hilarious and fun, and I occasionally revisit those titles in my home zine collection.

I interviewed both Chris and Milo on Inauguration Day, and suitably, when I confirmed what pronouns I should use, Milo sarcastically quipped, "My pronouns are they/them. Although it's probably not relevant anymore because as of noon today, there are only two genders," to which Chris (he/him) joked, "Intersex people, you're on your own." The way they riff on each other does not surprise me. They have known each other for two and half decades.



Liz: How did you both get involved with zines and archiving them?

Chris: We're roughly in the same linear time, but obviously in different places and different paths. I started making zines in the early '90s. I was living in Minneapolis, a great place for the arts, theater, and performance, as well as indie and punk music. I was really lucky to have a hometown that was kind of ready-made. I could jump into all these different interests and subcultures. I was living in a punk house where my punk roommates were making zines. They were basically cisgendered and straight.

And I was like, "Oh, if they can make zines, I can make zines." I saw that in the back of *Maximum Rocknroll*, *Factsheet Five* and things like that, that other people, other queer punks were making zines. I started doing the ubiquitous "fold up a dollar, tuck it inside of an envelope, and discreetly mail it off to a P.O. Box in San Francisco to get zines" thing. Then I had pen pals and other stuff for trading.

I wrote a zine called *Abrupt Lane Edge* from 1992 to 1996. I did six issues, and that was pretty much my time in Minneapolis. I lived briefly in Ann Arbor, Mich. for a summer and fall. Then I had plans to keep doing the zine once I moved to San Francisco in 1996. But once I got there, I had to work hard just to live there. Things like zine projects really fell by the wayside until later in my time there. That's when I started to reconnect with other queer punks and zine makers.

Ultimately that's what led to the two of us connecting through—it was a festival called Queeruption—which was this sort of autonomous thing that popped up literally all over the world in different locations. So, before the San Francisco Bay Area one, there'd been one in London and one in New York. After the one that we did in 2001, there were places like Vancouver, Tel Aviv, Barcelona. That was pretty much my path to making zines and the lead up to us talking about doing something like QZAP.

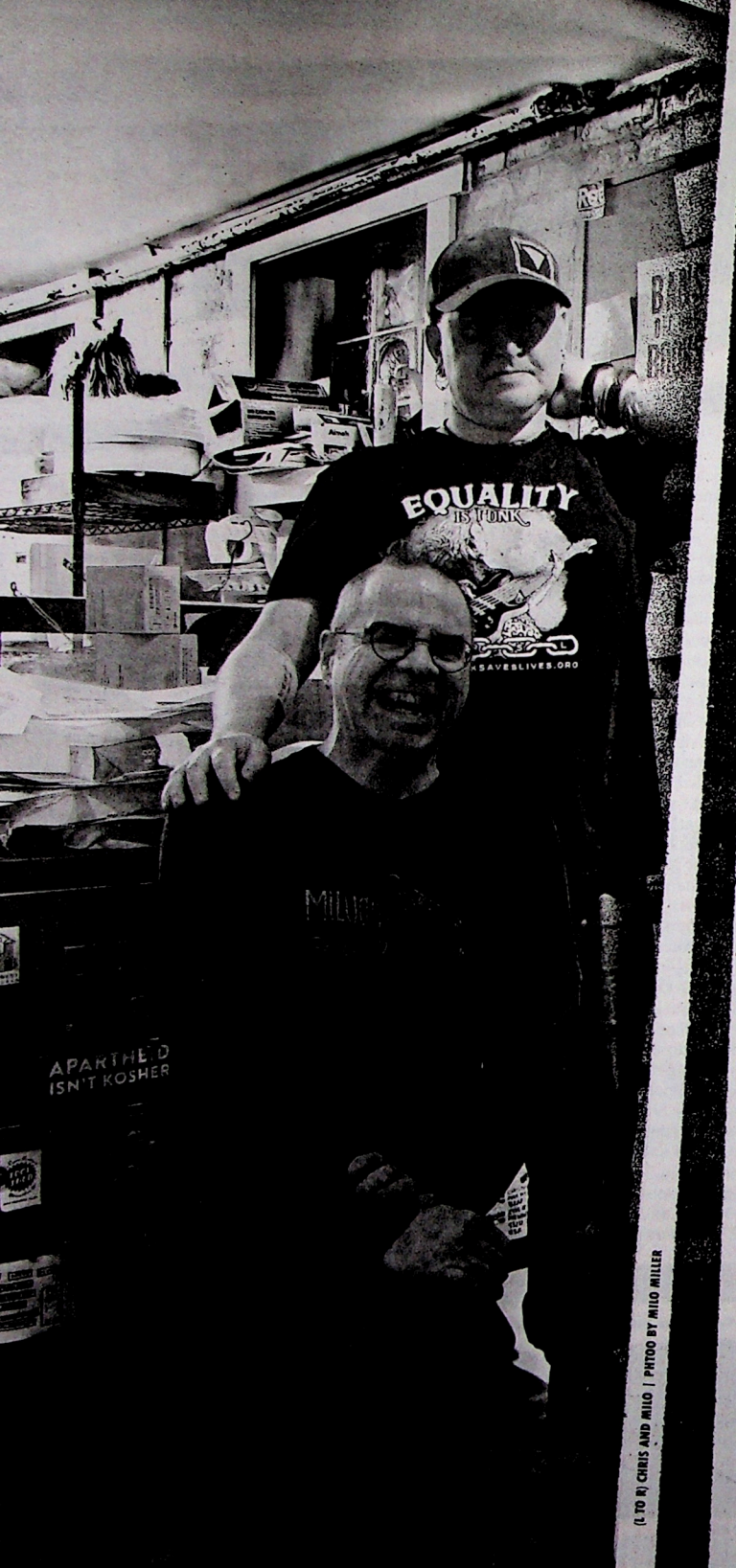
Milo: I started making zines in 1992. I had spent the summer of 1992 doing clinic defense. The abortion clinics in Milwaukee were hit really, really hard by groups like Operation Rescue, which is now called Operation Save America, missionaries to the pre-born. Basically, Christian fundamentalist terrorists came to town and terrorized people. My whole family got involved working, doing volunteer work at abortion clinics.

I was going into my senior year of high school through that, and I was starting to come out a little bit among my friends. I met other queer folks who were relatively young, freshmen and sophomores in college. I ended up coming out through my senior year of high school. I was involved pretty heavily politically with ACT UP Milwaukee doing AIDS activist work. I became a student council member, which is sort of weird. I'd run for student council because high school sort of sucked, and I had been bullied a lot. I was like, "Okay, well, you got to change the system." A huge focus of my senior year of high school was getting my nice suburban white schools to have better sex ed. and to have condom availability.

I mean, 1992 is the height of the AIDS crisis, right? I had a bunch of friends through this activist work who were sick and are now gone. But through that, I was also going out, coming

Interview by Liz Mason @caboosezine Photos by Milo Miller and Chris Wilde Layout by Tyler Schmidt

QZAP ZINE DISPLAY RACK, CURATED BY SUMMER 2023 QZAP INTERN - PHOTO BY CHRIS WILDE



(L TO R) CHRIS AND MILO | PHTOO BY MILO MILLER

out, going to shows, and going clubbing. I'd just turned eighteen and was in that really nice, liminal space. I still lived with my parents. I didn't have a shit ton of adult responsibilities, but I was also doing political stuff, trying to get into university, and all of that. Milwaukee had a pretty decent underage club scene, especially punk and new wave clubs. That was really a huge part of my social life. It was a space to be queer and also not queer. I could go and smoke, not drink, and maybe get stoned, maybe not.

But through that, I made my first zine, *Nikita's Boot*. I did that with a friend of mine. We put out three or four issues. Then I went off to university, and I was involved with our campus arts mag., which was kind of like running a zine. And I had, at an art school, lots of exposure, just outside of New York City. Being able to get into the city, my first weekend in college, Labor Day weekend of 1993, I got to see the Dead Milkman, and I met Joe Gennaro (Joe Jack Talcum). So, I knew about zines, and I knew a little bit about punk. Then later in college, I had a roommate who I just called Punk Rock Rich. And he was a fine roommate as far as they go, but he was kind of great in that he used to go to all the shows and record stores and bring back all the shitty punk zines. But he also brought back a ton of music. He's the one who introduced me to queercore and Pansy Division.

When I finished university, I ended up back in Milwaukee for a couple of years. I had been in a relationship with this person. We were going to make a zine together, but then our relationship ended. She was super encouraging to me to make a zine on my own. I started making the zine called *Mutate*, which I did from 1999 until maybe 2008. I put out ten issues. That was while I was in Milwaukee. Then I'd moved to California, still putting out *Mutate* in San Francisco. I think there were two or three issues that came out while I lived there.

About that same time, circumstances led me to get involved doing organizing with Queeruption. It dovetailed perfectly with being—obviously—very queer, alternative, and into the punk scene. That's where Chris and I met. Our first organizing meetings were the same day. We started talking, and we haven't stopped in twenty-four years. That said, while we were in these organizing meetings, all these questions came up, which comes with any kind of big group organizing, especially towards events which are going to be international in scope.

Because we were zine-makers, we had these little collections of stuff we'd traded through the mail—as Chris says—folding up a dollar and sending it. And we had things picked up at Quimby's, Bound Together or wherever, we were like, "Wait, didn't so-and-so write about that?" There are those missing issues of *Riot Boy* zine or whatever. That was the seed of an idea: "Hey, we know that people have written about this, and we have copies of it. But how do we get it into all these hands, if it's gonna be useful for other organizers in other situations?"

My time in university was spent as a graphic designer and as a software developer to write software to teach people about HIV, specifically to teach high school students about HIV. When I was in California, I was working as a web developer, and this is dotcom 1.0 era. The technology was very different, but to this day, anybody can make a website. It's not hard. You just have to get in there and learn how to do it. But combining all those things, we were like, "Hey, we're into the technology aspect. We have the zines,

we're into the design, and have a couple of scanners and computers that can do this. What happens when we put it all together? Are we gonna get Reese's cups or are we gonna get a pile of melted shit?" And we ended up with Reese's cups.

Liz: Good job. You put the chocolate in the peanut butter.

Milo: Exactly. You knew exactly what I was saying.

Liz: Yeah, totally. Sometimes I wonder when people start archives together, is it just like, "We both have all this stuff. Can we just combine it, and other people have access to it? It'll just be easier to store. We can organize it together."

Milo: That's kind of what happened.

Chris: Prior to this, my zine collection sat inside of this big Rubbermaid bin in my closet, in my bedroom. Nobody could access it except me.

Milo: That was exactly my situation as well, a running joke we've talked about for all these years. I was cleaning out my parents' house. My mom told me to get my high school shit out of there, and I had all the zines in that stuff. All of us Gen Xers are in these cultural spaces—that's kind of what happened, right? You go off to college or you start your first job, you do your early twenties adulthood, and maybe you're still making zines or maybe you're part of the scene, but maybe not. Then suddenly you come across zines again. And you recognize what you have.

From our initial supply, I probably had seventy-five zines and Chris probably had around three hundred. We figured out which ones were very specifically queer and that's what we started QZAP with, putting them all together. Chris has some he's kept aside that are very much his personal collection. I didn't have a lot of non-queer zines, so mine have all become part of QZAP at this point. But the idea really was that we wanted to make the zines available.

One of the things that I like to talk about quite a bit is that we must put it in the temporal context of 9/11 had just happened. It was the beginning of the second Bush 2.0. The battle in Seattle, the anti-WTO protests that happened in '99. From an AIDS activist perspective, the drug cocktail that is now pretty ubiquitous if you have money, was just hitting the market. But it was a huge sea change between when I finished university in 1998 until 2001. AIDS activism changed completely. And we're still probably a good decade plus away from being able to access PrEP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis, a medication that reduces the risk of contracting HIV). The science wasn't quite there yet, but what I had spent the last almost decade doing had taken a massive, massive shift. And I wasn't doing that kind of work anymore. To this day, I still think of it as, "I'm still doing all my activist stuff, it's just different."

Liz: Yeah, it's focused in a particular format.

Milo: Yeah. For both of us, that was really an impetus to start QZAP and to keep it going. We want this to be available because the world is as it is. As we sit here on Inauguration Day for this person who's going to make our lives much more difficult for the next generation, how do we look at our history? Also, we're sitting here on the day that remembers Dr. King's legacy. We look at who he was, but we look at all the other folks who helped to make him and all those stories that don't get told in the same way. That's the work that we're doing. It's taking these stories—whether they're activist stories or they're personal stories—they're people talking about loving each other, making families and community. Or they're stories of people talking about being assaulted, having to deal with health issues, challenging family situations, or challenging social situations. We have these stories from all over the world. Queer history in the U.S. is one thing, but we have access to these global stories too, and they aren't necessarily all tragedy.

Liz: When you first started the archive, was the goal from the get-go to put it all online so people can have access or was it to house the physical copies and put *some* of them online? How much planning was there in terms of knowing exactly what you wanted to do with it in that regard?

Chris: The concept initially was that QZAP was just a website, and that it was essentially a portal for people to look at. At first, it was more of a curated experience. These are zines that were important to us when we were coming up as young queer punk folks or were important in our community. For example, *J.D.s* (the Canadian queer punk zine that ran for eight issues from 1985 to 1991), is a touchstone for so many people. It had an impact that's outsized. If you think about it, the editors G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce essentially made up the fact that there was this radical scene going on in Toronto to really mask the fact that it was really like a violent hardcore scene going on. It was aspirational, like, "This is the world we want to see."

That was also some of the spirit that QZAP started with. We wanted to see a world where people have more access to queer zines, and technology would be helping to bridge that gap, even though years ago we used to talk extensively about the digital divide because we knew that people didn't necessarily have computers or a lifeline to the internet, either through dial-up or through DSL technology originally. We knew that a lot of public libraries were starting to add computers to their facilities, and that we were kind of *surfing*, if you pardon the pun, on this wave of how delivering information was changing. We wanted to ride that and share this knowledge through accessible technology.

At first, it was a way to share these important things. Then as people heard more about the project and different approaches, different scenarios came up as to what the collection could be. For example, early on we just thought it would be the two of us collecting zines as we always had, trading things through the mail, going to zine fests, meeting people in person and hand-to-hand trades. We never thought that that would change. And that component never has changed. But what did evolve was the fact that other people started to see the work we were doing. We talk about the levels of trust we have in the community.

People trusted us with their zines the first three years, and then we ended up with a zine collection that represented a single person, a radical fairy named Honza, who was mostly around in the Chicago area. When he passed, his friends gathered all his zines, which were a mishmash queer zines and things that represented Honza's politics. He was a big Earth First!er. Earth First! folks were this amazing cohort of environmental activists. The reason it was given to us was to keep it all together as a collection with his name on it. I had a history of being with radical fairies and in radical fairy communities. I didn't know Honza, but I knew people who were like him and would do anything to keep a voice like that alive or to keep the memory of that person sacred. When we received this collection of zines, we started to think that it had gone beyond just me and Milo, and that it was really community-based. People in our communities and in our circles recognized what the value of this was and they wanted to see it grow. This is one of the ways people were helping us that was very organic.

Milo: Twenty-one years in, we still don't know what we want QZAP to be. We often joke when we're introducing folks to the physical archive space—if somebody is coming to do an internship or if it's somebody who we've invited to come and spend a week with us to do research in the archive as an artist or a scholar or whatever—we often say, "Please let us know how we can help guide you, but also you have to let the archive take you where it's going to take you." It became pretty evident relatively early on that this was gonna be a living, breathing thing. Of course it's all about information, storytelling, the artwork, the amazingness that is committing stuff to print and making copies of it and giving it to other people. That is unquantifiable in a lot of ways. Every single day since that day in November of 2003, I find something in a zine I've never ever expected.

Liz: Just out of curiosity, when you say November 2003, is it that because that's the day you went live with the website?

Milo: Yeah. The way we date QZAP is by the little robots at the Way Back Machine, and they have recorded Nov. 3 as the first day that the Queer Zine Archive Project got spidered. That makes sense. My sister's a Halloween baby, and we're Halloween babies. Before that, we probably spent a good couple of months working on it, getting stuff scanned, getting stuff set up on the site.

Chris: I have an audio recording from a queer zine panel at Portland Zine Symposium that summer, and I mentioned it in passing. I was like, "Oh, Milo and I are working on this thing called the Queer Zine Archive Project."

Liz: What I'm curious about is the actual digitization discussion. Some zinesters are like, "A PDF is not a zine. Don't digitize my zine!" I imagine you have some physical copies of zines that aren't online. After

having done due diligence and asking people if it's okay to digitize their zines, do they ever say no? Do you have stuff in your physical archive that's not online?

Milo: A lot. We have about six hundred documents online, from an initial twenty-five or so. We started with about 350 zines in our combined collection that made up QZAP when we started. Now we have between four and five thousand, easy. When we say we don't know what we're doing with the archive, one of the things we didn't know was that we didn't think to catalog absolutely everything in a certain way from the beginning.

Chris: We actually don't know how much we have. Unlike a professional library institution that has set methodology for cataloging what they have, we've never done that, at least until only recently, when we have really started to. I started calling them manifests, but they're essentially finding aids for a collection of zines that would come in, like G.B. Jones sent us an envelope of fifteen zines in 2016 she randomly had. Larry-bob (Roberts) made a very significant and generous donation because he's probably one of the people on the planet with one of the largest collections of queer zines, just on a personal level. He donated most of his to the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco, but he hung on to a lot of them, then gave several to us.

Then the moment came that we finally had an intern from Halifax, Nova Scotia. They were here at UWM (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) as a library grad student. Together, we came up with the idea of doing a count. We decided to start going through the file cabinets. We had a web form to type in some basic info. For example, *Abrupt Lane Edge* #1 from 1992 is in our collection. We started that in March of 2020, and you know what happened. We did one session and then COVID hit. They had to go back to Canada. They texted us from the airport. "I'm here with my cat, and we're headed back to Canada because they're closing the borders in twenty-four hours. I have to go now, and I don't know when I'll be able to get back."

Milo: And they'd be in violation of their visas.

Chris: Right. We understood and we were like "no hard feelings" on that. But we have not revisited the project because someone like that was really one of the folks prepared to help us through that project. We'll get back to it someday, but that's how we ended up attempting a count that didn't really get too far.

Liz: And the counting is more than just counting. It's also checking a lot of information in there, too.

Milo: Yeah, because we want it to be findable, right? It's one thing to say, "Oh, we've got a number—like we can say we've got 5,233 zines," but that doesn't mean anything unless it's, "We have 5,233 zines. This many were created in 1997. These ones were made in Chicago. These ones were made in San Francisco," like all the metadata. We don't need to get the nitty-gritty of it that we would include in the digital archive, but at least we'd be getting enough so that when we start to ingest that information, if we hit half the fields, that's great. Then we can go and back and fill in all the other stuff, like figuring out what the keywords are, figuring out if we missed anything in terms of the creators, things like that.

Liz: You both have day jobs too. It's not like you're just sitting around.

Chris: That's the hardest part for both of us. If this was our regular job, those zines would be counted. That would be what I'd be doing every day. We have so many different things that occupy our time. That's been one of the biggest frustrations for us. We know intrinsically what needs to be done. It's just that we don't necessarily have the time to do it. We'll revisit that from time to time as our schedules change. I think, technically, I would have another ten-plus years before I could retire and the same with Milo. Until then, we'll muddle through. I'm hoping before then we can figure out something that will be a better compromise.

Liz: If it's an ever-expanding archive, something else you must think about is running out of room! Time expands it.

Milo: When we started QZAP, it was from this space of like, "We're going to just do it. It's going to be a little web project. It'll be a little, you know, nothin'-nothin'." Certainly, it's important to us, but, clearly, it's important to a lot of other people too, right? Having that in mind, we just wanted to do our little artwork projects.

Chris: If I thought back in the 1990s, when I was doing my zine, that people would be, like, still paying attention to it thirty years later, I would have put my *whole* ass into it instead of just *half* ass. I'm constantly amazed and am like, "Why would you care about this thing that I did so long ago?" But it set me on the path to do all these greater things. We truly had the passion for it, and we come from the community and wanting to see the community accurately represented. Zines changed our lives and are a significant part of them. I put energy into QZAP because I want other people to know just how important zine culture is, specifically queer zine culture.

Milo: We're not just promoting our own work. It's making a space for people to find whole bodies of work. It's not about *Mutate* or *Rumpy-Pumpy* or whatever dumb shit I'm putting out this week.

Liz: You actually live in the house that the archive is in.

Chris: We live above the shop, I like to say. But it's separate from it.

Liz: When you have interns and residencies, do they stay in your house? Do they sleep down in the basement with the archive?

Milo: Our residency program.

Chris: We really didn't kick into getting it in place for people to stay here until 2014. So, it's been ten years of us doing that.

Milo: I own the house. I'm still paying the mortgage on it. We try to live our values. We try to be communal about a lot of things. When one of the folks who had been living downstairs moved out, we expanded beyond our dining room, which is when we started QZAP. We started with a single two-drawer filing cabinet. Then we expanded to two, which became five, which is now ten, plus a bunch of four-drawer filing cabinets, plus a flat file. We were growing. And so, because we didn't have anybody living downstairs, the space needed some major renovations.

Liz: And when you say downstairs, you mean the ground floor.

Milo: Yeah, it's the street-level apartment. We said, "If we're gonna move our stuff in here, why don't we set it up in such a way that it's comfortable for us to work in and for other folks to work in?" It had a kitchen. It had a bathroom already because it had been an apartment. We brought in a futon and some comfy chairs. Because it has all the amenities, we were like, "This is a space where somebody could hang out in." People can now crash here, and they don't have to

QZAP FILING CABINETS AND BULLETIN BOARD - PHOTOS BY MILO MILLER

either sleep on our couch or be sleeping with one of us. That was where we were headed in terms of infrastructure.

We looked at a bunch of different zine residencies and how they were run, very specifically, the Anchor Archive residencies in Halifax. But there are lots of different zine and punk art residencies that exist. We thought that it was going to be a big hassle to do an open application process. We're not interested in trying to figure out if somebody's proposal is better than somebody else's. That seems very antithetical to who we are and how we want to be in the world. We decided to run this residency project in the summer because we live in Wisconsin, and it's the only time of year when it's nice. We wouldn't have people trying to stay here now when the archive space itself is hovering at about fifty-eight degrees.

People come and they sleep on the futon. We've got sheets, pillows, and towels. There's a refrigerator down there for leftovers. There's a stove with a kettle so you can make tea or coffee. It's by invitation. Maybe you're a scholar, an artist, or you're somebody who we've met in person who we think would benefit from staying in the space, from having access to these materials you can't access elsewhere.

In turn, we ask folks to contribute a piece of writing to us about their research, about what they found, or about the work they make while they're here. It works out amazingly. If you go to the library, you can do your research until 5PM and then the library closes. If you come and stay with us at QZAP, if you're a night person and you want to spend your whole night reading zines, awesome. If you want to get up early and do that, here's a space to do it along with our big cabinet full of art-making supplies, long-arm staplers, paper cutters, laser printers, and technology stuff. You're not necessarily on our schedule.

It serves multiple purposes for us also, in that for folks who we've invited to come, we're curious to know what they're interested in, what we can learn from them. But also, it's part of our bigger, broader queer radical anarchist conspiracy of how do we build better communities? And that's by spending time with each other, making meals together and being in community with each other, talking about whatever we're doing and what we're interested in.

Chris: And it also advances in like a small "s"—the *scholarship*—around QZAP. Folks are actively using the resources and then putting something of their view or their work out in the world based on their experience here and utilizing what's here. The residency experience came directly from my personal experience going through the Anchor Zine Library and Archive residency. I participated in 2009. It's so strange that it was fifteen years ago, but I still feel like I was there last year. Everything about the experience was so amazing.

The main difference was in those days, they actually had an entire house. You had to submit an application and propose a project. Or you'd suggest some community partners or propose something of your work that was going to be a public event. They had such a great community of people that they plugged me into all these resources once I got there. They gave me the keys to this house and were like, "Here, you're home for two weeks with freedom and autonomy."

What we had been doing in the two years leading up to the residency, and I did more of it there, is we'd been doing what we called "queer zine art shows." We were taking graphics and text from various zines in our collection and enlarging them or making them into tiled prints. Then we wheat pasted them to cardboard or art board. We'd actively go out into the community with materials from the collection and use that to engage people and have them explore the content very differently. The very first one we did nobody had no idea who we were, so we could wander around. I could eavesdrop on people saying,

"Zines are amazing tools making sure that the atrocities of the past don't have to be repeated."

-Milo

"Oh, this is really strange. This is the third thing I've seen with River Phoenix in it." It was fun to just be there, listening to people's reactions, and watching them put the things together. We included zines that had River Phoenix in it because he was important to young queerdos in the '90s.

Milo: He was a gay icon.

Chris: It's a great thing to take materials out into the community. I ended up making about forty different posters in the period when I was at Anchor Archive. They partnered me with the feminist sex toy store, and I got to hang up all the prints I'd made at the store. They loved the show so much that they asked me to leave it behind and left it up for a month. The work is still there. This queer historian in Halifax collected all of them at the end for me. He managed an art gallery at the time, but he has retired since then. He's been very careful to be like, "Hey, Chris, I know you saw I'm retiring, but I still have your stuff. Come back to Halifax."

Liz: It would be just as expensive for you to go to Canada as it would be to ship it here.

Milo: The other part of the residency for us is, when folks come and do a residency, we say, "The archive will show you what it wants to show you. It'll take you on a journey that may be what you planned and may be not what you planned." As a result, we get to see the materials in our collection through other people's eyes.

Librarians also come experience QZAP too. We might know something on a cursory level, but to have them spend a couple of days with material then talk to us about what they're noticing in their research gives us a chance to see what we didn't know about in our archive. They show us what they're writing about or how it's inspiring them to make new work. That's a really big component of the project. It speaks to the communitarian aspects of what we're trying to do and recognizes that even if we're at the front of the room being touted as experts, there's so much we don't know and so much we haven't had a chance to explore.

Liz: I imagine if somebody comes in and they're spending time with stuff in the archive, you have a lot of stuff. I don't know about you, but I read a lot, and I might not remember all of it. If someone borrowed some of it and then reported back, they might refresh my memory about stuff that I might not have remembered because I haven't read it recently. When someone does work with the archive it must be a refresher for you too. Or might even not have known the extent of what you have.

Milo: Yeah. Just as an example, we knew we had a whole lot of queer and feminist comics and a big, donated collection, but we didn't know that we actually had a *complete run* of Sarah Dyer's *Action Girl* comics, though we did know we had a couple of her newsletters. Kelly Wooten was visiting us from Duke. The archive she works in has a Sarah Dyer collection, but she hadn't actually seen a complete run of the zines all put together in the same way that I don't know that *I* have every issue of everything that *I've* ever put out. There are some things where I'm like, "Fuck, did I give away my last copy of that? Crap, I don't have one for myself."

Liz: Or even have a master copy, if I wanted to make another one.

Chris: Yeah.

Milo: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. I work digitally, so some of my stuff is locked in old software I don't have access to anymore. My first zines were done in QuarkXPress.

Chris: Yeah. I actually still have QuarkXPress files from the '90s.

Liz: Same.

Chris: If I spent an afternoon, I could access them, but I saved them thinking, "I'll go back or I'll reprint them at some time," and I never have.

Liz: Now you've got files bit rotting away on your hard drive somewhere.

Milo: And I don't even have the fonts that are associated with the text files, you know.

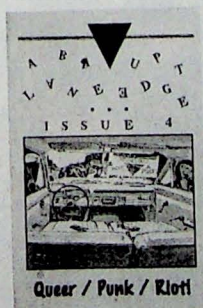
Liz: It's a mess. I got all those problems.

Milo: Yup!

Liz: A while ago, you gifted me a lanyard that says xZINECOREx on it, which has some relevance to the Zine Librarians Unconference (ZLuC). I wanted to talk about your involvement with ZLuC and some of that territory. Can you talk about that?

Milo: We went to Madison Zine Fest in 2004, but QZAP was still a pretty nascent project. I was on a panel at that fest with Jess Bublitz who ran Bottles On The Sill Distro and Jenna Freedman, curator of the Barnard Zine Library. The panel was moderated by Sandy Berman, who is a librarian extraordinaire and amazing radical cataloger archetype from the Hennepin County Library System in Minnesota. People who have followed his career trajectory very closely are sometimes called Sandy Nistas. But he, to this day, as an elder librarian, constantly writes to the Library of Congress suggesting subject headings. This was at the UW-Madison Library, where Madison Zine Fest was held. At the time, we were getting together, the Zine Librarian's email list was kicking off. Jenna added me on very early, and I've been one of the email list administrators for the last twenty years.

So out of all that came the first Zine Librarians Unconference in Seattle in 2009. It was held at ZAPP when it still lived at the Richard Hugo House. One of the things that came out of that was we were talking about different people from different libraries bringing in different ways of doing zine cataloging. They might be at an independent or an underground library, or they were trying to convince their library to start accepting zines as material, thinking about ways to do that type of cataloging. This is a conversation that's been happening since then. The thing that came out of the Milwaukee ZLuC was, before we can start talking about cataloging, what we really need is a union catalog, a single place where people can go and find out what zines different libraries have.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: QZAP: META 4 SCANNED BY LIZ MASON, *ABRUPT LANE EDGE* 4 1994 BY CHRIS WILDE, *FANORAMA* THE RIVER PHOENIX MEMORIAL ISSUE BY REB (1993) *NIKITAS BOOT* 2 1992 BY MILO MILLER AND BARRY OSBOURNE, *MUTATE* 4 2000 BY MILO MILLER

Liz: So, a "union" being like a union of zine libraries?

Milo: Yeah. And basically, the joke was, WorldCat (an online catalog where you can search for libraries around the world) but not evil, right? In order to eventually get there, we realized that we needed to have a common language that all zine libraries could speak if they wanted to. And that meant, for us, basically, it's a common metadata standard.

Liz: And for those who don't know what metadata is, that's the specific information regarding the publication or the book, like page count and all that stuff.

Milo: Right. It's all of the information that describes the information. We were doing some of that at QZAP, but not super well. We were trying to figure it out as we went along. People who have professional library backgrounds had different ways of approaching that, whether it was using Library of Congress subject headings or MARC records, which is an early '80s standard for machines that stands for "machine-readable cataloging records." What we needed was one thing that we could all speak to exchange information back and forth, so that all these disparate systems could talk to each other in a central union catalog.

And that's what xZINECOREx is, at its most simplistic level. We used a metadata standard called Dublin Core, which is very mutable. Dublin Core lays out a whole bunch of fields. We mapped those fields to what would become xZINECOREx. Those fields basically are the metadata fields that we ourselves use and we want other folks to use when they're doing zine library stuff specifically. It involves things like the title, the creator, the year that it was created, the place where it was created, the size of the document, the dimensions or the physical size, and the subject of the material.

For some folks, subject headings are subject headings from Library of Congress. For other folks, it might be using Anchor Archive subject headings. For us, it's using keywords. But having most of those fields standardized means that when we put all that information together, my information is going to look a lot like Barnard's information or a lot like Seattle Public Library's information. There's going to be discrepancies, but the basic information is all going to be the same, which is going to make it much easier for folks who are visiting this website or this resource to know that *Caboose* is the same as *Mutate*, which is the same as *Lower East Side Librarian*, which is the same as *Abrupt Lane Edge*, which is the same as *Razorcake*. That's the title field across all the different systems.

So that is a lot of what xZINECOREx is, and what xZINECOREx has produced is ZineCat, which is at zinecat.org, which is our first attempt at making the union catalog. It's an ongoing project we've been working on for over a decade. Jenna Freedman at Barnard and Lauren Kehoe have done a lot of the work on it, Lauren as part of their graduate degree program in digital humanities, but it's still this ongoing thing.

And then zine librarianship as a whole is this cataloging and sharing of information, but it's also a lot of the other librarianship pieces, like how do you do programming with zines in your library? What does it mean if you're a college library or an academic library versus a public library? Who has access to the zines? Where do they live? Is it in special collections, which is like a rare books kind of thing? Is it in periodicals? The answer for me is never. Because zines are monographs, not serials. That has been a conversation that happens all the time. How do we teach with zines? How can we, as librarians or as people who are interested in making information and storytelling accessible, use zines to go into other places?

The other thing that I have been jokingly saying since the first Zine Librarians UnConference is that for me personally, in some ways, I call it "punk rock zine camp." It's like going to summer camp in that these are folks who I meet in this very decentralized, autonomous way. We spend a long weekend together. We share information. We tell stories. We play games. We drink together. We eat vegan food together. They're my community. They're the folks who I like hanging out with the best on this whole fucking planet. I only get to see them every once in a while.

Liz: Let's talk about what you're hoping people know about and get from the collection generally.

Milo: We want this whole project to be a place where people can see themselves reflected back. They can learn about what it is to be queer in a whole host of ways they may not have thought about. We all have these amazing stories to tell, and those stories aren't necessarily ones that show up elsewhere. We do our best to live our values, and we think that the archive reflects that.

Chris: From my perspective as the historian, having that as my degree and background, what I want people to know is that zines fall into primary document and primary source category. They're the physical manifestation of people's lives and their voices, a substantial record of queer lives. It's a sad time where people are learning more about things, like how the Nazis destroyed Magnus Hirschfeld's work and the fact that there would have been this substantial archive of queer and trans lives that would have existed from that time period, and the destruction of that material created this big loss.

It stresses the importance of having these collections and preserving them at all costs, so that we don't again lose those voices. I don't foresee that loss happening, but it always seems like it's a breath away in current times. People are really trying to rewrite our history and negate us in ways that are harmful, and archives like ours will live on to preserve those voices, making them active. People can engage with and learn from these rich experiences, seeing the breadth of the depth of the experiences out there. We want people to see that zines are not just a bunch of things written in English about white people, and that it really does have a representation in so many different languages, cultures, and personal expressions. It's very important at the basic level to keep these things preserved but also active as a resource for people, to help them in realizing their own history.

Milo: On top of that, we want people to realize their own power. Zines are one of the most amazing things that to this day—no matter what happens on social media limiting what language is "safe" or what is "not safe," when we're trying to come up with ways of communicating and storytelling—we should look at zines. They're not just historical things that tell us, "Oh this is what our queer elders did," but also that some of the same stuff is still happening. Zines are still being made, and they circumvent so many barriers that have been set up. You can pass them from hand to hand. You can leave them anonymously in bathrooms. They don't get surveilled in the same way as information online does. With zines nobody says, "You use the word homosexual so we're not gonna let other people see that." Zines are amazing tools for learning, communicating, storytelling, preserving history, making sure that the atrocities of the past don't have to be repeated. They let us come up with new ways of creating societies that we want to live in, where people are safer, where we know things that we may not have known in past generations, things that may keep coming up and getting sublimated again.

Liz: This really drives home the point of the importance of the work that both of you are doing. Thank you.

Milo: Thank you.

Chris: Thank you.

qzap.org