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# CATALOGING THE LIVING

**WHAT  
CATALOGERS DO**

# WHAT CATALOGERS DO

*...in case you forgot*

- Describe library resources and related entities
- In standardized ways
- In order to facilitate access and discovery of collections
- As well as the re-use of metadata by other libraries

**FOR WHOM?**

# FOR USERS

... *per the ICP (of FRBR, not of Faygo)*

- The *International Cataloguing Principles* aim to “guide cataloguing rule makers in their efforts” and “provide a consistent approach to descriptive and subject cataloguing of bibliographic resources of all kinds.”
- “[T]he convenience of the user is most important.”
- “Convenience means that all efforts should be made to keep all data comprehensible and suitable for the users. The word ‘user’ embraces anyone who searches the catalogue and uses the bibliographic and/or authority data. Decisions taken in the making of descriptions and controlled forms of names for access should be made with the user in mind.”

*Statement of International Cataloguing Principles (2016) p. 5*

# BUT WHAT ABOUT CREATORS?

*...wait, who?*

- Have we ever asked creators if they *want* to be identified?
- Taking a lead from our archivist friends:
- “[W]e argue, an archival approach marked by radical empathy would require archives to make [marginalized] communities not just a target group of users, but **central focal points in all aspects of the archival endeavour**, from appraisal to description to provision of access. ... From the approach of a feminist ethics of care, **archivists are seen as caregivers, bound to records creators, subjects, users, and communities through a web of mutual affective responsibility.**”

Caswell & Cifor (2016)

# 4 Affective Responsibilities

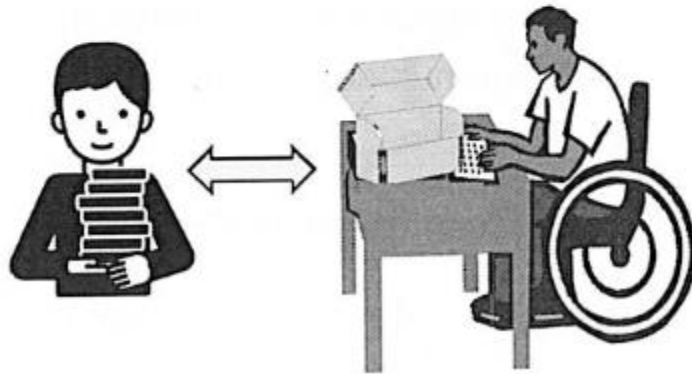
1 Archivist + Record Creator



2 Archivist + Subject of Records



3 Archivist + User



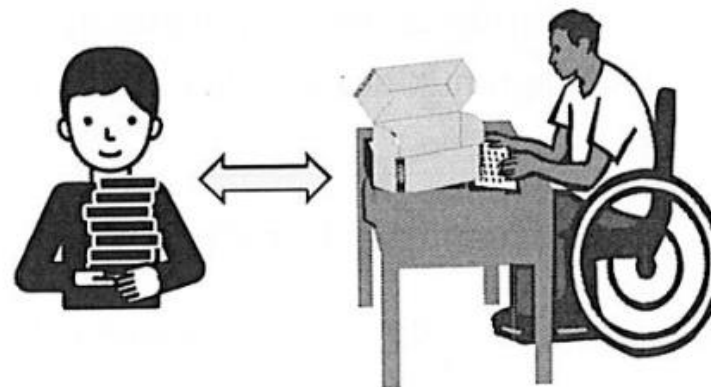
4 Archivist + Community



### 1 Archivist + Record Creator



### 3 Archivist + User





**WHAT IS AT  
STAKE?**



MEDU Arts Ensemble. *Defend SAAWU*. 1983/1984. Michigan State University Libraries Africana Posters Collection.

<https://d.lib.msu.edu/apc/5>

## ACTIVIST POSTERS & EPHEMERA

*May be posted or wheatpasted illegally in targeted space; may be disseminating subversive, prohibited content.*

For example:

- Anti-Apartheid movement.
- AIDS activist groups like ACT UP, Queer Nation, Fierce Pussy.
- Not necessarily produced with libraries in mind.



## ZINES

*Short-circulation, DIY, self-publications, usually produced on a photocopier by an individual or small group.*

In library collections:

- Add important voices to cultural record.
- Challenge cataloging assumptions.
- Not necessarily produced with libraries in mind.

Jared Eberhardt. *ZINES! - THERE IS XEROX ON THE INSIDES OF YOUR EYELIDS - TORRANCE*. 2010.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/jaredeberhardt/4828129078>

# WHAT IS AT STAKE?

*...privacy, for one*

- “One of the greatest worries I have about zine libraries is that so many of us were children (completely unaware of how the internet would change things, of course) who used our postal address in the contact information [of our zines]. Some even included their full names. ... Granted, few of these addresses, if any, are likely to work now, but it doesn't take long to find updated details on an internet search!”

*Email from a zinester to a zine library (2019)*

# WHAT IS AT STAKE?

*...safety, for two*

- “My main concern is that my family will somehow find out my sexual orientation, which I intend to keep private. I also worry about whether or not my critiques of my workplace will somehow end up in the hands of my boss. I also don’t like many people knowing about my past drug-use, for fear of judgement, so I like to keep that information private as well”

Zinester quoted in: Fox & Swickard (2019)

## ZINES AS A PRIME EXAMPLE

*Zines are undeniably crucial collections for libraries, but they also pose tensions in bibliographic and authority data work.*

Tensions we should start grappling with:

- Creators' personal privacy
- Creators' personal safety
- Creators' preferences

# ERODING ASSUMED BOUNDARIES

*...first xerography, then the Internet.*

- “Zines ... have never clearly been circulated as public documents. ... [They] were written and produced by individuals often for limited audiences (only friends or only people the zine producers deemed to be fellow travelers). ... [Z]ines demonstrate the extent to which the medium of xerography eroded assumed boundaries between the private and public spheres.”

Eichhorn (2019), p. 110-111

- This dynamic also occurs in new media today: on social media, messaging apps, etc.
- AND: new media serve to accelerate the erosion of yesterday’s assumed boundaries.

# ***INTERNATIONAL CATALOGUING PRINCIPLES***

*... on privacy*

- The *ICP* refers to an IFLA ethics statement - but in the context of accessibility and data access for users.
- From the *IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers* (2016): “The relationship between the library and the user is one of confidentiality and librarians and other information workers will take appropriate measures to ensure that user data is not shared beyond the original transaction.”
- So privacy is acknowledged, but for only one set of stakeholders.



# ***INTERNATIONAL CATALOGUING PRINCIPLES***

*... on safety*

- Safety of the creator isn't referenced and is not a factor in the guidelines given.
- Creator attribution is presented as crucial:
  - 7.1.2.1: “Essential access points in bibliographic data include: authorized access point for the name of the creator or first named creator of the work ...”
- Variant names of the creator (e.g. if they obscure their real name):
  - 7.1.2.2: “Essential access points in authority data include: ... variant names and variant forms of name for the entity ...”

# A NEW PRINCIPLE FOR THE *ICP*?

... *not just the convenience, but the safety and well-being of the creator*

- The *ICP* “builds on the great cataloguing traditions of the world” furthering Cutter’s original catalog objects, among other foundational guides.
- Cutter et al. could not have foreseen the scale of knowledge production and knowledge *producers* we have now.
- In the Information Age, we have to see that there are other humans besides users whose betterment and well-being is just as valuable and worthy of our attention.
- We must move beyond our tradition of user-centeredness, and beyond old paradigms from a much different, much more narrow bibliographical universe.

# WHAT ARE WE GIVING UP?

*... something significant*

- Risking the integrity of our catalogs (such as they are).
- Users might not find the information they want, and will not know that decisions a cataloger has made has prevented that connection from being made.

# WHAT ARE WE MISSING?

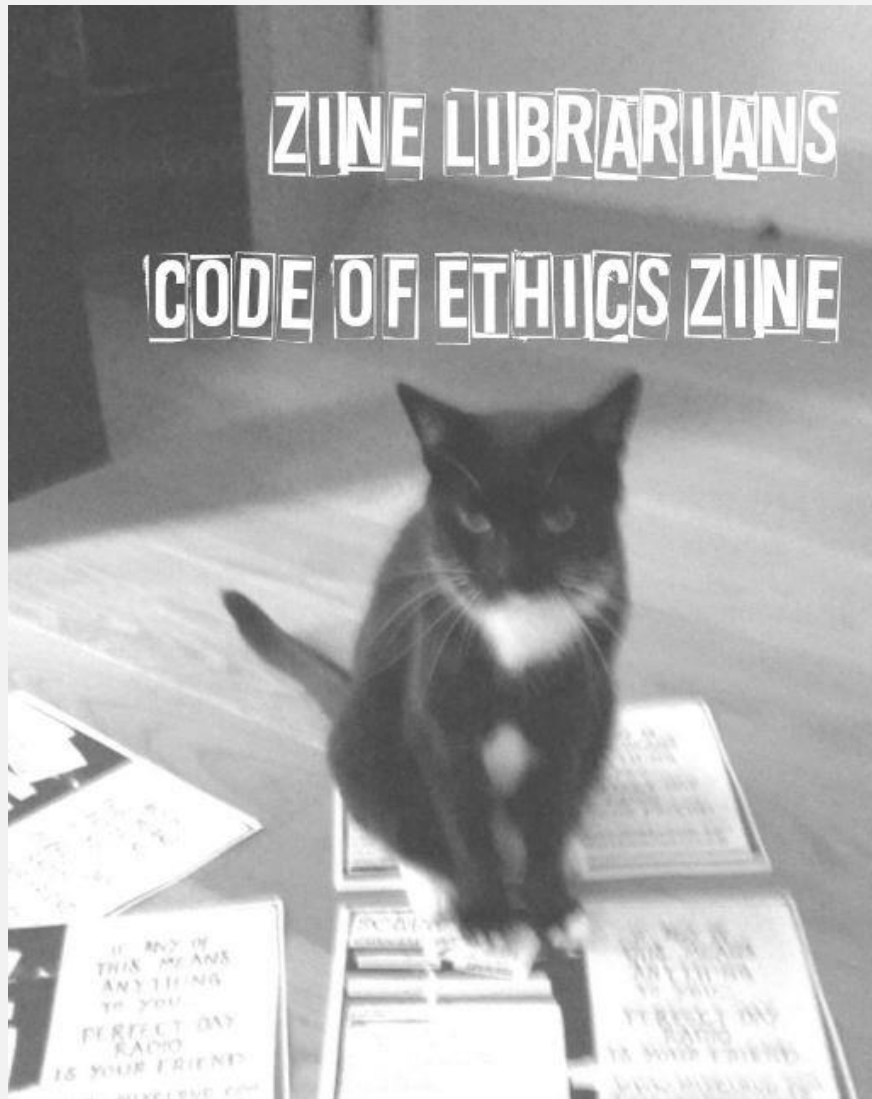
*... we can't say and we don't know*

- Technological ability to remove information (and keep it removed).
- We don't know if libraries are receiving requests about having information removed.

# A NEW CATALOGER'S JUDGMENT

*... that's both consistent and contextually aware*

- Reframe catalogers as stewards (not just scribes) of information.
  - Sharing responsibility with curators and collections specialists.
- Domain awareness: a sense of when identification might be dangerous.
- Awareness of media that might straddle public and private spheres or analog and digital eras.
- Normalize creator relations:
  - Being prepared to make contact with creators to solicit their preferences and/or field their feedback.
  - Being prepared to receive and honor unsolicited feedback from creators.
  - Developing policy and tools to receive metadata takedown requests.



## ZINE LIBRARIANS CODE OF ETHICS

*An example of an attempt to inject radical empathy into a guide for professional practice.*

- Created in 2015 by Zine Librarians UnConference participants
- Acknowledges zinesters as stakeholders across multiple aspects of zine collection stewardship

# WORKS CONSULTED

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# THANK YOU

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