

A grey squirrel is sitting on a light-colored carpet, surrounded by numerous zines of various sizes and colors. The zines are scattered around the squirrel, some open and some closed. The squirrel is looking down at the zines. The zines have various titles and illustrations, including one titled 'SELF-DEFENSE STARTER KIT' and another titled 'MOURNISH'.

THE EDUCATIONAL POWER OF ZINES

*On Making Academic Research
More Accessible Through Zine
Making and Reading*

**The Educational Power of Zines: On Making Academic Research
More Accessible Through Zine Making and Reading**

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Introduction



Thank you for picking up this zine! I am a zinester and a graduate student studying education. I have done a lot of academic and non-academic writing in my life. I believe in bridging the two, especially in making academic writing more accessible to people outside of academia. As I will explore in the following pages, zines are an excellent vehicle for doing this. They hold great educational potential that is often underutilized. I want to see more educators teaching with zines! I also want to see everyday people be given greater access to academic research through zines. This multi-media zine explores these ideas and provides some examples, instruction, and resources. I hope to get readers on board and excited about the educational power of zines! So, without further ado, let's get into it! >>

The Case for Making Academic Research Accessible

Academia is a knowledge production machine. Money, time, and expertise are poured into this machine to produce research that helps us to better understand ourselves and our world. However, academia can be an insular world. Much academic research does not leave the bubble of its field. Research results are often inaccessible behind journal paywalls, overly complex language, and field-specific jargon. In this way, the academic machine churns out new knowledge for elite groups rather than the masses. Who does this serve?

In their article on autoethnography, Bochner and Ellis (2022) wrote:

“Regrettably, the overly standardized and confining forms of writing recognized as legitimate in the field [of social work]—the third-person, objectifying, neutral scientific voice—often rearrange lived experiences of human beings in **conceptual and jargon-saturated ways** that leave human pain and suffering inconspicuous, and their unfolding human journeys **inaccessible**” (p. 9).

Bochner and Ellis (2022) identified the same issues with inaccessibility that I am writing about here. Though they referred to the social sciences, I believe their comment applies to most academic disciplines. Traditional academic writing is conceptual, distanced, jargon-laden, supposedly objective, and often impenetrable for the average reader (Forck, 2023; Pach, 2019).

I believe in making academic research more accessible by finding ways to distribute it beyond the limits of its sphere. We all deserve access to the knowledge coming out of this machine.

We are currently experiencing a crisis of education across the world. Many people are suffering from either a lack of education or miseducation. Thanks to new technologies, we have more knowledge at our fingertips than ever before. Yet it feels like ignorance and misinformation have also reached new heights. Most of us get our information from the internet, which is shaped by algorithms that reinforce what we already believe rather than provide more objective information. For

example, when I Google something, I may receive different results than my neighbour, friend, or classmate would.

“You may get the same or similar results to someone else who searches on Google Search. But sometimes, **Google may give you different results based on things like time, context, or personalized results**” (Google, n.d.).

Making dependable, credible, and peer-reviewed research accessible to all is more important than ever. We must give people access to educational materials that will enhance their capacity for critical thinking and reflexivity. People need access to materials that open their awareness and challenge their thinking rather than reinforce their biases and close them down with fear.

Palmer (1993) explored how reading short texts can create “learning spaces” where “students, teacher, and subject can meet” (p. 76). On these spaces, Palmer (1993) wrote:

“A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur—things like **exposing ignorance**, testing tentative hypotheses, **challenging false or partial information**, and mutual criticism of thought” (p. 74).

We need to give people greater access to texts that can create these learning spaces. This will help learners to combat their internalized ignorance and biases. I believe academia has a role to play here by increasing the accessibility of the knowledge it produces. Non-academics should have access to this knowledge without paying for expensive degrees or journal subscriptions. Reliable sources of information should not be gatekept but flow freely to all.

Personalized Google results, conspiracy theory Facebook groups, and reactionary TikToks are shaping people’s worldviews. Meanwhile, academic research, which has the power to counter widespread misinformation, remains safely tucked behind the walls of its institutions. We urgently need to release this research and find as many different mechanisms for doing so as possible. This zine provides just one.

Accessibility Issues With Academic Research

When I discuss the inaccessibility of the presentation of academic research, I am generally referring to the following issues. This list covers the main ones but is non-exhaustive.

Accessibility Issues

- Research results that are not disseminated beyond the academic community. The general public may not be aware the research exists.
- Journal articles that are kept behind paywalls.
- Overly complex language is used that requires an advanced degree to understand. A lot of jargon and field-specific terms are used without explanation.
- The writing is dry and impersonal and neither engaging nor interesting to read.
- Dense walls of text that are presented with few breaks. No graphics, charts, or other ways of communicating information are used.

Reflecting upon the survey they conducted on the accessibility of academic writing, Forck (2023) wrote:

“All respondents said that they believed that **academic writing has an accessibility problem**. When participants were asked why they thought this, the same sentiment was expressed nearly every time: academic writing is not written for people who are less educated on a subject, or for people who are not within that field of study” (p. 80).

Everyone Forck (2023) surveyed reported accessibility issues with academic writing. Academic writers tend to presume that their readers possess university-level educations and field-specific knowledge. Thus, they write in ways that are inaccessible to those outside of the academy. What if things were done differently? What if anyone with general knowledge of a topic could pick up and parse an academic article about it? What educational possibilities could this open up?

Forck (2023) argued that “if one of the main purposes of academic texts is to **spread new information and ideas**, then it is imperative that **everyone is able to access these resources**” (p. 81). Forck and I are in alignment here. I believe that spreading knowledge as broadly as possible should be one of the main goals of academic research production.

I also contend that it is essential that **research pertaining to social justice** be made accessible. Marginalized communities should have access to research that is about them. Social justice-related research can also help to further the agendas of social movements.

On the topic of academic research and social justice, Pach (2019) wrote:

“**Activism and academic progress can go hand in hand**. Radical theories in gender studies, ethnic studies and disability studies can be revolutionary in their own right and do some of the work of dismantling systems of power. **But they lose that potential if the people most affected by discrimination and marginalization can't puzzle through wildly inaccessible texts**” (para. 3).

Academic research has the potential to help advance movements for social change, but crucially, it needs to be accessible to the activists leading these movements.

Delving further into this, Pach (2019) argued:

“As long as average patients, teachers, students and working-class families don’t have access to it, it remains only theory, and can’t be acted upon. **If the revolution requires an advanced degree from an elite university, it is not revolutionary.** This work cannot be put into practice in real communities unless those communities can readily access it, understand it and put it into action” (para. 4).

Giving people greater access to theory increases the potential to transform theory into action. However, this potential will not be harnessed if theory is reserved for an elite few. If academic theories concerning social justice are not made available to all, or at least the communities they are about, they will exist paradoxically and fail to practice what they preach. If social justice theorists want to advance the movements they write about, they should make their work widely available so it can be acted upon. Preserving it within a bubble only continues to serve the status quo and contributes to further social injustices.

Some social justice researchers already distribute their findings in more accessible ways, which I will cover in more detail below. I support these practices and hope they continue and expand.

Zines as a Vehicle for Making Academic Research Accessible

So far, I have argued for the importance of making academic research more widely available. Now I will discuss one tool for doing this, which is what you are currently reading. This is a zine. I will explore zines as a vehicle for transmitting academic knowledge more broadly. But first...



What Is a Zine?

This definition comes from my experiences as a “zinester,” or maker of zines, and draws upon the words of other zinesters, writers, and academics.

Zines are independently published booklets. They can be on a variety of topics like music, feminism, gender, art, spirituality, or mental health. They tend to be composed of mixed media like text, illustrations, comics, collages, photographs, and more. Zines can be printed or made available online as PDFs. Traditionally,

single master copies of print zines were made and then photocopied and stapled for wider distribution. They are typically given away for free, traded, or sold for a low price to cover their production cost. The language they use is usually accessible to a general audience. They come from a do-it-yourself (DIY) culture, which emphasizes that anyone should be able to make a zine.

In a panel I attended on *Teaching With Zines*, the hosts described zines as “**radically accessible popular education materials**” (Parikh et al., 2024). Dr. Rae Baker, one of the panellists, also emphasized the political nature of zines when they said, “A depoliticized zine is not a zine, it’s an information booklet” (Parikh et al., 2024, 12:53 PM). Zines have roots in feminist and other social movements. They usually have political approaches or analyses.

Thomas (2018) wrote that “Zines are defined as do-it-yourself publications” (p. 738). Creasap (2014) elaborated that “DIY ethics hold that **there are no rules for making a zine**; it is a purely creative pursuit” (p. 159). Zines are countercultural. They go against the grain. They are not bound by strict rules or criteria. The zine format is designed to be accessible and open to all.

Creasap (2014) described how “Zines occupy a middle ground between traditional research papers or essays and Web-based media such as blogs” (p. 155). I am interested in exploring this middle ground in this zine. If zines occupy a place between research papers and blogs, it stands to reason that they can be a good medium for translating academic research into a more accessible format.

Thomas (2018) wrote that “**What distinguishes zines in general is the personal nature of the content**, whether the subject matter be diaristic or political” (p. 738). Zines often have a more personal slant to them. Sharing personal experiences or anecdotes while writing is another way to increase the accessibility of texts by making them more engaging and interesting (Forck, 2023).

If you are new to zines, I hope I have provided a robust enough definition here. Because they are an open medium, however, it is important to note that the way I view zines may be different from the way someone else views them. There is no singular, totalizing definition. I will continue to discuss zines as a tool and their potential for translating academic research as well as look at some examples below.

Zine Reading as an Educational Tool



Zines are a great vehicle for distributing information. They tend to use straightforward, plain language and be easier to read than academic works. They often utilize visual media that breaks up text and makes them more engaging. They are also typically shorter texts that can convey essential information with few words, making them easier to digest. Zines can say *a lot* with a little.

In the *Teaching With Zines* panel, Dr. Angela Last discussed assigning zines they created as reading for their students because of how they convey more information in fewer words than textbooks (Parikh et al., 2024). As short texts, they also have the potential to create the “learning spaces” Palmer (1993) referred to (p. 76).

Zines can be made by individuals and small collectives to share information outside of the online algorithms that tailor everything we see. They can provide an alternative way of distributing knowledge that subverts these algorithms. Zines can

be donated to libraries, left at bus stops and coffee shops, and traded within communities. Sharing is an important aspect of zine culture. Zines are not meant to be made and left to gather dust on bookshelves. They are made to be shared far and wide.

Typically, zines are sold for a few dollars or given away for free because of their low production cost and this culture of sharing. Creasap (2014) wrote:

“Zines are inexpensive, and there are numerous ways to find, request, and/or purchase zines both in person and online... Some of these [zine] libraries allow teachers to email requests for photocopies of zines in small numbers, sometimes for free or a nominal fee” (p. 165).

Zines can be more financially accessible than textbooks or journal articles. Thomas (2018) also wrote about how “zine assignments make education more cost-effective” (p. 747).

Zines are also great for teaching about underrepresented or marginalized topics. They tend to cover subjects that there is little academic research on.

“Zines often present ideas that are not represented in mainstream media—or challenge the politics of mass media in general” (Creasap, 2014, p. 166).

Zines often come from the margins and can therefore be good tools for teaching about the margins. Creasap (2014) reinforced this when they wrote that “zines can help instructors teach issues that are underrepresented in academic literature and/or mainstream media” (p. 158). In their survey, Thomas (2018) also noted that their respondents emphasized that “zines provide access to ‘diverse and hard-to-find material’” (p. 747).

When I say that zines come from the margins, I mean that their creators are often people living with multiple forms of marginalization who document their lived experiences through zines. Therefore, these texts often centre the voices of women, people of colour, LGBTQ+ folks, disabled folks, and others who experience

systemic oppression. These voices are underrepresented in academia. Within the world of zines, however, they are at the forefront. Studying zines can foreground voices that are otherwise silenced or ignored.

Zines can convey information in an intimate, emotional, and experiential way. Creasap (2014) discussed teaching their students with a zine about a trans guy's experience of coming out. They wrote, "Discussion of this zine gives students an **intimate look at the coming out process**, one that cannot be conveyed as convincingly in scholarly texts" (Creasap, 2014, p. 158). They found that a zine was a better tool than academic literature for teaching about the topic of coming out. Reflecting on this experience, Creasap (2014) wrote:

"The exercise opened up questions about gender and language in a way that **academic readings had not**. I got the sense that many of them [the students] believed gender-neutral language was **theoretical**... Learning about gender-inclusive language from Kelly and JDEW [the authors] **personalizes the subject**" (p. 159).

This teaching exercise prompted new questions in Creasap's students and brought the topic alive for them through the voices of the real people it was about. It opened a new avenue for learning that Creasap (2014) had not found within academic texts. In concluding their article, Creasap (2014) wrote, "Zines are effective teaching resources that help students connect theory and everyday life" (p. 166). Zines can help students connect concepts to their lives, which enhances their learning by making these concepts feel more relevant, personal, and real.

Mr. Keating Would Have Loved Zines

Dead Poets Society (1989)

Film Synopsis: “At an elite, old-fashioned boarding school in New England, a passionate English teacher [Mr. Keating] inspires his students to rebel against convention and seize the potential of every day, courting the disdain of the stern headmaster” (Letterboxd, n.d).



In *Dead Poets Society* (1989), the inspiring and out-of-the-box teacher, Mr. Keating, encouraged his students to see from different perspectives, develop their voices, and not conform to the status quo (M. A. Naseem, personal communication, October 22, 2024).

I believe that Mr. Keating would have approved of zines as a teaching tool due to their non-conforming nature. In the movie, there was a scene where Mr. Keating directed his students to rip out the introduction of their poetry textbooks, which outlined a method for measuring the value of poetry. Mr. Keating disagreed with

the idea that poetry can be evaluated in this way, and so prompted his students to rip out this section and throw it away (Weir, 1989).

Zines are like poetry. They are difficult to measure. They are a non-conformist art form that challenges the status quo. As we discussed in class, “Art asks us to think... in a different way” (M. A. Naseem, personal communication, October 22, 2024). Zines and poetry ask us to think in different ways.

In another scene, Mr. Keating had his students take turns standing on his desk to emphasize how the classroom looked different depending on one’s perspective (Weir, 1989). He said, “I stand upon my desk to remind myself that we must constantly look at things in a different way” (Weir, 1989, 0:43:09). Reading poetry and zines can also shift our perspectives and provide us with alternative views of the world.

Throughout the movie, Mr. Keating also wanted to help his students find their voices through reading, writing, and performing poetry in and outside of class (Weir, 1989). In the following pages, we will touch upon non-fictional educators who also share in this desire and pursue it through student zine creation. The themes explored in *Dead Poets Society* (1989) about non-conformity, exploring different perspectives, and finding your voice are all common themes found in zines as well. Had he known of their potential, I believe Mr. Keating would have used zines alongside poetry as a teaching tool.

Zine reading can also help learners enhance their critical thinking skills. In support of this idea, Thomas (2018) wrote:

“Librarians interested in applying critical information literacy theory, founded on **the principle of creating resistant or critical student readers**, may find that zine pedagogies, especially those centered on zine reading and interpretation, provide an excellent praxis opportunity” (pp. 750-751).

Zines can help students become more critical readers. They can teach students to question hierarchies, inequalities, and systems of domination. Studying materials that cover a range of marginalized perspectives can help learners to question hegemonic power structures.

Zines can offer alternative sources of information that are not controlled by governments or corporations.

Thomas (2018) touched upon this in their discussion of Eamon Tewell and “teach[ing] students how to question hierarchical systems, Google in particular. **Students might realize that some voices are privileged at the expense of others in the information landscape**” (Tewell, 2016, as cited in Thomas, 2018, p. 751).

Google and other online resources managed by algorithms may provide information that reinforces what their users already believe. Zines, on the other hand, can provide more diverse information because they are not curated in this way. Engaging with materials outside of online algorithms can cause learners to question who programs these algorithms in the first place, what their motivations are, and why some forms of knowledge are prioritized over others. This questioning enhances their critical reading and thinking skills.

In their survey, Thomas (2018) found that zines were primarily being taught in “Art and design courses... Literature and composition courses... and gender studies or women’s studies courses” (p. 742). Several other subjects were reported in small numbers. Thomas (2018) received no responses from “STEM (science, technology,

engineering, and mathematics) fields or STEM-adjacent health professions” (p. 742).

However, Thomas (2018) did find limited research on students using zines to learn science. Zines can be used to teach all kinds of subjects. I would encourage educators, regardless of field, to explore the possibilities of teaching with zines. If there are no or limited zines available in your field of study, you can also make your own. As previously mentioned, Dr. Angela Last does this for their students, creating zines that function like short textbooks summarizing important course material (Parikh et al., 2024).



I also believe in harnessing the educational power of zines outside of school. I have read zines on gender, sexuality, feminism, mental health, addiction, trauma, environmentalism, gardening, and more. I have learned more about myself, others, and the world by reading zines.

Zines should be taught in schools and made widely available outside of them as well. Learning does not end when formal schooling does. It is lifelong. People should always have access to zines as educational resources. They can be picked up and carried through life, from place to place and person to person.

Zines can be made available in libraries, neighbourhood library boxes, bus stops, cafes, bookstores, zine and book fairs, activist centres, art galleries, museums, waiting rooms, online, and many more places!

The further zines are distributed, the more accessible they will be, and the more people they will reach with their educational content.



Zine Creation as an Educational Tool

Though not the focus of this zine, it is notable that Creasap (2014) and Thomas (2018) also found zine creation to be a great educational tool. Reflecting on a zine assignment they gave, Creasap (2014) wrote, “Students were **motivated to work on the project and spent considerable time working on their zines**, reading and rereading articles, revising essays, and refining the connections between theory and everyday life” (p. 166). One student reported feeling more motivated to work on their zine than they would have been for a traditional paper (Creasap, 2014). The personal nature of the zine assignment made it feel more relevant to the student’s lives and interests, which increased their motivation and may have resulted in a deeper understanding of their subjects.

Thomas (2018) wrote that “Librarians who participate in zine making may meet the challenge of **encouraging students to find their own voices** and develop agency as writers, designers, and artists” (p. 751). The theme of students developing their voices through zine creation came up multiple times (Creasap, 2014; Thomas, 2018).

Making a zine can be an empowering experience. You can produce something unique that captures how you see the world.

One respondent whom Thomas (2018) surveyed wrote that “zines force the author to take on multiple roles regarding design, writing/composition, art and graphic representation, distribution, marketing and promotion, etc.” (p. 746). In this way, zines can lead to **the development of new skills**. When I first started making zines, in addition to writing them, I also had to learn how to create images for, design, print, bind, and distribute them. There were many different skills I had to acquire as a beginner zinester. And there is still so much to learn! Every new zine I make teaches me more.

The authors discussed other learning outcomes related to zine creation that we do not have the space to cover here. This topic could fill a whole other zine! Suffice it to say that zine creation is also a powerful educational tool.

Zine Examples

Get In Line: A Guide to Peterborough's System for Housing and Sheltering the Unhoused

Get In Line: A Guide to Peterborough's System for Housing and Sheltering the Unhoused by Trent University's BfE Super Crew at the Research for Social Change Lab (RSCL) is a multi-media zine that uses comics, illustrations, photos, tables, charts, annotations, and other graphics along with text to convey information (Mackenzie et al., n.d.). It is written in a straightforward way with plain, simple language. Lots of definitions of important terms are provided and acronyms are broken down. It is accessible for all kinds of readers.

"What happened to my cheque?!"
Social assistance, housing & shelter

Social assistance is the primary source of income for many people who are homeless in Peterborough. In this section, we're focusing on the ways housing and shelter decisions can impact people's social assistance cheques.

Social assistance cheques are broken into two main categories: a basic needs allowance and a shelter allowance. In theory, the first is meant to pay for things like food, toiletries, and clothing while the second is meant to cover housing costs. (We say "in theory" because the size of both allowances is insufficient.)

You only receive the shelter allowance if you can prove that you are housed and paying rent. That means you'll lose it if you become homeless.

Family Type	New as of July 2020			
	Basic Needs	Max Shelter	Max OCB	Total
OW				
Single	\$343	\$390	\$0	\$733
Single Parent - 1 child	\$360	\$642	\$121.75	\$1,123.75
Single Parent - 2 children	\$360	\$697	\$243.5	\$1,300.5
Couple	\$494	\$642	\$0	\$1,136
Couple - 1 child	\$494	\$697	\$121.75	\$1,312.75
Couple - 2 children	\$494	\$756	\$243.5	\$1,493.5
ODSP				
Single	\$672	\$497	\$0	\$1,169
Single Parent - 1 child	\$815	\$781	\$121.75	\$1,717.75
Single Parent - 2 children	\$815	\$846	\$243.5	\$1,904.5
Couple	\$909	\$781	\$0	\$1,750
Couple - 1 child	\$909	\$846	\$121.75	\$1,896.75
Couple - 2 children	\$909	\$910	\$243.5	\$2,130.5

Bedroom for rent in Peterborough on Water street
Peterborough · 13 hours ago
4 bedrooms, 2 washroom house on Water street, available 1/20/21 (bedroom one year lease. Starting date immediately, There university bus stop available in front of the door, short walk to shops...
\$750.00
Hiland Street / Circle Drive · 16 Beds 4

Bedroom Apartment just north of downtown PBRO
Peterborough · 13 hours ago
77 Agnes Street North, Unit 2 (back) Apartment \$1100.00 per month (Utilities INCLUDED) Available 1/20/21 Compact, open style formal kitchen with refrigerator and stove. Cleanly washed and kept spot on the...
\$1300.00
Typical of the corner of Agnes and 7th Street
Agnes Street North / 7th Street · 15 Beds Bachelor/Studio

Housing allowances can't cover even the cheapest apartments listed locally on Kijiji.

Arthur found a way to increase his income. He told his OW worker he rents a room, even though he doesn't. That means he receives a shelter allowance in addition to a basic needs allowance for a total of \$733 per month. But he doesn't actually pay rent, so Arthur can use the money to buy food, toiletries, and drugs. Arthur doesn't have anywhere to live. But he doesn't want to use the shelter system. If he does, OW will find out he's been lying, and his monthly income will drop from \$733 to \$343. So, Arthur chooses to sleep rough, even though this leads to confrontations with bylaw enforcement. On the plus side, sleeping rough means he's more likely to be offered housing through the BNPL.

If you find housing after experiencing homelessness, you'll need your new landlord to fill out an "Intent to Rent" form so you can have your housing allowance reinstated.

But here's a glitch you might run into: ODSP cheques are issued at the end of the month they cover, not the beginning. So you won't get your full cheque until you've already been housed for a month. This means you'll have to cover your first month's rent some other way.

If this impacts you, consider applying for the City's Housing Stability Fund, which can provide funding to help cover first and last month's rent.

Ontario
MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Monthly Cheque Statement
Statement of Assistance
Please retain

MONTHS / PERIODS	AMOUNTS / AMOUNTS	DEBITATIONS / DEBITATIONS	BALANCE / BALANCE
Basic Needs	815.00	0.00	
Shelter	781.00	0.00	
Total	1596.00	0.00	1596.00

Get In Line's description reads: "This zine is about how the shelter and housing systems are designed to work officially, collecting information from many places and putting as much relevant information in one place" (Mackenzie et al., n.d., inside cover). The RSCL took information from many disparate places and made it more accessible for people by pulling it together into this resource. This zine is

designed to act as a useful guide for people trying to access these systems by making their processes and procedures transparent.

What Shelters Exist?



- Brock Mission**
- For men ages 24 and up
 - 32 beds available
 - Open 24/7
 - Meals provided, laundry and shower facilities available



- Cameron House**
- For women ages 24 and up
 - 7 beds available
 - Open 24/7
 - Operated by Brock Mission



- YES Shelter**
- For youth (ages 23 and lower) and families
 - 15 beds for youth
 - 15 beds for families
 - Open 24/7
 - Meals provided, laundry and shower facilities available

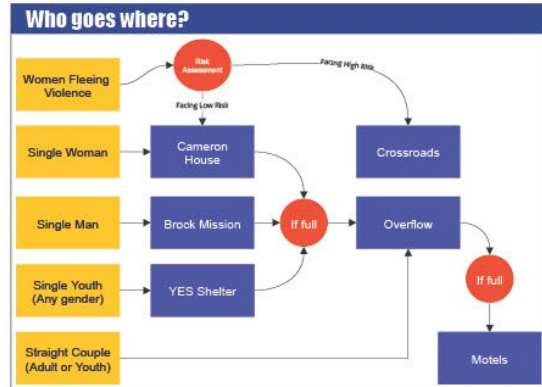


- Overflow Shelter**
- For those who cannot be served by the other shelters
 - 32 beds available
 - Open 24/7
 - Operated by Brock Mission
 - Meals provided and showers available; no laundry facilities

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- Crossroads**
- For women and families fleeing domestic violence
 - Open 24/7
 - Operated by YWCA



NOTE: A client will sometimes be given a motel room if the shelter options available are inaccessible or dangerous to them. For example, we know of at least one trans person who was given a motel room because there were no safe options for them in the gender-segregated shelter system. However, we could find no official process for how these requests are made and evaluated.

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The RSCL provided a brief overview of their methods. They reviewed documents and interviewed staff who worked within the system to verify their findings (Mackenzie et al., n.d.). They then translated the findings from their research into this zine.

Get In Line is an excellent example of accessible research results created by a university lab. It is designed to be useful to everyday people. It is engaging and easy to digest. It covers a lot of essential information within its 31 pages. This zine is a great model of the work I am advocating for.

This Zine!

The zine you are currently reading is also meant to serve as an example of what I am advocating for. It was my intention for the **form to reflect the content**. I have tried to present my ideas in an interesting and engaging way. I have woven references to academic and non-academic texts throughout my discussion. This zine is far from perfect. It warrants critique, suggestions, and revision, but I have tried my best with the resources and time I have had.

This is an important point. We may not be able to make our ideas and knowledge perfectly accessible to everyone through our zines. We will likely have limited time and resources. Notably, the RSCL zine I reviewed was made by an entire team of people! Making zines is a lot of work, which I was reminded of while creating this one. A single zinester with limited time and funding may need to cut corners.

What matters is that we sincerely try to distribute our knowledge more broadly and do the best we can with what our circumstances will allow.

Ask yourself, what can you do to make your work more accessible? What liberties can you take? Where can you begin?

It helps that zine creation is rather accessible, being low-cost and open-ended. Zines come from a culture that asserts that anyone can make one.

Your zine may not be perfect, but **perfection is not the end goal of a zine.**

Telling your story, sharing your research, and getting your ideas out there are the goals. Do your best. It is enough. And it is certainly better than solely producing academic texts hidden behind paywalls and so full of jargon that no one outside of your field could parse them even if they were freely available. Putting effort into translating academic writing for a broader audience is what matters. Don't let your **fear of imperfection** stop you from trying.

Palmer (2017) wrote about a shop teacher who feared changing technologies and being left behind but eventually admitted to his fears and faced them head-on.

Palmer (2017) explained how, “His breakthrough was into a new way of *being*, into the realization that he could have fear but did not need to be fear—that he could speak and act from a place of honesty about being fearful rather than from the fear itself” (p. 60).

It is okay to be afraid.

You can be scared of trying something new and doing it imperfectly. Like the shop teacher Palmer (2017) described, if you are afraid, dare to move forward anyway and be open about how you feel. Make the zine. Within its pages, you could even discuss your fears about creating it. The history and culture of the zine world welcomes this openness and transparency from its creators. You would be participating in this **lineage of vulnerability**.

I am afraid that this zine will not turn out well. Perhaps it will be too wordy. Maybe it will seem scattered, or the arguments will be weak. I might not have the time to edit it as thoroughly as I would like. Perhaps it will not be as engaging as I want it to be. Maybe what I have to say is unoriginal or unimportant. Still, I am making it anyway. I cannot know if I do not try.

Palmer (2017) wrote that if we face our fears, “**We would no longer need to put our lives on hold while waiting for structural change**” (p. 37).

Change requires that many people take small steps toward their fears. Ideally, these incremental changes will cause a snowball effect that leads to larger structural changes. It starts with a few and grows into many. Perhaps one day we will see zines as an integral part of disseminating academic research to the public. We will only know if we try.

Tips for Making Accessible Zines

- Use plain, simple language.
 - Provide definitions of field-specific terms and acronyms that are not a part of people’s everyday vocabulary (Forck, 2023).
- Break up text into different sections and use headers (Pliego, 2022).
- Use photos, illustrations, tables, charts, and other graphics.
- Use large, easy-to-read fonts (Pliego, 2022).
- Try to convey more information with fewer words when possible.
- Make your zines more engaging by “Adding funny anecdotes or creating a unique author’s voice” (Forck, 2023, p. 82).
- Make online and print copies available.

Some Zine Resources

Anchor Archive Zine Library

“The Anchor Archive Zine Library is a collectively-run, non-profit library with a collection of over 7000 zines from the local area and around the world. It has been providing access to independent media, art, and local zine history and culture since 2005 through operating the library and offering tools, resources, and programming for making zines” (Anchor Archive Zine Library, n.d.).

<https://anchorarchive.org/>

GEOZONE

“GEOZONE – Geography Zine Organizing Network – is a transnational collective archiving zines and print ephemera broadly concerned with geography. We aim to make these materials available for download, print, and distribution in academic and activist spaces across the globe” (GEOZONE, n.d.).

<https://geoz.one/>

Queer Zine Archive Project

“The Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) was first launched in November 2003 in an effort to preserve queer zines and make them available to other queers, researchers, historians, punks, and anyone else who has an interest DIY publishing and underground queer communities” (Queer Zine Archive Project, 2022).

“The primary function of QZAP is to provide a free on-line searchable database of the collection with links allowing users to download electronic copies of zines. By providing access to the historical canon of queer zines we hope to make them more accessible to diverse communities and reach wider audiences” (Queer Zine Archive Project, 2022).

<https://gittings.qzap.org/>

Research for Social Change Lab

“Founded at Trent University by Dr. Naomi Nichols in 2021, the Research for Social Change Lab (RSCL) aims to mobilize University resources for social change. With our community partners, we design and execute research projects to

generate actionable knowledge and creative problem solving around issues such as homelessness, social exclusion and poverty” (The Research for Social Change Lab, n.d.).

<https://www.socialchangelab.ca/publications>

Sheer Spite Press

“Sheer Spite Press was founded in 2024 in Tiohtià:ke / Montreal to publish and distribute useful, generous, personal, political, funny, heart-filled works” (Pepper, 2024).

<https://sheerspite.ca/>



Sage Pantony is a writer, poet, and zinester. They write about gender, sexuality, mental health, trauma, creativity, and the best ways to cook eggs. They are the author of several zines, including a trilogy about transitioning as a non-binary person. Sage's work has appeared in publications such as *Coven Poetry*, *Idle Ink*, and *The Varsity*. They currently reside in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal with their pet dinosaur, Peter.

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