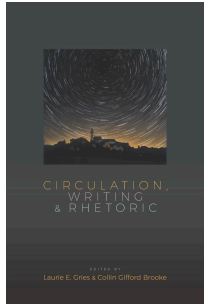


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Gries, Laurie, and Collin Gifford Brooke, editors. *Circulation, Writing, and Rhetoric*. Utah State University Press, 2018.

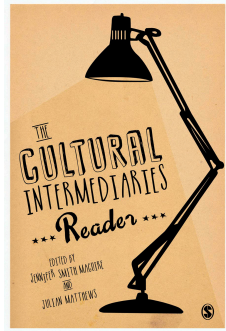
In the span of 10 years — from 1994 to 2004 — the field of composition and rhetoric intensified its study of public writing, seeing it move from a print-based extracurriculum to one that had become more expansive, what Kathy Yancey famously described as a “writing public made plural.” In the 15 years since Yancey gave that oft-cited talk, writing publics are not so much made plural as they are ubiquitous, proliferating through the widespread use of mobile technologies and social media. Partially for this reason, circulation studies has become a significant area of inquiry for the field. Here’s a sign: this month Utah Press published *Circulation, Writing, and Rhetoric*, a collection edited by Laurie Gries and Collin Brooke, featuring essays, including one co-authored by Dustin, that helps us better understand how the movement and flow of rhetoric affects publics. Borrowing from Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle in her introduction to the book, Gries frames circulation as a threshold concept “critical for continued learning and participation in an area or within a community of practice.”

How and why do intermediaries change as circuits and tools change?

How do those changes empower but also threaten counterpublics?

How can circulation, when coupled with archival methods, help us produce and teach such knowledge?

In the spirit of continued learning and participation, this panel offers another term — intermediaries — as a way for re-approaching circulation in a context of late capitalism. While each of us might emphasize this term differently, for my purposes I argue that we might effectively historicize circulation by looking at how intermediaries emerge, dissipate or change over time. After defining intermediaries and providing a recent example of how they have been used to analyze a public in writing studies, I apply the term to a counterpublic that was territorialized through print: zines of the 1990s. Focusing on one intermediary from this time period — a review magazine called Factsheet Five — I argue two points. First, that case studies like this one can inform us about the historical role of intermediaries and how those roles are inherently dependent upon the cultures, economies, and technologies in which they reside. And second, rhetorical histories of counterpublics require attention to the texts and artifacts produced by their members, but also to the ways they get mediated by other publics.



Cultural intermediaries construct cultural capital by legitimizing and making desirable certain cultural phenomena – objects, materials, ideas, behaviors, and services – orienting others toward them.

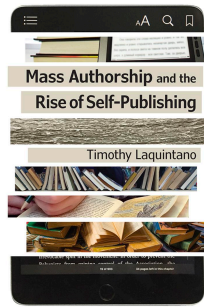
Maguire and Matthews (2012, 2014)

Maguire, Jennifer Smith, and Julian Matthews, editors. *The Cultural Intermediaries Reader*. Sage, 2014.

Within social theory, intermediaries act as agents who play a role in the market, mediating between acts of production and consumption. That is, cultural intermediaries produce value or cultural capital by legitimizing and making desirable certain cultural phenomena — objects, materials, ideas, behaviors, and services — orienting others toward them. They include those who assert authority through expertise, framing materials in such a way that they have lasting power — particularly through the creation of cultural boundaries, categories, or conventions. They are also increasingly nonhuman. Intermediaries control flow through a variety of social and technological code; canonical authors compete with algorithms on Amazon, NYT critics compete with Yelpers, celebrity shoutouts on Twitter complete with check-ins — these are just some of the more familiar actors and means intermediaries route rhetoric, as my co-panelists will surely attest.



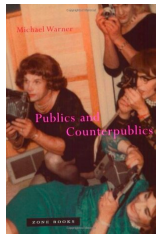
5



Laquintano, Timothy. *Mass Authorship and the Rise of Self-Publishing*. University of Iowa Press, 2016.

Studying these historically reveal that intermediaries are not inert. For example, Tim Laquintano uses intermediaries in his recent book to examine how and why digital self-publishers circumvent the dominant, royalty-based model of publishing. He rejects a narrative of disintermediation — that notion that “users ousted traditional gatekeepers by circumventing the industrial middleman to reach readers directly” (5) — and finds that self-publishing is in fact deeply mediated. Some of the actors he talks about are Amazon, who are producing other less-visible, nonhuman intermediaries like ranking and recommendation algorithms. His study suggests that as long as we have markets, we will have intermediaries.

Studies like Laquintano’s — which focus on the ways extracurricular publics have transitioned from print to digital — are increasingly important for understanding how the circuits and intermediaries within a given delivery system affect the rhetorics, values, and politics by which those publics operate. To that end, I wonder whether rhetorical histories of mediation might tell us how counterpublics are affected differently, especially as they engage with wider publics.

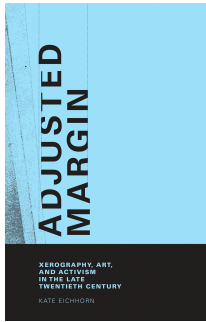


"The cultural horizon against which [a counterpublic] marks itself off is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant one. And the conflict extends not just to ideas or policy questions, but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public and to the hierarchy among media. The discourse that constitutes it is not merely a different or alternative idiom, but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness."

Warner, Michael. "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2002, pp. 49-60.

Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*. Zone, 2002.

By counterpublics, I mean those who gather and exist as a parallel to dominant publics, where members not only oppose or resist their dominance, but do so through what Michael Warner calls "poetic world making." All publics create their worlds through visible discourses, but counterpublics subvert, remediate, or remix these discourses in ways that produce tension through their illegible, pornographic, or illegal materiality. Rather than participate in rational public debates, in other words, counterpublics rip their scripts, pasting the fragments into zines and tagging them onto subway cars. At the same time, counterpublics are reliant upon the same circuits and tools — cameras, spray cans, public transportation, book culture — as the wider publics they resist. Such a perspective is helpful when looking at how they affect publics but how publics also attempt to engage or destroy them — or opt for the more effective strategy of assimilating or absorbing them. I believe that viewing circulation as a historical process can be useful in this way.



Eichhorn, Kate. *Adjusted Margin: Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century*. The MIT Press, 2016.

7

For example, in her history of xerography, media historian Kate Eichhorn traces the ways in which photocopiers spread, from being a tool of corporate bureaucracy to one that was useful for counterpublics infiltrating public space with manifestos, collages, and other creative messages throughout the 1970s.



Photo from "Dirty Old 1970's New York" Facebook Page



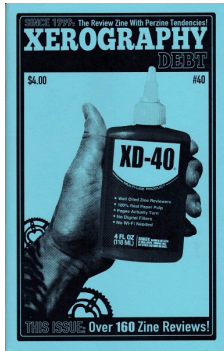
Photo of the same corner in 2014

However, by the 1990s, counterpublic forms of xerography like DIY art and wheat-pasted promotional bills became increasingly scrubbed from urban centers like New York, setting up confrontations that took place both on the streets through dramatic increases of summonses and through more traditional rational-critical debates in the spaces of local newspapers.



10

As these xerographic communities were being deterritorialized, however, the photocopier gained favor with a different kind of self-publisher than those studied by Laquintano — zinesters.



11

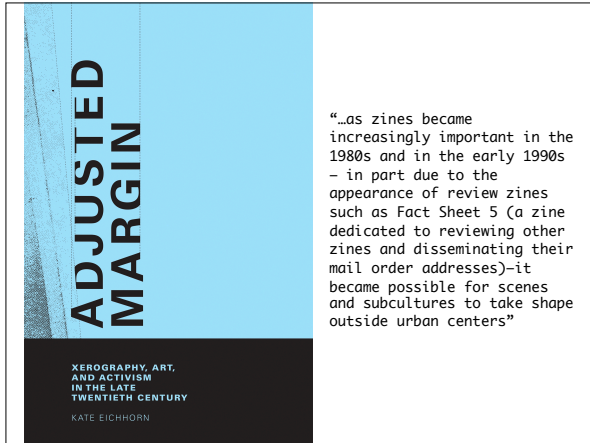
Though not all zines are strong examples of counterpublic rhetoric, as Frank helpfully notes in his book, many turn to acts of bricolage, cutting and pasting various printed forms of the visual and vernacular to assemble meaning that may or may not resonate with dominant publics.



12

While mimeographed sci-fi fanzines had existed since the 30s, the photocopier was an important tool for zines — what Eichhorn dubs a “predigital social media” (109) that closed the gap between production and circulation. Copies could be scammed or stolen at work, which also made it easier to reproduce illicit or copyrighted material. After collating copies they were assembled as booklets and mailed out to readers. As Eichhorn’s history notes, zinesters first found each other through those urban centers in the 1970s, especially as punk rock publications rose to prominence; however, those citizens eventually either fled these urban centers or were removed through the sanitization of cities.

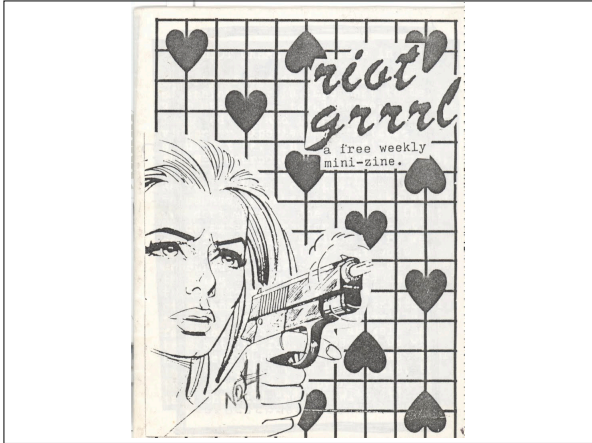




13

But as they moved, zines spread. Eichhorn writes:

...as zines became increasingly important in the 1980s and in the early 1990s — in part due to the appearance of review zines such as Fact Sheet 5 (a zine dedicated to reviewing other zines and disseminating their mail order addresses)—it became possible for scenes and subcultures to take shape outside urban centers. (107-108)

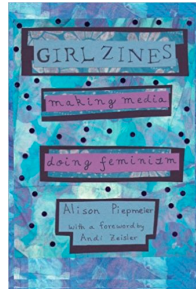


14

Eichhorn goes on to explain the ways in which zines were central to movements such as Riot Grrrl, which connected third-wave feminists from Washington State to Washington DC. Thanks in part to activists and artists who connected through these zines, we can examine movements like Riot Grrrl in special collections libraries like Fales at NYU or the Sallie Bingham Center at Duke.

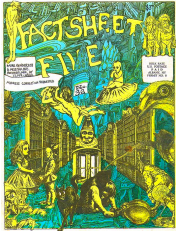


Licona, Adela C. *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric*. SUNY Press, 2012.

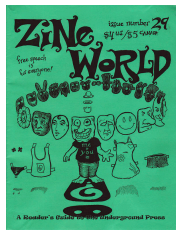


Piepmeyer, Alison. *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism*. First Edition. NYU Press, 2009.

Indeed, books like Alison Piepmeier's *Girl Zines* and Adela Licona's *Zines in Third Space* draw from these archives to document the important roles such zines played in contemporary feminist movements.



(1982-1998)



(1996-2012)



(1995-?)

Yet under-explored in zine and DIY histories are the intermediaries Eichhorn briefly mentioned. Review zines like Factsheet Five, Zine World, and Broken Pencil reviewed tens of thousands of zines over the years, not only helping zines connect to each other, but creating some of the very language and categories used to describe them. As arguably the most important intermediary for zines in the 1990s, Factsheet Five presents a helpful case study for understanding the ways in which the web reterritorialized counterpublic zine networks and prepared them for public consumption. I say reterritorialized because zines never died, but like Laquintano's self-publishers, found new intermediaries.



17

Factsheet Five was started in 1982 by anarchist and sci-fi nerd Mike Gunderloy. Back then it was nothing more than a duplex-printed mimeo sheet. But by the time Gunderloy suddenly walked away from Factsheet Five after publishing 44 issues, his small group of friends were reviewing over a thousand zines per issue. In 1991 Gunderloy gave Factsheet Five away to longtime fan, Hudson Luce; however, just after Luce took over and was trying to learn the process of running a magazine with a circulation of over 10,000, his aunt died; as the sole heir to her estate, he moved here to Kansas City in January 1992, packing up 1,000 lbs worth of zines and shipping them to his apartment. And then fate intervened...

"I was out riding my bike, and got run off the road by some guy in a convertible who was avoiding colliding with another car. I went into the ditch, went over the handlebars and landed on my left wrist, and the shock traveled up my arm to the shoulder ball joint, which shattered into 5 pieces, two of which were too small to pin.

The orthopedic surgeon on call sent me home in a sling, with a scrip for pain meds, and with the advice that the cartilage would form a natural cast, which is what happened. He also said the arm would end up permanently useless. That didn't happen, because instead of doing the exercises prescribed by the docs, I started lifting weights after about six months. But for Factsheet Five, that pretty much did it. You can't type fast enough with one hand. So at that point I had to find someone else to do the zine, and that's where R. Seth Friedman took it over."

18

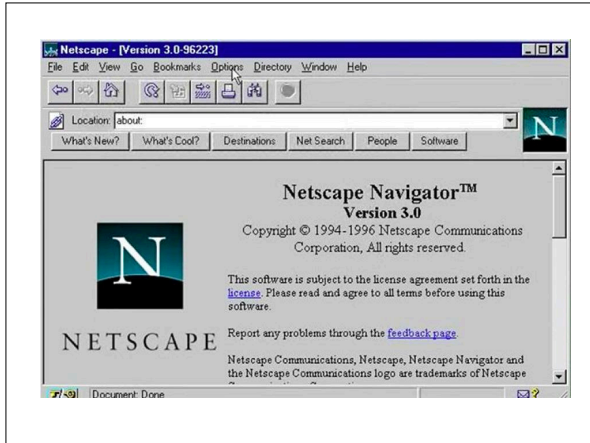
Hudson Luce on why he only did Issue 45



19

So R Seth Friedman took over Fact Sheet 5 in 1993 and published Issues 46-64 until he quit in 1998, supposedly after making several attempts to sell it.

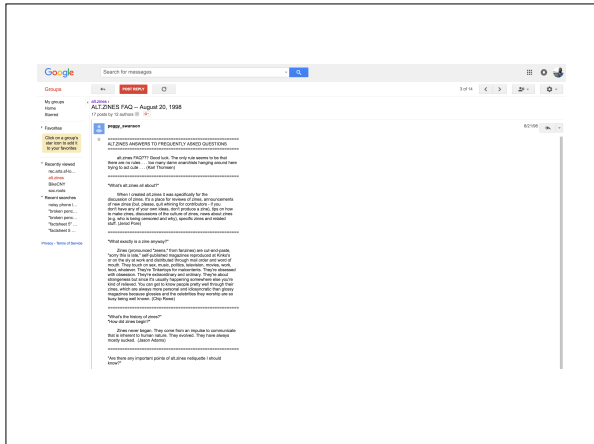
Each publisher of Factsheet Five ran it differently, but were also responding to the economic, cultural and technological forces in play. For example, Gunderloy ran it through a combination of direct mail order subscribers and stores or distributors, but most his issues were sent for trade. He left the magazine to Luce as long as Luce agreed to continue sending issues to the magazine's 1,100 subscribers and review everything sent to it. But as Luce later found out, of the 10,000 copies printed of #45, 6,000 went for trade — an unsustainable practice that the following publisher, Friedman, would refuse to continue when he took over in 1992. And as zine networks continued to expand in 1994, thanks in large part to the explosion of “alternative” culture through the success of bands like Nirvana, Factsheet Five swelled to a point where Friedman felt compelled to institute a new policy: the print version would not review zines that “sucked.” Fans of the magazine were deeply upset by this as it began to provide a new role for the intermediary that was less anarchic and more consumptive.



20

While all of this was happening, the web was growing. By the summer of 1995, Issue 56 of Factsheet Five circulated 15,000 copies of its 144-pages, which included 1,500 reviews of zines. At this same time, Google's founders were graduate students, Craigslist was still an email listing, eBay was just coming together as "AuctionWeb," and Internet Explorer was taking its first steps toward infamy. Also by this time, the creators of Mosaic left their university positions in Illinois to create a commercial version of it called Netscape. Importantly, more and more PCs were shipping with modems and, for all intents and purposes, the web as we know it today was in its infancy. Three short years later, Factsheet Five would be gone for good.

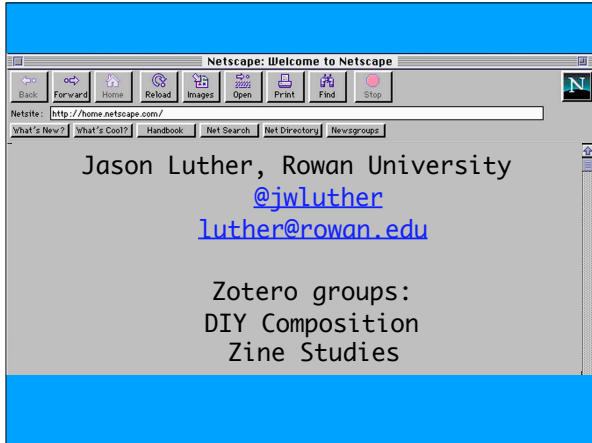




21

There is a lot that I'm leaving out of this story, partially because I'm out of time, but also partially because the materials for the story are hard to verify. While Factsheet Five presents a story of a print magazine about printed zines, below the surface is a story about how three editors used early digital technologies to hold the magazine together. For example, Gunderloy had left to pursue a career, strangely enough, in computer programming and ran a BBS for Factsheet Five since 1987. Jared Pore, a friend of Gunderloy's used a newsgroup called alt.zines as well as the WELL to maintain a shadow version of Factsheet Five through FTP called F5-E especially as Luce and Friedman began to take over. Much of these conversations are documented on a Google Groups archive of alt.zines.





23

But the demise of Factsheet Five is also a story about the struggle for the means of production and mediation as zines themselves began to use the web to connect. My point is that exploring the archives of counterpublics brings specific challenges, but in order to understand them in all their complexity, I think we must go beyond the artifacts themselves and explore mixed media, methods and methodologies — as well as teach them to our students — as we attempt to historicize delivery systems, especially as they complicated mediation in the late age of print. I'm not sure exactly how to do this and so I hope we might talk more about your experiences in the discussion. Thanks!