

Welcome to the Zine Scene: creating zinemaking resources for Scottish librarians, informed by research into the mental health benefits of zinemaking for young people.

Fi Johnston

Abstract

Libraries provide an essential support role for emotional health and wellbeing. This is particularly relevant as evidence shows that Scottish children and young people are increasingly at risk of poorer mental health. By researching the positive effect on young people's mental health that zinemaking can have, this project suggests that libraries can increase their value by introducing zinemaking activities to their patrons. The research resulted in accessible resources being created that will demystify zinemaking in general, and increase librarian confidence, thus easing the process of implementing such activities.

The literature review highlights three key areas of particular interest to this investigation: the mental health benefits of creativity and physical making as providing an embodied experience; how zinemaking can create both micro and macro communities and the importance of this for young people; and lastly the way that zines can be used as tools for activism and amplifying marginalised voices.

An analysis of easily available resources verified that there was a need for providing online, accessible resources for Scottish Librarians, whilst establishing elements of good practice. By triangulating this analysis with the academic research, prototype resources were created. This was the first cycle of an iterative, mixed methods Action Research approach. The next cycles involved multiple pilot workshops with librarians, representing a cross-section of both school and public Scottish libraries. Qualitative data gleaned from workshop observations, and post-workshop interviews with the librarians, informed iterative changes to these resources along with new resources being created.

After ten separate workshop days, and therefore ten potential iterative cycles, the final resources were created. These use a unique handmade-digital approach to ensure the DIY ethos of zinemaking is represented whilst allowing for digital distribution and editing. These were then made available through an online portal that is both informative and inspiring. This will be made publicly accessible to public and school librarians across Scotland, thus encouraging them to join the zinemaking community and allowing their young people to gain all the benefits and the increased emotional wellbeing that can result.

Keywords: zines, zinemaking, Scotland, health and wellbeing, mental health, children, communities.

1. Introduction

In 2022 the Scottish Government released the Children and Young People's Mental Health in Scotland report (Marini 2022), which states that:

“The COVID-19 pandemic has had a particularly negative impact on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, with the impact exacerbated for those groups already at-risk of poorer mental wellbeing.” (Marini 2022 p.1)

Those at-risk groups include: those in Scotland's most deprived areas; care experienced children and young people; LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) individuals; and adolescent girls.

Helping towards mitigating these risks is embedded in Scottish Public Library Strategy (SLIC 2021a), as Scottish libraries look to provide therapeutic empathic support, and facilitate social interaction and personal growth towards improved health and wellbeing (SLIC 2019). Further, they are "...social spaces, physical and virtual, where people learn, share, participate and create; where everyone is equal and everyone is welcome; and where improving our shared wellbeing is at the heart of the service" (SLIC 2021b)

1.1 Zines and Libraries

Per this definition, libraries and zines have many comparative qualities. Zines are self-published "noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves" (Duncombe 2008 p.10). They are utterly democratic and participatory - each zine is of equal worth as each maker has something unique to contribute to the conversations and the communities that are built around them (Lankes et al 2007). Everyone is equal. Everyone is welcome.

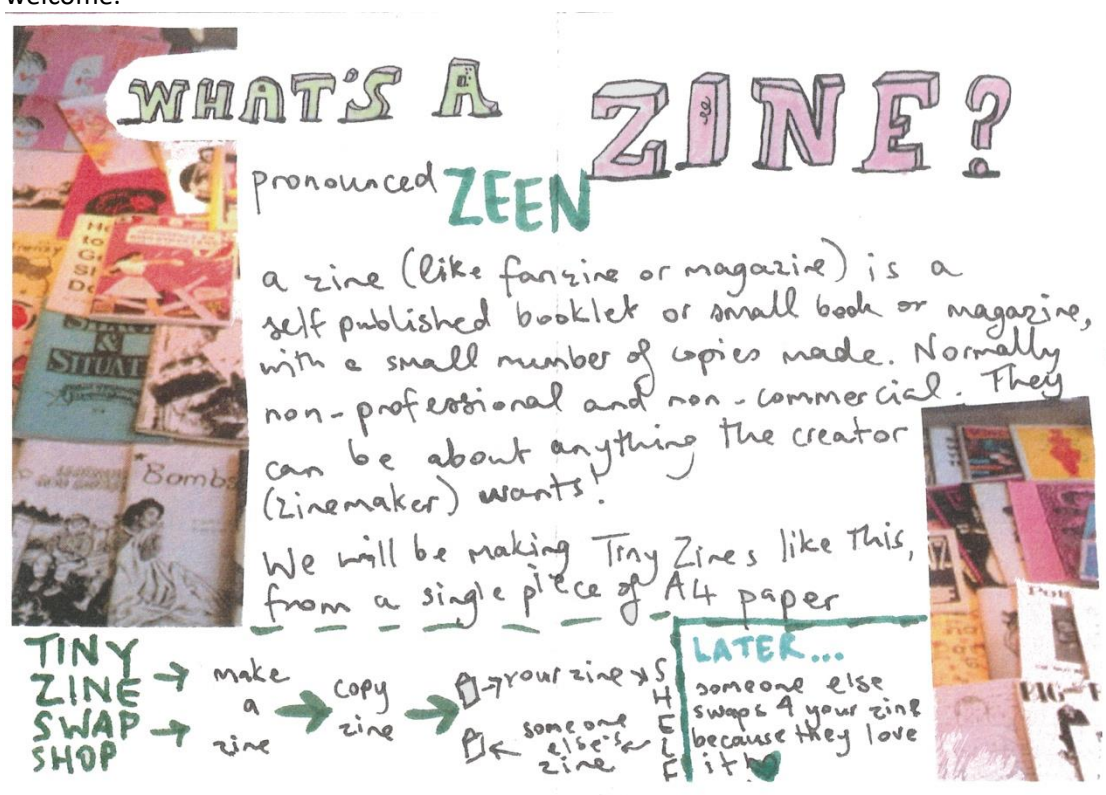


Figure 1. 'What's A Zine?' Edit from The Workshop Zine resource

Research shows that zinemaking can be of benefit to young people's mental health, through the opportunity for physical making activities, the creation of community, and the potential application as a tool for being heard and feeling seen.

However, the freedom and fluidity of zines, the fact that they "intrinsically defy definition" (Hays 2020), could be a paralysing force for librarians and educators looking to work with them. To this end, this research project lays out the arguments for, and processes of, creating accessible zinemaking resources to be used by Scottish librarians working with young people, to demystify and make easily approachable this valuable experience.

1.2 Rationale

The rationale for this project is threefold. Firstly, introducing zinemaking into the library could be of benefit to young people. As presented in 2.0 Literature Review and Resource Analysis, the evidence suggests that the communal creative act of making zines could support positive emotional and mental health and wellbeing by easing stress and anxiety, allowing expression of self and creating an embodied community. Secondly, zinemaking workshops could be of benefit to the libraries themselves. Not only could they encourage new, diverse and possibly underserved patrons into the library space, but also the subsequent zines would provide a valuable resource as a community archive (Baker et al 2022). Finally, in order to realise these benefits, it is essential that librarians have access to resources that make the process of introducing zines and zinemaking to their patrons as attainable as possible.

1.3 Project aim

To create accessible online resources for Scottish librarians working with young people, so that they feel confident in introducing zinemaking to their patrons. These resources will be developed utilising current best practice and knowledge to optimise value to both librarian and young person.

1.4 Project Objectives

1. To research current literature and establish how zinemaking could be of benefit to the mental health of young people aged 12 - 18.
2. To consider a sample base for pilot workshops that is representative of different library types and geographical areas, ensuring broader applicability, inclusivity and impact.
3. To use iterative design processes to deliver resources of value and use to librarians, that are online, accessible and inspirational.
4. To investigate and consider the needs of both librarians and young people as part of the resource development process.

2. Literature Review

The subversive, self-published nature of the zinemaking community means much of the discussion is outside of the traditional academic realm. However investigation revealed a limited but increasing body of literature examining zines through various academic lenses (Hays 2020). These studies primarily approach zines as 'artefact' as opposed to zines as 'process'. Therefore, by examining the latter, this project contributes research of value to this ongoing conversation, despite being fundamentally practical in its nature.

The literature review revealed three Key Findings, which became research areas of relevance to this project:

1. Making as beneficial to mental health
2. The importance of community in zinemaking
3. Zines as tools for positive change.

It should be noted that the researcher is neither psychologist or mental health practitioner, and that the research element of this project is very much intended as an overview of current thinking to inform best practice in the creation of educational resources, and as a possible prompt for future investigation.

2.1 Key finding: Making it Counts

As opposed to merely a "diversional activity" (McDonnell 2014 p.99) the literature provides evidence that making activities can be an active agent towards increased emotional wellbeing for young people. In particular, unstructured and informal making activities have been found to successfully engage

participants who, through anxiety or social isolation, may not otherwise embrace opportunities (McDonnell 2014; Brooks et al 2020). These allow them to become active agents in their own lives, as opposed to mere consumers (Sinor 2013). This autonomy in creation then allows for a positive shift in self-identity, away from a more negative victim-based mindset, providing an opportunity for young people to rediscover and rebuild a more positive identity.

In collecting data on people during the pandemic lockdowns of 2020, researchers established that those “who engaged more in everyday creative activities also reported higher levels of self-esteem, optimism, and positive affect” (Brosowsky et al 2022, p.1), with the inverse also being true - those with lower creative engagement had higher risk and incidence of depression and anxiety. This research expands on the findings by Spandler et al, that “the fostering of hope, creating a sense of meaning and purpose, developing new coping mechanisms” (2007, p.1) can all result from arts initiatives.

Specifically for young people, evidence suggests that engaging in making activities could result in decreased risk of depression and anxiety, and should be explored as a way of increasing emotional stability and social adjustment (Fancourt and Steptoe 2019). In particular, trying something new in a playful, informal manner can promote positive affect and increase self-esteem (Brosowsky et al 2020). Expanding on the benefits of creative making in general, there is a body of research suggesting that “embodied engagement with physical materials” can be a “particularly self-enhancing and empowering experience” (McDonnell 2014 p.99). Researchers such as Gulliksen (2017) and Desyllas et al (2014) use the lens of embodied learning, which posits that cognitive experiences are connected to bodily engagement, to analyse practical making activities. They conclude that making is important for not just cognitive development, but also behavioural and sociocultural development. The sensory-motor interactions and materiality vastly contribute to the success of the process (Gulliksen 2017). An important note for this project is that the materials themselves do not have to be special. There is a beneficial playfulness to thinking outside the box (Brosowsky et al 2022), and a creative subversion to “making wondrous creations out of everyone’s everydayness” (Damon et al 2022).

2.2 Key finding 2: Make a community

The physical nature of zinemaking, and making activities in general, are often described as having dual benefits. Having looked at how zinemaking can “reconnect us to our bodies” (Peipmeyer 2008 p.1) and be “central to the affirmation of selves as embodied subjects”, we now look at the research affirming zinemaking as a way of reconnecting with other human beings, allowing young people to engage with both the “physical and social worlds” (McDonnell 2014 p.99)

MICRO COMMUNITY

The positive impact of a social setting, particularly the informal community aspect of communal making activities, is of great benefit and support to participants (McDonnell 2014). Firstly, there is the community present in the participatory making environment of a workshop, which can differ from the self-selected social groups in the participants’ everyday context, offering new viewpoints and experiences (Creasap 2014) and the space to be “creative and imperfect” (Piepmeyer 2008 p.85). Shared activities allow for social integration on the participants’ own terms, without pressure (McDonnell 2014). A sense of social inclusion can be particularly important for young people who are at risk or feel marginalised (Brooks et al 2020). Social inclusion, by necessity, must include equitable access (Ramdarsham Bold 2017; Brooks et al 2020) and the resources created in this project should reflect this need.

MACRO COMMUNITY

Secondly, Duncombe states that “zines are as much about the communities that arise out of their circulation as they are artefacts of personal expression” (2017 p.49). This suggests that the resources created should allow for consideration of the zines, and potential community created, beyond merely a singular activity. Zines can be described as “textual communities” (Sinor 2003) linking people across

geographical and social boundaries, a sort of physical 'proto-cyberspace' connecting like-minded people (Creasap 2014). This can be particularly beneficial for young people who find themselves outside of 'dominant culture' (Sinor 2003). Social inclusion into mainstream society may not be a goal, may in fact be actively avoided, but feeling supported within a smaller world, a peer network that they participate in the creation thereof, can help with positive self-identity and affirmation (Spandler et al 2007). Further, exposure to new ideas through zines read, and the "perceived ability to influence others" (McDonnell 2014 p.99) through zines created can increase self-empowerment.

Through both micro and macro communities, zinemaking can help teenagers form peer support networks and create a safe space (Schilt 2003). A sense of belonging, and mutual endeavour are important at any age, but particularly to young people in vulnerable groups and marginalised voices (Sinor 2003).

The data pertaining to both physical and social worlds corroborate the importance of an embodied process - creating resources towards a physical offering as opposed to resources allowing for a singular, digital experience. Harnessing the analogue nature of this activity and providing the physical space to allow for community building is something that public and school libraries are uniquely capable of providing (Gissony and Freedman 2006).

2.3 Key finding 3: Zines as tools for positive change

There is a lack of research explicitly linking the making of zines to improvements in mental health (Burns 2020). However, in researching societal and emotional elements that may improve emotional wellbeing we can see clear links to many of the at-risk groups highlighted by the Scottish Government initiative (Marini 2022). Zines can be used to recognise and challenge power structures, empowering under-represented young people by deconstructing stereotypes and strengthening marginalised voices (Desyllas and Sinclair 2014; Baker and Cantillon 2022). Simultaneously being author and subject of a zine allows the young person to both "form and perform their identity" (Sinor 2003 p.245). Zines allow queer youth to take ownership over their representation (Boatwright 2019) and can create a transformative discursive space that allows for creativity and collaboration.

Zinemaking's links to the Riot Grrl Movement of the 90s, where they were used to "encourage girls everywhere to set forth their own revolutionary agendas from their own place in the world" (Duncombe 2017 p.75) means there is a comparative abundance of literature examining the benefits and positive effects of zinemaking on adolescent girls, and young women in the LGBTQI+ community, allowing them to resist societal expectations, develop their own cultural identities and tell their own stories (Guzetti and Gamboa 2004; Hays 2020; Moscovitz and Carpenter 2014; Schilt 2003). Zinemaking creates "rich spaces for resistance and connection between outlaw and outsider subjects" (Scheper 2023 p.23)

Expanding the investigation, there is research exploring zines as a pedagogical tool, especially in support of composition and literacy (Hays 2020; Williamson 1994). A tiny zine in itself can simply be an accessible tool with which to offload cognitive workload (Gulliksen 2007), it's perceived impermanence - just a folded piece of paper - removing the pressure of permanence. This pedagogical application should not be discounted as being of great benefit to librarians and thus this project. School librarians in particular encounter an increased focus on Reading For Pleasure, and Reading Schools accreditation (Scottish Book Trust 2020). Zinemaking could be a low-budget, easily implementable method of motivating and expanding a community of readers, particularly reluctant readers (Webber et al 2021).

2.4 Current Resource Analysis

Having ascertained the value of this project, it is also imperative to ensure there is an actual need for resources, by analysing what is currently available, and how it could be improved upon. This is not meant to be a systematic search, but to replicate an everyday librarian searching for this information, within the social context of librarianship in this country. Public and school library professionals are regularly working multifaceted jobs, lacking in both the time and funding to implement all the services they would like. As such, this analysis utilised: the most commonly used search engine, Google; a very basic, cursory search language; and analysed only the first four pages of results. This in no way represents an absolute systemic overview of what is available, and stands as an initial exploratory basic search as might be applied in these circumstances.

The initial Google search of: ***zine making scotland library "how to"*** was informative in its lack of useful results. Of the first 34 search results, 60% were completely unrelated to zinemaking, and none featured useful resources for learning how to make zines (Figure 2).

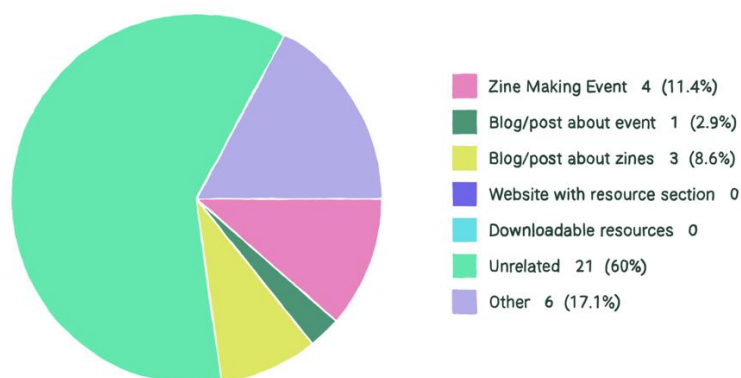


Figure 2. Page Content (Search 1)

It should further be noted that a single result related to zines within a Scottish public library - the National Library of Scotland which until recently housed the Edinburgh Zine Library. Two results related to Scottish school libraries, both briefly recounting a zinemaking workshop held by Glasgow Zine Library volunteers. These results suggest a clear lack of Scottish public and school libraries currently offering this valuable experience, particularly outside of the Central Belt of Scotland.

Following these results, a second search was carried out to ascertain resource availability without the limitation of geographical location. As American Universities account for a large amount of zinemaking events and information, and the purpose of this project is to create resources relevant to librarians working with younger users, age was specified in the following search terms: ***how to teach zinemaking teenagers***

This search yielded a much higher rate of potentially useful content, as 97.6% of the first 41 results mentioned zines. However, only 60% (24) of those pages had useful resources for a librarian looking to learn how to make zines and introduce zinemaking to their young patrons. The other 40% were primarily advertising zinemaking events, or were general blog posts about zines.

The pages were overwhelmingly American, and no results were based in Scotland. Of the three pages based in the UK, one related to a school library, and none related to public libraries (Table 1). This further cements the information gap for zinemaking resources aimed at Scottish librarians, both public and school.

Table 1. Geographic Location and Institution (Search 2)

LOCATION	INSTITUTION						Total
	Public Library	School/School library	University	Specialised Zine Library	Specific Zine or ZineMaker	Other	
Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
UK/Ireland	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
America	21	4	2	0	1	6	34
Other	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Total	22	5	3	1	1	8	40

Analysis of the resources offered in the pages (Figure 3) shows a lack of account for multimodal learning.

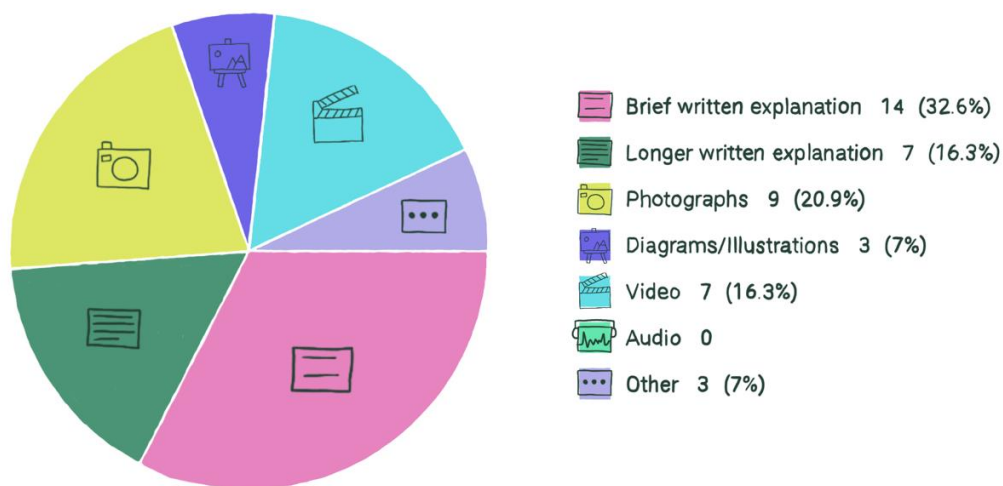


Figure 3. Media Formats Used in Resources (Search 2)

Of the 24 pages with useful resources, 37.5% (9) had no informative visuals at all accompanying the writing. The others primarily incorporated either photographs, video or illustrated diagrams - only 12.5% (3) accommodated for different learning styles and needs by offering more than one visual learning tool (Figure 4)

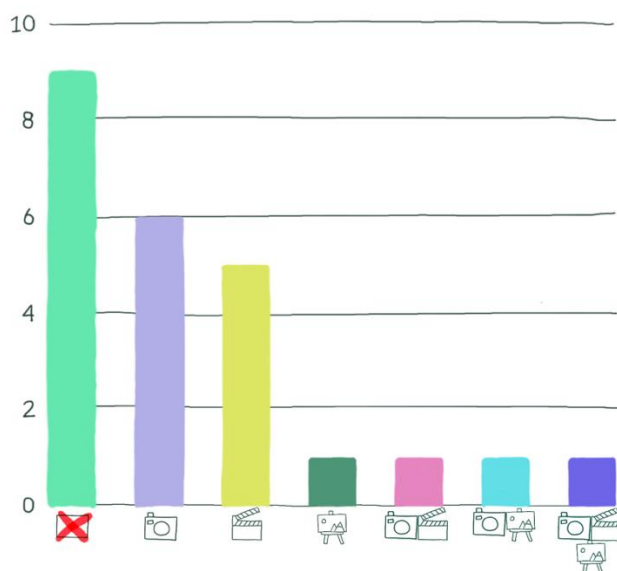


Figure 4. Visual Media Distribution in Resources (Search 2)

The Teen Librarian Toolbox blog post (Jensen 2020) has photographs of making in progress and links to an external zinemaking video - the images are lacking in clarity of process though, so the video does most of the tutorial work (see Figure 5).

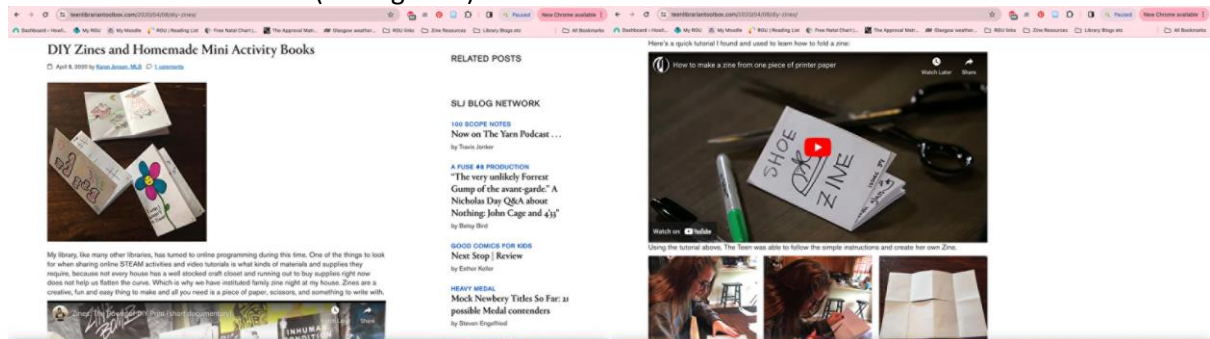


Figure 5. Screenshots of Teen Librarian Toolbox

Kansas Public Library (2020) also showcases photographs of the making process, and the zine pages, whilst using a simple illustration for the folding tutorial. Both of these pages are fairly basic, and simply showcasing the specific method of making a small zine, with just a cursory mention of further information and context, if any (see Figure 6).

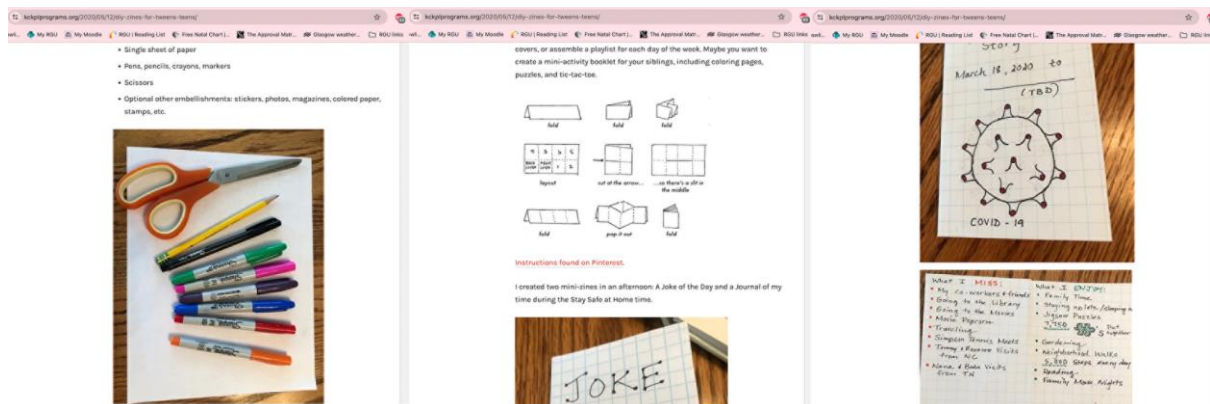


Figure 6. Screenshots of Kansas Public Library zinemaking post

In contrast, the Smithsonian Learning Lab's (2022) resources are more in-depth, and educator-focussed. They are also one of the few pages with elements like film and illustrations purpose-made for the resource, which provides a uniformity and perception of professionalism - although the DIY and informal nature of zinemaking should be communicated, equally it is important that librarians trust the resources and a harmony of aesthetic could increase the perceived validity of this project's resources (see Figure 7).

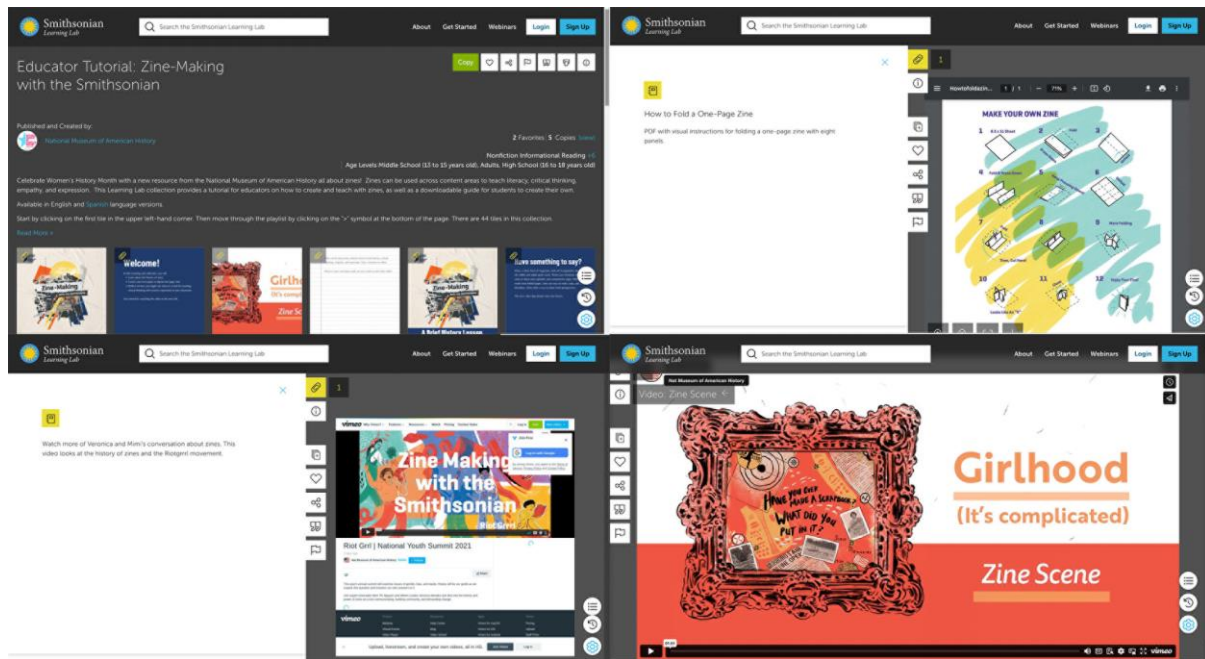


Figure 7. Screenshots of Smithsonian Learning Lab's Zinemaking Tutorial

This resource analysis indicates a clear need for targeted resources to increase the use of zinemaking in Scottish public and school libraries, whilst signposting some good practice and inspiration.

3. Design and methodology

Ease of access is central to the ethos of this project, therefore language remained straightforward and jargon-free throughout the process. All data collected followed full confidentiality and data-protection protocols where suitable, and with the explicit permission of participants involved. Permissions needed for young people involved in pilot workshops were obtained by the participating librarian/facilitator. The right to refuse, or rescind permission was an explicit option at all times.

The research design is non-experimental, and followed a mixed-method Action Research approach to Data Collection and Analysis, as can be seen in the Project Framework.

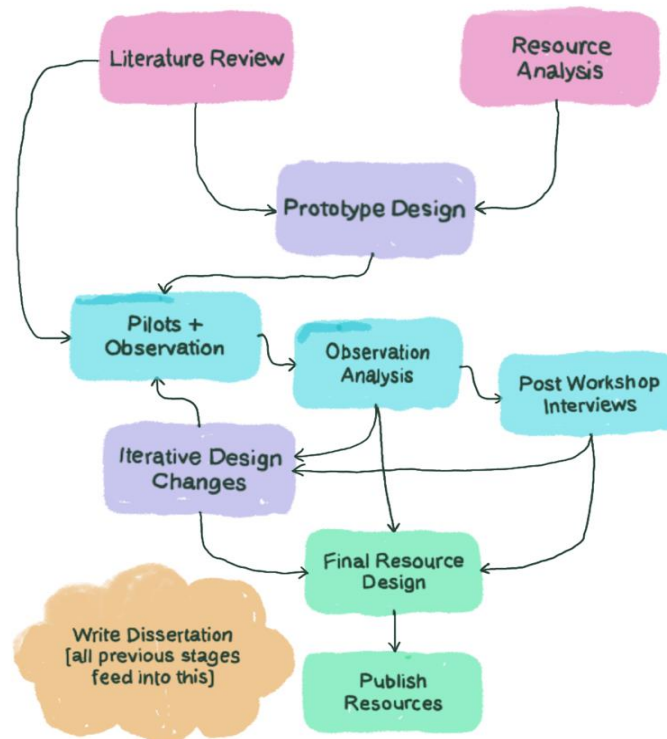


Figure 8. Project Framework

Such evidence-based evaluation within a recurring cycle of implementation and incremental alteration is particularly suited to education-based projects and small-scale practitioner studies with an education-based remit (Forster and Eperjesi 2021).

Initial resource prototypes were created from quantitative and qualitative data gleaned from the literature review and resource analysis. This was followed by quantitative observational analysis of the pilot workshops to ensure a valuable depth of information. Finally comparative quantitative data was gleaned from interviews. Throughout, the researcher strived to “integrate the findings of the qualitative and quantitative strands/arms” (Tashakkori and Cresswell 2007) resulting in a more robust outcome.

The researcher’s previous experience with facilitating zinemaking workshops provides the necessary context for successful AR-based evaluation and reflection. The final application of this project is practical in nature - the systematic cyclical approach of AR mirrors the Human Centred Design Process (Norman 2013), which is iterative and led by research and data. Incorporating these iterative processes into the research design (see Figure 9) resulted in final resources that were as useful and impactful as possible.

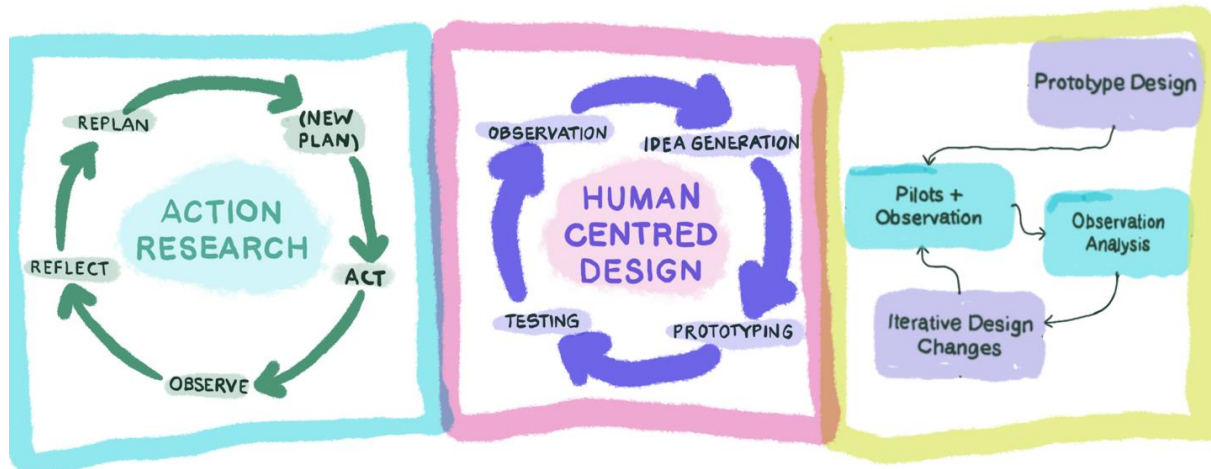


Figure 9. Comparative iterative cycles of AR, HCD and research project

3.1 Literature and resource analysis

The initial Action Research cycle through the literature review and resource analysis revealed the need for accessible resources, and enabled identification of the Key Findings to be incorporated into the resource planning in order to optimise the mental health benefits. The data obtained from the literature review and resource analysis was then triangulated and actively informed the prototype resource design.

The literature review used a narrative review framework in order to synthesise the available literature and ascertain the Key Findings which would be of use for the ongoing project. As the subject matter is not highly studied or reported on, it was necessary to search across a number of electronic databases such as Sage Publications and JStor, using keywords per Table 2, narrowed down to dates from 1990 to March 2024.

Regarding the wider terms in Key Word Group 2, it is necessary to extrapolate those broader findings into the specific context of this project.

Table 2. Search Keyword Groups

SEARCH KEYWORD GROUPS			
GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4
zine*	creat*	mental	teen*
	making	wellbeing	"young people"

Further, when a highly relevant article was discovered, tracking methods were then employed to search backwards and forwards for related research through an examination of both cited and citing papers.

The methodology of the resource analysis is explained in section 2.4 of this paper.

3.2 Pilot workshops

Once the prototype resources were designed (see Section 3.4), piloting the resources with the Target User is an essential component of the iterative design process (Don 2013). The AR cycle here is dual-

focussed, with the education of both researcher and participant being integral to the process. Although the young people making zines were observed as part of the Human Centred Design process, 'success' of the project is predicated on accessibility and ease-of-process for librarians, therefore it is they who should be considered the Target User, the participant.

The pilots were Zinemaking Workshops, led by the researcher and generally assisted by the participating librarian, who had access to the current iteration of resources prior to the workshop as training. Fourteen workshops were observed, over ten separate days, 6 different locations, and with four participating librarians.

3.2.1 OBSERVATIONAL GUIDELINES

Structured Observation was built into the pilot process. Simple Observational Guidelines were created utilising the Key Findings from literature research, along with the researcher's own knowledge and experience in leading successful workshops, particularly focussing on positive and negative interactions and emotional response.

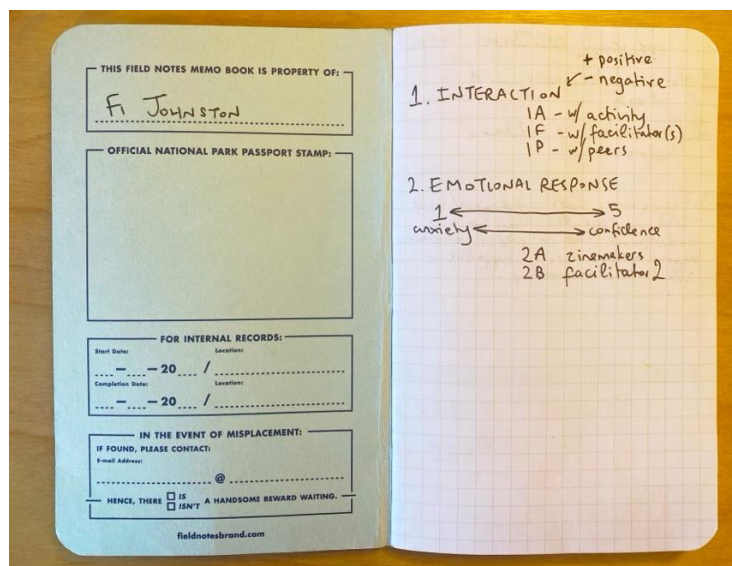


Figure 10. Observational Guidelines

Due to time and attention constraints inherent in the researcher/observer/facilitator role, general engagement with the workshops was not noted, only points of particular interest regarding specific observational priorities stated above. While this in-situ selection process could result in biased data, this is somewhat mitigated by triangulating observations with librarian interviews, and with the researcher's attempts to "eliminate preconceived ideas and prejudices, and constantly look out for possible signs of bias" (Bell 2017 p.155).

The data recorded was two-fold:

1. Observations on the value and success of the workshop
2. Observations of the participant librarian, specifically points of confident interaction and uncertainty.

The observation process was overt - facilitators were involved in organising, and participants were made verbally aware of the research project - therefore observations could be recorded in real time. In order to minimise impedance or alteration of natural behaviours, these notes were taken as subtly as possible in a small notebook that blended in with workshop materials and easily fit into the

researcher's pocket (Frankfort-Nachmias 2015). Where possible, the researcher participated in the activity to remove any perceived boundary of 'authority figure'.

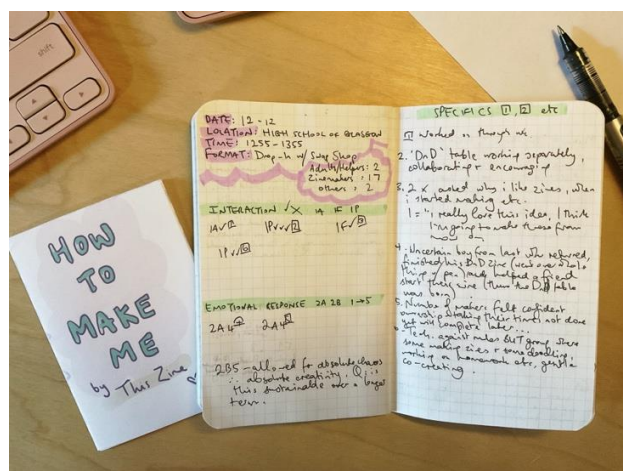


Figure 11. Observation Notebook and zine size comparison

The coded notes and brief observations taken during the workshops were primarily a mnemonic device to assist with reflections written directly post-workshop. These observations and reflections are transient data and should not be considered to be verbatim. However having prepared sections and guidelines in the notebook pages, and a pen easily to hand, meant that the path to capturing this transient data was as free of obstacles as possible, and therefore as meaningful and authentic as possible (Forster and Eperjesi 2021).

3.2.2 REFLECTIVE DATA ANALYSIS

A descriptive thematic analysis approach was employed, with the researcher coding Workshop Reflections for data relating to the Key Findings and allowing for observation of practical resource analysis. The data associated with each theme is colour-coded (see Figure 12), allowing for easy visual identification of recurring themes or situations that may not have otherwise been anticipated (Caelli et al 2003).

THEMATIC COLOUR CODING



Figure 12. Thematic Colour Coding Key and examples

3.2.3 SAMPLING

Action Research is inherently local in nature (Greenwood and Levin 2007), and the intention of this project is not to generalise the findings to other settings. It was however imperative that the sampling process for pilot workshops should account for variations within the field of Scottish librarianship. Specific consideration was given to representation of both school and public libraries, and geographical representation.

Due to the restrictions of this project, a purposive sampling approach was used, with librarian-participants being recruited through a mix of convenience, snowballing, and maximum variation sampling techniques. This stratified approach allowed for representation of aforementioned factors within the constrictions of a short time-scale and subsequent small sample base (see Table 3).

Table 3. Comparative Librarian Representation

LIBRARIAN REPRESENTATION				
LIBRARIAN	PUBLIC	PUBLIC SCHOOL	PRIVATE SCHOOL	LOCAL AUTHORITY
1		X		East Renfrewshire
2	X			Moray
3		X		Moray
4			X	Glasgow

3.3 Interview

In order to allow for triangulation of data - increasing the validity of the research findings and decreasing the potential for researcher bias or misinterpretation - data from the pilot observations was supplemented with qualitative data gathered through interview with the participant librarians. Where the observational data presents understandings of the participants needs and difficulties they may not even be aware of (Norman 2013), the interview provides data on their perceptions and attitudinal/behavioural shifts. Therefore, the interview took place 1-2 weeks after the workshop. Whilst risking some loss of memory detail, this time allowed for more contextual and considered analysis and feedback.

3.3.1 INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

An interview framework was pre-established, with questions focussing on the participants experience of the workshops, usefulness of resources, and feedback or legacy of the activity including their confidence and desire to run further zinemaking activities.

The interviews themselves were semi-structured and informal. This allowed for flexibility within the framework, including use of extension questions, and allowed the participant to feel comfortable in expressing their opinions, experiences and personal observations (Stringer 2014). Questions were open, but concise - being sympathetic to the value of participants time but allowing for longer answers as they arose. This resulted in a more conversational flow, whilst the touchpoint of the framework ensured all essential data was gathered.

The interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes, and were conducted over the phone. As no data of a sensitive nature was anticipated, with explicit permission the conversations were recorded, on the understanding that the recording would only be used to transcribe the interview for further analysis. Recording thus allowed for ease of note-taking and conversational flow.

3.3.2 INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS

The colour-coded thematic analysis that was established in the workshop reflections informed the coding of the interview transcription analysis. Further thematic identification was allowed for but unnecessary - the groupings remained the same. This enabled cross-reference of thematic content, and corroboration of any points of difference.

True to the iterative process, the insights from both interview data and observational analysis were then used to inform the ongoing evolution of the resources, and the creation of the final resource portal.

3.4 Resources

Following the Human Centred Design methodology of iterative design process, the design and content of the final resources is contextual and heavily influenced by the first and second person data obtained throughout. The decision to focus on the simplest concept of Tiny Zine allowed for a streamlined and accessible entry point to the larger world of zines. In order to further optimise accessibility, the resources created needed to be:

1. Online – a permanent website to allow for straightforward resource search, and convenient signposting.
2. Multimedia - accounting for different learning styles and time availability, the resources needed to incorporate written guidelines, instructions and suggestions, but also visual aids including video and illustration.
3. Do It Yourself/Handmade - in order to be as inspirational as possible and to introduce a DIY zinemaking aesthetic before a workshop even begins, the resources should fit within this concept.

The researcher's previous experience and skills in workshop development and resource creation provided a useful starting point, and access to a small archive of tiny zines as examples to curate from prior to the self-populating of zines by the project itself (Johnston 2016).

3.4.1 CREATION AND ITERATION

The seemingly incongruous needs of resources that represent a handmade aesthetic whilst offering digital accessibility resulted in a specific workflow, as seen in Figure 13.

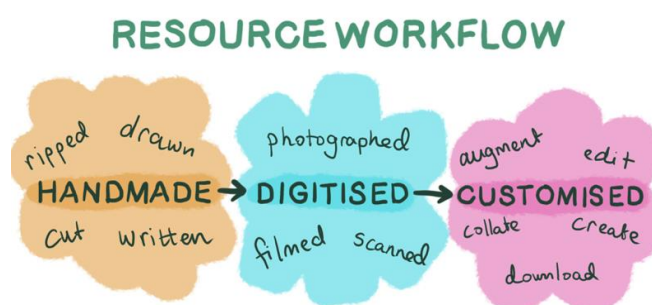


Figure 13. Resource Workflow

Resources started handmade, either as a resource unto themselves ie tiny zines created for the reference library, or as a bank of elements ie ripped and cut textures and letters for poster-making. These handmade assets were then either scanned, filmed or photographed thus making them available for digital collation, creation and customisation. Basic editing of assets was done in Adobe Photoshop - primarily removal of backgrounds, erasing unnecessary marks, and increasing contrast for visual accessibility. Creative and illustrative work was completed in ProCreate, using a tablet and digital pencil to replicate the embodied handmade process.

The step-by-step instructions for the HTMM zine started life as screenshots of the HTMTZ video. These screenshots were imported into ProCreate, and the essential elements were traced using the digital pen and touchscreen tablet (see Figure 14). This resulted in instructions that were: visually simplified and therefore usable in a number of contexts from tiny zine to blogpost; aesthetically tied to other resources created for a harmonious overall resource collection; a hybrid of handmade aesthetic and digital accessibility per the project needs.

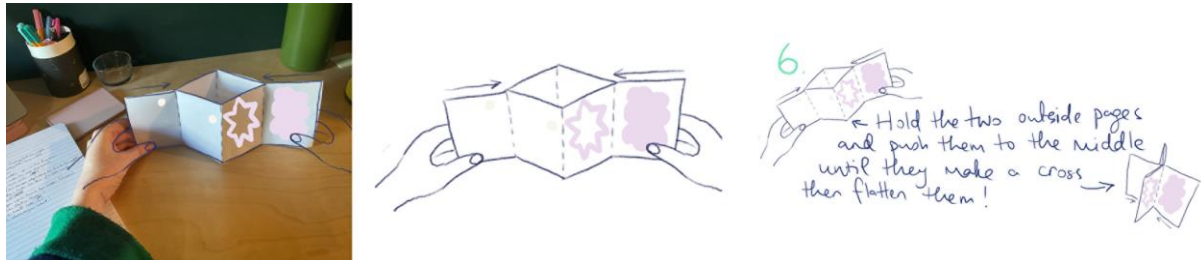


Figure 14. Illustration Development

This 'handmade digital' approach, coupled with more literally handmade embodied making allows for digital distribution whilst maintaining an embodied and DIY ethos. Further it allowed for easier editing and evolution throughout the iterative design process, where small elements may need to be augmented or altered whilst maintaining the overall resource. For example, the initial Inspiration Slips were handwritten and scanned, but further editing was done digitally, as more ideas arose throughout the workshops (see Figure 15).

A TOP 5 LIST OF YOUR FAVOURITE (thing)	PHOTOGRAPHY ZINE	HOLIDAY/ROAD TRIP/ADVENTURE (real or imagined)
A COLOURING ZINE	FAN ZINE (ABOUT SOMETHING OR SOMEONE YOU'RE A BIG OF)	SECRETS
NAIL ART	A PUZZLE ZINE	SOMETHING YOU ARE OBSESSED WITH!
FICTION ZINE	COMIC/GRAPHIC NOVEL	A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF...
COLLAGE ART ZINE	AN EVENT	A GIFT FOR A FRIEND
SOMETHING YOU ARE GREAT AT	DOODLES	A THING THAT YOU CARE ABOUT
YOUR PERFECT HOUR/DAY/WEEK	ACTIVISM	STEP-BY-STEP 'RELIFE' FOR HOW TO DO SOMETHING
A TV SHOW YOU LOVE	ADVICE/TIPS	THINGS PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT OR EXPECT OF YOU

Figure 15. Inspiration Slips Resource

Through interviews and informal conversation, Canva was established as an online graphic design tool that many library workers were confident with, so resources that were to be customisable were created within this, and the editable link shared. The full capabilities of Canva also allowed for social media to be easily created and shared, including a short stop-motion GIF advertising the workshop.

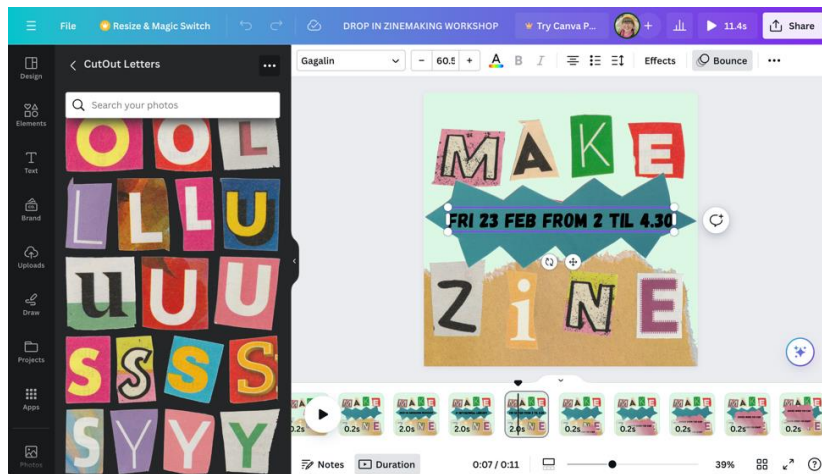


Figure 16. Canva Screenshot with customisable elements and assets

3.5 Portal Design

Having ascertained the most useful content for the downloadable resources, the usability of these hinged on librarians being able to easily access them. This required an online central hub which is both easily navigable and, through its existence, a tool to further cement the importance of the Key Findings, both explicit and implicitly.

Although the website itself is merely a container for the resources developed, and not in itself a development outcome, certain design considerations were made to fit with the overarching ethos of the project. Wordpress was used to create the portal, with a simple but playful aesthetic, allowing the resources to shine whilst maximising usability. A block theme was used with a visually customisable template. This allowed for ease of process in the portal creation, and guaranteed compatibility across different browsers and devices, increasing user accessibility (see Figure 17)

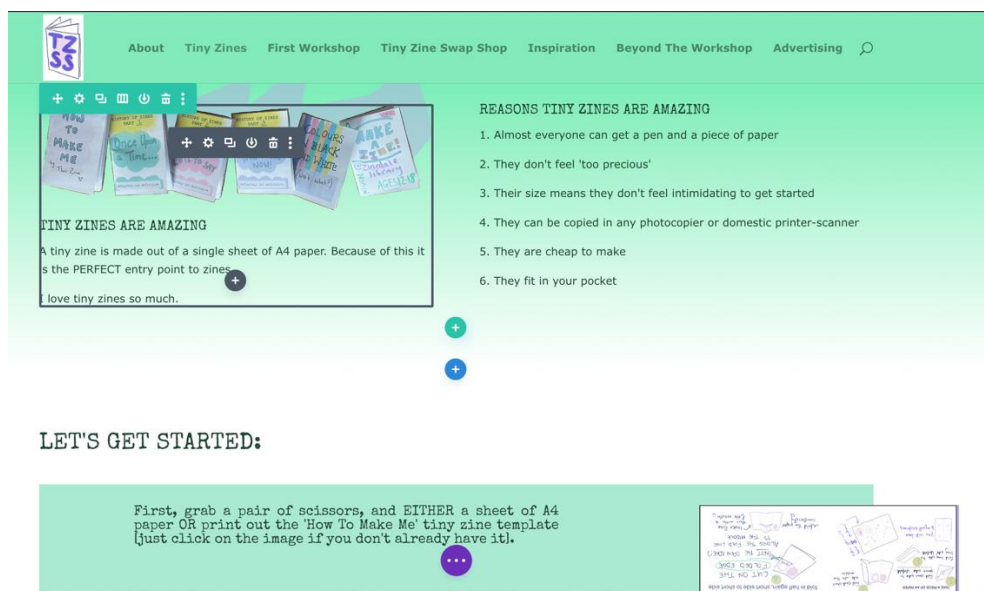


Figure 17. Website Editing Process

3.6 Methodological reflections

The interpretivist paradigm allows for nuanced qualitative research, fitting with the subjective nature of success within a project such as this. However, this, coupled with the fact that purposive sampling methods limit both generalisability and reliability (Andrade 2021), means that it was essential that the

researcher remained wary of societal and personal bias, and how this could impact the interpretation of evidence gathered.

Although evidence is filtered through the potentially biased lens of personal experience and reflection, this is mitigated through a triangulation of data points across multiple references of researcher and participating facilitator-librarians. Further, all findings were corroborated by prior research and literature, as evidenced by earlier in this article.

4.0 Reflections

The subjective success of the resources relied on the balance of a) optimal benefit for young people making zines and b) ease of implementation for a librarian. This was a constant consideration throughout, as it doesn't matter how comprehensive the offering is for the young people if the librarian doesn't feel able to offer it. Universal participant positivity (see Table 4) regarding both process and resources suggests at least some measure of success.

Table 4. Librarian Interview Answers

INTERVIEW ANSWERS			
LIBRARIAN	Confident to run Zine Activities?	Interest in Future Zinemaking?	Resources Useful?
1	Y	Y	Y
2	Y	Y	Y
3	Y	Y	Y
4	Y	Y	Y
For Full Interview Transcripts see Appendix			

This section will look at the overarching choices throughout the iterative process of resource design, and then specifically reflect on how the resources may have incorporated and encouraged implementation of the Key Findings from the Literature Review. Throughout this section specific Librarians and Zinemakers are referenced from librarian interviews, and zinemaker from the Observation Reflections.

4.1 Resource Evolution

From the first workshop it became clear that there was not enough time to introduce much beyond the actual practical aspect of folding and making the zines. Therefore, all information that was deemed useful or important beyond this would need to be shown rather than told. The problem being defined, this factor greatly impacted the development of all the resources (see Figure 18), working with librarian needs towards sustaining the zinemaking beyond a single workshop.

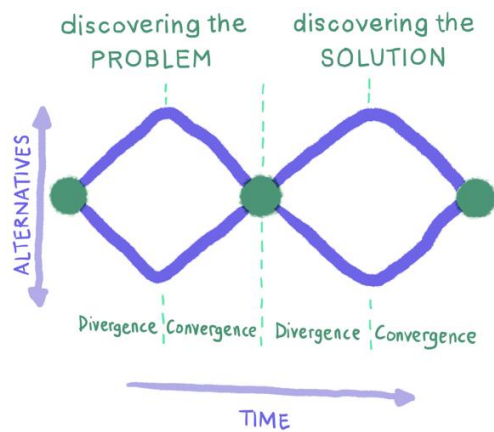


Figure 18. Double Diamond Model of Design (Norman 2013 p.220)

This led to the creation of the Tiny Zine Reference Library, allowing for more information of value to be available, and increasing autonomy and ownership in the discovery process (see Figure 19).



Figure 19. Tiny Zine Reference Library

The importance of Creation versus Consumption to facilitate autonomy was built into the design aesthetic. When questioned about provided resources, librarians commented that they were “really bright and they looked a lot like... what you were going for. Very reflective of what the workshop was going to be about” (L2) and the “poster generated a lot of interest” (L4). Providing resources that look handmade, informal, evoke the DIY spirit and use common zinemaking techniques introduces people to these ideas and concepts prior to attending a workshop, further clarifying what zinemaking can be without explicitly telling through words. This aesthetic needed to translate into a digital context for customisable resources, so physical making techniques of paper cutting and ripping, collage were scanned in as assets for digital marketing (see Figure 20).



CutOut Elements ☆

Type ▾

Newest edited ▾

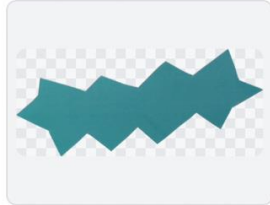
**ZigZag Bubble.png**

Image • Uploaded 2 months ago

**Torn Strip Lilac.png**

Image • Uploaded 2 months ago

**Torn Square Dark.png**

Image • Uploaded 2 months ago

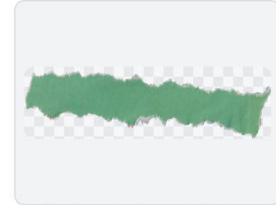
**Torn Strip Green.png**

Image • Uploaded 2 months ago

**Cloud Bubble.png**

Image • Uploaded 2 months ago

**Torn Rectangle Orange.png**

Image • Uploaded 2 months ago

**Torn Rectangle Blue.png**

Image • Uploaded 2 months ago

?

Figure 20. Example Media Assets Library in Canva

To provide an overarching uniformity, as one resource was edited or improved, that could impact on further resources. The illustrations in the HTMM zine were improved for clarity, with input from ZM8 in WS5.1, and colours were changed for greater contrast and visual accessibility (see Figure 21).

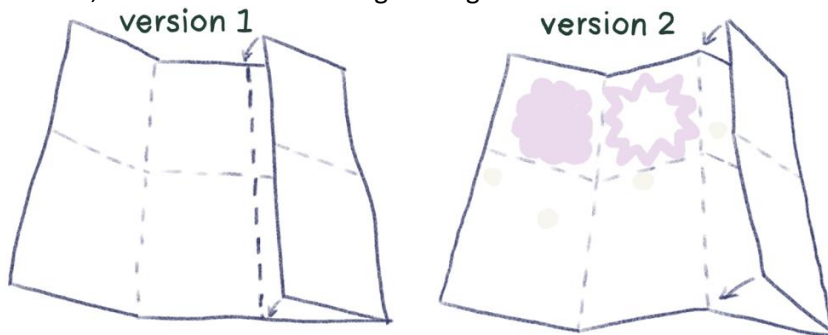


Figure 21. Illustration before and after

Therefore, the HTMTZ video was reshot with the updated zine template. As a colour palette emerged throughout the iterative design process, so earlier resources were enhanced and unified through the application thereof.

Although some libraries have a pre-established group of regular young people - “basically all the people here will come next week cos we’re the ones who hang out here all the time anyway!” (ZM14) - one of the biggest challenges for some librarians is getting young people into the library to engage with the workshop - “I possibly should have advertised it more” (L4). As a new idea for a lot of people, providing resources that introduced the idea of zinemaking or showed what zines are would help to get bodies through the door. The poster was very useful to librarians - “I was quite relieved because I had ‘make a poster for zine workshop’ on my to-do list and then saw that you’d provided one!” (L4) - and served as a customisable introduction to basic concepts. The success of this led to the creation of The Workshop Zine, to be downloaded and placed in visible positions within the library, eg on the YA bookshelves (see Figure 22)



Figure 22. The Workshop Zine as marketing on YA shelves

When further social media was introduced through use of a GIF after WS6.3, there were young people who turned up to WS6.4 having seen it on social media. Some libraries had greater access to digital noticeboards than physical noticeboards, and a lot of event advertising is through social media, so marketing resources were made to accommodate for these different needs and sizes.



Figure 23. Poster Examples

4.2 Making

4.2.1 ALLOWING TIME FOR CREATIVITY

A large proportion of makers did not finish their zine within the parameters of a single workshop - allowing for two consecutive workshops in 5.1 and 5.2 demonstrated to those makers that this was an ongoing process and didn't need to be 'complete' within a specific time - "the more serious zine making was done afterwards, after the session. You've given people the idea and the ones that get printed out on the day are kind of... rushed. Then people keep going" (L4). After the initial workshops, Librarian1 created a portable zinemaking toolbox that was readily available in the library, with the basic materials and tools needed to make a tiny zine (see Figure 24). This allowed for zinemakers to create without time constraints or a need for permission - some makers would work on their zines outside of the library setting, then drop in to use the toolkits to "finesse" (L1) the final zine. This works for young people who feel that they "need the time to fold AND think of an idea AND then make it"

(ZM11) and resulted in the creation of the Zinemaking Toolkit resource. This works to encourage librarians to increase the time available to the zinemakers to work at their own pace, and thus decrease stress and anxiety (McDonnell 2014)



Figure 24. Zine Toolkit Setup

4.2.2 FACILITATE FOLDING

It became clear that everyone, young people and facilitators, found the final folding step to be the hardest part, so this needed to be communicated in multiple ways, with as much Showing as possible, to increase confidence at this stage. Having the instructions available on the webpage, on printable documents and a corresponding video would allow for different learning styles, greater independence, and optimise accessibility.

Ensuring facilitator confidence was imperative - where librarians were more confident with the folding process, they were more able to help the makers and focus on the creative processes, which can result in decreased anxiety on all sides. Therefore the resources needed to provide opportunities to practice these techniques sufficiently, without increasing the load for time-poor librarians. By creating resources that were in the form of downloadable Tiny Zines, the workshop prep inherently involved folding practice, whilst also maximising understanding of the general concept of zines, and the breadth of possibility.

The How-To Make Me zine (see Figure 25) served double purpose. Firstly, it increased librarian confidence as they prep the zines prior to workshop - L3 had never made "or even held" a zine before, "but I printed off your paper how to, and... folded a few of them that that way. Because it's the sort of thing that I learn by doing". Secondly, access to this zine during the workshop led some makers to complete the folding process on their own timescale as opposed to waiting for the group instructions, stating that they "just find the pictures easier" (ZM7).



Figure 25. How To Make Me zine template

Accessibility is further enhanced by having premade blanks available. Varying dexterity and motor skills can increase the barriers to folding zines, and some young people were unable to participate at the time or arrived late but were still interested in getting involved. Providing equitable access in this way maximises potential benefits (Brooks et al 2020)

4.2.3 IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

Some young people instantly have an idea. Some are aware of the zinemaking in advance and so have come with an idea prepared. ZM1 in WS2.2 had seen the workshop poster, and turned up on the day having cemented her concept of a zine of her friend's favourite flowers. ZM13 was uncertain and overthinking in WS6.3, then returned to WS6.4 two weeks later with an idea for their zine, and increased confidence in their use of materials.

The statement "I'm not creative" was prevalent throughout the pilot process, from both young people and facilitators, suggesting a very narrow view of what it is to 'be creative', and a resultant ingrained negative identity. By overcoming this self-perceived negative identity and creating an alternative sense of self, the zinemaker can re-evaluate their worth and increase self-esteem (Spandler et al 2007). This low self-esteem or anxiety were the most common barrier to creating zine content. There is an increased vulnerability for a young person being asked to publicly present themselves in some way. It is possible to mitigate the inspiration process through strategic workshop structure. Discussing possible content, illustrated by diverse zine examples, prior to the folding activities works twofold. Firstly, it allows time for ideas and inspiration to percolate. Secondly it allows for the maker to get started in the embodied process without any pressure. This first part of the zinemaking requires no creative thought processes, thus allowing for the benefits of embodied making (Spandler et al 2007). Zinemaking can be "therapeutic 'in a subjective sense of self-perceived benefit'" (McDonnell 2014, p.98) - one self-proclaimed "not creative" young person declared at the end of the workshop "I haven't had this much fun or felt this relaxed in forever" (ZM11).

Having zines further displayed, either as Tiny Zine Library or Swap Shop, can act as "ideas to get people started... if they'd maybe not heard of them before... they could have an idea of what can be done with them" (L3). By demonstrating the full spectrum of what a zine can look like, and thus creativity in this context, "the materiality of the zine is in itself an invitation to making" (Damon et al 2022). Thus the strategic curation of the Tiny Zine Starter Library was imperative, showcasing a variety of skill levels, genre and aesthetic.

4.2.4 EMBODIED MATERIALS

Some young people gravitated towards materials, using them as tools for play and experimentation "just to try it out" (ZM6). Occasionally this would present as an attempt at disruption - a maker using the same stamp over and over again on the page until the image was barely discernible, another maker using an entire roll of washi tape to cover almost their entire zine. The important thing here is that

these outcomes are equally as valid as any other zine, and by providing a range of materials - with no judgement on how they are used - the librarian can facilitate such experimentation.



Figure 26. Tiny Zine example using stamps and tape

Further, materials like washi tape, stamps and stickers are quicker than cut-and-paste collage, and require less dexterity and drawing/writing skills than other zine-filling methods, therefore are potentially more accessible for some makers. Providing a concise but creative Need/Want List (see Figure 27) for librarians means that “there is stuff on there that I wouldn’t necessarily have thought of” (L2) and the path towards this embodied play is made easier by encouraging the magic in the monotony, the everyday (Damon et al 2022).



Figure 27. Need/Want List resource

Providing materials that act as a physical embodied interaction - peeling stickers, ripping tape, stamping ink then paper - to get the maker started can prevent an over-thinking spiral and give permission to just play (Brosowsky et al 2022). Through that play, a maker’s confidence can increase, as was the case for ZM1 whose technique evolved throughout - “My first pages aren’t as good because my style has gotten better. I’ve found my style for this”.

4.3 Social aspect

4.3.1 MICRO COMMUNITY WITH PEERS

Having young people in groups results in a sharing of tools, materials and increased engagement regarding zine content, with the intensity of social interaction in the control of each maker (McDonnell 2014). These 'incidental collaborations' corroborate the value of purposeful material sharing, as opposed to singular toolkits and the resultant individualised making process. Group structure can also lead to young people assisting with, or inspiring, their more uncertain peers - if a 'reluctant zinemaker' is grouped with a more confident peer then this can help them become more engaged in the process.

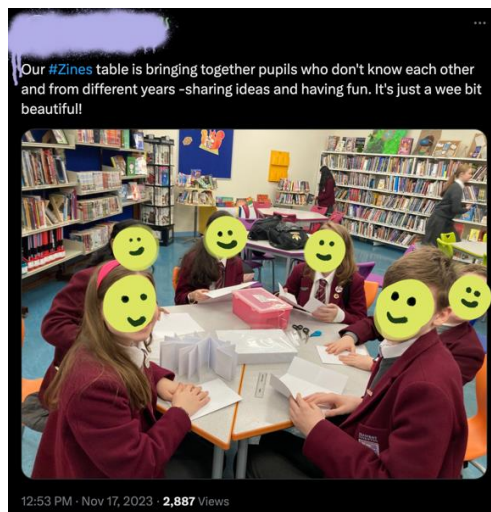


Figure 28. Tweet from Librarian1 (anonymised and recreated with permission)

In-group discussion can lead to discoveries and mutual connections, bringing a group closer together (Desyllas et al 2014), increasing the potential for validations and encouragement that come from this community. This can be as simple as micro-communities created through shared passion for musicals (WS2.1) or a 'lively' discussion about top footballers (WS1.1). It can also lead to deeper discoveries within an established social group. ZM5 noted that their poetry and songwriting was an activity they normally kept to themselves, but they were inspired by the history and social context of zines to share their words on their own terms - "wow, I'm learning so much about my friends - you write poetry?!" (ZM3). In workshops that allowed for different age groups working together there was evidence of a mentor/mentee relationship forming, as in WS2.2 when an older maker was able to provide support and advice for a younger maker who attended the same school - evidence of the micro-community of the making space expanding out into the maker's lives.

4.3.2 THE MACRO ZINEMAKING COMMUNITY

The concept of a larger zinemaking community, filled with different voices and passions and skills is integral to young people getting the mental health benefits as espoused by Spandler et al (2003). As the paucity of time within a workshop setting was clear from the first pilots, this zine history and context needed to be incorporated and communicated in a more integral fashion. By carefully curating a Starter Library of Tiny Zines representing different genres and focus, the resources allow librarians to download and pre-populate a Tiny Zine Library or Tiny Zine Swap Shop, introducing the wider zine community within the limited time of a led workshop (see Figure 29). The Starter Library includes zines that are more basic or 'rough' as well as more complex, aspirational zines, to ensure that the makers know that all levels and styles have worth, and are embraced in the larger zine community.



Figure 29. Tiny Zine Starter Library resource

The Starter Library also allows for interactions outside of the zinemaking itself - during workshops with zines on display, 26.2% of all interactions were people who were not making zines at that time being introduced to these communities and ideas, and appreciating the zines that other people have made. This can act to open up new points of interest or possibility for these young people, beyond the boundaries of a single workshop - important since research shows that teenagers' levels of reading enjoyment and engagement are declining at record levels (Webber et al 2023; Clark et al 2023b)

The Swap Shop resulted in excitement from young zinemakers on two levels. Firstly to have their zines visibly available for others to read and swap for, a tangible achievement on the shelf to be witnessed by themselves as much as other people (Spandler et al 2007). Secondly, the chance to pick someone else's zine for themselves and be an active participant in the community, creators of their own communities (Nijsten 2017). Although outside the scope of this project, many librarians were interested in the possibility of running a multi-location Tiny Zine Swap Shop as a way of creating a larger zinemaking community within a local council area. Public libraries already have an inter-library loan service, with regular deliveries between locations, so the infrastructure is already in place for this, "it wouldn't be a bother" (L2). Therefore, a resource was created to show the step-by-step process to set this up.



Figure 30. Tiny Zine Swap Shop Setup Examples

4.4 Activism

In being introduced to the history and community of zines, even briefly, many young people were inspired - “the size of them is great - hardly anyone has the concentration to read a whole big book and really understand the message cos they don’t get to the end. With this they only need a few seconds, and they get the whole point, the whole message” (ZM10). This sentiment echoes a zinemaker quoted in Desyllas et al’s research (2014) who suggests that the different format to more traditional forms of media might make a person “more willing to read and view it”.

As established, within the parameters of these time-poor workshops, there is more capacity to SHOW the potential for activism and Own Voices through exemplar zines, rather than TELL. Therefore, allowing for Issues Led and Activist zines to be present in the History of Zines resource (see Figure 31) effectively communicates zinemaking’s potential for empowerment and representation. This resource would assist librarians like L1 and L4, who have plans to introduce this facet in a deeper way with equalities-based groups of young people within their school, allowing for greater depth of information and discussions around the use of zines as medium for political and activist messages. The librarians will “see if any of them wanted to create zines on issues that they feel really strongly about”, allowing these young people the sense of empowerment and autonomy that can be achieved through this (Sinor 2003; Nijsten 2017)



Figure 31. History of Zines zine trilogy

4.5 Pedagogical

A consideration that arose throughout the iterative process was whether there were still benefits if the zinemaking was of a more pedagogical focus, with specific curriculum-based content being dictated as opposed to the creative freedom in a more informal workshop. It was found that within those workshops there was still opportunity for embodied making using materials, and for some micro-community benefits to be felt where groups worked together and collaborated (WS2.1, 3.2 and 4.2). Without question, each school library environment had at least one member of staff who expressed an interest in zinemaking within their classroom curriculum, therefore providing some ideas and prompts for this would inevitably help librarians working with teachers, and therefore be a useful resource (See Figure 32).

[About](#)
[Tiny Zines](#)
[First Workshop](#)
[Tiny Zine Swap Shop](#)
[Inspiration](#)
[Beyond The Workshop](#)
[Advertising](#)

ZINES IN THE CLASSROOM

Tiny Zines are very popular with some teachers. If you work with teachers then zines are your friend – they provide a fun, accessible way of presenting information, whether that's diagrams of a biological process, a week in the life of your novel's protagonist, or a very elaborate maths equation explained by stickmen.

CURRICULUM ZINE IDEAS

- A snapshot of a day/week in student's reading
- First chapter of a shakespeare
- 5 Quotes from a Famous Figure
- Build up a series of zines ie a zine per chapter, or character, or concept
- Creating templates that the whole class would work on and fill in.
- Double page spreads – same phrase, two different languages
- Write a zine from the POV of a character
- Five facts about this subject/book/chapter
- Accessible note taking
- Transition Buddies – P7 into S1, younger student fills one side and buddy does the other
- Getting To Know You exercise, each page new information OR top 5 facts about yourself
- Quick CLPL session with teachers – how to fold a zine and ideas for use

Figure 32. 'Beyond The Workshop' website page

5. Conclusion

In summary this Research Project addresses a clear research and resource gap investigating the potential for zinemaking as a library offer with a positive impact on young people's mental health. Further, this research could contribute to the ongoing conversation of the essential role that libraries play in their communities.

Although a very small sample, subjective findings from the pilot workshops corroborate evidence as collated in the literature review, and have resulted in resources that are already being used and distributed amongst the Scottish librarian community. Librarian1 alone has introduced zinemaking to over 1200 pupils, and teachers in schools have "really went and ran with it" (L3), having seen "real potential for creating their own zine libraries based around set text in the classroom" (L1). This research has been shared at a CILIPS event (CILIPScotland 2023), and through an upcoming tutorial on the Scottish Book Trust blog.

These resources can also be of benefit to libraries themselves. Workshops in public libraries (WS2 and WS6) had young people attending who were not previously library users - "anything to get young adults in is great in our... estimation" (L2). In light of libraries having to constantly prove their worth to a community, this opportunity to bring new users into the space and expand their understanding of what the library is and what it can offer them could prove invaluable.

The hope is that the launch of the Resource Portal will result in an increased use of zinemaking across Scotland, thus exponentially increasing the larger zinemaking community and exposure to zines in general. This in turn further promotes wellbeing for young people through expanded community and perceived social acceptance and support.

Within the context of this project, there is no pretence or attempt at demonstrating the effects of the project on mental health. The primary goal was following the Key Findings of established reports and research, and iteratively incorporating them into resources as effectively as possible. However, anecdotally there were young people in every single workshop setting who started with some anxiety or uncertainty about their capabilities, and ended proudly showing off their zine to both peers and facilitators. To quote one "not creative" maker who ended up with an extremely detailed Dungeons and Dragons zine, and plans for more:

"that was actually very enjoyable once I got over the fear!" (ZM9)

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