Zines are often highly personal in nature and cover topics like music, sexuality, and popular culture. They are often illustrated with drawings by the author or cut-and-pasted graphics appropriated from the mainstream media.

The Colorado College zine collection began when Lisa Lister, Tutt reference services librarian, returned from the Association of College and Research Libraries meeting in the summer of 2005 excited about a panel discussion she had attended entitled “Collecting and Preserving the Do-It-Yourself Revolution: Zines in Libraries.” The panelists discussed how important it is for libraries to collect ephemeral publications such as zines. “They said that in the new networked world there will be a homogenization of information,” Lister says, “and that unique local materials are now even more important to collect.”

Examples of Zines from the CC Collection

“Bony Landmarks, A Zine of True Adventure and Cultural Artifacts,” by the Look For Signage Art Collective, Tucson, Ariz. Issue number one contains tales of true adventure such as a wild birthday party in Zagreb, buying a computer with a pushy boyfriend, and working at a café.

“shortandqueer,” by kelly shortandqueer, Denver, Colo. The library has issues one through five of this zine. A personal zine, “shortandqueer” covers transgender issues, with each issue taking on a different theme such as “friends are important” or “the best thing that happened today was...”

“World Salad: More Horses,” by “chaired” of Texas. Sixty-six one-panel cartoons with odd juxtapositions and nonsequiturs such as “My name is Tony and I’ll be your waiter.... Would you like to see me eat a violin?” More at http://www.palfloat.com/worldsalad/

When Lister returned to the library, she talked to Jessy Randall, college archivist and curator of special collections, about her idea for a CC zine collection focusing on Western states. “Initially I was reluctant, because I didn’t know we had many zines locally,” Randall says. “But the more we looked into it, the more local zines we found.”

The collection now encompasses zines published in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Wyoming. (Salt Lake City Public Library already collects Utah zines.) Acquiring zines for the
collection can be a bit more of an adventure than the usual library book-ordering process.

The collection got a good head start when Adam Leech, owner of the Leechpit, a Colorado Springs novelty boutique and hipster hangout, donated a couple of dozen local music zines dating from the late 1990s. Mostly, though, zines can be bought directly from the author/publisher (or “zinester”). The library has ordered some zines through the mail, and has found zines produced by CC students on campus. One CC zine, “Bloom Where You’re Planted: The Craftslut Manifesto,” by Katie Ries, was even on sale in the library vending machine with the chips and candy bars.

Randall also purchased zines for the collection at the Denver Zine Fest in March 2006. The event brought together zinesters and zine enthusiasts interested in buying and selling zines and attending workshops on letterpress printing and documentary video production. Randall bought every zine she could get her hands on. She says that when the zinesters found out she was buying their publications for the library collection, “they loved the idea that their zines would be preserved. They hadn’t thought of libraries as a market for zines before, but they sure were happy to sell them to me!”

When possible, the library is buying two copies of each zine issue. One copy is housed in special collections. These copies may be read only in the special collections reading room, ensuring the longevity of the collection. Additional copies of the zines are shelved in the library’s new magazine lounge, where browsing students can read issues of zines like “Behind Wire Fences” or “Needles for Teeth.”

Cataloging and preserving the zines present the library with some challenges. It can be hard to tell when and where a zine was published, or even who the author is. Zines often aren’t standard sizes, and some are made of odd materials, making them a bit more difficult to house.

But seeing the collection in use makes it worth any extra trouble. “This morning a student came in looking for a copy of ‘The Loafer,’ a CC student zine,” Randall says. “I have had a student tell me how much he enjoys looking at the zines in the magazine lounge.” She is also hoping to interest the feminist and gender studies program in the collection, which contains many zines with transgender themes. For her part, Lisa Lister says, “I’m looking forward to students’ using the material to write a paper for a popular culture class or the like.”