

**ZINE collection
CURATOR
Josh Jubinsky
DELIVERS NOTES
FROM THE
UNDERGROUND
AND SPREADS
THE D.I.Y. gospel
IN THE PROCESS**

**By JOHN E. CITRONE
photos by WALTER COKE**

It's hot. Saturday afternoons in June always are. Even in the shade of the Fuller Warren Bridge, with a slight breeze coming in from the south off the St. Johns River, visitors to the Riverside Arts Market are glistening with sweat, sipping from frozen lemonades and spooning colored slush from Italian ice containers.

A few hours ago, it was a bit cooler, but it didn't make the trip from the Main Branch of the Jacksonville Public Library any easier for Josh Jubinsky. He came by bicycle at around 9 a.m., pulling behind him a small but weighty trailer called the Zine Mobile. The trailer holds a plastic bin packed with an assortment of, well, zines — do-it-yourself publications ranging from hand-drawn, photocopied and stapled eight-page travel diaries to bound punk-rock magazines. They are, by and large, written and produced by amateurs on a shoestring budget

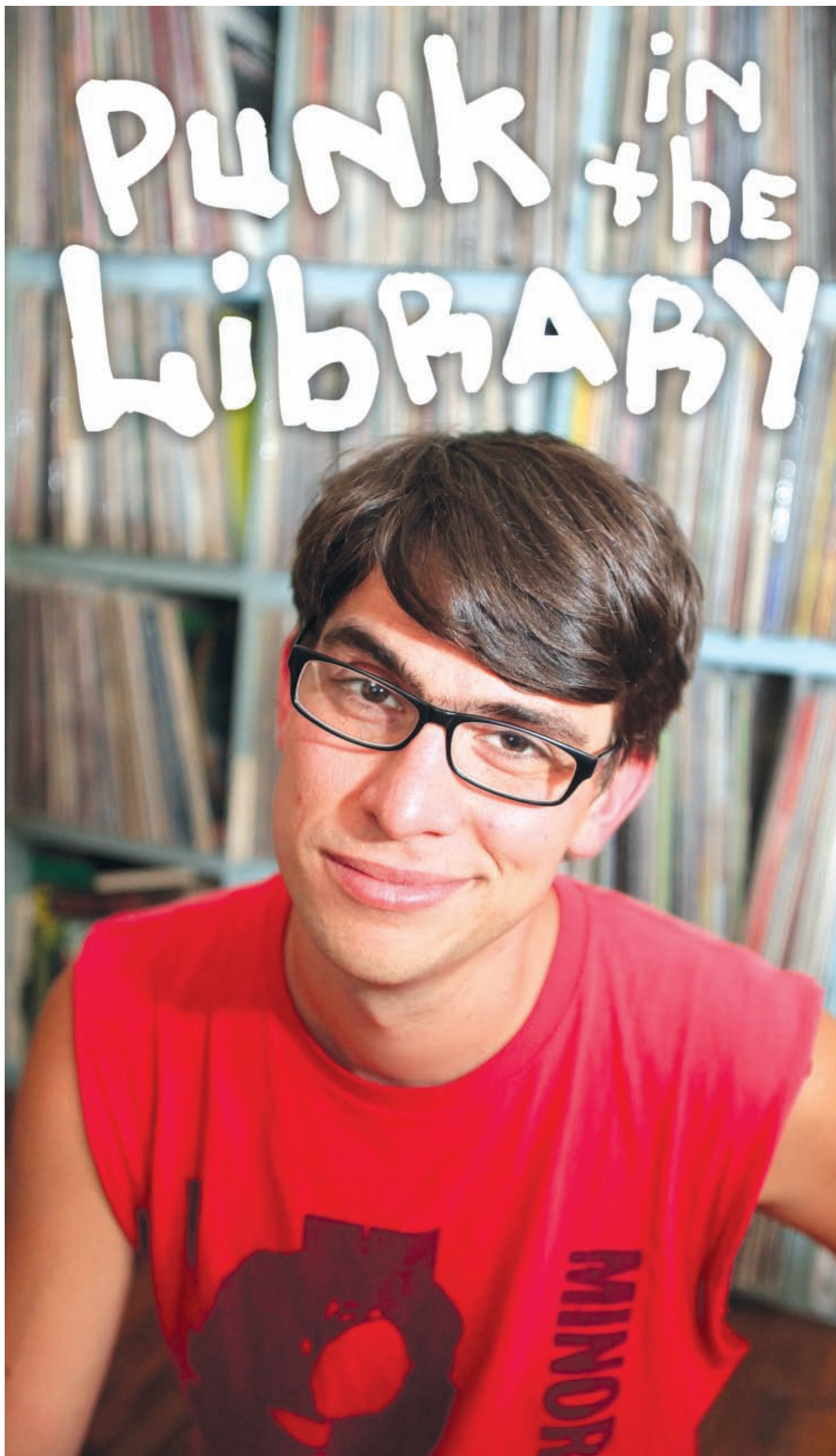


and either given away or sold for pennies. The operative phrase here: Do it yourself.

Jubinsky makes the trek once a month to bring a portion of the library's growing zine collection to the Arts Market on Riverside Avenue near Five Points. There, he meets up with fellow zine committee members Jessica Whittington, Matthew Moyer and Andrew Coulon. Together, the foursome created a plan to bring zines to the library's permanent collection, making it one of around 20 public libraries in the country that maintains such a collection. Jacksonville Main Library's zine collection is one also of only a handful that allows visitors to check them out and take them home.

And that's exactly what the zine committee does from its booth at Riverside Arts Market — checks out zines, along with oddball CDs and DVDs. They also issue library cards on the spot.

Though the zine initiative enjoys funding and support from such a venerable municipal institution as the downtown library, it has a distinct grassroots feel. Jubinsky, who established his own DIY record distribution company, Dead Tank Distro, back in 2000, says



two-wheeling it to RAM brings back memories of his younger years as a champion of the underground, when he would pedal his boxes of records, CDs and counterculture literature to local clubs and house parties. “It’s brought over in a cool punk way,” he says of his Zine Mobile. “Really similar to what I was doing for free for myself [years ago].”

Setting up shop at RAM was a smart move, considering most people don’t even know what a zine is, much less understand that there is a healthy collection of the publications on the first floor of their local library. The zine table at the Arts Market puts it out there for the more adventurous art patron as well as the merely curious. The result has been more than encouraging.

“We checked out a good amount of stuff,” says Jubinsky of the Zine Mobile’s most recent

— and second — visit to RAM. “The first time we checked out 30 items. This time we checked out about 45.”

It was successful in more visceral ways, too. Later that Saturday, Jubinsky’s Facebook page featured this update: “Dear 11-year-old kid who was so stoked on the zines and punk bands and wanted the ‘Reagan is dead’ and ‘Los Crudos’ issue of MRR [Maximum RockNRoll magazine] to check out at Arts Market: Thank You.”

“He was all talking about the Dead Kennedys — with his grandmother there,” says Jubinsky with a chuckle. “It was a perfect day.”

That Josh Jubinsky would wind up working as a library associate — a job that requires shirt-sleeves, slacks and the occasional necktie — might come as a surprise to those who once frequented his distribution, or “distro,” tables at local punk shows or dropped into his indie record stores in Five Points and Springfield. An unassuming-looking fellow with geek-chic glasses and a quiet charm, the Jubinsky of today is a far cry, aesthetically speaking, from his early years as a scenester, fresh in town from Ormond Beach, in late 1999.

Back in Ormond, more accurately around the Daytona area, Jubinsky would hang at shows booked at a local church by “this older kid, Billy Regar, who had a lawn service called Straight-Edge Cuts.” (Jubinsky likens those shows to the legendary Orange Park Lions Club concerts organized by local punk and hardcore acts around the same time.) The experience whetted his appetite for do-it-yourself music and activism.

Upon his arrival in Jacksonville, where he enrolled at the University of North Florida to major in



“If the kids are united:” Jubinsky teaches kids how to make their own zines every Tuesday afternoon at the Main Library.

PUNK IN THE LIBRARY



English and minor in film studies, Jubinsky got hip pretty quick to the Riverside arts district, but recalls an initial disconnect.

“I heard about Einstein [A Go-Go, the Jacksonville Beach punk and rock club] after the fact,” says Jubinsky. “I came from a different musical perspective. The shows down there [in Daytona] were more hardcore-punk and metal. I get up here, and when I moved to Riverside, my roommate would be like, ‘You haven’t heard of Shellac?’ and I’d be like, ‘You haven’t heard of this hardcore band?’”

It didn’t take long before a scruffy-haired and ambitious Jubinsky connected with the Jacksonville underground, however, finding his place among the bands and artists, and shaking hands with organizers of grassroots political movements. To be clear, Northeast Florida has never been a hotbed of political radicalism or even a focal point of any one musical or artistic movement. But the region’s ultra-conservative climate has alienated many a youth eager to alter the landscape either by planting new trees or burning the entire forest down.

Jubinsky decided to plant a few evergreens. After settling in and starting school, Jubinsky made his first substantive contribution to the scene and founded Dead Tank Distro in late 2000. The concept was simple: Record and distribute low-budget releases by independent regional bands. First up was “chomp chomp chomp” by organic power-punk trio The South, released in 2001. (The album, long out of print, is available to download at deadtankdistro.com/dtrreleases.htm.) Soon, Jubinsky was biking to shows with boxes of LPs and CDs of his and other labels’ bands, along with counterculture literature and, yes, zines.

In 2003, Jubinsky expanded his reach by co-founding a chapter of the national organization Food Not Bombs, which prepares and shares vegan and vegetarian meals with the hungry and the homeless. What started with three or four people working out of Jubinsky’s apartment grew to a small army servicing large numbers each weekend.

“We’d always go to Confederate Park and feed people,” says Jubinsky. “To the point where there’d be 80 people waiting in line, knowing these kids come with food every Sunday to the park.”

The next few years would be filled with late nights at local clubs and a long-running involvement with The Pit microcinema, where he would set up in the parking lot before film screenings and punk shows, which he helped book. There he’d hawk his 12-inch records, indie publications, screen-printed patches and homemade buttons to small but dedicated crowds.

In 2003, Jubinsky graduated from UNF and lived off his income from Dead Tank, while occasionally washing dishes for Elaine Wheeler at her vegetarian restaurant, Heartworks Café in Five Points. “Sometime in 2004,” says Jubinsky, he interviewed for an entry-level position at the library and was hired the same day. He was soon promoted to his current title as library associate.

Between 2006-’09, Jubinsky moved his operation indoors, opening his brick-and-mortar business Inertia Records and Books with UNF English instructor Joe Flowers, first on Lomax Street in the old Heartworks building in Five Points, then in the Zombie Bikes complex in Springfield. At the Springfield location, Jubinsky would host “freeschool” events, during which patrons could partake of an odd array of

workshops — from bike building and repair to organic gardening and composting to first-time home-buying. At the library, he taught young children how to play guitar and held court in the children’s section, telling stories to toddlers and their parents, some of whom used to attend Jubinsky-promoted punk shows.

Despite his kinetic nature, Jubinsky soon found his off-hours were so full — running the store, promoting bands and concerts, hosting

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classes, touring with his own band Environmental Youth Crunch — he realized something had to go. So he closed Inertia’s doors and moved Dead Tank online (deadtankdistro.com).

But Jubinsky’s love of all things DIY didn’t perish with his store, so when coworker Moyer approached him about setting up a zine collection at the downtown library, Jubinsky was all over it.

"It was late summer of last year," says librarian Moyer. "I'd seen some presentation at a library conference about zine [collections]." He took inspiration from the conference and talked to Jubinsky, who had experience acquiring music-centric and activist zines. The duo hooked up with librarian Andrew Coulon and circulation clerk Jessica Whittington and formulated a plan. They talked and organized, asked for donations, drafted a proposal, submitted and resubmitted the proper forms and, after months of work, in September of last year, the library's official Zine Collection was unveiled.

Located on the first floor of the Main Library, in the popular section, (alongside DVDs, CDs and audio books), the collection began with around 160 zines, most donated through Jubinsky's Distro connections, all of which had to be reviewed, catalogued and packaged. There are popular titles (Maximum RockNRoll, Cometbus, Truckstop), local zines (Movement magazine) and obscurities (Psionic Plastic Joy, Beer Powered Bicycle). The ideas embraced by zine culture are so vast that virtually anyone can put together a zine and someone, somewhere will be interested in reading it.

"There are definitely subcategories," says Jubinsky. "There are political zines. There are 'per' zines, a personal zine, which is, like, someone's diary. ... There are different gender-studies zines. Music history and criticism."

The collection is growing so rapidly that Jubinsky says it's hard to give a firm accounting. What is certain is that there is no end in sight. Both Jubinsky and Moyer have started their own zines. Jubinsky now teaches kids how to build their own zines at the Zine Machine classes, which are held every Tuesday. And the library hopes that people from the local community will begin to contribute their own zines.

The members of the zine committee regularly contribute to their blog (jplzinelibrary.wordpress.com), reviewing zines, making recommendations, promoting related events and announcing new additions to the collection.

Though they have no official titles, and they often share duties, the members have fallen into some pretty distinct roles. Jubinsky and Moyer acquire the zines, Jubinsky is steeped in educational outreach, Coulon works on the technical issues such as cataloguing, and Whittington handles circulation and "practical issues regarding materials that are pretty ephemeral in format and construction," says Moyer.

It's a labor of love, of civic involvement, of punk-like resolve.

"It's pretty creative work, actually," says Moyer. "I'd been reading zines since high school, since the early '90s, and I was exited by the medium. I would always be excited to see these mimeographed and Xeroxed statements of enthusiasm."

There are a few schools of thought regarding the origins of the zine. The abbreviation itself is up for debate, it being short for either fanzine or magazine, depending on whom you ask. What is most readily agreed upon is its general definition: an independent or self-published work of limited circulation commonly reproduced on a photocopier, often singular in its objective or theme and usually given away or sold on the cheap.

Revolutionary Thomas Paine's "Common Sense," initially published anonymously as a pamphlet in 1776, could be considered the first zine, but the self-publishing of pamphlets by authors and dissidents was not uncommon at the time. Throughout the 1800s, amateur press operators would also self-publish, and the "chapbook" — small books or pamphlets featuring anything from folk rhymes and illustrations to political and religious messages — would also rise in popularity.

But the modern zine didn't begin to take shape until the 1930s and '40s — as an outgrowth of sci-fi culture. Science-fiction fans would write for each other, discussing the genre and generating "fan fiction," which re-imagines scenarios within popular sci-fi novels or casts characters from those novels in other narrative situations.

In the '70s, punk fanzines and hippie comics reshaped the concept of the zine, establishing a format and style that has endured for decades. The widespread use of photocopiers in the early part of the '70s made formatting and reproducing zines much easier, and do-it-yourselfers would create all manner of music and political zines, looking not unlike the punk concert fliers of the day.

Though the zine would survive the '80s and '90s in much the same way, the last decade has seen a decline in its popularity, a trend some blame on the Internet. But they haven't disappeared, and library directors are realizing the cultural importance, if not the demographic appeal, of a thriving zine collection.

Though the Library of Congress hasn't started archiving zines, 30-plus academic libraries maintain zine archives, which are not for public consumption. About another 60 volunteer libraries have collections. But public library zine collections are thriving, and growing as more people get involved, create their own zines and submit them to their local libraries. It seems what began as a no-budget statement of individuality and subversive attitude in the name of free press has been mainstreamed into the very same collections that include pop authors James Patterson, Dan Brown and Janet Evanovich. How does this bode for the future of the zine community — or public libraries, for that matter?

"I think it's really unique and important, and it appeals to a group of customers that we don't always do a really good job of touching base with," says the Main Library's Assistant Director of Support Services and 20-year library veteran Gretchen Mitchell. "Sometimes we lose the people in their 20s and 30s."

Mitchell was instrumental in helping the zine committee complete the necessary documentation to get the library to approve

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Word up: Jubinsky takes the zine revolution to the streets.

the collection. It was an arduous task, requiring extensive paperwork and a number of additions to the original proposal, to make it appealing to library administrators. The Main Library now enjoys a healthy zine collection, and educational and outreach programs, including the Zine Machine workshop, zine author roundtables and even live indie music right in the middle of the library.

“Some of the other libraries that have zine collections, they operate kind of as archives,” says Andrew Coulon, whom Moyer calls the “technocrat and theorist” of the group. “Our mission is a little bit different. We wanted to let people interact with the collection. Take it home and read it. Really be comfortable using it. We want people to feel like it’s their collection and feel comfortable to take it home and read it at their leisure.”

Mitchell says this kind of grassroots outreach can only benefit the library, appealing to an entirely new demographic. She says a younger crowd will “come in for the zines and realize the other benefits of the library. The great thing about the outreach is that they’ve gone to so many venues outside the library, they bring in bands, have discussions. They’ve really made it work.”

My job is to give stuff away,” says Jubinsky. “Or to get [library officials] to spend money on stuff to give away.” It’s the way Jubinsky has lived most of his adult life, bringing

together material from artists and activists, and getting it to the people cheap. Offering educational opportunities to the community without charging a cent. Providing food to those who needed it and doing it for free.

He’s still selling records online, still touring with his eco-conscious bands Civilization and Vicious Fishes. He still teaches bicycle repair and safety to kids at Zombie Bikes. He recently took up woodworking, and now builds his own cabinetry. He’s begun a program for kids on how to use tools. He maintains an organic garden with his wife, Amber, at their home in Riverside.

Josh Jubinsky might have shorter, neater hair these days. He might wear the occasional tie to work. And he has no problem jumping through a few bureaucratic hoops, if it means his community will benefit. It’s all for the greater good, a manifestation of a rebellious spirit that always has his neighbor — and neighborhood — in mind. It is in this spirit that Jubinsky, Coulon, Whittington and Moyer continue to grow the Jacksonville Public Library’s Zine Collection. And it is in this spirit that they invite every one of you to contribute.

“[Zines represent] a subculture that we can include within the context of our library,” says Jubinsky. “Librarians and teachers are really the only real punks left.” □

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To learn more about donating your zines to the library, go to jplzinelibrary.wordpress.com.