

Prisoners of Microfilm

Freeing Voices of Dissent in the Underground Newspaper Collection

“We are a people, and a people must have their own voice, and that voice is the underground press.”¹ - Thomas King Forcade

1. Bad juju

I put the finishing touch on the display case in the lobby of our library, a sign in bold newsprint: “Come Explore the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection (1963-1975)!” Stepping back to admire my creation, I almost had to brace myself against the dizzying psychedelic collage of graphics. This display screamed not only “Look at me!” but “Damn! I’m cool!” And oh how cool it was covered with photos, comics, and covers from a wide range of colorful Vietnam-era ‘underground’ newspapers. The bright art of Black Panther’s Emory Douglas shouted “Power to the People!” Psychedelic covers of the *San Francisco Oracle* flashed Vedic Motifs, bearded gurus, and hookah-smoking shamans. Gilbert Sheldon’s *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* and Trina Robbins’ feminist superheroes playfully danced throughout the display. There were photos of protesters marching for civil rights, gay rights, women’s rights, and in opposition to the war in Vietnam. There were raised fists of solidarity, peace signs, concert posters, a real lava lamp (which I hoped wouldn’t burn the library down), and covers of the *Berkeley Barb*, *Avatar*, the *Los Angeles Free Press*, and many others. Books about the Vietnam-era underground press were featured prominently throughout the display, such as Ken Wachsberger’s extensive *Voices from the Underground* series and John McMillian’s *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media*

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in America. Inspired by its cover, I propped McMillian's book next to an old typewriter I'd decorated with flames soaring out of it and a scorched scroll rising from its platen inviting all to a presentation I planned to give at the end of the month on the underground press. As I continued to admire my work, I noticed two young college students approaching the display. I held my breath waiting for the accolades to roll in. After a few speechless moments of staring, one of the students shook his head, furrowed his brows, and exclaimed to his friend, "Man! There's some bad juju goin' on up in there." Oops! Not the response I was going for.

Nevertheless, the display eventually seemed to grow on folks and turned out to be quite a success. Faculty and students stopped to look at the spectacle, some even taking photographs. Handouts on the underground press were snatched up, and interest in the papers began to surface. A travelling exhibit of *The Great Speckled Bird*, Atlanta's underground paper from 1968-1976, was also on exhibit in the lobby. The exhibit, on loan from Georgia State University, was created to celebrate digitization of all issues of *The Bird*.² I'd planned and heavily promoted a month-long celebration of the Vietnam-era underground newspapers. Specifically, I wanted to educate students, faculty, and community members about our Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) Underground Newspaper Collection on microfilm.

Jacksonville State University is a medium-sized institution nestled in the foothills of the Appalachians. In a fairly conservative college town, far removed from radicalism, I was pleasantly surprised to discover this collection of over 500 alternative newspapers dating from 1963-1985 in our library. As a librarian working at one of the 109 libraries³ worldwide which provide access to this resource, I knew I had hit upon a rare gem, one that needed to be explored, promoted, and used.⁴ Now titled the Underground Press Collection and available from ProQuest, in 35mm microfilm,⁵ this Collection began as a joint venture created by the Underground Press Syndicate and the Bell & Howell Company in the early 1970s. While united in opposition to the Vietnam War, the newspapers cover a diverse range of movements such as civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, American Indian issues, Black power, Eastern spirituality, alternative lifestyles, communal living, growing ecological awareness, the New Left, youth culture and, "oh yeah," a whole lot of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. In this paper, I discuss the unique story of how this Collection came into existence, the role librarians can play in making the Collection more visible, and why, in our current political and cultural climate, this alternative media Collection is more relevant than ever. Also explored is the dilemma of making a microfilm collection accessible in a digital age. While students expressed great interest and curiosity in The Underground Newspaper Collection, its cumbersome format turned them away. Convince students to use *microfilm* in 2012? Dream on. Ultimately, unless librarians come up with ways to make this resource easier

to access, this Collection will remain unused and underappreciated – in effect, a prisoner of microfilm.

2. Fifth Estate Rising

Until six years ago, I'd never heard of the Underground Newspaper Collection nor did I know anything about the Vietnam-era underground press. My introduction to the Collection was pure happenstance. While shelving a box of microfilm, I noticed a set of microfilm titled the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) Underground Newspaper Collection. What in the heck was the 'Underground Press Syndicate?' I began to peruse the index which went with the collection. The papers sported some pretty outrageous titles: *The Buddhist Third Class Junk Mail Oracle*, *Free Spaghetti Dinner*, *Peace Balloon*, *The Shinjoko Sutra*, *The Great Speckled Bird*, etc. My curiosity was instantly piqued. I randomly picked up one of the yellowing microfilm boxes and blew off the dust (these things obviously hadn't been used in years) and headed towards the microfilm readers. I turned out the lights, spun the microfilm through the machine, and like Alice falling down the rabbit hole, entered a psychedelic, funky alternative universe I never knew existed. I began tripping on the gospel of Timothy Leary: "Drop out! Modern Civilization is a dangerous insane process..."⁶ I soaked up reviews of Beatles albums and photos of Jimi Hendrix. I marveled at the originality and artistry of the newspaper covers. I covered my mouth and gasped in shock at images of naked hippies intertwined in Kama Sutra positions and newspaper headlines which shouted "Fuck Hate!" I giggled at the antics of a couple of stoned comic book characters named the *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*. I screamed "hell, yeah!" to "Free John Sinclair!" I became teary-eyed reading the stories of servicemen who'd lost comrades in Vietnam. Hours later, my colleagues found me slumped over the microfilm reader, punch-drunk and in love. I've always been fascinated by sixties counterculture and, I confess, a little envious that having been born in 1970, I missed the entire scene. However, I had not been aware of the hundreds of Vietnam-era papers that "spread like weed"⁷ from the late sixties and into the early seventies. This Collection of those newspapers provides a vivid snapshot of one of the most important cultural, anti-establishment youth movements in our Nation's history.

So, just what are the 'underground newspapers' in the Collection? Scholars of the underground press tend to agree that the *Los Angeles Free Press* was the first 'underground' newspaper, having been founded in 1964 by Art Kunkin on a mere budget of fifteen dollars.⁸ In 1973, Thomas King Forcade, Director of the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS), chronicled the early history of the underground newspapers writing:

Some people say the underground press began with the socialist papers of the early 1900s, while others trace it either to the beatnik little magazines of the fifties or the *Village Voice*. While it is certainly true that there are some similarities between these early efforts and the current underground press, the latter is a separate and unique phenomenon with a history of its own. That history began with the founding of the *Los Angeles Free Press* in 1964.⁹

Certainly, many of the underground press writers may have been influenced by popular and well-established publications such as *Evergreen Review*, *Ramparts*, *The Realist* and the *Village Voice*, which were founded much earlier. These publications were critical of the establishment and, like the underground press, covered stories considered inappropriate by mainstream magazines and newspapers. Steven Brower describes *Evergreen Review*, published from 1955-1973, as a “groundbreaking journal which inspired readers with its call to ‘Join the Underground’.”¹⁰ *Ramparts*, which was published in 1962, was described by *Time* as a rambunctious magazine packed with “a bomb in every issue.”¹¹ Dwight Garner argues that “*Ramparts* stood apart from the brawling underground press of the 1960s not only because of the quality of its writing, but for its élan, its aura of brewing drama.”¹² However, it’s doubtful that most ‘underground’ writers would agree with Garner’s assessment. There was no shortage of drama from the underground press. Unlike the underground newspapers, however, *Evergreen Review* and *Ramparts* were polished, well-financed magazines with widespread audiences.

Perhaps more connected with the sixties underground newspapers were *The Realist* and the *Village Voice*. *The Realist*, founded by Paul Krassner, described itself as “social- political – religious criticism and satire.”¹³ The first issue of *The Realist*, which was published in 1958, was titled “An Angry Young Magazine.”¹⁴ The *Village Voice* was founded in 1955 by Ed Fancher, Dan Wolf, John Wilcock, and Norman Mailer in Greenwich Village.¹⁵ John Wilcock, recently dubbed by Steven Heller, as the “puppet master of the underground press,”¹⁶ was not only responsible for co-founding one of the first underground newspapers, the *East Village Other* (the ‘other’ alternative to the *Village Voice*) but was also responsible for founding the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS), which was instrumental in the fast and far reaching expansion of the underground press. What set the ‘underground newspapers’ apart from *Evergreen Review*, *Ramparts* and the *Village Voice* was that they operated on shoe-string budgets, typically didn’t have a host of renowned literary contributors, weren’t glossy and commercial, were more grass-roots and local in their coverage, had short life spans, and perhaps, most importantly, set out to do more than just report the news. The underground press set out to *make* the news. The writers of the underground press often did not distinguish between their roles as activists

and journalists. Herein lies the uniqueness of the style of writing pioneered by the underground press. Reflecting on the mission of the underground papers, John Wilcock wrote “All of us underground publishers thought we were making history!”¹⁷ In 1966, Walter Bowart warned readers about the growing acquisition of local dailies by larger firms with their “own axes to grind.”¹⁸ In reaction to this ‘monopoly on the news,’ Bowart suggested that a “fifth estate” had emerged (the fourth estate traditionally refers to the press). He pointed out that “shoe string publications” were popping up everywhere throughout the United States, and he described them as follows:

These papers of the fifth estate or underground concern themselves with civil libertarian issues, the war in Vietnam, freedom of pleasure, freedom of privacy, and freedom to dissent in a time where cynicism – the traditional frame of mind for the journalist – is lacking in the moneyed press. The fifth estate is fighting for cynicisms reinstatement.¹⁹

Appropriately, one of the first underground newspapers, one which is still in publication, is titled *The Fifth Estate*.²⁰

During the late sixties and into the early seventies, hundreds of underground newspapers were founded. In 1968, *Newsweek* attributed the underground press’s success to lack of coverage in the “dailies” of the youth counterculture movement, particularly opposition to the war in Vietnam.²¹ Other factors included “the comparatively low overhead cost of offset printing methods and the whole new permissiveness made possible by the 1966 Supreme Court [ruling] defining hard-core pornography.”²² Indeed, young people often seemed to taunt the establishment as they continued to push the boundaries of sexual expression in the underground press. Wilcock, noting the low costs of printing wrote, “any kid with dedication plus \$200 and a typewriter can go into the publishing business.”²³ According to Wilcock, most underground papers operated on a budget of “five hundred to one thousand dollars per issue.” Further aiding the young aspiring newspaper founders was “the development of a street sales force.”²⁴

Underground newspapers weren’t strictly confined to the most liberal and radical centers of the United States. By the late 1960s, counterculture papers had emerged all over the country. The *Distant Drummer* was popular in Philadelphia, hipsters read the *Helix* in Seattle, and Madison, Wisconsin’s *Kaleidoscope* was considered “one of the most impressive” papers in the Midwest “with editions printed in Milwaukee and Chicago.”²⁵ James Danky, Librarian at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, reported that by 1974, there were twenty underground newspapers in Madison, Wisconsin alone.²⁶ Well-known publications out West included three from Texas: *The Rag* (Austin), *Space City News* (Houston), and *Dallas Notes* (Dallas). In the Southeast,

young street vendors could be found hawking copies of *The Great Speckled Bird* (Atlanta), *NOLA Express* (New Orleans), *The Crocodile*, (Gainesville, Florida), and *The Kudzu* (Jackson, Mississippi). America's youth had caught newspaper fever! Even students in high schools began publishing their own 'undergrounds,' aided by the *New York High School Free Press*, where they battled "fascist" principals over the right to wear their hair long. A special issue of John Wilcock's *Other Scenes* featured a "do-it-yourself newspaper contest." The winner's newspaper would be published as a regular issue of *Other Scenes*, of which they would receive one hundred free copies, along with a cash prize of two hundred and fifty dollars. Contestants were urged to cover a variety of content from suggested categories: "politics, art, rock, sociology, revolution, astrology, dope, religion, ecology, fantasy, sex and photography."²⁷ As Thomas King Forcade wrote, "in cities and towns throughout the world the founding of an underground newspaper in that community has then made possible an entire culture which was impossible without a voice."²⁸ Abbie Hoffman echoed this notion, suggesting that the main role of the underground press was to provide a *space* for a movement that felt alienated by the straight news, remarking:

Let's start from the position that the most valuable thing about the underground press is that it is here. I don't know if that is what McLuhan means by the medium is the message, but the fact is that ... it looks different from the other press and that people see it. It is a viable manifestation of an alternative culture.²⁹

The alternative press looked askance at corporate news sources. In the *Berkeley Barb*'s "statement of purpose," Max Scherr wrote "if we do our job well, we hope to nettle that amorphous but thickhided establishment that so often nettles us..."³⁰ Indeed, it would seem that the *Barb* did its job exceedingly well. Between constant FBI harassment and lawsuits brought on by the Establishment, the *Barb* was constantly embroiled in controversy. The headlines of one *Barb* flashed "CIA Buys Barb."³¹

3. The Myth of Objectivity

The greatest difference between the underground press and mainstream news is that authors of underground papers dropped all pretense to objectivity. Maxine Ruvinsky, in a study on the characteristics of sixties underground press journalism, defines 'objectivity' as follows:

Objectivity referred to the mainstream belief in an objective reality which, mirror-like yields facts, which were presumed to exist in the

“real world” and add up to the truth; while subjectivity referred to the undergrounders’ belief in personal involvement as the only way to discover the facts left out (of the mainstream accounts), and hence the truth.³²

Journalists of the underground press were also activists. Michael Kindman, editor of Michigan State University’s (MSU) *State News*, quit his job to start an alternative to the relatively tame campus paper. Kindman founded *The Paper* so he could freely express his views and write according to his conscience. In his memoir, Kindman writes that “the increasing pressure to be either an “objective” journalist or an activist, but not both was more than I could take.”³³ Kindman, a bright journalism student, was so bored and dissatisfied with his studies that he eventually dropped out altogether. “The journalism courses,” Kindman writes, “were unexciting, taught by traditionalist faculty with a heavy commitment to what we have since come to know as the myth of objectivity.”³⁴ He later joined Mel Lyman’s commune in Boston, Massachusetts to write for the *Avatar*.³⁵ “Thorne Dreyer and Victoria Smith of Austin’s *The Rag* argued that ‘objectivity’ fails to put “isolated events and data into context.”³⁶ “Radical journalism” strived for something beyond presenting mere facts. The underground press sought to provide reflection and open up a dialogue with its readers on the *implication* of these facts. Dreyer and Smith explain the shortcomings of journalistic objectivity:

Not only does the commercial media fail to tie together the facts it presents, but it actually destroys a sense of continuity and history in the minds of the American people. In the name of journalistic objectivity, it reports events; the readers are supposedly free to make their own judgments. But the people read their daily papers and make no judgment at all, except that most of what they read doesn’t relate much to their daily lives.³⁷

Abbie Hoffman stressed the activist role of the underground press, remarking that “Underground editors ... have to eventually evolve into the organizers.”³⁸ Also related to the subjective nature of the underground press is the writers’ relationship with their readers. Min, in a case study on the *Texas Observer*, discovered that the writers of the *Observer* characterized “their audience accurately in terms of demographics, political ideology, and political activism.” According to Min, scholars of mass communication “have argued that professional journalists do not know their actual audiences.”³⁹ The underground press’s close relationship to their audience (weren’t they also their own audience?) is in direct contrast to “objectivism journalism” which retained a professional distance from its readership.

Underground papers spurred readers to action by announcing when and where protests, rock concerts, be-ins, and other gatherings would occur. The youth movement had a pervasive fervor and energy in which communication between the underground press and its readers was essential. Many of the papers published reader feedback, along with exposes of the cultural and political events that were unfolding around them at lightening pace. In a pre-Facebook age, young people needed a place to voice their opinions about issues such as the Columbia University Protests of 1968, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, the Civil Rights Movement, and other transforming events that were rapidly taking place. An exploration of the late 1960s underground newspapers reveals a genuine sense amongst counterculture youth that America was on the verge of a cultural, social, and political revolution. The underground press was the voice of the revolution. Dreyer and Smith wrote "...there is a serious revolutionary movement struggling to be born; there's something to write about."⁴⁰ Indeed, there was plenty to write about. The underground press provided readers with a channel for communicating with each other in an age when social media didn't exist. The Underground Newspaper Collection is a record of how thousands of young people reacted to the tumultuous times in which they lived.

The publications in the Underground Newspaper Collection are valuable in their coverage of political and social issues from a perspective different from that of mainstream media. For historians and sociologists, the historical record is not complete without the underground press. It was often the underground press who first broached topics not deemed worthy or appropriate for the regular news. As Forcade wrote, "...spin through the microfilm copies of the *New York Times* for the period 1964-1973 and then spin thru the UPS microfilms for this same period. The difference is staggering, beautiful, and clear-cut."⁴¹ Rodger Streitmatter, in his historical study of the dissident press in the United States, points out that the underground press was the first to "legitimize rock 'n' roll."⁴² There's no denying that rock 'n' roll was one of the greatest legacies of the sixties and early seventies and some of the most thoughtful critiques of the music and musicians of the era can be found in the Underground Newspaper Collection. *Rolling Stone*, founded in 1967, had more than its share of competition from the underground press who often lambasted the commercial upstart for its capitalist belief "in the cosmic dollar."⁴³

The underground press was ahead of its time in its coverage of many issues. For example, *Gay Sunshine* first reported on the inhumane treatment of gay inmates in Vacaville Prison in California. As a "cure for homosexuality," doctors forced shock therapy on gay men by attaching electrical wires to their genitals and delivering shocks. Gay men were also forced to take drugs and carry I.D. cards identifying themselves as homosexuals.⁴⁴ This news was later confirmed by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, but those who followed the

underground news were already aware of and protesting against this treatment of gay men in prison.⁴⁵ The underground press reported on the atrocities coming out of Vietnam years before the media giants dared question the United States' involvement in the war. Streitmatter writes that "after the Tet Offensive, it was as if the country's leading journalists had simply combed through the back files of the anti-war press and then repeated the statements that had been published there five, six, and seven years earlier."⁴⁶ Forcade, Director of the UPS, told a reporter from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that the underground press wrote articles on ecology, sexism and protests against the war in Vietnam long before they appeared in the "daily papers."⁴⁷ Forcade even boasted "Hell, we published what was in the Pentagon Papers long before it appeared in the *New York Times*, but we didn't have proof."⁴⁸ In "How we Covered Wounded Knee," Rex Weiner, a writer for the UPS, reflected on how the underground press covered the American Indian Movement (AIM) occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1973. Weiner noted that anyone looking for information on the occupation should check out a special issue of *Akwesasne Notes* (Roosevelt, New York) which gave a "day-by-day chronicle of the Wounded Knee occupation over a month's period." According to Weiner, the coverage was so thorough that the issue deserved to be published as a book.⁴⁹ One wonders how many gems like this are hidden in the Underground Newspaper Collection and how many go unread by sociologists and historians who might otherwise gain a different perspective.

4. Rainbow Newspaper Consciousness

Allen Cohen, founder of the *San Francisco Oracle*, wrote that the *Oracle* began as a "rainbow newspaper dream" where "people were exploding with rainbow newspaper consciousness."⁵⁰ In hindsight, it seems that Cohen's dream may have come true. While most of the newspapers in the Underground Newspaper Collection, particularly through the years 1964-1973, were united in their opposition to the war in Vietnam, their content and characteristics were as diverse as the colors in a rainbow. Only a few papers had significantly high circulation numbers; the biggest sellers tended to be located in areas with large concentrations of radicalism. By 1968, there were an estimated 150 underground newspapers with a total circulation of twenty million readers.⁵¹ The *Los Angeles Free Press* had the greatest circulation with an estimated readership of 68,000. The *Barb* had a circulation of 50,000, *Avatar's* circulation was 35,000 and the *East Village Other's* was 40,000. Liberation News Service, an organization that supplied packets of political and international news for the underground press to add to their newspapers, served about 300 underground newspapers, including 100 college newspapers.⁵² The *Black Panther Intercommunal News*

Service was one of the most successful underground papers, in spite of constant harassment by the FBI, with a readership of 100,000 at its peak.⁵³

Some of the papers focused on youth culture while others were highly political in nature. Schisms occasionally erupted over cultural versus political content. Papers that focused on revolution and civil rights often charged cultural lifestyle papers, such as the psychedelic *San Francisco Oracle*, with apathy. While the readers of the *Oracle* sought enlightenment and freedom from society by ‘tuning in’ and ‘dropping out,’ readers of *The Movement* (San Francisco) or the *Black Panther Intercommunal News Service* (San Francisco) sought revolution through militant resistance and protest. In an “Open Letter to Weather Underground from Panther 21” which was published in the *East Village Other*, the following warning was given:

We can also see the possibilities that exist for you to develop the movement so that as revolutionaries you change and shape the cultural revolution ... We can also see that you feel – and rightly so – the need for more support from the mother country youth. But we feel that most of the mother country youth culture communes smack heavily with escapism...⁵⁴

How could a revolution possibly be won by a bunch of hippies tripping on acid or listening to Beatles albums while stoned? Because the Weather Underground Organization (WPA) really *was* underground, the Black Panthers were using the widely read *East Village Other* to communicate with them. However, this opened a dialogue among general readers as well on the ethics of peace and militant resistance. The battle of flower power versus revolution was a constant theme in the underground newspapers, particularly during 1968-1970.

According to Dreyer and Smith, by 1968, underground papers had become more political and revolutionary. Dreyer and Smith suggested that it was at the underground press conference in Madison, Wisconsin on Thanksgiving of 1968 that the true “media of the revolution came together for the first time” to “discuss their new identity.”⁵⁵ During this conference, attendees discussed the “need to work together and ... to begin the development of a political strategy for the underground press.”⁵⁶ Dreyer and Smith concluded that the conference in Madison defined a “transitional period” in the underground press in response to “escalating repression” from the Establishment and the growing realization that underground papers needed to be “politically relevant to an America beset by potentially fatal traumas and to a movement just realizing the fantastic complexity of the enemy and the task at hand.”⁵⁷ The counterculture movement was maturing. As Dreyer and Smith noted, the underground press conference in Madison was “a far cry from the *San Francisco Oracle’s* original pow-wow.”⁵⁸

The first underground press conference had been held near San Francisco on Easter 1967.⁵⁹ The conference in Madison in '68 was the fourth meeting of the underground press and, according to Dreyer and Smith, the most productive and meaningful.⁶⁰ That this 'transition' took place in the span of just one year points to the tumultuous, fast-paced tempo at which socio-political events were unfolding during the late 1960s.

Papers which focused on hippie 'drop out' culture tended to flourish in the late sixties. One of the most well known was the *San Francisco Oracle* published from 1966 to 1968. The *Oracle* captured the pinnacle of the "summer of love" in Haight-Ashbury, covering subjects such as expanding consciousness, experimentation with Eastern spirituality, and human be-ins. Contributors to the *Oracle* included writers, poets, thinkers, and artists such as Timothy Leary, Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey, Alan Watts, Allen Ginsberg, Michael Bowen, and Allen Cohen. The *Oracle* was well known for its colorful, psychedelic graphics.

Hundreds of underground newspapers began sprouting up on college campuses, especially those with chapters of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). *New Left Notes* was the official paper of SDS and focused heavily on New Left ideology. Papers that sprung up on or near college campuses throughout the United States included *The Paper* (near Michigan State University in East Lansing), *The Rag* (near the University of Texas at Austin), *Old Mole* (near Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts), *The Great Speckled Bird* (associated with Emory University students in Atlanta) and *High Gauge* (near the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa). *The Paper* was one of the first five publications invited to become a member of the Underground Press Syndicate. One of *The Paper's* most widely read stories delved into involvement of faculty from Michigan State University's political-science department who had "served as advisors" to the United States' supported "anti-Communist regime" in Saigon during the 1950s.⁶¹ A few papers attempted to appeal to worker's rights and focused on Unions; these included the *New Age* in Buffalo, New York and *Rising Up Angry* in Chicago. However, the working class sector never really identified itself with the counterculture movement, particularly its 'hippie' lifestyle aspects. *Left Face* (Ft. McClellan, Anniston, Alabama) was one of hundreds of GI newspapers which were published on or near the bases of military servicemen. Many of the writers documented racism within the military, spoke out against the draft, and shocked readers with gruesome tales and images of atrocities emerging from the War in Vietnam. There were papers that addressed the concerns of ethnic groups in the United States such as *Free Palestine* (Washington, DC). The Young Lords Movement (YLM) explored the plight of Puerto Ricans in *Palante* (Bronx, New York). *Dine' Baa Hani* (Fort Defiance, Arizona) focused on social issues of the Navajo during 1970 to 1973. *Akwesasne Notes* was one of several that covered American Indian topics. Other papers championed civil rights, women's rights, and gay rights.

Women's rights were the central focus of *Rat* (New York City), *It Ain't Me Babe* (Berkeley), *Ain't I a Woman* (Iowa), *Off Our Backs* (Washington, DC) and *EveryWoman* (Los Angeles). In 1970, the women workers at RAT staged a coup and took over the entire paper, opening up *LiberRATion* in response to their allegedly sexist male co-workers who had relegated them to secretarial or other menial staff positions. In her widely circulated essay, "Goodbye to All That," printed in *Rat's* 'take over' edition, Robin Morgan wrote:

Goodbye, goodbye forever, counterfeit Left, counterleft, male-dominated cracked-glass mirror reflection of the Amerikan Nightmare. Women are the real Left. We are rising, powerful in our unclean bodies; bright glowing mad in our inferior brains; wild hair flying, wild eyes staring, wild voices keening ... We are rising with a fury older and potentially greater than any force in history, and this time we will be free or no one will survive. Power to the people or to none. All the way down this time.⁶²

Gay Sunshine (San Francisco) and *Fag Rag* (Boston) were two of the first papers to openly address Gay and Lesbian rights following the Stonewall Riots in 1969. According to Charles Shirley, "*Gay Sunshine's* twelve year history of intellectual dignity on the cutting edge of the gay experience remains unmatched by any gay publication."⁶³ Published by Winston Leyland, *Gay Sunshine* featured interviews with renowned literary figures such as "William Burroughs, Jean Genet, Allen Ginsberg, Christopher Isherwood, Gore Vidal and Tennessee Williams."⁶⁴

Counterculture papers even flourished (or attempted to) in the Deep South, particularly around universities with Southern Student Organizing Committees (SSOC) which was the South's closest affiliation with the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In a letter to the *Inquisition* in Charlotte, North Carolina, a reader pleased with the paper's existence wrote, "Charlotte needs you. Otherwise it would probably still be a bummer. Someday I might tell you about the poppies in my backyard."⁶⁵ Many Southern underground newspapers did an excellent job covering the Civil Rights Movement. Atlanta's *Great Speckled Bird* announced "a new spirit is rising in the South, the closed society of the crackers is cracking."⁶⁶

Some papers, such as *Modern Utopia* (Berkeley), explored communal living. *Northwest Passage* (Bellmington, Washington) was known for its coverage of environmental issues. Never quite having the feel of an 'undergrounder,' *Mother Earth News* (Madison, Ohio) emerged in 1970, describing itself as a "monthly how to" targeted for the "doers. The ones who make it all happen."⁶⁷ In the first issue, the editors noted that the publication would place "heavy emphasis on alternate lifestyles, ecology, working with nature and doing more with

less.”⁶⁸ *Edcentric*, published by the Center for Educational Reform, explored radical reforms in education and addressed educational needs in third world countries. An issue published in 1971 focused on education in North Vietnam. *International Times (iT)*, *Black Dwarf*, and *Gandolph’s Garden* were published in London. *iT* reemerged into the digital age in November, 2011. All issues of *iT* have been digitized and are now freely available online.⁶⁹ *Black Dwarf* published articles on socialism. *Gandolph’s Garden* was a mystical, ‘hippie’ publication.

Georgia Straight became a highly successful Canadian underground paper founded in Vancouver by Dan McLeod in 1967.⁷⁰ Still owned by the McLeod family and in publication today, *Georgia Straight* boasts a circulation of 804,000 readers.⁷¹ In exploring the UPS Collection, I came across one politically conservative publication, seemingly out of place, entitled *The New Advocate* which claimed to be “Staten Island’s Only Conservative Voice in Print.” In an article on the threat of “Guerilla Warfare” in the United States, readers were reminded of their “duty to urge ‘tricky Dick,’ and Attorney General John N. Mitchell to prosecute” radical left-wing protestors for “treason.”⁷² Hmm.

According to an estimate in the 1973-1974 Directory of the Underground Press Syndicate, the underground press had “20 million readers, 83% of whom were 25 years of age or younger.”⁷³ What really makes the underground newspapers particularly unique is their colorful, bold, and often shocking graphics. Many of the covers are beautifully illustrated, dazzling, and psychedelic. Another characteristic of the underground press is its mixture of serious issues with adolescent humor and zany urban myth. As Harvey Wasserman (Liberation News Service) noted “we were not only political activists but comedians.”⁷⁴ Abe Peck (*Chicago Seed*) writes about the “sheer balls-to-the-wall, nose to the grindstone, laughing-all-the-way daily life” he experienced working in the underground press.⁷⁵ Peck remembers that the largest folder in the office of the *Chicago Seed* was labeled “No More Goddamned Hippie Poetry!”⁷⁶

Readers of the underground press regularly followed their favorite comix strips (X for alternative). While the written voices of the counterculture tell the stories of the underground press, Paul Buhl writes that the underground comix “epitomize” and “visualize” the “fabled 1960s.”⁷⁷ Robert Crumb’s *Mr. Natural*, R. Cobb’s biting satire, Gilbert Shelton’s *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*, Spain Rodriguez’s *Trashman*, and Trina Robbin’s feminist characters (to name a few) were widely published and adored by underground readers. According to Patrick Rosenkranz, underground comix had an influence all their own:

[They] became an ascendant force on the cultural zeitgeist, and a popular lifestyle accoutrement through the sheer audacity of the stories, the explicitness of the sex, and the wild-and-crazy graphic experimentation, along with a big “Fuck you if you don’t like it!” to authority.⁷⁸

Indeed, no history on the underground press would be complete without covering the massive popularity and importance of underground comix. The Underground Newspaper Collection is a goldmine for scholars and students interested in cartoon and comics art.

Like the underground comix, popular columns were featured regularly in the underground press such as the *Barb's* "Dr. Hippocrates" by Eugene Schoenfeld, who answered questions about "sex, dope, and personal hang-ups." Others included the *Los Angeles Free Press's* "Ask Dr. Strawberry," *The East Village Other's* "Poor Paranoid's Almanac," Larry Lipton's "Radio Free America," Ralph Nader's weekly column "In the Public Interest," Charles Bukowski's "Notes of a Dirty Old Man," Julian Schuman's "China Report" from Peking, Saul-Paul Sirag's "The New Alchemy," and Phineas Israeli's "Maggie's Farm."⁷⁹ Readers also expected the underground press to cover the rock 'n' roll scene. Music fans enthusiastically snatched up underground papers, some solely for the papers' record reviews and in-depth critiques of rock songs. In a recent article for the *New Yorker*, Maria Bustillos wrote about the influence rock critic and underground writer Lester Bangs of *Creem Magazine* had on her coming-of-age reading choices.⁸⁰ Bustillos writes:

As much as I relied on his irresistible humor and wisdom for advice on how best to blow my birthday money at the Licorice Pizza Record Store, I sought him out still more to learn about books, in particular the forbidden and arcane books no conventional teacher would mention.⁸¹

Books, poetry, and films censored or ignored by the Establishment were often covered only by the underground press.

5. From Underground to Alternative

Far from being 'underground,' the counterculture press was always a source of interest to the mainstream press. In "How they Cover Us," Forcade wrote "hardly a week goes by without a reporter calling the UPS for a story on the underground press."⁸² In fact, barely had the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) been founded in 1966 when *Time*⁸³ 'broke' the story about this wild coalition of hippie newspapers.

At an Underground Press Syndicate conference in Boulder, Colorado, the consensus among attendees was to change the syndicate's name to the Alternative Press Syndicate (APS).⁸⁴ In a 1973 UPS Directory, Forcade explained this decision, "though we are the only press uniquely equipped to go underground at a moment's notice, what we are really about is viable social alternatives."⁸⁵

Forcade expressed his distaste for the term 'underground' as early as 1968, complaining;

Underground is a sloppy word and a lot of us are sorry we got stuck with it. "Underground" is meaningless, ambiguous, irrelevant, wildly imprecise, undefinitive, derivative, uncopyrighted, uncontrollable and used up.⁸⁶

Papers that might have actually been 'underground' would include the hundreds of GI newspapers published by servicemen. Even more 'underground' were those of prisoners, who had their own underground press organization, the Prisoners' Digest International (PDI). In the preface to Joseph W. Grant's recently published book on the PDI, Black Panther journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal writes, "imagine, if you will, that you are in a maximum security prison ... and you want to put out a newspaper. No you don't get it. Not an administratively approved, guard-censored newspaper. An *underground newspaper*."⁸⁷ There were truly underground organizations who used underground newspapers to publish 'open letters' and 'communiqués.' Such groups included the Weather Underground Organization (WUO), Black Liberation Army (BLA), The Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) and the New World Liberation Front (NWLF).⁸⁸

In an article for the underground press, Gabrielle Schang, staff member of the UPS, discussed the complexities involved in publishing communiqués from underground organizations, particularly if an underground newspaper was already under the watchful eye of the FBI. She asked fellow underground press members to ponder the question "What if you received a communiqué from a group purporting to be underground? Would you print it? How would you authenticate it?"⁸⁹ Most of the papers in the Underground Newspaper Collection, however, screamed like the protesters to be accounted for and heard. As Forcade wrote:

The underground ideas and lifestyle have merged into the mainstream of thought everywhere in books, plays, films, and advertising. Even the established press has adopted our new journalistic styles and our role as questioners of authority.⁹⁰

The established press had, indeed, taken notice of the underground press, some with curiosity and others with pure disdain.

An article in *Time* described "most underground newspapers" as "a garish amalgam of barnyard prose, bare bosoms, revolutionary tracts, and sex-oriented want ads."⁹¹ In this same issue, the underground press was even accused of censorship:

Despite their strong editorial stance against all forms of censorship, the underground papers have just got together and imposed a censorship of their own. Advertisers no longer may plug their products with any forms of the words 'liberation' or 'revolution.'⁹²

Because it smacked of Capitalism, advertising was always a tricky issue for the cash-strapped, fledgling underground papers. Record companies, head shops, trendy clothing shops, and book stores were often their biggest source of advertising revenue. On the one hand, advertising allowed newspapers to reduce the costs of papers to readers or, even better, give them away for free. On the other hand, not having advertisers meant raising the price of papers in order to cover overhead costs.

6. Birth of the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS)

The Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) was instrumental in propelling the tremendous growth and expansion of underground newspapers worldwide, particularly between the years 1964-1973. In 1973, Forcade reported that there were over 300 members of the UPS with an estimated readership of twenty million.⁹³ Conceived in 1966 by staff members of the *East Village Other (EVO)* in New York City, the general idea of the UPS was to serve as a loose coalition between the *EVO*, the *Los Angeles Free Press*, the *Berkeley Barb*, *The Paper* (East Lansing, Michigan), and *The Fifth Estate* (Detroit) to swap papers and allow each paper the ability to freely reprint (with credits) each other's news stories, comics, and columns.⁹⁴ According to Wilcock, no one quite remembers exactly why they chose to call it the "Underground Press Syndicate" He remembers throwing in the suggestion "underground," having been impressed (while living in wartime Europe) by the French *Marquis* (underground).⁹⁵ On being invited to join the UPS, Michael Kindman (*The Paper*), had this to say:

We did look underground enough ... to earn an invitation to help in the haphazard formation of the Underground Press Syndicate, a mutual-self-help-or other which from the first has captured everyone's imagination ... Almost needless to say the UPS is not well organized. Mainly it is a mixed bag of publications none of whose respective bags is easy to figure out.⁹⁶

The syndicate's vagueness was also echoed by Forcade who suggested that the UPS was more of an "appearance" which "does not attempt to speak for any underground paper's politics or cultural views or act as their conscience."⁹⁷ Emphasizing the practical, everyday work performed by the syndicate Forcade

wrote, “UPS is part of the plumbing which does things which someone has to do but nobody wants to.”⁹⁸ *Time* described the UPS as a “vague alliance” in which papers “hope to exchange articles, columns and cartoons, hire one agency to solicit advertising for all of them and divide up the income.” The story was accompanied by photos of the first five underground newspaper founders who banded together to form the UPS; Alan Katzman (*East Village Other*), Art Kunkin (*Los Angeles Free Press*), Max Scherr (*Berkeley Barb*), Harvey Ovshinsky (*The Fifth Estate*), and Michael Kindman (*The Paper*).⁹⁹

According to Steven Heller, the significance of the UPS is that it provided underground newspapers with “almost unlimited access to inexpensive content-text and image.”¹⁰⁰ By 1968, UPS had expanded from five papers to over 150 papers across the United States and even into Europe, Australia, and Canada. Because papers swapped stories with each other, counterculture news not covered in mainstream papers made its way from the more radical centers of California and New York, into places such as Jackson, Mississippi fairly quickly. In a pre-Internet age, the UPS allowed alternative news to flow very effectively. At a UPS conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan, one coordinator described the underground press as “three hundred fingers.” UPS’s role was to “make these fingers into a fist.”¹⁰¹ In addition to the UPS, there were at least four other alternative news gathering organizations that helped supply the underground press with national and international news. These groups included Liberation News Service, New York News Service, Alternative Features Service and Pacific News Service.¹⁰² The UPS also had several overseas offices that attempted to disseminate and organize underground newspapers in different countries. The UPS Europe office was maintained by Ian King, a homeless writer who hated to travel but whose mailing address in England seemed to change with every issue of *Magic Ink*, their official newsletter.¹⁰³ A perusal of all of the *Magic Inks* published in the Collection humorously details the trials and tribulations of managing the UPS Europe office. In the August 1973 issue of *Magic Ink*, King blames delay of publication on a series of unfortunate events:

We were searched by the Drugs Squad while leaving a party, had head lice the size of mosquitoes, bronchial asthma, one of the staff members destroyed a doctor’s fence whilst driving Bath Arts Workshop’s van, and Igor, our dog, has an abscess on his arse.¹⁰⁴

And the situation for *Magic Ink* continued to deteriorate with King’s dismal report in another issue that “UPS Europe has no money, no home and, from feedback from the last *Magic Ink*, no readers.”¹⁰⁵ In one issue, King ordered readers to staple and number the pages, themselves, confessing “This issue is late-it is badly produced.”¹⁰⁶ In *Smoking Typewriters*, McMillian writes that by 1968 the UPS in New York was “in total chaos” and “broke.”¹⁰⁷ Luckily, a long-

haired ruffian with a passion for hippie ‘mags’ and a business degree to boot came blazing into Greenwich Village in a 1946 Chevrolet school bus. Straight out of Phoenix, Arizona, the “Reverend Forcade,”¹⁰⁸ singlehandedly whipped the UPS into shape and ensured the preservation of hundreds of underground newspapers by creating the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection.

7. Bell bottoms & Bell & Howell: wacky work in Wooster

The year was 1970. A clunky old school bus filled with a bunch of ‘hippies’ and stacks of underground newspapers rolled into Wooster, Ohio. Their destination: the Microfilm Division of the Bell & Howell Company. The company put their groovy new business partners up in a hotel for the night. The next day, staff from the Underground Press Syndicate and the Bell & Howell Company began filming the first batch of what would ultimately become the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection. Bell & Howell began offering Underground Newspaper Collection sets to libraries as early as 1970. After the Collection’s initial start-up in 1970, staff at the UPS office would ship batches of newspapers to the Bell & Howell Company to microfilm into the mid-1980s. The last set of papers was microfilmed in 1986. When completed, the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection provided access to underground newspapers published from 1963-1985.¹⁰⁹

The story behind the Underground Newspaper Collection is both amusing and remarkable. It also demonstrates how one person with a great love and passion for the underground press created an amazing resource in which hundreds of counterculture newspapers have been preserved in libraries for scholars, students, and interested folks to enjoy for decades to come. While Thomas King Forcade, the man behind this remarkable feat is no longer with us (he committed suicide in 1978),¹¹⁰ the UPS Collection allows the papers Forcade dedicated so much of his life’s energy in supporting and defending to live on. As Forcade waxed not-so-eloquently before President Richard Nixon’s Commission on Obscenity and Pornography in 1970 in defense of the underground press, “these goddamned papers are our lives and nobody shall take our lives away with your goddamned laws ... So fuck off, and fuck censorship.”¹¹¹ I’d like to think that Forcade would be happy to know that, because of his tireless efforts these “goddamned papers” are still here, still waiting to be read by a new generation of rabble-rousers.

“Born as Kenneth Gary Goodson in Berkeley, California in 1945,”¹¹² Thomas King Forcade was an enigmatic figure. Today, Forcade seems to be most well known as the founder of *High Times*, that glossy, popular ‘Playboy’ of pot. Forcade made national headlines in the 1970s for the aforementioned testimony he provided at the Commission on Obscenity. His speech might

have gone unrecorded had he not topped it off by throwing a whipped cream pie in the face of the chairman upon his conclusion.¹¹³ He also debuted in the regular news for founding the Zippies (Yippies with a Zip!). The Zippies, who, unlike the Yippies, wouldn't be "McGoverned," caused a bit of a stir with their shenanigans at both the 1972 Democratic National and Republican Conventions in Miami Beach, Florida.¹¹⁴ While in Miami, Forcade was charged with and eventually acquitted of, firebombing charges. He also made the national news over a bizarre legal dispute with Abbie Hoffman over, of all things, a book titled *Steal this Book*.¹¹⁵

Despite these headline, there is very little written about the life of Forcade. Bill Weinberg, writer for *Cannabis Culture*, dubbed Forcade as the "unsung hero of the counterculture" writing that he "changed American culture as much as his confederates Abbie Hoffman and Larry Flynt."¹¹⁶ According to Weinberg, much of the world knows little about Forcade because he wanted it that way; "he labored behind the scenes" and "shunned the spotlight."¹¹⁷ Michael Chance, writing for *Take Over*, described Forcade as "an underground publisher, international smuggler, radical activist, and self-made millionaire."¹¹⁸ According to Chance, Forcade grew up in Phoenix, Arizona, obtained a business degree from the University of Utah, served in Air Force briefly, and around 1967, turned into a bit of a hippie.¹¹⁹ He bought a 1946 Chevy School bus, dubbed himself the "Reverend Forcade," and started an underground newspaper titled the *Orpheus*.¹²⁰ Forcade also began collecting underground newspapers and, it seems, until his death, never stopped collecting them. In his bus, Forcade began building a library of underground newspapers. In fact, Forcade had amassed so many underground newspapers that he decided to call up John Wilcock at the *East Village Other* in New York City to offer his assistance with the Underground Press Syndicate.¹²¹

John Wilcock, one of the UPS founders, remembers returning from his travels abroad to find the UPS in complete disarray. At that point in his life, Wilcock couldn't devote the time needed to 'fix' the syndicate so he was quite relieved when he got a call from a "Tom Forcade" in Phoenix who said he had a collection of papers and asked if Wilcock could use some help. Wilcock recalls welcoming Forcade as a partner (though he'd never even heard of him). He explained to Forcade that UPS was "financed – in a minuscule way – by group subscriptions whereby Time-Life [publishing company] would pay \$25 and be guaranteed copies of all member papers."¹²² According to Wilcock, Forcade wasted no time in moving to New York City. He became Director of UPS and came up with a more lucrative idea for funding the fledgling UPS.¹²³ In what Michael Chance called Forcade's "greatest coup," Tom formed a partnership with the Bell & Howell Company "to create a microfilm collection of every underground newspaper published in America and abroad."¹²⁴ An article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on the UPS reported on Forcade's savvy wheeling

and dealing, stating “UPS is not financed as you would expect ... The money comes from no less a capitalist venture than Bell & Howell, which pays UPS about \$10,000 a year to supply it with underground papers.”¹²⁵ This ‘venture’ became the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection which consists of nearly five hundred boxes of microfilm reels of well over eight hundred underground newspapers.

According to Chance, Forcade was “a tireless shit worker spending hours on the phone and typing letters to pin down and enumerate the shadowy ranks of the underground press.” Within a year of arrival, he had “...transformed UPS into an efficient organization.”¹²⁶ In addition to obtaining the microfilm contract with Bell & Howell, which funded the UPS and provided royalties to member newspapers, Forcade also advanced the underground press by sponsoring UPS Conferences, seeking advertising sources for papers, publishing marketing research on the underground press, aiding members with legal defense, promoting the papers, publishing extensive membership directories, and providing information about distributors.¹²⁷ Forcade also published and sold a booklet titled *How to Publish an Underground Paper* (not in the UPS collection), and “received accreditation to the Senate and House Press Galleries.”¹²⁸ He was turned down by the White House, however, for reasons even the *New York Times* could not ascertain.¹²⁹ In the September 1971 issue of *Free Ranger Intertribal News Service*, Forcade declared that he was suing Richard Nixon and the government to provide cause as to why he was considered a “security risk and to demand admittance to the White House Press Corps.”¹³⁰

If the state of UPS was in chaos prior to Forcade taking over the helm, the various official newsletters which seem to begin with his arrival reveal that he ran a pretty tight ship, at least as tight as one could run with a “vague alliance” of hundreds of often fledgling counterculture papers. The official UPS newsletters published from 1970-1985 provide excellent information on how the UPS operated, the state of the underground press during different time periods, its interaction with members, and the ‘business side’ to managing the syndicate. The official UPS newspapers also mirror the characteristics of the underground papers they represented throughout the years. All of the newsletters are available in the Underground Newspaper Collection and go by various titles such as *Free Ranger Intertribal News Service*, *Underground Press Service*, *Underground Press Revue*, *Alternative Press Revue*, *Alternative Journalism Review* and *Alternative Media*. The later publications, *Alternative Journalism Review* and *Alternative Media*, are quite different in characteristics from their more counterculture predecessors with more professional and in-depth reports, such as Chip Berlet’s “Carving up the Constitution,” an in-depth investigative piece on the government’s attack on the press.¹³¹

The official newsletters published throughout the UPS’s lifespan provide a wealth of data including member feedback. Letters from member newspapers

regarding their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the syndicate, as well as their trials and tribulations running an underground newspaper are published in the newsletters. The UPS newsletters also provide information on advertising, distribution, copyright, and other issues of importance to their members. In addition, the newsletters often reprinted 'trending' stories, comics, or articles that were currently making a buzz amongst the undergrounds. While there are hundreds of newspapers in the UPS collection, the official UPS newsletters serve as a sort of anthology. They're great sources for providing samples of some of the most popular stories and best articles published by the underground press during different time periods.

The UPS's success can be attributed in part to Forcade's excellent business skills. In the 1973 UPS Directory, Forcade, hoping to attract advertising sources, argued that the underground press was a ripe market for advertisers pointing out that "the legendary Woodstock, which had some 500,000 in attendance was advertised almost exclusively in the underground press."¹³² He also pointed out that regular media sources are largely ignored by the "subculture served by the underground press" writing that:

Most of the readers do not read newspapers, watch television or listen to conventional radio. If they do, they have little respect for such media or the advertisements found there. Thus the underground press, to some extent, holds a monopoly position with this huge subculture.¹³³

Forcade also recognized that because of the sheer diversity of UPS newspapers, the UPS, itself, had to be "somewhat anarchistic" in order to meet "the basic needs of the underground press."¹³⁴ Forcade reported that the UPS had expanded to such a degree that there were official UPS offices in Argentina, London, and Hong Kong.¹³⁵ In *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America*, John McMillian devotes an entire chapter to the UPS with lots of tidbits from folks who had worked at the UPS office in New York City with Forcade.¹³⁶ One such person was Rex Weiner, who recalled that in the middle of the UPS office was "a huge tie-dyed tent" and "a rock'n'roll band living there, and a bunch of really hot babes walking around."¹³⁷ There seemed to be a method to the madness, however, since the UPS lasted until 1985.

Libraries had several options of purchasing papers from the UPS. For \$50 a library could receive all newspapers in the UPS collection for six months, or pay \$100 for a year's worth. However, once the microfilm sets were available (sometime in 1970) libraries could begin purchasing entire runs of underground newspapers for \$500.¹³⁸ In an issue of *Free Ranger Intertribal News Service*, 141 "UPS Microfilm Repositories" were listed, revealing that there were microfilm sets in libraries as early as 1971 in 40 different states, as

well as collections in British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and Ontario.¹³⁹ Of the 141 libraries listed, fourteen are public libraries. Not surprisingly, the Wisconsin State Historical Library in Madison is among those listed. Thirteen libraries that had subscribed in print for either six months or one year are listed as well. Out of thirteen libraries, the American Library Association is listed. Out of the eleven academic libraries listed, three are from Canada and one is from New Zealand. The libraries who subscribed in print are listed with complete addresses and expiration dates because member newspapers were required to send copies of their newspapers to every library listed until their subscriptions ended.¹⁴⁰ Forcade also came up with options for individual subscriptions. One could purchase a sample packet of fifty papers for \$12 or a sample of ten papers for \$5.¹⁴¹ In fact, there were so many different options available for purchasing newspapers from the UPS that it's hard to keep track of them all. By 1985 and long after Forcade's passing, complete sets dating from 1973-1985 were sold. Although the origin of the Collection in my Library is shrouded in mystery (no one remembers how, when, or why we obtained it), I was surprised to discover that my institution is listed as a microfilm repository in a 1973 UPS newsletter.¹⁴²

What's most amazing about the UPS is that it worked as well as it did given that it operated in part on a system of trust. The syndicate published a directory each year with "complete information on all members, ad rates, publishing schedules, bulk distributor rates, editors, addresses, subscription rates and founding dates of all papers." To be a member of UPS, a paper owner had to agree to "free exchange" of their material, pay a \$25 initiation fee, and send six copies to UPS for "microfilming," "publicity," and for "UPS's own archiving purposes."¹⁴³ Members were also required to visibly indicate that they were members of UPS somewhere on their publications, "give credit to any papers reprinted," and "allow Bell & Howell full rights to microfilm their papers." The most crucial (and often neglected) rule was that they were required to send copies of their papers to all other members whose addresses were included in the yearly directories. In other words, if there were over 200 newspapers in the UPS directory, a member would have to send a copy of their newspaper to all 200 members. Given that many of these newspapers were struggling and operating on shoestring budgets, and given that member papers were operating on a system of trust, one can imagine the number of problems that occurred. International papers, for example, were constantly complaining that they were not receiving papers from the United States. Obviously, many of the papers did not want to bother with or could not afford airmail postage. There were frequent complaints published in the UPS newsletters from members angry that they were sending out their papers to other members, but not receiving papers in return. One such letter was published by Don Romundson of *Whipping Post* in Nelsonville, Wisconsin:

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Here is our \$25. We have finally got it together. We have paid our \$25 for membership. In everything we read that you send us there is a statement about the paper exchange. We could dig it, and thought it was an excellent idea. But dig this: Last month we sent out a paper to EVERY UPS MEMBER, and so far we have received absolutely NO PAPERS! We are rather pissed off to say the least. ... Christ, what is UPS good for ANYWAY if it isn't conducting exchange. ... Out of the two hundred papers, we didn't get any ... They regard the exchange as a complete waste of money instead of the idea-sharing it was meant to be. Are they all capitalists?

Yours Gratefully,

Don Romundson¹⁴⁴

Amazingly, despite the fact that the system did not operate perfectly, it operated well enough for the UPS to last from 1966 until 1985. Thomas King Forcade's passion for the underground press was truly impressive. Even after founding *High Times* in 1974, Forcade continued to support the UPS. He established a *High Times* office in Washington D.C., where Chip Berlet could continue his work on alternative media. According to Berlet, Forcade funded the UPS until his death in 1978. Forcade devoted nearly a decade of his life's energy into supporting the alternative press in our country, both through his leadership and financially. He was a visionary who strongly believed in freedom of the press. When Gabrielle Schang-Forcade once asked him what he felt about the "straight media," Forcade responded as follows:

In the past 20 years the entire media has been bought up and become a subsidiary of big business. There is no media self-criticism in this country. The result is inevitable ... The people who own the media are blatantly controlled by the government and big business.¹⁴⁵

Forcade obtained a contract with Bell & Howell as a way to finance UPS and provide member newspapers with a little extra funding as well. However, another consequence of this deal has been that hundreds of the small underground newspapers he so passionately supported have also been preserved. Reflecting on the legacy of his friend, Ron Lichty, wrote:

The alternative press worldwide owes a great debt to the late Thomas King Forcade. He was undoubtedly responsible for more underground and alternative papers' and magazines' beginning publication than any other five persons put together.¹⁴⁶

By 1980, an *Alternative Review* was still being published¹⁴⁷. Some of the crew who kept the UPS going at that time included Craig Silver, Ron Lichty, Chip Berlet, and Harvey Wasserman. Chip Berlet's name appears on the masthead of one of the last official UPS publications in 1985. Although, I've mainly focused on Forcade, it's hard to know how many folks devoted their time and energy to the UPS and who they even were. They weren't a self-congratulatory bunch and must have been motivated by love and a belief that what they were doing had real meaning. They obviously didn't do it for the money. In 1973, a reporter asked Don Weimer, who was in charge of microfilming the underground papers for Bell & Howell, whether he thought it had been "worth all the trouble." Weimer replied:

They have some pretty good reasoning behind their shouting. What isn't worthwhile won't stay. Ten and 20 years from now, scholars will look at these microfilm copies and see how things have evolved.¹⁴⁸

Nearly forty years have now passed and it seems as though this Collection is more relevant than ever. Reflecting on the importance of the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection, John Wilcock, founder of the Underground Press Syndicate, wrote "I do think it's very important that there is an actual record of underground papers in the form that Bell & Howell made it. I certainly wish the papers were all available, digitized or whatever."¹⁴⁹ Because Thomas King Forcade was always on the cutting edge, it seems like he would *want* this Collection digitized for a younger generation to enjoy. I asked Rex Weiner, former staff member at UPS and friend of Forcade, what he thought Tom would do with the Collection if he were alive today. Weiner chuckled and half-jokingly replied, "if Tom didn't already have his own copy of the Collection, he would've broken into a library at night, stolen the entire set, digitized it himself, and had it up on the Web the very next morning."¹⁵⁰

8. Legacy of the UPS

In 1973, the *Washington Post* published an article entitled "Zap! No more Underground Press!" which suggested that the readership of underground newspapers had dwindled to the point that the papers were no longer relevant.¹⁵¹ According to the *Post*, the underground press was dying out because "their readership became depoliticized" and there was nothing "left to shout about."¹⁵² The article concluded, "They cannot shed tears for Hard Times or Leviathan. Those days are over."¹⁵³ If the underground press is generally agreed to have been born in 1964 with the founding of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, its end is not so clear. Ed Sanders (*East Village Other*) was once asked to comment on

why the counterculture movement seemed to have lost steam and had become cynical in the early 1970s. Sanders remarked “We’re tired; I’ve been here since ’58 and I haven’t had a day off. Ginsberg’s been doing it since about thirty years.”¹⁵⁴ Many scholars have suggested the underground press fizzled out with the end of the draft and the war in Vietnam.

Furthermore, the peaceful revolution that once was envisioned had degenerated into eruptions of violence throughout the United States during the late 1960s and into the early seventies, most notably; the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, violence at the 1968 Democratic Convention, “Bloody Thursday” at Berkeley’s People’s Park protests, mayhem at the Altamont Free Concert in California, the Kent State Massacre and the Jackson State killings. The long arm of the Establishment seemed to be winning the cultural battle as the FBI’s counterintelligence programs (COINTELPRO) constantly targeted the underground press.

Indeed, a growing sense of disappointment and cynicism seemed to spread within the counterculture movement. For a brief moment in late 1960s, a door appeared to open for real change. Many in the youth movement envisioned a society based on love, care, peace and social justice. Racism and inequality would decline as our society became more educated. The Military-Industrial complex would be dismantled, and our Country would cease its Imperialistic aspirations. Americans could seek more holistic lifestyles that embraced cooperation, doing more with less, enjoying life, and leaving the smallest possible footprint on our environment.

One can feel a profound sense of sadness in the words of John Sinclair when this door for meaningful change seemed to be closing:

We had been so wiped out by our visions of love and universal truth that we were blinded to the real nature of the death culture and we just couldn’t believe it when Babylon refused to melt away in the face of the colossal wave of good feelings we had let loose on Amerika. ... This wasn’t quite what we expected, and it knocked most of us right off our feet, and we still haven’t recovered from the shock of finding out that the world wasn’t going to change just because that was the best thing for it.¹⁵⁵

James Danky, however, writing in 1974 on the “supposed death of the underground press” suggested that the “subject tone of many papers” had changed but that the “alternative” press was still flourishing.¹⁵⁶ He suggested that papers tended to focus more on “questions of survival and control of one’s lifestyle.”¹⁵⁷ The *Whole Earth Catalogs*, for example, became popular during this time period.¹⁵⁸ Reflecting this notion of survival in the 1970s was an underground newspaper aptly titled *Post Amerikan* which lasted until 2004 and

attempted to resurface later as a blog.¹⁵⁹ The UPS itself includes alternatives published until 1985.

An exploration of the publications in this Collection reveals a shift in the characteristics of the underground press as papers became more specialized around causes such as women's liberation, gay rights, the emergence of New Age lifestyles, and Ecology. It might be more appropriate to say that the underground press evolved into alternative publications that focused less on an alienated Vietnam-era youth movement and more on a maturing baby boomer group whose activism led them in more diverse directions. John Foster "Chip" Berlet, one of several who held the Alternative Press Syndicate together until the end, continues to be a tireless activist for freedom of the press and a sentinel for crimes against civil liberties.¹⁶⁰ Some have suggested that those in the sixties counterculture became cynical in the seventies, gave up on the multitude of concerns plaguing our nation, 'sold out,' and got rich in the eighties. It's comforting and inspiring, then, to discover how many of the original underground press writers, like Berlet, are out there in the blog-o-sphere still fighting against senseless wars, racism, injustice, and ecological destruction. Harvey Wasserman (Liberation News Service) went on to found No Nukes and hosts "Green Power and Wellness" on Progressive Radio.¹⁶¹ Thorne Dreyer (*The Rag*) maintains the "Rag Blog Spot" and Rag Radio where several members of the underground press write about current issues and provide excellent book reviews.¹⁶² John Sinclair (*Ann Arbor Sun*) maintains Radio Free Amsterdam and continues to fight for legalization of marijuana.¹⁶³ John Wilcock blogs about cultural and political issues in his "Column of Lasting Insignificance."¹⁶⁴ Former crew of the *East Village Other* recently held a reunion at New York University to educate students about their experiences in the underground press.¹⁶⁵ Trina Robbins continues to publish comix for "grrrlz."¹⁶⁶ Billy X. Jennings maintains "It's About Time," the Black Panther's Web Site with freely accessible issues of the *Black Panther Intertribal Communal News Service*.¹⁶⁷ Ken Wachsbarger (*Joint Issue*) has been on a lifelong quest to keep the spirit of the underground press alive through his extensive *Voices of the Underground* series¹⁶⁸. A.J. Webberman (*East Village Other*) continues to contribute general weirdness to the field of "Dylanology."¹⁶⁹

It's been over forty years since the underground press flourished, but in the last few years there has been a notable resurgence of interest in the Vietnam-era underground newspapers. It kind of makes sense, though. After a senseless, decade-long war in Afghanistan; women's reproductive rights in the spotlight *again*; with racist policies concerning immigration being enacted; with censorship and surveillance by the government ratcheting up; with corporate greed, media consolidation, the failed drug war, and ceaseless destruction of our environment; it make one wonder if we'd be in this shape *now* if the underground press had been taken seriously enough.

9. Showdown in the Richmond City Council meeting

Most underground newspapers were sold by street vendors and were also available from local head shops, bookstores, and on college campuses. Many librarians, as part of their mission to provide all their readers with a diverse selection, began to encounter the challenges that went along with providing access to local underground papers which might not be popular with conservative patrons. In 1968, mayhem broke out at the El-Cerrito branch of the Richmond Public Library in California over the presence of the *Berkeley Barb* on library shelves.¹⁷⁰ At the El-Cerrito City Council Meeting, community members expressed their outrage that the library would provide such “subversive” and “pornographic” garbage. Due to community pressure, the *Barb* was temporarily pulled for evaluation by the library’s book selection committee. John Forsman, Richmond Librarian, defended the *Barb*:

It provides news not covered elsewhere in the press. It expresses a contemporary point of view which is not reflected in other media, It is unique as a record of social phenomena and their impact on the local scene.¹⁷¹

A particularly irate community member identified as “Mrs. L. Klock,” took such offense that she began a crusade to exorcise the *Barb* from the public library, of all places!¹⁷² On August 26, 1968, Pacifica Radio recorded, and released as an album, the entire Richmond City Council Meeting in which Mrs. Klock challenged John Forsman, calling for a ban on the *Barb*. A description on the album’s cover notes that “the meeting itself was much more disorderly” than it sounded on the record and that “There were cheers, boos, shouted insults and general rudeness.”¹⁷³ Priests, an attorney from the American Civil Liberties Union, a local Birch Society Member, and community members both for and against the library providing access to the *Barb* were in attendance. At one point Mrs. Klock stated that the *Berkeley Barb* was more dangerous to the minds of young people than “childhood diseases.” A priest attempted to take up for the *Barb* by claiming there was nothing in it that wasn’t already in the Bible. In the end, censorship claimed victory and the *Barb* was officially banned from the Richmond Public Library.¹⁷⁴ The liner notes on the Pacifica Recording described the meeting as “a unique and often frightening experience for those who believe that materials selection for libraries is merely a rational, intellectual exercise confined to librarians.”¹⁷⁵

While the underground papers fought censorship and harassment by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI’s COINTELPRO on one front, librarians fought for the freedom of patrons to access these papers on another. Librarians were encouraged to serve all of their patrons by offering access to a diverse collection

including publications both mainstream, and marginal. In the tumultuous cultural climate of the 1960s, some librarians realized their role in helping citizens make informed decisions by including literature representing a whole spectrum of viewpoints, even when some of these included views that the mainstream found offensive. Some of the underground press's greatest allies in the fight against censorship were librarians. In *American Libraries*, James Ridgeway describes the value of the underground press:

Most important, the underground press opened up the press to ordinary people ... Journalism, the very best journalism, is not a business for professional technicians, but ought rather to be the natural evocation of every citizen in a democracy. And in that sense the underground radicals have created the basis for real revolutionary change.¹⁷⁶

Perhaps no librarian was a better advocate for the inclusion of alternative materials than James Danky, who compiled *Undergrounds: A Union List of Alternative Periodicals in Libraries of the US & Canada* in 1974.¹⁷⁷ To “fellow librarians” who were “not so easily convinced” of the importance of collecting underground newspapers, Danky wrote:

The size, popularity, and diversity of content and approach provide sufficient reasons for institutional collecting and serious scholarship. The growing number of dissertations and master's theses based on these materials is proof of the value placed upon research in the alternative press.¹⁷⁸

Today, another type of restriction impacts the free flow of information in libraries; media consolidation and the lack of alternative materials in the database bundles offered by large vendors. In *Fostering Media Diversity in Libraries: Strategies and Actions*, a publication by The Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association, librarians are advised to give “special attention” to the “acquisition of and access to small, independent, and alternative sources – including locally produced and international ones.”¹⁷⁹ The importance of providing access to alternative voices in libraries is explained:

When media consolidation restricts the creation and dissemination of multiple perspectives, the public no longer has a healthy, open exchange of information and ideas. In an era when democratic discourse is more essential than ever, the information system is out of balance. Libraries must provide forums – both physical and virtual – that create opportunities for individuals to engage in the open and balanced exchange of viewpoints and ideas.¹⁸⁰

Unfortunately, libraries facing economic challenges find themselves making hard decisions about what to purchase. All too often, big database vendors that provide the 'sweetest' deal are favored over smaller, independent sources that librarians feel may not be heavily used by their patrons, are more costly, and probably will entail cataloging nightmares. In a study by LaFond, Ulling, and Irving (2000) on the inclusion of alternative serials in the databases that are most purchased by libraries, the authors found that alternative materials were "not well represented" in the "the commercial products available today."¹⁸¹ In a study on the inclusion of alternative materials in libraries, Donna Davey argues that. "since the dissident press has a long history of being overlooked, libraries should make an extra effort to ensure that non-mainstream titles are included in serials initiatives."¹⁸²

Most of the underground newspapers in the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection are not included in available commercial databases. However, for American Studies, History, Sociology, Political Science, Art and Communications scholars the papers in this collection constitute primary resources of immense value. Davey notes:

Researchers wishing to expose every angle of a topic should seek coverage in the alternative press. In fact, one of the most detrimental and perhaps unrecognized consequences of hidden collections of alternative serials is the hole in scholarship left when research draws only on mainstream media.¹⁸³

Although the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection is currently preserved in microfilm in at least 109 libraries worldwide, the format deters a significant number of scholars and students who are used to and have come to expect the convenience of full text access to materials through databases. Because of the collection's tedious and outdated format, the probability that students will ever come across the papers in the Underground Newspaper Collection during their research is slim. Some librarians may counter by saying that if students really want to have access to this Collection, they can simply come into the library. However, as Davey notes, "in an era of digital immediacy, access means not just ensured availability through longevity, but immediate fulfillment of demand."¹⁸⁴ She suggests that librarians seek digitization initiatives of microfilm resources. Of particular importance are alternative serials that have been overlooked by big database vendors (even those providing retrospective access). Again, according to *Fostering Media Diversity*, librarians are encouraged to "request database aggregators to include small/ independent/ alternative resources in their packages, and their collections overall."¹⁸⁵ As the primary markets for these vendors, librarians must let providers know that we want more retrospective access to alternative publications.

Another option is for librarians to create their own digitization initiatives for underground press publications that were local to their region. Currently, New York University is in the process of digitizing the *East Village Other*.¹⁸⁶ The Ann Arbor District Library has digitized the *Ann Arbor Sun*.¹⁸⁷ Georgia State University has digitized all copies of *The Great Speckled Bird*¹⁸⁸, and Cleveland State University Libraries have digitized *The Buddhist Third Class Junk Mail Oracle*¹⁸⁹.

Suzanne Parenti Sink, who obtained a Ph.D in English from Old Dominion University and studies the 1960s underground press in the South, has created The Southern Underground Press Web Site. She hopes to create a network where underground newspapers from the Deep South will be digitized and made available to the public. Paving the way, she has digitized all issues of *The Inquisition* (Charlotte, North Carolina). Sink provides details on her Web site regarding her experience digitizing *The Inquisition*, including how she tracked down former staff of *The Inquisition* and obtained permission to carry out the project. Passionate about making sure folks know that the counterculture movement was very much alive in the South, she encourages others to join her.¹⁹⁰ Additionally, Jeff Moyer and Ken Wachsberger plan to unveil “Independent Voices: a Collection of an Alternative Press.” This database will, ultimately, include sets of over 800 digitized titles of underground feminist, antiwar, LGBT, Black Power, Hispanic, Native American, anarchist, alternative literary magazines, dissident GI newspapers and ultra-conservative right-wing publications. Librarians and scholars interested in purchasing these sets, offered through a unique acquisition model unlike that of most corporate vendors today, should contact Jeff Moyer of Reveal Digital LLC.¹⁹¹

10. Extra! Extra! Squint your eyes and read all about it

Although the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection is still only available in microfilm, there are ways that librarians can increase knowledge about the collection and promote it. Creating displays and exhibits like the one I described in the opening is one method for raising awareness and interest in the Collection. One of the most amazing aspects of this collection is its bold, shocking, in-your-face graphics. Simply displaying a collage of underground newspaper covers with bold interesting headlines and books about the underground press creates an instant visual representation of the Collection. Inviting students, faculty, and community members to presentations about the Collection is another way to generate interest. In March of 2012, I presented “Occupy the Occupast: Echoes of Dissidence in the Underground Newspaper Collection.” The purpose of the presentation was to discuss the similarities and differences between the Occupy Wall Street Movement (OWS) and the

Vietnam-era counterculture movement as illustrated through news stories and graphics from the underground newspaper collection.

Reaching out to faculty in history, political science, sociology, art, and communications departments and offering to collaborate with them on assignments or projects that would encourage their students to use the Underground Newspaper Collection as primary sources is a great way to promote the Collection. I offer to give presentations about the Collection to student clubs and campus groups, an offer which, thus far, has been taken up by our campus ethics club.

There have been many excellent digitization efforts of individual underground newspapers that could be promoted to students. In addition to the ones already mentioned, other papers which have been, or are in the process of being digitized, and are available freely on the Web include packets of Liberation News Service,¹⁹² Antiwar GI Newspapers from the Radical History Project at the Harry Bridges Center for Labor History at the University of Washington,¹⁹³ the *Black Panther Intercommunal News Service*,¹⁹⁴ *The Rag*,¹⁹⁵ *The Paper*,¹⁹⁶ and *The International Times (iT)*.¹⁹⁷

Additionally, several excellent books about the underground press have recently been published and should be purchased by libraries, including Ken Wachsberger's four volume *Voices of the Underground* series. In this extensive series, the history behind a wide variety of underground newspapers is told through first-hand accounts of those who created and wrote for them. Wachsberger's series is a monumental contribution to the underground press. John McMillian's well-received *Smoking Typewriters* is a must-read for all scholars of the underground press. McMillian's extensive bibliography reveals much primary research from the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection. Sean Stewart's *On the Ground* is a perfect teaser to get folks interested in the underground press as it provides page-by-page graphics from the actual underground papers with little tidbits from those who wrote for the newspapers covered. One of the best ways to promote this collection is just to let people see it. The graphics alone are enough to provoke interest. Although published much earlier, Abe Peck's classic on the underground press, *Uncovering the Sixties, The Life and Times of the Underground Press* is an excellent resource for students unfamiliar with the major cultural and political events of the 1960s. These are just a few of several great books published on the underground press but are essential reading for faculty and students interested in putting the papers in the Underground Newspaper Collection in their proper context.

Since the Collection is on microfilm, providing as many access points as possible to the Collection is crucial. Access points include cataloging, library handouts, and subject guides. In order to promote the Collection I created an extensive online guide and regularly send the link to faculty members and ask them to share it with their students. This guide provides information about the

UPS Underground Newspaper Collection, a tutorial, a bibliography of books about the underground press, links to individual papers which have been digitized, and a listing of all the newspapers in the Collection.¹⁹⁸ This guide continues to be a work in progress and anyone wishing to collaborate and add additional information to the guide is encouraged to contact me.¹⁹⁹

Although the Collection is in microfilm, when conducting presentations or creating displays on underground newspapers it's beneficial to obtain a few original print copies of the papers so students and community members can experience firsthand how unique these papers are. In *Occupy Nation*, Todd Gitlin described the energy and fervor of the early months of Occupy Wall Street writing that people “started newspapers and theoretical journals. They lived pell-mell in the grip of what Barrie Thorne, writing about the sixties, once called *event time*, hurtling from action to action with high fervor and much jubilation.”²⁰⁰ Flipping through an original underground newspaper from the 1960s, one can almost feel that energy of ‘event time’ and sense the ‘fervor’ and excitement with which it was written. Possibly no other media in our nation’s history captures such youthful exuberance as the 1960s underground press. David Carr, upon being handed a copy of the *Occupied Wall Street Journal* in Zuccotti Park pondered what makes a print, tangible newspaper unique:

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Forgive an old newspaper hack a moment of sentimentality, but tis somehow reassuring that a newspaper has traction in an environment preoccupied by social media. It makes sense when you think about it: newspapers convey a sense of place, of actually being there, that digital media can't. When is the last time somebody handed you a Web site?²⁰¹

The papers in the Underground Newspaper Collection were lovingly and painstakingly designed and illustrated. Luckily, thousands of underground newspapers have been preserved in the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection for at least five hundred years, the known-preservation life of microfilm. Thanks to Thomas King Forcade and all of the individuals who devoted time and energy to the Underground Press Syndicate, we have this Collection of immense value. The challenge is in making it more visible, a fact that is somewhat ironic since this is a Collection of some of the most graphic, colorful, eye-catching newspapers ever published.

11. A fair hearing

It has been said that “history is written by the winners” but the fact is that we have in our possession a vast chronicle of our nation’s history written by

a laughable, lovable, bunch of losers! It can also be said that history is more kind to the underdog because that's where we get our heroes from. Whistle blowers like Daniel Elsberg and Julian Assange are lauded for their efforts to shine light into dark places, but the UPS Underground Newspaper Collection contains hundreds, if not thousands, of firsthand accounts of people enduring a struggle for their mere existence. Their stories can inspire and inform us in unimaginable ways, but the reason why this archive is so important is because it literally details the extraordinary lives of ordinary people normally silent, but forced by the prison of their own consciences to speak out or cease to exist. Instead of continually reinventing ourselves, we could just acknowledge who we are: half of us are hell-raising rabble-rousers discontent with our 'imperfect union'.

If our strength lies in our diversity, then we need to hear from as many voices as possible to reinforce defiance, a defining characteristic of our humanity. The important thing is to express yourself, a risk the underground press was not afraid to take, often even reveling in their brave attempts to 'stick it to the man.'

Free Speech is no joke; just ask the thousands of people who have been jailed, pepper sprayed, gassed, or clubbed for expressing it since the Occupy Wall Street Movement started in September of 2011. Librarians are tasked with the responsibility of protecting the free flow of ideas, both mainstream and marginal. We do an excellent job acquiring knowledge; the challenge is in disseminating it. While students and scholars are able to access many retrospective articles and newspapers online through databases and on the Web, the hundreds of alternative, shoe-string budget papers which aren't available digitally still exist only because of Thomas King Forcade and the Underground Press Syndicate's efforts to have them microfilmed. Vendors and giant publishing conglomerates dictate what users are able to instantly access. Because little perceived demand exists for the Underground Newspaper Collection, the probability of its being digitized is slim. However, librarians must not only ensure that this valuable resource is available, but must make it *easily* accessible. Whether this entails delving into issues of copyright, exploring digitization initiatives, making vendors aware of the immense value in the underground press, or creating more access points such as handouts and indexes to the Collection, we can't allow these papers to disappear from the historical record. The scholarly importance of the collection is confirmed by historians such as Paul Buhl, Faculty Emeritus at Brown University, who recently referred to the underground press as "one of the great wonders of modern cultural politics."²⁰² John McMillian, a historian too young to have witnessed the sixties firsthand, spent countless hours using the Collection while doing research for what culminated in his well-received book on the underground press. In *Smoking Typewriters*, McMillian concluded that

...never again will we see anything like the underground press of the sixties ... the underground press had a specific raison d'être: it was created to bring tidings of the youth rebellion to cities and campuses across America and to help build a mass movement.²⁰³

Joseph W. Grant, founder of the Prisoners' Digest International, reminds us that the writers of the underground press "fought the Vietnam-era war machine with an assault of words and actions..."²⁰⁴ We have a serious restriction on information here, made critical by its content: subversive opposition to suppression. These are the words of people beaten down in the streets for standing up for what they believed. Some died or went crazy fighting for civil liberties and for speaking out against an unjust war. From their moldy, yellowed, microfilm cells, it's time to free those voices of dissent. Don't we owe them at least a fair hearing?

12. Acknowledgments

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APPENDIX A - PHOTOGRAPHS

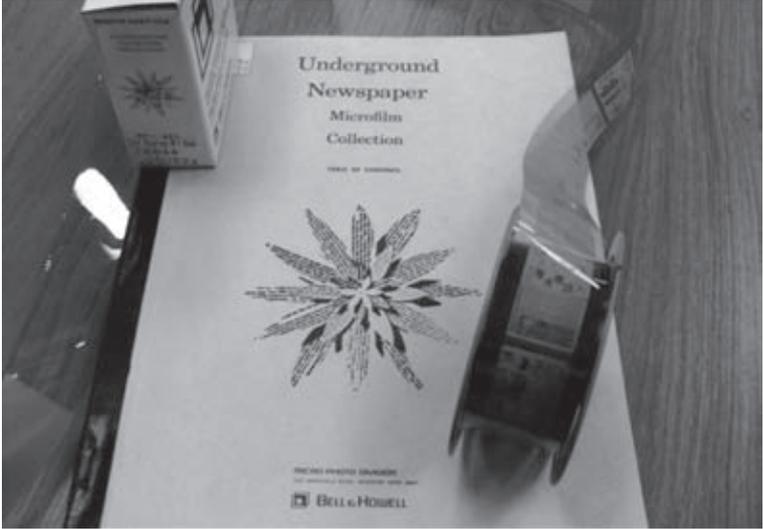


Figure 1: UPS Index to the Underground Newspaper Collection. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo



Figure 2: Display in the Houston Cole Library promoting the Underground Newspaper Collection in March 2012. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo



Figure 3: Student using the Underground Newspaper Collection in the Houston Cole Library. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo

Figure 4: Student viewing the from Georgia State University's Great Speckled Bird Traveling Exhibit, in the Houston Cole Library in March, 2012. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo





Figure 5: Student exploring the Underground Newspaper Collection in the Houston Cole Library. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo

Figure 6: Student reading *The Great Speckled Bird* in the Houston Cole Library in March 2012. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo





Figure 7: Student looking at Georgia State University's Great Speckled Bird Traveling Exhibit in the Houston Cole Library in March, 2012. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo

Figure 8: Student struggling with microfilm in the Houston Cole Library in March, 2012. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo





Figure 9: Student viewing an 'underground' paper on the microfilm machine in March, 2012. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo

Figure 10: The Underground Newspaper Collection on a microfilm reader. (c) 2012 L. Charnigo





Figure 11: Thomas King Forcade, Director of the Underground Press Syndicate. (c) 2012 Chip Berlet

Figure 12: The last UPS Directory published in 1986. (c) 2012 Chip Berlet





Figure 13: Chip Berlet using the College Press Service ATF Chief 15 offset printing press in Denver, Colorado. (c) 2012 Chip Berlet

Figure 14: “Phil Ochs on the steps of the National Student Association in Washington, DC after being interviewed in 1974 by Chip Berlet for an article on Nixon’s resignation that August. Ochs saw himself as part of the underground press culture.” (c) 2012 Chip Berlet





Figure 15: “A. J. Weberman engages in dumpster diving on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC as part of his garbology research series in the underground press in the 1970s.” (c) 2012 Chip Berlet

Figure 16: One of the last publications produced by the UPS/ APS in 1985. (c) 2012 Chip Berlet

