

The Lithuanian Fanzine Collection: Creating and Visualizing Metadata

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Abstract. This article aims to highlight aspects of creating the Lithuanian fanzine collection available at Lithuania's Youth Culture Digital Archive with a more detailed focus on building fanzine metadata structure and metadata visualization options. Fanzines are informal or alternative press created and distributed by youth subcultures. Despite the lack of bibliographic information that fanzines provide and the manual population of descriptive metadata by professional metadata creators, it is a time-consuming process that requires agreement on a standardized vocabulary, phrases, and terminology. Nevertheless, metadata is essential in improving document search, preserving fanzine culture, and enriching fanzine analysis. This study presents metadata structure and visualizations linkages that represent the scope of the fanzine collection. The results show that a well-structured metadata schema facilitates effective data management, search, and retrieval of information reflecting the distinctive characteristics of fanzines. Additional metadata fields (subculture, data type, collectors, and comments) provide contextual details, enabling more precise record identification and a deeper contextual understanding of specific youth group publications. Moreover, collection overview graphs (timeline, map, and network) serve as valuable tools for analyzing the collection and help the readers gain insight into fanzine culture from the perspective of the fanzine publishing period, the geographical distribution of fanzine production, and fanzines in personal collections by understanding fanzine circulation extent.

Keywords: Fanzines, Zines, Collection, Non-Professional Press, Lithuanian Youth, Subcultures, 1990s, Metadata, Visualization

1. Introduction

There is a growing effort to preserve memory, cultural practices, and youth cultural heritage in contemporary society. Digital archives enabled access to a distinctive cultural and historical aspect of youth subcultures by engaging diverse communities in collecting and preserving material. One of the artifacts of youth subculture is fanzines – the informal press they create and distribute.

The term 'fanzine' (abbreviated as 'zine') originated in Western culture and was a combination of two English words: 'fan' and 'magazine.' This term was coined by the amateur fiction writer Louis Russ Chauvenet in his magazine *Detours* No. 6, which appeared in October 1940 in the United States of America (Sheidlower, 2020). American

fanzine researcher Stephen Duncombe defines them as non-commercial, non-professional, often small-circulation publications or magazines created and distributed by the creators and authors, as amateurs, from the literary and musical genres, sports fans, and the arts (Duncombe, 1997).

Fanzines have been a significant form of self-expression for over 60 years (Triggs, 2010). These self-produced fanzines serve as valuable artifacts, offering unique insights into musical trends, worldviews, and cultural activities often overlooked or marginalized by mainstream media. As a phenomenon of alternative youth culture, fanzines oppose the norms and standards of popular culture (Duncombe, 1997; Worley, 2018). Fanzines, as an informal media, serve as an ideas dissemination form for individual subcultural groups, shaping and representing subcultural identities (Haynes, 1995; Millward, 2008; Ryan, 2015), impacting the public spaces (Vivant, 2018) and creative culture (Austin & Eladhari, 2024).

Fanzine's research covers sociocultural, subcultural, and youth identity discourses. With the rise of digital humanities, fanzine research aspects expanded. Mapping of the fanzines (Guerra and Quintela, 2014) fanzine corpus analysis, including word frequency, helps to reveal text structures of fanzines which reflect specific worldviews, relations between fanzine creators and readers, their communication forms, as well as the changing impact on society and enables an investigation of the various linguistic topics (Gabbalo, 2012).

Meanwhile, the collecting, archiving, and digitization of fanzines have been well-established practices in world archives¹. Digitized collections significantly contribute to the enrichment of research resources, as fanzine researchers discuss not only the importance and value of fanzines but also the perspectives on their collection, digitization, and preservation (see Koh, 2008; Price and Robinson, 2017; *Art Libraries Journal*, 2018; Trotter, 2019).

Moreover, archival data has become increasingly important in research, particularly in the digital humanities field. It provides more comprehensive insights into archival analysis, datasets, and research phenomena (Hawkins, 2022). By offering structured information about data, metadata enhances the accuracy, transparency, and interpretative depth of digital analyses. However, the question remains: Which metadata model and potential metadata visualizations are optimal for reflecting the scope of the collection, its composition, the distribution and publication history, and the relationship between the contributors of the collection and the documents they submit?

This article aims to examine the use of metadata by analyzing the Lithuanian Zine's Collection database, available at Lithuania's Youth Culture Digital Archive², consisting of more than 10,000 scanned pages that resulted in 550 digital documents, mainly self-published, informal, non-professional Lithuanian youth subculture press such as punk, rock music, fan-fiction, football fans, and other fanzines (84% of the collection) and fanzines leading material such as flyers, brochures, newsletters, catalogs and similar (16% of the collection).

The objectives are: 1) to present the main principles of metadata structure creation considering the distinctive characteristics of fanzines, and 2) to illustrate the possible collection visualization options, focusing on the statistical document analysis.

¹ <https://archive.org/details/zines?sort=-date>; <http://www.archivesportaleurope.net/web/guest>

² <https://jauka.knf.vu.lt/en-US>

The following sections will discuss the process and stages of metadata building and descriptive metadata visualization linkages, considering the specific nature and particularities of fanzines created by Lithuanian youth subcultures in the 1990s.

2. Lithuanian Zine Collection’s Metadata Structure and Creation of Descriptive Metadata

Standardized metadata models have their benefits and disadvantages (Fay, 2014). Such models may only partially be suitable for specific document types, such as informally produced youth fanzines (cf. Fee, 2008; Culbertson and Jackson, 2016). The distinctive characteristics of fanzines create a challenge for libraries attempting to catalog them (O’Dell, 2014), resulting in the inaccessibility of collections through poor or non-existent bibliographic records (Hall and Smith, 1997).

While conducting fanzine research, it was noticed that bibliographical fanzine information is insufficient and often incomplete. In many cases, it is not always clear when a fanzine was created, where it was printed, or who the publishers were. Many authors used pseudonyms or variations of their names, which could change from issue to issue. The name of the fanzine may also vary. Moreover, some fanzines were single publications with a limited circulation, number of pages, or quality features.

The nature of fanzines as non-traditional, alternative, or underground publications requires a distinctive approach, especially when it comes to descriptive metadata. Therefore, Lithuania’s Youth Culture Digital Archives project aimed not only to collect fanzines and their leading material from the community but also, working with the project’s team of researchers who study the Lithuanian youth subcultures or are involved in the fanzine cultural field, to develop a metadata structure that reflects the distinctive characteristics of fanzines, reveals the subcultural realities of youth, and contributes to preserving fanzine culture.

Before building the final metadata structure and programming the database environment, the project team chose an Excel spreadsheet as the best way to work with the initial records, populating with new data and editing according to the amount and type of incoming documents (see Figure 1).

Thumbnail	Archive ná	Institu	Collection name	Data kind	Subcultū	Title	Year	Issi	Authors	Publisher	Collector	Place	Language
2	Zin_12-Kedzu_1991.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek įvairūs	12 kėdžių	1997		Benediktas Januševičius	Vano burnos	Ugnius Liogė	Vilnius	Lietuvių
3	Zin_Abominata_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Abominata	1993	1	Linus Pielikis, Egidijus Krasauskas, Nerijus Kibi	Ugnius Liogė	Tauragė	Lietuvių	
4	Zin_Ad-Arma_01_EN.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Ad Arma!	2001	1	Tadas Kazlauskas	Ledo Takas Records	Tadas	Vilnius	Anglų
5	Zin_Ad-Arma_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Ad Arma!	2001	1	Tadas Kazlauskas	Ledo Takas Records	Tadas	Kaunas	Lietuvių
6	Zin_Ad-Arma_02.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Ad Arma!	2002	2	Tadas Kazlauskas, M No	Ledo Takas Records	Tadas	Savonlinna	Anglų
7	Zin_Aeternum_Silentium_0	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Singlė	Tek Metalistai	Aeternum Silentium	1995	1	Mindaugas Kalinauskas		Aurelija	Alytus	Anglų
8	Zin_Aeternum_Silentium_0	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Aeternum Silentium	1995	1	Mindaugas Kalinauskas		Aurelija	Alytus	Anglų
9		Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Aeternum Silentium	1995	1	Mindaugas Kalinauskas		Saulius Majauskas	Alytus	Anglų
10		Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Aeternum Silentium	1995	1	Mindaugas Kalinauskas		Ugnius Liogė	Alytus	Anglų
11	Zin_Ale_sposai_01_1995.j	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Pankai	Ale Šposai?	1995	1	Aleksas Gračiovas		Kreatorius	Tauragė	Lietuvių
12		Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Pankai	Ale Šposai?	1995	2	Aleksas Gračiovas		Kreatorius	Tauragė	Lietuvių
13	Zin_Ale_sposai_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Pankai	Ale Šposai?	1995	2	Aleksas Gračiovas		Ugnius Liogė	Tauragė	Lietuvių
14		Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Andaja	1994	1	Dailė, Kristė, Skalpas		Albertas Mickėnas	Alytus	Lietuvių
15		Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zino priedas	Tek Metalistai	Andaja	1994	1	Dailė, Kristė, Skalpas		Aurelija	Alytus	Lietuvių
16	Zin_Andaja_00_bukletas.jp	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Bukletas	Tek Metalistai	Andaja	1996				Saulius Majauskas	Lietuvių	
17	Zin_Andaja_01_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Andaja	1995	2	Dailė, Kristė		Ugnius Liogė	Alytus	Lietuvių
18	Zin_Andaja_01_5_priedas.j	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zino priedas	Tek Metalistai	Andaja	1995	1,5	Ther, Dailė, Kristė		Ugnius Liogė	Alytus	Lietuvių
19	Zin_Andaja_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Andaja	1994	1	Dailė, Kristė, Skalpas		Ugnius Liogė	Alytus	Lietuvių
20	Zin_Another-World_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	Another World	1996	1	Rosvaldas Sarapinas, Darius Launavičius		Ugnius Liogė	Vilkių	Lietuvių
21	Zin_Ant-dumiau_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Pankai	Ant dumiau	1996	1	Andrus Jovaiša		Ugnius Liogė	Daugėliškė	Lietuvių
22	Zin_Ar-plaunat-kojines_02	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Pankai	Ar plaunat kojines	1993	2	Benediktas Januševičius, Tomas Verbalis		Ugnius Liogė	Vilnius	Lietuvių, anglų
23	Zin_Ar-plaunat-kojines_03	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Pankai	Ar plaunat kojines	1993	3	Benediktas Januševičius, Tomas Verbalis		Ugnius Liogė	Vilnius	Lietuvių, anglų
24	Zin_Arnurj_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Pankai	ARRJURJUR	1994	1	Jonas Škėnis		Ugnius Liogė	Praha	Lietuvių, anglų
25	Zin_Art_Core.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Pankai	Art Core		2-3		SMC	Ugnius Liogė	Vilnius	Lietuvių
26		Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Naujieniški	Tek Metalistai	ArteFacted		1	Arūnas Nonaviša		Aurelija	Kaunas	Anglų
27	Nuskenutas antra kartą, n	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Zinas	Tek Metalistai	ArteFacted		2	Arūnas Nonaviša		Kreatorius	Kaunas	Anglų
28	Artefacted_01.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Naujieniški	Tek Metalistai	ArteFacted		1	Arūnas Nonaviša		Ugnius Liogė	Kaunas	Anglų
29	Artefacted_02.jpeg	Skatmeninis	Vilniaus Lietuvos zinų kolekcija	Naujieniški	Tek Metalistai	ArteFacted		2	Arūnas Nonaviša		Ugnius Liogė	Kaunas	Anglų

Figure 1. Excel spreadsheet fragment of records data entry

Clear rules for record completion, including descriptive metadata about the objects, the names of the files in which they were stored (thumbnail, PDF, and JPG file names), as well as tagging, cell values, and comments associated with the documents collected from the community (date received, deadline for return) were defined. Once the database management environment was set up and the metadata structure was finalized, the updated records could be transferred to the database using a CSV file containing new data³.

In creating the metadata structure of the Lithuanian Zine Collection, the main task was to provide as much accurate background information as possible to increase the search availability of fanzines among the users of the collection and to provide a comprehensive publication scope for the researchers.

The creation of the Lithuanian fanzine database metadata consisted of three stages: 1) organizing metadata structure and identifying the possible values, 2) populating the descriptive metadata for the database documents, and 3) a metadata verification process to ensure data accuracy and validity.

The metadata structure of the Lithuanian fanzine collection was designed to incorporate essential metadata fields used in bibliographic descriptions typical for various library collections by adding fanzine contextual understanding fields. The metadata structure of the documents was built taking into account:

- a) record content metadata such as document title, year, issue, place, authors, language, keywords, record kind and type, subculture, and comments, which provides main contextual details, enabling more precise record identification and deeper contextual understanding of specific youth groups' publications;
- b) document statistical information and physical characteristics, such as measure amount and publication format;
- c) information regarding the person collecting and storing the original documents;
- d) ownership of the digital document, including the name of the collection, digital archive and institution, and unique identification number of the record;
- e) accessibility level and intellectual property rights, determined using the Digital Content Labeling Tool⁴.

During the process of metadata population, the primary challenge was the unavailability of data related to the specific features of the fanzine mentioned above. The missing information has been reconstructed using fanzine content analysis and field research information retrieved from known fanzine creators and readers. For example, in the Lithuanian Zines Collection, 66% of the fanzines have an accurate year of publication, 21% have a reconstructed year, and 13% have no specific year of publication (see Table 1). Nevertheless, the research indicates that these paper-printed fanzines were produced and distributed mainly in the 1990s.

³ Lithuania's Youth Culture Digital Archives' administration environment allows users to manage records data (add, edit, delete). Searching for records entered into the database using an identification code or a search term is possible. The metadata of an object can be entered or selected from a list. PDF and JPEG files can be uploaded, and modified records can be saved or deleted.

⁴ <https://cc.lnb.lt/>

Table 1. Availability of the Lithuanian Zine Collection metadata (n=552).

	Available	Reconstructed	No data
Year	66 %	21 %	13 %
Place	87 %	2 %	11 %
Authors	70 %	11 %	19 %
Pages	100 %	0 %	0 %
Language	100 %	0 %	0 %
Format	100 %	0 %	0 %

Despite the lack of information and the fact that the manual population of descriptive metadata by professional metadata creators is a time-consuming process that requires agreement on a standardized vocabulary, phrases, and terminology, metadata plays an essential role in improving document search, preserving fanzine culture, and enriching fanzine analysis. This includes understanding the fanzine phenomenon, subcultural similarities and differences, and the dynamics of other trending subcultural activities. Some of these features will be presented in the next section.

3. Lithuanian Zine Collection's Metadata Visualization Linkages

Lithuania's Youth Culture Digital Archive for the Lithuanian Zine Collection users offers three pre-prepared collection overview graphs: a timeline, a map, and a network⁵. Each graph is interactive and automatically refreshes with the latest uploaded document whenever metadata is introduced or modified for existing ones. The most recent document update date is indicated next to the relevant graph.

The Lithuanian Zine Collection documents (including fanzines and their flyers, newsletters, and brochures) timeline (see Figure 2) show the year of publication and the number of unique documents published that year. Documents for which the publication year is unknown and could not be identified by metadata creators were not included in the timeline (in this case, 72 out of 552). Nevertheless, the graph accurately reflects the period of the emergence and prevalence of fanzines in Lithuania.

The Lithuanian Zine Collection records indicate that the earliest examples of informal youth group publications, mainly hippies, fan-fiction, and members of punk subculture, occurred during the late 1970s and 1980s. At that time, individual publishing without the approval of the Glavlit, the communist organization of that time, was regarded as illegal and unauthorized activity. However, this did not stop publishers from sharing their ideas and values by creating independently produced limited-distribution publications even though the publishers could have been under surveillance and persecution by the KGB structures at that time.

⁵ <https://jauka.knf.vu.lt/en-US/collection/1/stats>

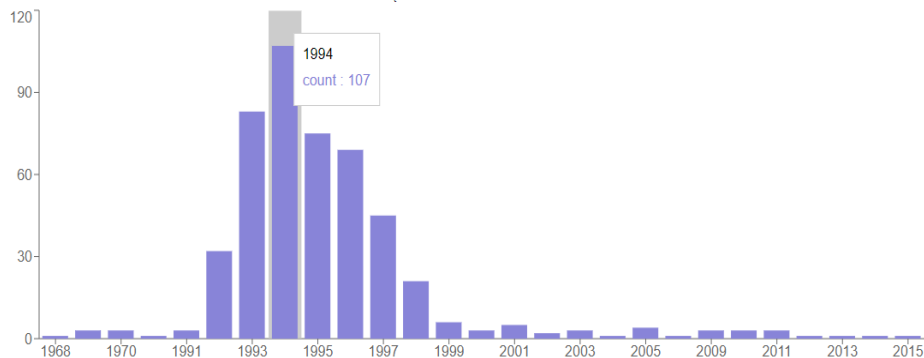


Figure 2. Lithuanian Zine Collection documents timeline. Lithuanian Zine Collection updated: 2024-03-15

The more noticeable emergence of fanzine culture, together with the spread of Western cultural concepts and ideas, changing Lithuanian political society, and cultural and social changes, occurred mainly during the period of independence of the Republic of Lithuania since 1990 and reached its peak in 1994. This period coincides with technological possibilities, such as the Xerox photocopier, for copying and reproducing fanzines by offering zinesters (people who make zines) new publishing opportunities. Around 1994-1995, some handwritten or typewritten fanzines were replaced by computer-layout publications with the rise of personal computers and publication layout software.

In the late 1990s, the production of paper-based fanzines experienced a decline due to the emergence of new digital publishing technologies and the advent of cost-free online distribution. By the beginning of the 21st century, the number of paper fanzines had significantly reduced, giving way to electronic fanzines ('webzines' or 'e-zines'). These electronic fanzines spread across the Internet on fan forums, independent websites, and later on social media groups, resulting in long-term e-zine stability problems, discoverability, and archiving challenges (Stevens, 2004; Stevens and McCord, 2005).

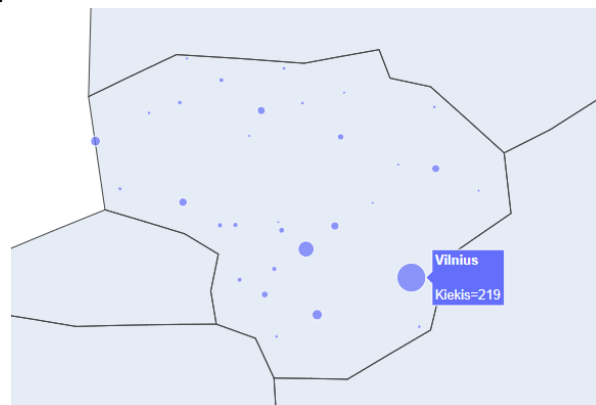


Figure 3. Place of publications and numbers of Lithuanian fanzines. Lithuanian Zine Collection updated: 2024-03-15

The second graph of the Lithuanian Zine Collection (see Figure 3) illustrates the geographical distribution of fanzines stored in the database, indicating the number of fanzines published in each location.

Looking at the results provided for collection users while using database document metadata reveals that fanzines were created in all regions of Lithuania, including main cities, towns, and villages. Even though most fanzines were produced in the largest cities (Vilnius 219 and Kaunas 66), the map shows that subcultures involved in fanzine publishing were active in all areas of the country.

While zooming into the interactive map, it is visible that several issues were released outside the boundaries of Lithuania: three were created in Prague (Czech Republic) and one in Savonlinna (Finland). For example, the fanzine “ARRUJRUR” was created in or around 1994 by the author while studying in Prague. The eight-page publication was presented as a letter to friends left in Lithuania. It describes the impressions of coming to the Czech Republic, the people, subcultural places, punk rock bands, and concerts (Oškinis, 1994?).

The creation of the Lithuanian Zine Collection involved 20 fanzine collectors from all over Lithuania who were interested in fanzine culture and its preservation. The number of copies in individual collections of fanzine creators and their readers ranged from a few to several hundred units of fanzines linked to different subcultures. Therefore, Lithuania’s Youth Culture Digital Archive allows users to explore the Lithuanian fanzines in personal collections stored in a digital Lithuanian Zine Collection (see Figure 4).

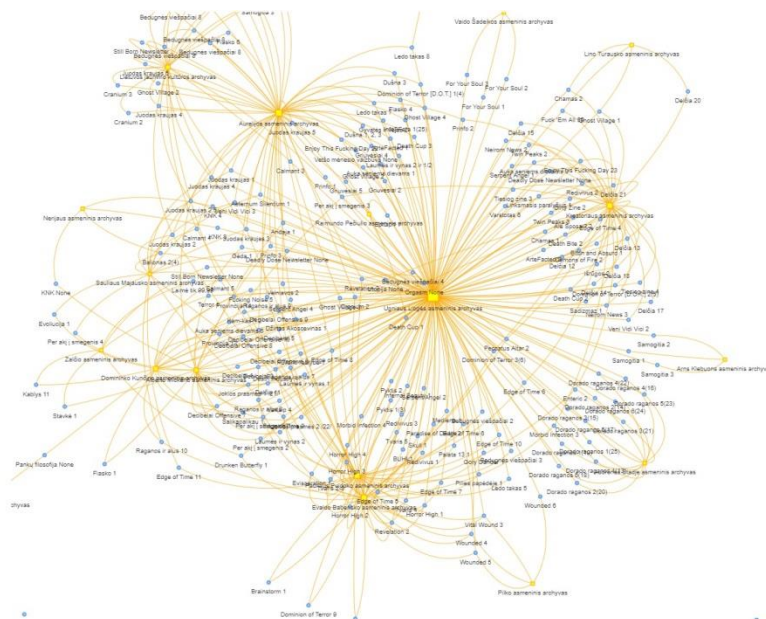


Figure 4. Lithuanian fanzines in private collections. Lithuanian Zine Collection updated: 2024-03-15

The interactive networks' graph displays the collectors' names (indicated by yellow squares), the names of the fanzines, and their issue numbers (represented by blue dots). Upon clicking on the name of the fanzine (blue dot) or a collector (yellow square), the connecting lines between the collector and the document are highlighted, and the titles of the collections are displayed. For the aesthetics of visualization of the interactive graph, fanzines owned by a single collector are presented as separated dots.

During the project, approximately 1,000 items were collected. To avoid duplication, unique fanzine issues and other fanzines' leading material were digitized and uploaded to the database, indicating collectors who had duplicates (343 documents, or 62% of the collection, had no duplicates). The most extensive collection of fanzines was held by a single collector, who provided almost 200 for digitization.

The graph shown in Figure 4 allows us to explore the distribution of fanzines among the readers who have saved fanzines since their peak of popularity until the present day. Notably, these figures are still being determined. A greater number of fanzines were created and distributed informally by alternative youth subcultures⁶.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Lithuania's Youth Culture Digital Archives' Lithuanian Zine Collection overview graphs do not provide more detailed document information due to the technical limitations of graph visualization (e.g., timeline shows the number of fanzines in a given year but not fanzine titles). Therefore, for a more detailed analysis of the fanzine phenomenon, it would be advisable to search the archive using search keywords and study fanzines one by one individually.

4. Conclusions

The digitized Lithuanian Zine Collection serves as a preservation effort and facilitates access to a distinctive cultural and historical aspect of Lithuanian youth subcultures. In creating fanzine collections, it is important to ensure the metadata structures are suitable and conducive to researchers engaged in fanzine study. Therefore, while creating the collection, it was intended to provide valuable, accurate, and usable metadata information.

The metadata structure of the documents was developed by categorizing the information into specific groups to facilitate effective data management, search, and retrieval. Improving the metadata for record content, fields such as the subculture, the data type, the collectors, and the comments were included to provide contextual details, enabling more precise record identification and a deeper contextual understanding of specific youth groups' publications.

Lithuania's Youth Culture Digital Archives' Lithuanian Zine Collection overview graphs (timeline, map, and network) are a relevant tool for analyzing the collection itself and help the readers gain insight into fanzine culture from different perspectives. The timeline and the map illustrate the general trends that allow an accurate understanding of the scope of the fanzine publishing period and the geographical distribution of fanzine production. The network enables the users to gain insight into the scope of the collection,

⁶ This publication's author found over 800 unique fanzine issues while conducting fanzine content analysis, collecting data from respondents, and studying websites that provided copies of scanned fanzines.

including the number of unique fanzines and their duplications stored in personal collections, and understand the extent of fanzines' circulation tendencies.

Expected forthcoming improvements, including full access to collections document metadata for researchers, automatic generation of keywords, and integration of a document citation tool, will enhance the Lithuanian Zine Collections' usability, dissemination, and accessibility, facilitating more efficient data processing and retrieval. The descriptive metadata quality enhancements could be achieved by introducing crowdsourcing techniques utilizing collective expertise to provide more precise document descriptions.

Furthermore, crowdsourcing methods could be beneficial for collecting online-published fanzines, which gained popularity in the early 21st century after the decline of paper-printed fanzines. The challenges regarding finding valid and stable online-published fanzines, the archiving problems of various document formats, and copyright questions could be an issue for further research by integrating web archiving techniques and digital preservation strategies, such as format migration and standardized metadata, to ensure accessibility and long-term preservation of e-fanzines.

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