Presented is an analysis of what has been done regarding the preservation of alternative publications in microfilm. The alternative press was defined, for the purposes of this study, as "nonstandard, nonestablishment publications." Two projects undertaken to microfilm such publications, one by the Microphoto Division of Bell and Howell and the other by Harvester Press, were contrasted with respect to completeness, quality of microfilm, and ease of access. The Harvester collection, which focuses on British publications, is seen to be the more nearly complete of the two, and it provides more satisfactory external finding aids. However, a subject index to the contents of the publications is not available for either collection, and neither offers individual titles for purchase. A related study found that only 44% of the publications indexed by Alternative Press Centre were microfilmed leading to the conclusion that libraries may be doing their patrons a disservice if they do not subscribe to all the publications available. Their value for historical research, risk of loss through fire, theft, or deterioration; and the limited number of libraries maintaining such collections are the major reasons cited for the publications to be reproduced and preserved on film. A brief commentary on other micropublishers engaged in filming radical publications and recommendations for future action are included. A bibliography and titles available from Bell and Howell and Alternative Press Centre in microfilm are appended. (Author/JRF)
THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS IN MICROFORM

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will attempt to present a critical analysis of what has been done regarding the preservation of alternative publications in microform, and offer my own suggestions for what should be done to reproduce these publications on film.

The paper should also serve as a useful research guide for others seeking a selected list of alternative publications in microform. The compilation contains titles of publications currently indexed by the Alternative Press Center which are available in microform.
THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

What constitutes the "alternative press" is a matter of dispute. Various compilers have defined the alternative press in different ways. Robert H. Muller subtitled his classic 2-volume study From Radical Left to Extreme Right (1970) as follows: "a bibliography of current periodicals of protest, controversy, advocacy, or dissent..." The Alternative Press Index made its appearance in 1970 subtitled: "an index to the publications which amplify the cry for social change and social justice." Danky in his introduction to Undergrounds: A Union List ... (1974) noted that "no two definitions are likely to be the same." What seems clear is that the term, as contemporaries define it, apply to the publications generated by the social and political upheavals of the 1960's; Spiers (1974) argues that before 1965, the underground press just did not exist. It may have of course, but not in the way we understand it today.

I myself am content with the broad definition adopted by Danky and Fox in their occasional column on the alternative media which appears in the Wilson Library Bulletin: "Non-standard, non-establishment publications."
THE CASE FOR MICROREPRODUCING THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

Why should we attempt to preserve the alternative press in microform? Very simply it is because film, under archival conditions, lasts much longer than newspaper. But that answer, of course, is inadequate. Is the alternative press worth preserving?

Xerox University Microfilms, it is understood, felt that some of the underground press material was "in poor taste" and reportedly stopped microfilming it, according to Mr. Stevens Rice (April 1977). Indeed, Muller has noted (1970, v. 1, xxii-xxiii) that:

A great obstacle is the traditional concern of librarians about quality. The main purpose of book selection, in professional rhetoric, is to choose the good, screen out the shoddy, and build up a "choice" collection that will educate and elevate the public by offering them the "best". Yet, considerations of "quality" may be inappropriate when it comes to choosing polemic tracts. How important, after all, is the style in which an opinion is expressed? What if a viewpoint be printed on poor paper, with bad typography, many errors in spelling, inelegant language, and much profanity? What if the reasoning be illogical? The drawings lacking in artistry? What if this viewpoint so shoddily tricked out is, furthermore, read eagerly by only a few hundred or a few thousand people? A tract, though half-literate, is still a document. If it puts forward myths or lies, with intent to deceive, should it be excluded? On such grounds many librarians reject astrology, numerology, palmistry, descriptions of dubious medical cures, etc. It is hard to know where to draw the line. What a librarian should avoid is excluding a point of view because he is offended by the way in which it is presented.
It is incumbent on librarians today not to act as censors of what future generations may want to read. What is good or poor taste, after all, is a variable across time and among people. Taste should not be the criterion to base a decision on whether or not one should preserve the alternative press. Who are we to prevent future historians from studying the protest movements of the 1960's, and its associated ephemera, just because we happen to be hung up over quality? Our role as librarians is to provide service -- in academic libraries to serious researchers. Our role is definitely not to act as guardians of morality or of establishment views.

Some two dozen libraries already maintain special collections of alternative publications (Akeroyd and Benedict, 1973), and graduate students and faculty are beginning to use the resources for serious study (Palmer, 1973). The fact that a limited number of academic libraries maintain such collections underscores the need for easy access to the material. Ease of access can be facilitated if these materials are microfilmed.

Judith F. King, of the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, has been quoted (in a Bell and Howell advertisement) as follows: "In the long run, the newspapers will have great historical and research value. Unfortunately, the stock on which they are printed is not of the best quality, and immediate attempts to preserve them must be made. If this is not done, the whole period of turmoil that we are currently (late 1960's) experiencing will be lost to history." In the same brochure, Herbert Finch, Curator and Archivist at Cornell University, was quoted as saying:
"I think that a compilation of these newspapers, easily available on microfilm, should become an outstanding source of information for scholars who wish to study in this era of student unrest and rebellion which has been so influential on contemporary history. Since these papers, even at the time of publication, are very difficult to acquire through ordinary channels, I think that it is most important that you try to make your filmed set as comprehensive as possible."

The fact that many institutions of higher education have deemed it important to collect and preserve such "ephemera" attests to the necessity of preserving such material on film, as well as facilitating access (through sale and loan of film) to the material.

Beyond preservation and ease of access, I can mention several more reasons why the alternative press should be microfilmed. In those libraries which currently subscribe to such publications, space can be a problem, which would be partly resolved by keeping the material on film. A more important factor would be that wear and tear may cause the material to deteriorate. The special collections, after all, would not be likely to weed out original periodicals in favor of microform copies. Another major consideration is the risk of loss, through fire, damage, or theft. A microfilm master of a periodical, stored safely, will thus ensure that the periodical is not lost forever.

Finally it is often suggested that maintaining microfilmed copies of a run of periodicals will be less costly than hard copies (Reed, 1976), especially taking into consideration the cost of binding the latter. However, in relation to the alternative press, it is not clear to me whether the cost of microfilming the periodicals will in fact be
low, given the admittedly low demand for such material, and the reluctance of profit-making micropublishers to engage in risky enterprises (as this must certainly be). The trend, at least for collections of underground and alternative publications, is toward higher and higher costs, where individual titles are not available for purchase, presumably because of the overwhelming cost of providing title by title service. In the next chapter we shall take a look at what has been accomplished thus far in the microreproduction of alternative publications.
PROGRESS TO DATE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

What has been done in the microreproduction on film of the alternative press? In this chapter I shall focus on two contrasting projects, as well as comment briefly on other attempts to film such publications. Finally I present results of an empirical study of titles indexed by the Alternative Press Centre.

BELL AND HOWELL COLLECTION

The first, indeed massive attempt to microfilm the alternative press was undertaken in the late 1960's (and presumably still going on today) by the Microphoto Division of Bell and Howell. Its Underground Newspapers Microfilm Collection was heralded as an "unbiased view of the '60s and '70s" in its promotional literature, and ultimately comprised some 600 titles. However, reviewers to a person panned the collection.

The basic criticism was over the lack of a system. Ed Weber, curator of the University of Michigan's Labadie Collection, told me that the firm apparently filmed only what they could get their hands on. He had spent two days examining some rolls from the Collection, borrowed from the Center for Research Libraries. The notes he took at that time, preserved in the Labadie Collection, give ample proof to the charge that the Collection was haphazardly compiled. A number of titles were thrown together in a roll, and some titles only were indicated by one issue. Indeed, the Circulation Librarian for the Center for Research Libraries felt impelled to issue a memo (dated 8 February 1971) stating:
"A few words of explanation might save you from the utter confusion (of) the microfilm of the Underground Newspaper Collection. The holdings for each title are very incomplete and appear on different roles (sic)."

Despite the firm's claim that it "an exhaustive effort was made by both the Bell & Howell and the office of the Underground Press Syndicate in an attempt to find any and all missing issues and titles," it was clear that the firm merely filmed what the Syndicate happened to have available (Marshall, 1974, p.23).

Ed Weber found that the Labadie Collection had more complete runs of some of the titles in the B&H Collection.

It was also found that in spite of a claim of maintaining "the highest possible quality of readability", one reviewer had to constantly refocus the microfilm reader (Marshall, 1974, p.22). Mr. Weber found the first page of the Baltimore Free Press (roll 5) "very black, no volume or number distinguishable."

Pages appeared to be missing, and it was unclear if this was due to an error in filming, or if the pages were actually missing from the original. Obviously the absence of explanatory targets (e.g., PAGES LACKING) compounded the problem.

Further the Table of Contents provided with the Collection did not provide sufficient ease of access. Subsequently attempts were made to index the collection. (Some titles had already been indexed in the Alternative Press Index.)

In 1970 B&H had made an effort to provide subject access to the Collection through the indexing efforts of the volunteers who publish the Alternative Press Index. The bid did not succeed; as Mary McKenney of the Index staff subsequently reported:
the problem was that the publications they microfilmed weren't necessarily the ones we indexed. So they had another bright idea: we could supply them with copies of all publications we indexed, they could microfilm them, and then 'give' away the Index with the package. When we asked what we were to get out of the deal, they said, we'd get not only all that good (?) publicity for being connected with them, but also a free copy of the film! This was supposed to make up for all the extra expense of printing enough copies of the Index to accommodate them ... and we knew no one would benefit from the deal except B&H" (Marshall, 1974, p.23).

Subsequently, the ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table Task Force came to some sort of agreement with B&H to produce a subject index to the Collection. Nothing seems to have culminated, however! (Marshall, 1974, p.24).

While the number of titles microfilmed is impressive (see Appendix A), the fact that individual titles are not available for purchase (in addition to the flaws already described), reduces the usefulness of the project. Although the collection was filmed using silver film, libraries have been reluctant to purchase the collection.

HARVESTER PRESS COLLECTIONS

From England comes a very different microfilming enterprise, the filming of current and retrospective runs of Britain's underground and alternative press. The project is everything (almost) that the B&H project is not. Every attempt has been made to locate the materials, and separate fiches or roll films are used for separate titles. Explanatory targets are utilized, and
an external finding aid (including location designations, and a bibliographic essay) is provided. The collections are mostly on silver halide standard microfiche, with some parts on 35mm silver halide roll film, where merited by reduction size.

The relevant collections for our purposes include:

The Underground and Alternative Press in Britain Since 1961; the 1973 Update; The Left in Britain (5 parts); and Sexual Politics in Britain (publications of the women's and gay liberation movements).

Reviewers have consistently praised the collection.

"Harvester Press has performed the Herculean task of collecting and assembling a comprehensive set of "underground" newspapers, which it has made available in a well-packaged microform edition. An exemplary bibliographical guide, including an illuminating introductory essay by John Spiers, testifies to the richness and diversity of the assortment," wrote Koss in Microform Review (July 1975).

"Martin (1977) praised Harvester Press for "the comprehensiveness ... (and) meticulous work evident in the production of this microform collection of British underground and alternative newspapers. Congratulations, Harvester Press, for a job well done!"

Indeed, the Harvester Press collections appear to be many times superior to the B&H collection, with its usefulness enhanced by the bibliographic guide compiled by Spiers (1974). Unfortunately, individual titles from the collections are not available, nor is there a subject index to the contents of the publications.
OTHER PROJECTS

A brief comment is appropriate here about other projects.

There are a number of micropublishers engaged in filming radical publications from even before the 1960's turmoil, and "underground press" materials are often included in their collections. Furthermore there may be projects filming special collections at libraries (such as Clearwater Publishing Co.'s American Indian Project of Stanford University's periodicals collection). Finally, individual contracts have been made with individual alternative press publishers to micropublish their titles.

I might mention the following collections:

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS (see also Appendix B)

In an attempt to compile data on the extent of micropublishing of alternative publications, I compared publications indexed by the Alternative Press Centre in 1976-77 (leaving out earlier titles, but including titles listed in its Index for 1975 which has just appeared), with titles reported as being available for purchase in microform, using the standard sources. Of the 151 titles being indexed by the Centre (not listed here in this paper) I found that only 66 are available individually in microform. (Titles in the B&H Collection, for instance, were not counted.) This 44% availability rate of *Alternative Press...
Index titles means that most publications they index may not be accessible to library users. It seems clear that libraries subscribing to the Alternative Press Index may be doing their patrons a disservice if they do not subscribe to all the publications available. Since very few obviously do, they may not even be able to get microfilmed copies of those they do not own in hard copy.

Interestingly enough, the findings indicate that most publications are being microfilmed by Xerox University Microfilms, despite its abhorrence of "bad taste".* Another significant micropublisher in this area is AMS Press.

It should be noted that the 44% reported figure may be understating the progress made so far in microfilming alternative publications if earlier titles indexed by the Centre—and not considered in the computation—were in fact microfilmed, and if titles in specific microfilm collections are included.

*Titles reported as being available for purchase in Serials in Microform in Appendix B are, of course, sold by Xerox University Microfilms.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

In the Ann Arbor-Detroit area we have seen this past year the demise of a number of alternative publications: Gay Liberator, The Sun, and Her-self. The first mentioned periodical is contained in B&H's collection, although it is unclear what issues are included. In any case there is no way to purchase the title individually. Fortunately, the Sun has been microfilmed by Xerox University Microfilms, but no one appears to have microfilmed Her-self. All the defunct titles have been indexed in the Alternative Press Index. There must be very few places that have complete runs of these and other titles indexed in the API, and every attempt should be made to microfilm titles that have been indexed by API before they vanish. Xerox University Microfilms can be commended for filming the bulk of the titles indexed by API which are available for individual purchase. Most noteworthy is its notation in Serials in Microform indicating a title is indexed in the API. Incidentally, many of the titles listed in Appendix B do not show that they are indexed by API in Serials in Microform, probably due to normal time lag in reporting. It would make sense to attempt to microfilm material that is already indexed, giving that material a priority over and above other alternative publications.

In addition attempts should be made to increase the sharing of such publications. Already a number of union lists have been published (Danky, 1974; Akeroyd, 1976) but none specifically on microform collections of such material. After all, it is unlikely that libraries would lend their hard copies of the Black Panther to other libraries, but a microform copy would probably be

The Center has ordered Political Literature of Northern Ireland 1968-74, as well as parts I to III of the Left in Britain (Newsletter #157, Jan-March 1976). Sexual Politics in Britain has been approved for purchase later in the fiscal year, according to a memo on purchase proposals dated January 17, 1977 sent to member libraries. It has not yet decided on whether to purchase the American Indian Periodicals collection from Clearwater, and has voted down a proposal to purchase the Advocate (Newsletter #158, April-October 1976), a paper indexed in API.

In reference to the national foreign newspaper microfilming program, Cole has written (1975): "the most efficient means of making a greater number of titles available is to concentrate resources on the microfilming of titles never before filmed, rather than on producing duplicate positive copies for a number of institutions." In the case of such ephemeral publications as the alternative press, his advice is even more relevant.

Because there are a number of collections of such publications in libraries, it would make sense if the libraries began to microfilm specific titles. Cole thinks that "librarians prefer to encourage microfilming by a library or a research institution"
rather than a commercial publisher. It will, I think, depend on which publisher is involved. A library may not have the technical expertise to film, but a publisher may not have the same concern for bibliographic control as a librarian. Most of the Labadie Collection's materials have not been microfilmed because of shortage of staff, according to its curator, even though the University of Michigan runs a small microfilming operation. Mr. Weber indicated, however, his absolute willingness to let University Microfilms borrow materials to film, as he has done in the past, in return for a microform copy.

To avoid duplication libraries owning masters should report them to the National Register of Microform Masters. Titles available for sale should be announced in Microforms in Print.

Activists are rarely archivists and much of what they put out will be lost to their contemporaries and to future generations, unless a systematic attempt is made to preserve the titles and other ephemera of the alternative press.
APPENDIX A: The Newspapers of the Underground Press Collection.
## APPENDIX B

### TITLES INDEXED BY ALTERNATIVE PRESS CENTRE AVAILABLE IN MICROFORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>ISSN</th>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>POSTAL_CODE</th>
<th>PUBLISHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADVOCATE</td>
<td>San Mateo</td>
<td>0001-6496</td>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>20011-7153</td>
<td>D.C. Gazette**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKWESANE NOTES</td>
<td>Roosevelttown, NY</td>
<td>0002-3949</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>0046-0038</td>
<td>Labor Today*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY</td>
<td>Milaca, MN</td>
<td>0012-3846</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>0023-6640</td>
<td>The Last Post**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTERNATIVES</td>
<td>Petersborough ON</td>
<td>0024-189x</td>
<td>Eugene OR</td>
<td>0025-5865</td>
<td>Liberation**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMEX-CANADA</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>0003-1674</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>0015-0080</td>
<td>Merip Reports+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMFO</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>0003-2026</td>
<td>Atlanta GA</td>
<td>0017-369x</td>
<td>The Militant*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK PANTHER</td>
<td>0006-4211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK SCHOLAR</td>
<td>Sausalito CA</td>
<td>0006-4246</td>
<td>Freeland MD</td>
<td>0017-3983</td>
<td>New Politics**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BODY POLITIC</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>0315-3606</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>0017-9094</td>
<td>New Times**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BULLETIN OF CONCERNED ASIAN SCHOLARS</td>
<td>0007-4810</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATHOLIC WORKER</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>0008-8463</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>0019-8870</td>
<td>News and Letters*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLEGE PRESS SERVICE</td>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>0010-1125</td>
<td>Eugene OR</td>
<td>0047-0384</td>
<td>Our Generation*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>Louisa, VA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0030-686x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTER-SPY</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Issues in Radical Therapy
- Issues in Radical Therapy

### Labor Today
- Labor Today

### The Last Post
- The Last Post

### Liberation
- Liberation

### Merip Reports
- Merip Reports

### The Militant
- The Militant

### New Politics
- New Politics

### New Times
- New Times

### News and Letters
- News and Letters

### Our Generation
- Our Generation

### Pacific Research & World Empire Telegram
- Pacific Research & World Empire Telegram
APPENDIX B continued:

PEACEMAKER*  
Cincinnati  
0031-3602

PEOPLES' WORLD**  
Berkeley  
0031-5044

THE PROGRESSIVE**  
Madison WI  
0033-0736

RADICAL AMERICA**  
N Cambridge MA  
0033-7617

RAMPARTS**  
Berkeley  
0033-9168

REVIEW OF RADICAL POLITICAL ECONOMICS**  
NY  
0486-6134

RISING UP ANGRY**  
Chicago  
0048-8313

SCIENCE & SOCIETY**  
NY  
0036-8237

SCIENCE FOR THE PEOPLE*  
Jamaica Plain  
0048-9662

SECOND CITY*  
0037-0533

SECHABA*  
London  
0037-0509

SOCIAL POLICY**  
NY  
0037-7783

SOCIALIST REVOLUTION*  
San Francisco

SOUTHERN AFRICA*  
NY  
0038-3775

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE**  
Chapel Hill

SOUTHERN PATRIOT**  
Louisville, KY  
0038-4402

THE SUN*  
Detroit

TELOS*  
St. Louis MO  
0040-2842

THIS MAGAZINE*  
Toronto  
0040-6228

WIN*  
Brooklyn NY  
0043-5668

1List of titles being indexed in 1976-77 from "List of Some Publications of the Alternative Press" (May 1976), Alternative Press Centre; and from list in Alternative Press Index, V.7 #1 (Jan-March 1975). Note that other earlier indexed titles are not included. The following key symbols refer to sources where individual titles are reported as being available in microform:


Union lists, directories, bibliographic guides, indexes:


Newsletter. No. 157 and 158.


Spiers, John. The underground and alternative press in Britain.
BIBLIOGRAPHY continued:


Reviews:


Articles:


