

THE
FEMINIST
INSTITUTE

MEMORY LAB



**TFI TEACHES:
BUILDING A FEMINIST LEGACY**

WHAT IS THE FEMINIST INSTITUTE?

The Feminist Institute (TFI) documents and celebrates feminist contributions to culture by preserving and digitizing archival materials for public access. TFI promotes information activism and gender equity by infilling the cultural record to reflect fuller truths.

Through our partnership program, our staff works closely with institutions, feminist creators, and organizations on archival projects with both physical and digital records. Our partnership with supersisters, a 1970s feminist trading card collection, is a perfect example of this.

In August 2022, TFI staff traveled to Indianapolis, IN and worked closely with the mother-daughter duo, Lois and Melissa Rich, to organize and digitize their collection of ephemera, press, mock-ups and more.

WHY ZINES?

Zines are emblematic of DIY feminist practices that have preserved and recorded marginalized histories when large institutions excluded their narratives from the larger cultural record. Here at TFI, we always want to pay homage to the DIY roots that have given us so much feminist history to work with. Also—we love zines!

We envision a future where gender-marginalized individuals and organizations' equal contributions to culture are known and recognized, and their rights are protected. As part of this vision, TFI aims to provide free educational programming and resources to individuals and collectives looking to create their own archival collections—which is why we've created this zine series.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS A FEMINIST LEGACY? _____ 4

HOW DO I BUILD A FEMINIST LEGACY? _____ 4

CASE STUDY: JUDY CHICAGO'S RESEARCH PORTAL _____ 6

CONCLUSIONS _____ 7

WHAT IS A FEMINIST LEGACY?

A feminist legacy is one that is built from action. It should highlight the feminist work you've done over the course of your career and life. Through highlighting this work, your legacy should be contributing and engaging with larger feminist networks. As most of us know, feminist efforts are collective. Think about how you can include your community and collaborators within your archive, and how you can activate it. More and more, archives are becoming sources for creative and educational cultural projects. Try and connect with community organizations and students who might be interested in remixing your work into a new project.

HOW DO I BUILD A FEMINIST LEGACY?

Feminist Ethics of Care Framework

Here at TFI, the critical work of Drs. Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor is the foundation of our partnership model. According to Caswell and Cifor, using a feminist ethics approach, archivists are seen as caregivers, bound to records creators, subjects, users, and communities through a web of mutual affective responsibility (Caswell and Cifor, 2016). Simply put, archivists act as caretakers of materials instead of gatekeepers, and archives are seen as a community resource instead of an institutional asset. By using feminist ethics of care as the framework for building your archive, the feminist legacy you're building will be ingrained into the design of your project.

Feminist Principles of the Internet

Design is an essential aspect of building a feminist legacy. Specifically, when creating your digital archive, the *Feminist Principles of the Internet* (FPI) (<https://feministinternet.org/>) is a great resource. FPI advocates for using open-access software tools and platforms as a mode of feminist praxis. This means all tools and software are free to the public, and you can modify them to your needs. Their list of principles also dives into many different topics, such as memory, access, and embodiment.

Feminist Archives and Digital Memory Projects

Below is a short, non-exhaustive list of different archives + digital memory projects that embody a feminist legacy to check out and learn from:

Lesbian Herstory Archives
(<https://lesbianherstoryarchives.org/>)

The Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) is a physical archive in Park Slope, Brooklyn that holds a vast collection of papers, ephemera, and audiovisual materials relating to lesbian life. LHA materials originally lived in founder Joan Nestle's Upper West Side apartment until 1993, when LHA crowdfunded funds to purchase a brownstone in Park Slope, where the archive still stands. LHA functions collectively and is an incredible example of feminist network building and intergenerational feminist archival education. While most of their materials are still physical, some digital collections are available.

Alex Juhasz' VHS Activism Archive
(<https://activismvhs.omeka.net/>)

Alex Juhasz's VHS Activism Archive is another potent digital feminist memory project. Juhasz has used the archive as a pedagogical tool in her queer feminist media praxis. The archive holds community-made videos source of HIV/AIDS (information) activist videos, with a focus on the intersections between gender, race, class, sexuality and AIDS, safer sex short films, Queer Nation videos, and more. Juhasz's archive is an invaluable contribution to more extensive feminist information networks, as her materials have been used in countless student and creative projects.

Addresses Project
(<https://addressesproject.com/>)

As many lesbian and queer spaces disappear around the U.S., Addresses Project, created by Gwen Shockey in 2016, provides necessary documentation while mending a fragmented queer cultural record through intra-community connection. The project highlights lesbian and queer spaces, specifically in New York City, from the early 1900s to the present. Shockey utilizes a multi-medium approach, from oral history and digital mapping to digitizing personal archives, to weave together a rich and contextual memory project. Riya Lerner began collaborating with Shockey in 2019 to create portraits of queer and lesbian community leaders interviewed by Shockey.

CASE STUDY: JUDY CHICAGO'S RESEARCH PORTAL

(<https://judychicagoportal.org/>)

Judy Chicago is an influential artist and feminist icon. Her work has spanned nearly five decades. Chicago's archival materials are at five different institutions: her papers are at the Schlesinger Library for the History of Women in America at Harvard University, her art education archives are at Penn State University Libraries, her visual archive is at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and her fireworks archives are at the Center for Art + Environment Archive Collections at the Nevada Museum of Art, and finally, her printmaking collection is held at the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation.

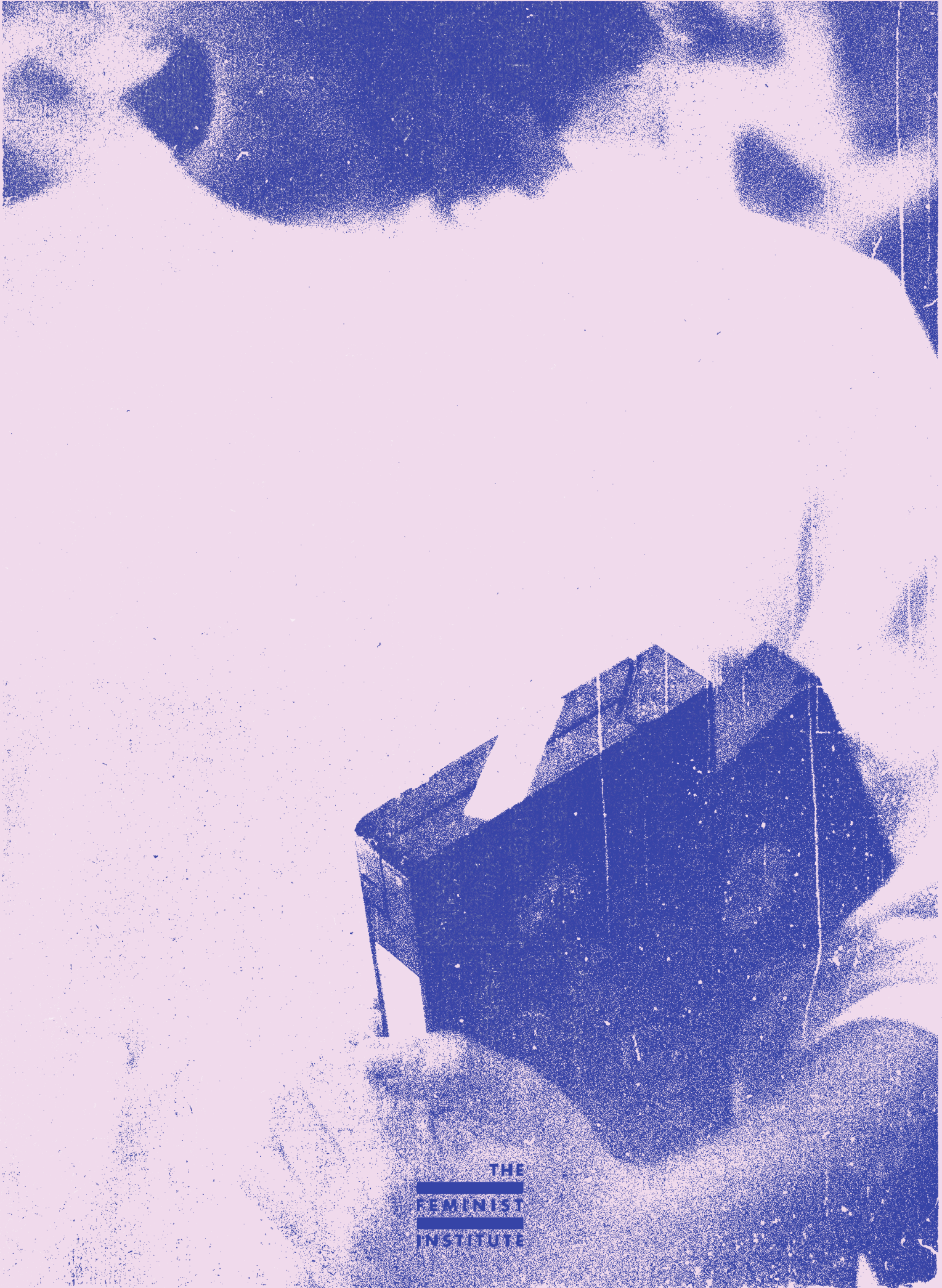
Through collaboration, the five institutions created the portal to provide access to these important materials. While having physical collections at several institutions provides some access, uniting the materials digitally contributes to a more extensive feminist network. Users can search the portal by specific projects, themes, and institutional collections. The portal provides information about Chicago's biography and career and links to an additional biography and a bibliography. Lastly, the portal includes a resources page that links to twelve different projects about Chicago's work.

Judy Chicago's Research Portal is an excellent example of building a feminist legacy highlighting feminist contributions while creating a new, accessible tool for students, educators, researchers, artists, and culture workers. As mentioned earlier, building a feminist legacy depends mainly on your praxis. As seen in Chicago's portal, she's activated her archive through collaboration, digital access, and contributing to a more extensive feminist information network. By committing to this kind of praxis as you build your feminist legacy and archive, not only will your feminist work be preserved, but the essence of your project will be embedded within feminist networks, and your archive will be activated.

CONCLUSION

Building your feminist legacy is slow, collaborative, rewarding, and political. Marginalized histories are often left out of the mainstream cultural record. Still, by partaking in personal digital archiving and building your feminist legacy through feminist ethics of care, you're contributing to the more extensive web of feminist and counter-histories that correct the cultural record.

We hope this zine provides jumping-off points and resources from the more extensive feminist information network to guide your project scope. As you can see, the importance of these feminist archives and digital feminist memory projects aren't only crucial to an accurate cultural record and to provide a roadmap and praxis examples. By starting your feminist legacy building, you're also contributing to this necessary feminist information network.



THE
FEMINIST
INSTITUTE