

Background images from a notebook that my third great-grandfather William MacGregor used when formulating textile dyes in Scotland and the US.

Wendy McClure is a writer and editor who lives in Chicago. She's written pieces for various defunct websites, a magazine that was once print but is now digital, a print publication that started out as a zine, and newspapers that no longer run book reviews (but also one that still does), and is the author of several books, including one that was based on viral content on her website and went permanently out of stock after one print run and as a result was algorithmically priced by third-party vendors on Amazon for over a thousand dollars for a while, and one very short book that was a digital "e-special" commissioned to promote the paperback edition of one of her print books but which instead seemed to just confuse people. Nowadays she works in children's books and in her spare time makes zines for her imprint called Mystery Family, which she created as a way to do something with all the terrifyingly old scrapbooks and photos and letters she inherited from this one side of her family. She might use the imprint for other things too. Anyway here's the logo:



# why zine why now

*inadequately  
explained by*  
Wendy Mc.

I started doing these foldable zines last summer. Making them feels better than anything I've done online in the past five years. I don't think physical media is inherently better, but how you'll come to be holding this in your hand and reading it is a process I trust more right now. I'm sure this process won't happen fifty thousand times, the way it would back when I knew how to stoke the furnace.

Depending on the definition you use, ephemera is either something that doesn't last, or else something that wasn't meant to last but did. I never used to think about what it means to survive. I hope this helps, and I hope we make it through this moment. I have so much to show you.

It's more that the world is online, and now online is a furnace with the world inside it. We live in it, and everything we put in there gets used up or fed into something else. (Plus it turns out that water is relevant after all.)

The feeling I have now is different. It's not exactly that it feels unsafe to keep a photograph on a phone. (I mean, it's *usually* fine?)

And online was its own place but it led elsewhere too. The message board led to the website gig; the blog led to writing for a print magazine, and two books happened from the viral thing. People I met because of online became my friends, or even people I dated.

After a while it became all one world, online and print, online and off. This was fine. Or I guess it was fine as long as the world was fine.

I have this notebook that my family kept. In 1844, someone in my family cut test strips of calico fabric, printed with dye he'd made, and pasted them onto the pages. I'm pretty terrified of how old this notebook is. Whatever was made with that fabric is probably gone; and so is the factory that made the fabric.

I have photos of this notebook on my phone. It used to feel like I was keeping it safe that way, in a place where air and heat and moisture and sunlight were irrelevant.