Archives of Sexuality & Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940

With material drawn from hundreds of institutions and organizations, including both major international activist organizations and local, grassroots groups, the documents in the Archives of Sexuality & Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture since 1940 present important aspects of LGBTQ life in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. The archive illuminates the experiences not just of the LGBTQ community as a whole, but of individuals of different races, ethnicities, ages, religions, political orientations, and geographical locations that constitute this community. Historical records of political and social organizations founded by LGBTQ individuals are featured, as well as publications by and for lesbians and gays, and extensive coverage of governmental responses to the AIDS crisis. The archive also contains personal correspondence and interviews with numerous LGBTQ individuals, among others. The archive includes gay and lesbian newspapers from more than 35 countries, reports, policy statements, and other documents related to gay rights and health, including the worldwide impact of AIDS, materials tracing LGBTQ activism in Britain from 1950 through 1980, and more.

One highlight of the archive is the unparalleled assemblage of newsletters, newspapers, and periodicals by, for, and about gays and lesbians. Materials from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society, for example, include rare publications from now-defunct groups such as the spiritually oriented Q Spirit forum or the Southern California Council on Religion and the Homophile. Collections from the Lesbian Herstory Archives include mainstream and alternative publications from 1970 to 2008. The collection from the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (Series 11) includes periodicals and newsletters from countries as far-flung as Latvia and Zimbabwe. These holdings reveal the many functions printed media held, and hold, for LGBTQ individuals: creating and fostering community; providing local, national, and international news; advertising meetings, demonstrations, and other events; offering entertainment; shaping readers’ perceptions of relevant issues; and showcasing LGBTQ-friendly businesses.

In addition, the archive encompasses extensive material related to feminism, women’s rights, and women’s concerns. The Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin: Beyond the Daughters of Bilitis collection, for example, includes documents related to Lyon and Martin’s groundbreaking book on domestic violence and their work with the National Organization for Women (NOW). Many of the subject files from the Lesbian Herstory Archives concern the women’s liberation movement, and the Sexual Politics in Britain collection documents the British wing of the movement specifically.

In the 1940s and 1950s, American and British lesbians and gays began forming organizations to educate others and advocate for greater acceptance. The archive’s records of the earliest US gay rights (Mattachine Society) and lesbian rights (Daughters of Bilitis) organizations include both internal records, such as meeting minutes and membership data, and documents produced for the public, such as press releases and texts of speeches. Britain’s emerging gay rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s is represented by the files of the Albany Trust, which was founded in 1958 to decriminalize homosexuality, counsel gays and lesbians, and educate the public.
Beginning in 1970, events affecting the LGBTQ community inspired the creation of groups with more militant tactics. The archive includes records of the Gay Activists Alliance, an organization founded after 1969’s Stonewall riots, and ACT UP, a group founded in 1987 in response to the AIDS crisis. The archive also contains extensive records of the largest British LGBTQ rights groups during the 1970s: the Committee for Homosexual Equality in England and the Scottish Minorities Group in Scotland.

Three collections document governmental and medical responses to the AIDS epidemic:

- Studies in Global Crisis: The International AIDS/HIV Crisis, Part 1: 1985–1999; and
- The Bush Administration and the AIDS Crisis.

These three collections include records from presidential commissions concerning AIDS during the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations and governmental and NGO reports from 1985 to 1999 that offer an exhaustive review of the political, social, medical, and economic effects of AIDS worldwide.

The Archives of Sexuality & Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940 consists of 20 individual collections, with a total page count of nearly one and a half million pages. Documents span from 1940 to 2014, with the bulk from 1950 to 1990. Although most materials are in English, the archive contains periodicals in German, Polish, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, French, Italian, Hebrew, Indonesian, and other languages. Four collections are sourced from the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the largest lesbian-focused archives in the world; two are sourced from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society. Others are sourced from the New York Public Library; the London School of Economics; and from the National Institutes of Health.

Documents include:

- Meeting, committee, and conference minutes, notes, and transcripts from LGBTQ rights organizations worldwide
- Administrative records of LGBTQ rights groups, such as bylaws and membership lists
- Materials produced by these groups slated for the public: press releases, articles, fliers, handbills, brochures, presentations
- Complete contents of US and International newspapers, newsletters, and magazines
- Press clippings about gay and lesbian issues
- Internal US government memoranda
- Studies and reports by US government agencies and nongovernmental organizations
- International reports, policy statements, and documents related to LGBTQ health and rights
- Medical research records and reports
- Private correspondence
- Surveys, election questionnaires, records of site visits
- Government briefing books
• Photographs

This archive is essential for scholars and researchers focused on gender and LGBTQ studies, women's studies, American studies, civil and human rights, journalism, social movement history, British twentieth-century history, and more.