

**PERSONAL TOUCHES, PUBLIC LEGACIES:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF LGBT LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES**

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ABSTRACT

Personal touches, Public legacies: An ethnography of LGBT libraries and archives examines lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) information organizations in Vancouver, Canada and surrounding areas. In order to develop a deeper understanding of the diversity in, changes to and challenges for LGBT information organizations, a multi-sited ethnography was conducted between June and September 2014. Organizations featured in the study include: two autonomous LGBT information organizations (the BC Lesbian and Gay Archives and Out on the Shelves Library), two LGBT information organizations founded within universities (the Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony at Simon Fraser University, the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria), an LGBT-focused collection within Vancouver's public municipal cultural milieu (the Ken Brock collection at the City of Vancouver Archives and the Museum of Vancouver) and, a temporary, autonomous home library with a queer mandate (the STAG Library).

This study puts feminist, LGBT and queer studies in dialogue with archival studies and library and information studies (LIS). The chapters are organized by overarching themes associated with information organizations and address specific theoretical discussions that accompany those themes: location (Chapter 2), collection development (Chapter 3), organization and dissemination (Chapter 4) and mandate (Chapter 5). The findings not only explore how LGBT information collections and organizations interrogate and reimagine the definitional boundaries of what constitutes an information collection and information organizations more broadly but also examine how concepts of gender, sexuality and queerness are understood in the realm of the information organizations under study. The divide between normative and non-normative information collection and organizational practice is not simple or stable, but, like the concept of queer, is ever shifting. The findings demonstrate that queer information organizing persists in LGBT information organizational contexts, but not in ways necessarily anticipated by existing literature on the topic. This study also highlights how the relationship between the LGBT communities and the public is in great flux as some LGBT communities become increasingly considered a part of the mainstream public. It is precisely this oscillation and tension between concepts of the personal and the public that define LGBT information organizing activities in this current moment.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
LIST OF ACRONYMS	VII
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING LGBT LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES	1
On the Move	1
Defining LGBT and LGBT Libraries and Archives.....	7
Theorizing at the Intersection of LGBT Communities and Organizations.....	11
Methods for Examining LGBT Information Organizations	17
Chapter Outlines	26
CHAPTER TWO: SEMI-PUBLIC HOME LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES	30
Always Take Your Books.....	30
Public, Semi-Public	33
A Necessity for Community Engagement	37
Sheltering Information and Ideas.....	43
Fires, Floods and Death	48
House Proud.....	56
Conclusion	63
CHAPTER THREE: CONSTRUCTING THE SELF THROUGH PERSONAL COLLECTION	67
A Gay Man’s Shoes in the Museum of Vancouver	67
Ken’s Collection in Vancouver.....	71
Documentation with a Personal Touch.....	74
Documentation as Self-Healing	79
Self-Documentation as Legacy.....	85
Conclusion	92
CHAPTER FOUR: INFORMATION ORGANIZATION AND DISSEMINATION IN A CONTEXT OF NON-DIGITAL PERSISTENCE	96
Digitally Divided	96
The Emotional Labour of LGBT Information Organizing.....	99
Non-Digital Persistence	106
“No One Does This Anymore”: Labour at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	107
A “Library Mind”: Mind as Search Engine	110
Analogue by Choice.....	115
Conclusion	118
CHAPTER FIVE: THE IMAGINED PATRON	123
Present Assimilation, Uncertain Future	123
Finding the Patron Through Method and Theory	126
L, G, B, T	133

Always-Already White	141
The Future is Now	147
Conclusion	155
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	157
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	168
APPENDIX A: LHA INTERNSHIP ADVERTISEMENT.....	184

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Out on the Shelves interior, summer 2014 (1).....	1
Figure 2: Out on the Shelves interior, summer 2014 (2).....	1
Figure 3: Out on the Shelves entryway, March 2015.....	2
Figure 4: QMUNITY’s training room.....	2
Figure 5: Research at the dining room table, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	40
Figure 6: Buster the cat overlooks the garden, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	40
Figure 7: Exterior, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	42
Figure 8: Sign, and main gate exterior of the STAG Library.....	42
Figure 9: The STAG Library in Home Body #1 (Rose Bond, 2015).....	51
Figure 10: Sign-up sheet, the STAG Library.....	57
Figure 11: Member’s card, the STAG Library.....	57
Figure 12: Close-up of shelf, the STAG Library (1).....	57
Figure 13: Close-up of shelf, the STAG Library (2).....	57
Figure 14: Close-up of shelf, the STAG Library (3).....	57
Figure 15: Interior view, the STAG Library (1)	58
Figure 16: Interior view, the STAG Library (2)	58
Figure 17: Ephemera, the Lesbian Herstory Archives.....	58
Figure 18: Interior view, the Lesbian Herstory Archives.....	58
Figure 19: Closet storage, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	60
Figure 20: Poster storage, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	60
Figure 21: Concealed storage, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives (1)	62
Figure 22: Concealed storage, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives (2)	62
Figure 23: Minor “spill over,” the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	62
Figure 24: Armband and harness, openMOV catalogue record.....	72
Figure 25: “Vancouver Opera Theatre presents: ‘La Traviata’ by F.W. Sunday”	73
Figure 26: Cover of “The Military Years,” a volume of Ken Brock’s journal.....	75
Figure 27: Handwritten captions, Ken Brock’s Genealogy.....	75
Figure 28: Typed page with ephemera, Ken Brock’s journal (The Military Years)	76
Figure 29: Handwritten corrections, Ken Brock’s Genealogy.....	76
Figure 30: Handwritten citation on clipping, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	108
Figure 31: Handwritten label on clipping, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	108
Figure 32: Duo tang with film metadata, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	110
Figure 33: Card catalogue, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	110
Figure 34: Examples from the STAG Library’s Self Shelf Swap profile.....	117-118
Figure 35: Roman coin depicting Janus.....	131
Figure 36: Business card front, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives (1)	138
Figure 37: Business card front, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives (2).....	138
Figure 38: Business card back, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.....	138
Figure 39: Ken Brock’s ring, openMOV catalogue record.....	149
Figure 40: Ken Brock’s mask, Museum of Vancouver exhibition, 2011.....	151
Figure 41: Search engine, Digital Transgender Archives.....	158

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALMS: Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections

ALOT: Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony

CLGA: Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives

LAGAR: Lesbian and Gay Archivists Roundtable

LGBT: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

LGBTQ: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer

LGBTQI: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex

LHA: Lesbian Herstory Archives

LIS: library and information studies

MOV: Museum of Vancouver

MSW: Master of Social Work

OOTS: Out on the Shelves Library

SMA: Sexual Minorities Archives

SAA: Society of American Archivists

STAG: Strathcona Art Gallery Library

TFQ: trans-feminist and queer

VPL: Vancouver Public Library

Chapter One: Introducing LGBT Libraries and Archives

On the Move

“Out on the Shelves is on the move!” proclaims the last blog post from Vancouver’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) library, Out on the Shelves (OOTS), published in February 2015. As of this writing, however, the library has still not opened a new location and is in temporary storage after losing its space in QMUNITY—the queer community centre located in Vancouver’s West End on Davie Street in the heart of the gay village—in order to make way for other forms of programming and a room rental program (see Figures 1-4). OOTS existed as part of QMUNITY, once known as the Vancouver Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, for thirty years. The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) has now acquired some of OOTS’ collection but the remaining materials are still in storage as some former OOTS volunteers continue to seek a permanent home for the library.



Figures 1 and 2. Out on the Shelves interior (summer 2014). Photos by the author.



Figure 3. Out on the Shelves entryway (March 2015).
Photo by the author.



Figure 4. QMUNITY's training room (once library space).
Photo by the author.

The case of OOTS is but one example of the changes to and challenges facing LGBT information organizations in Vancouver and surrounding areas in British Columbia, Canada. Another example is that of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, which, for over thirty years, has been located about two blocks away from QMUNITY in the condo of its founder and caretaker, Ron Dutton. When it was announced, in January 2014, that the City of Vancouver had awarded \$7 million dollars to QMUNITY to build a new, 10,000 square-foot-sized centre through community consultation, Dutton hoped that the new centre would house the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives alongside OOTS once he was no longer able to care for the archives. Dara Parker, the Executive Director of QMUNITY, publicly acknowledged in late January 2015, around the time of OOTS' closure, that OOTS might not necessarily become part of the new QMUNITY centre because the library was "highly under-utilized" (Lewis, 2015). If there is no longer room in QMUNITY for a library, will there be room for an archives? Where and how should LGBT information be collected for public use?

Focusing on the case of Vancouver and surrounding areas in British Columbia, this dissertation explores the contemporary, transitional context for LGBT information collections and organizations, and demonstrates the ways in which this case is reflective of how information organizing and LGBT issues more widely relate to the public-at-large. As the title of this study, *Personal Touches, Public Legacies*, suggests, LGBT information organizing concurrently has both highly personal and highly public stakes. This overlapping and conflicting investment in both the personal and the public in LGBT information organizing also reflects how these organizations interrogate and re-imagine the definitional boundaries of what constitutes information collections and information organizations more broadly.

Creating a public presence for LGBT information has been a longstanding form of activism in LGBT communities in Canada and the United States. The stakes of this activism have always been highly personal. As the aforementioned example of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives suggests, LGBT information collection intersects with the personal because it traditionally constitutes histories that would otherwise have remained private or been lost entirely if not for strong advocacy work from key individuals. Further, this information was housed in typically private spaces, often personal residences, at a time when the mainstream public was hostile to the idea of making that information more readily available.

Yet, in this current moment, the dynamic between LGBT communities and the public-at-large is shifting rapidly, as are public expectations and activities pertaining to information access and use. This shift is echoed in the changing conditions within the context of LGBT information collecting. With the normativizing of some aspects of

LGBT life, certain forms of LGBT information, such as QMUNITY's library, are seen as less necessary and are now being decommissioned or even relegated to private storage, whereas other forms of LGBT information, largely archival, are increasingly being moved into public settings, such as universities, often with a priority of making that information more widely available online. These kinds of transitions have not been smooth, nor can they be construed as universally beneficial, and this dissertation seeks to challenge the dominant, largely positivist narratives associated with the contemporary mainstreaming of LGBT life and, and by extension, LGBT information in the 21st century.

The conditions and associated assumptions surrounding information organizing in the 21st century are also vastly different than those in which LGBT information organizations were originally established during the late 20th century. We now no longer exclusively collect analogue collections necessitating physical storage space, nor do we any longer assume that any one of those collections can or should be considered a complete representation of a subject in its entirety, or indeed that those who collect the information are neutral or objective when doing so. The necessity and plausibility of creating large standalone collections, and, by extension, the spaces, content, techniques and audiences associated with information, have thus come into question in tandem with these technological and political shifts. While the stakes in collecting LGBT information have never felt more public, we have also never been more attuned to how individuated and de-centralized information organizing activities can be. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the personal touches that can still be found throughout LGBT information organizing attest to how the personal is present in all forms of information organizing and

how LGBT information organizing is a particularly rich site for finding those personal touches.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of the diversity in, changes to and challenges for LGBT information organizations, I conducted ethnographic research at multiple sites in Vancouver and surrounding areas such as Burnaby, New Westminster and Victoria for three months between June and September 2014. Southern British Columbia provided a compelling site for studying LGBT libraries and archives not only because of the relative lack of research conducted in this region and in Canada more broadly, but also because of its unique LGBT information organization context. Toronto and Montréal both host only one major LGBT information organization each and in both cases these organizations remain autonomous (the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives and Les Archives Gaies du Québec). In contrast, at the time of my research, Vancouver featured two autonomous LGBT information organizations (the BC Lesbian and Gay Archives and OOTS) and one LGBT information organization founded within a university context (the Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony [ALOT] at Simon Fraser University). Nearby Victoria hosts the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria, another LGBT information organization founded within a university.

Over the course of my research, I also encountered two LGBT-focused collections within Vancouver's municipal cultural milieu. The Ken Brock collection is held at the City of Vancouver Archives and the Museum of Vancouver, while the temporary (now closed) Strathcona Art Gallery (STAG) Library project, which, in its queer orientation towards challenging what constitutes an information collection and how political projects

engage with public and private space, is a descendant of grassroots LGBT libraries and archives past.

The central research aim of this dissertation is to examine the social, material, technical and political conditions that currently shape the LGBT information organizational landscape in the region, with particular attention to evolving definitions and configurations of LGBT and queer communities and the role of information and information organizations in both those communities and in society more widely. Key questions unfolded from this central research aim, including: How do LGBT information organizations challenge models for constituting information organizations? How do they relate and respond to current contexts within information-based institutions such as the ascendancy of online and digital technologies and increased interest in LGBT information in academic libraries and archives? Do queer information activities continue to take place within LGBT information organizations? Why and how do stakeholders utilize and develop LGBT information organizations in this era of ever-proliferating LGBT information? How do LGBT information organizations relate to the LGBT community, both as a population and as a concept?

This dissertation's findings attend to the tensions and overlap between understanding LGBT information collection as a personal and public endeavor. The grassroots LGBT information organizations included in this dissertation continue to challenge dominant models for constituting information organizations by offering services in semi-public environments, most notably homes, by relying on the services of volunteers as opposed to paid employees, and by developing techniques, technologies and mandates that do not conform to the norms found in mainstream libraries or archives.

As a result, these projects are highly personal in nature and therefore can also be considered non-normative or queer in their orientation to information because they challenge the underlying ethos of objectivity that permeates hegemonic information organizing.

Yet, this dissertation's findings also contend that LGBT information organizations are not always already queer and that it is crucial to also attend to the normativizing of some forms of LGBT information in tandem with the normativizing of some LGBT lives. LGBT collections and organizations created in normative institutional contexts often have more in common with the aims and techniques of mainstream information organizations, particularly in regard to how digital initiatives are prioritized and funded and how mandates are oriented toward the public-at-large, relative to grassroots LGBT information organizations. This is not to say that the motivations behind institutionally located LGBT information collections and organizations are not also highly personal in nature, reflecting that the simple dichotomy between the personal and the public collapses when examining different forms of LGBT information organizing.

Defining LGBT and LGBT Libraries and Archives

The broad concept of "LGBT information organization," and more specifically, LGBT libraries and archives, is difficult to define. I use these terms to denote organizations created with the primary mandate to collect, preserve and disseminate LGBT information. Whenever possible I refer to specific LGBT information organizations and related collections by their primary informational function, such as "archives," "library" or "museum collection" and the title of this study reflects the centrality of libraries and archives to this project. Yet, as Kate Eichhorn (2013) observes

within feminist and queer studies, “archive” is often used as an umbrella term to denote libraries, museums *and* special collections, whereas library and information science (LIS), the more professionally oriented discipline, places a strong emphasis on differentiating between these kinds of information organizations (p. 15). Increasingly within library and information studies, there are calls to break down the traditional silo-ing of different organizational types in order to respond to the evolving, digitally oriented needs increasingly associated with information seeking and use. As Paul F. Marty (2014) proposes, the distinctions between libraries, archives and museums may continue to exist at the back end, but at the front end, these institutions must work together to meet patrons’ expectations of universal, transparent access (p. 624). Reflecting these concerns, I will sometimes use the general term “organization” to reflect the commonality between LGBT archives, libraries, museums and special collections as well as to highlight that individual LGBT information organizations, regardless of their self-identification, often concurrently include archives, museums and libraries.

Indeed, a primary objective underlying this study is to explore how LGBT information collections and organizations interrogate and reimagine the definitional boundaries of what constitutes information collections and information organizations more broadly. This aim is reflective of the “archival turn,” the discursive shift from using the archives as a *source* for research to critically interrogating the archives itself and thereby transforming the archives into the *subject* of research. Although there is debate as to the origin of the archival turn, most credit Michel Foucault’s (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and Jacques Derrida’s (1996) *Archive Fever* as defining moments for this discourse (Stoler, 2010, p. 44). As explored throughout this dissertation, feminist theory,

post-colonial theory and queer theory are particularly productive frameworks for critically interrogating how information collections and organizations are defined because these frameworks are attuned to how definitions of information and knowledge (such as the institutionally located archives) are wielded by institutions to exercise control over particular communities. Some scholars, such as Sara Ahmed (2010), Antoinette Burton (2003), Ann Cvetkovich (2003), Gayatri Gopinath (2005), J. Jack Halberstam (2005; 2011) and Roshini Kempadoo (2008), move from examining physical archives to discussing archives metaphorically in order to challenge the traditional bounds of archives. These scholars invoke archives by arguing that either their sources comprise or contribute to a larger metaphorical archives that does not physically exist, or, similarly, that the work they create constitutes an archives in and of itself (Cooper, 2016). This dissertation's interest in exploring the bounds of what constitutes an information organization has been directly informed by the dynamic arguments emanating from theoretical work that invokes metaphorical archives.

In addition to attending to how information, knowledge and information organizations are defined and delimited, it is also important to attend to how terminologies of gender and sexuality are understood in the realm of the information organizations under study. I use the term "LGBT" not only to denote information organizations with mandates towards the LGBT community as a whole, such as the ONE Archives at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, but also organizations that have mandates towards particular segments of the LGBT community, such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City or the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria. Information organizations pertaining more generally to sex and

sexuality, such as Cornell's Human Sexuality Collection, as well as organizations with information relevant to particular segments of LGBT communities, such as the Leather Archives and Museum in Chicago, are also related to "LGBT information organizations," but I have excluded organizations such as these because different historical contexts informed their creation.

Whether and when to use such terms as "lesbian and gay," "LGBT," "LGBTQ" or "queer" in the context of these organizations is an issue of ongoing debate and much vexation. Some, including Marcel Barriault and Rebecka Sheffield (2009) and Diana K. Wakimoto, Christine Bruce and Helen Partridge (2013), propose using "queer" as opposed to LGBT in conjunction with these information organizations because, in their opinion, queer is a more open and practical term for describing non-heterosexual identities and communities. Sheffield (2015) has since revised her perspective and the organizations in her dissertation are referred to as "lesbian and gay archives" due to their specific historical contexts (p. 5-7). I also contend that queer is a misleading catch-all for describing the organizations included my project because none of the organizations exclusively used the term "queer" in either the titles of their organizations or their associated materials. Using queer as an umbrella term can also erase the history of exclusion, adoption and evolution of sexual and gendered identifiers in these contexts. For the same reasons, however, LGBT is also a tricky identifier. The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, for example, does not include "B," "T" or "Q" in its name but includes those identities within the scope of its collection. Ultimately, I chose the term "LGBT" as opposed to "queer" because all of the organizations and collections considered in my study are attuned to collecting information on various points of the LGBT spectrum and

often also encounter challenges in defining their mandates in relation to these definitional boundaries. Whenever necessary I use the term “queer” separately from the LGBT umbrella term to further emphasize that “queer” refers not only to a sexual or gendered identifier in itself but also to a theoretical orientation. Separating out queer as opposed to using the term as a catch-all is important because throughout this project I investigate how queer theory relates to LGBT information organizations, so as not to propose that these organizations are always already queer.

Theorizing at the Intersection of LGBT Communities and Organizations

The slippery boundaries between LGBT information organizations, terminologies, queerness, and their respective allegiances with various forms of information organizing, such as libraries and archives, reflect the diverse interdisciplinary and corresponding theoretical dimensions that emerge throughout my research. This dissertation project puts feminist, LGBT and queer studies in dialogue with scholarship from archival studies and LIS. LGBT issues have emerged in library and information science through examinations of how LGBT-identified patrons perceive and experience mainstream information-based institutions such as public and academic libraries (see, for example, Hamer, 2003; Joyce & Shrader, 1997; Rothbauer, 2004a; Rothbauer, 2004b; Rothbauer, 2007; J. Taylor, 2000). There is also a connected literature that focuses on programming and resource recommendations for LGBT-identified patrons in public and academic library and archives settings (see, for example, Greenblatt, 2010; Martin & Murdock, 2007; Mehra & Braquet, 2007). Both of these literatures, by emphasizing LGBT patrons’ distrust of and discomfort with mainstream information-based institutions, provide some context for why grassroots, autonomous LGBT information organizations were originally developed

but do not explicitly include autonomous LGBT information organizations as part of their purview.

Only more recently has research in archival studies and LIS highlighted the significance of community-based information activity located outside of conventional institutional contexts. My research draws inspiration from this cohort of scholarship (see, for example, Flinn, Stevens, & Sheppard, 2009; Moore & Pell, 2010). There has also been a recent cohort of doctoral projects that focus primarily on LGBT archives, including: Wakimoto's case study of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society, the Lavender Library, Archives, and Cultural Exchange of Sacramento, Inc., and the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives (Wakimoto, Bruce, & Partridge, 2013);¹ Rebecka Sheffield's (2015) case study of the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, the June Mazer Lesbian Archives, the Lesbian Herstory Archives, and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives; and Cait McKinney's (2015) work on the Lesbian Herstory Archives alongside other forms of feminist information activism.

While differing in their specific methodological and theoretical commitments, the work of Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge (2013), Sheffield (2015) and McKinney (2015), respectively, shares an underlying focus on studying LGBT archives through the theme of activism, with a specific focus on how activism relates to information organizing. It is not unsurprising that these projects use activism as their underlying thematic because LGBT information organizations first emerged in conjunction with other professional, scholarly and research-oriented groups that burgeoned during the liberal era of gay and

¹ Wakimoto's dissertation work is currently only represented in the published record through a co-authored paper with two of her dissertation committee members, Bruce and Partridge.

lesbian activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Stein, 2012, p. 99). All of these projects share a commitment to demonstrating how information organizing itself constitutes a form of activism. Wakimoto, Bruce, and Partridge (2013) explore the role of activism in the archives that they studied in order to argue for the importance of activism in archival work more broadly (p. 293). Sheffield (2015), drawing from sociologically informed social movement theory, explores how the archives in her study constitute social movement organizations that help shape and produce the larger social movements from which they emerged (p. ii). McKinney (2015) examines the Lesbian Herstory Archives in the context of feminist information activist tactics from the early 1970s to the present and also includes feminist and lesbian newsletters, indexes and bibliographies (p. ii). It is important to note that Sheffield (2015) and McKinney (2015) take an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on feminist and queer theory to bolster their understandings of LGBT archives and the relationship of these archives to activism.

Feminist theory pertaining to activism and alternative knowledge production contextualizes the underlying motivations behind studying LGBT archives in relation to LGBT and queer movements. The feminist epistemological framework, for example, challenges traditional forms of knowledge production within academia and, by extension, positions feminist scholarship as a meaningful political act (see, for example, Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991; Naples 1997; Ristock 1991; Ross 1995). This approach echoes autonomous LGBT information organizations' mandates to collect and disseminate information ignored or destroyed by society-at-large. Similarly, Eichhorn (2013) utilizes Wendy Brown's concept of "genealogical politics" to explain the ongoing preoccupation with archives in queer theory and feminist theory. As Eichhorn (2013) suggests, archives

serve as a platform for critiquing and imagining possibilities beyond the current neoliberal political and material conditions that foreclose any activities and expressions not driven by profit (p. 6). This type of theoretical engagement with the archives has less to do with an interest in history and the past and more to do with an interest in responding to issues pertaining to the present. Feminist theory also highlights the importance of reclaiming and creating public space as an essential component of activism more broadly. A. Finn Enke (2007) most notably defines a social movement as a “collective, spatial process” and emphasizes the importance of researching organizations such as cafes and bookstores that are developed in conjunction with more formal movement activity (p. 4).

LGBT archives have also been considered within queer theoretical discussions on archives and affect. Queer theory is a multidisciplinary critical framework that examines social and cultural activities through an outsider or non-normative perspective (Turner 2004). As both David Halperin (1995, p. 62) and José Esteban Muñoz (2009, p.11) emphasize, a queer perspective challenges dominant ideologies by offering a “horizon” or possibilities for future ways of being that cannot yet be fully articulated or known. Examples of queer strategies that emerged in relation to dominant modes of information collecting and organizing include locating LGBT information organizations in private homes and home-like environments, collecting ephemeral materials, and demonstrating an interest in “everyday” people and their experiences, as opposed to famous figures (Cooper, 2013, 2016; Cvetkovich, 2003; Halberstam, 2005). According to Ann Cvetkovich (2003) (whose book, *An Archive of Feelings*, provided for many a major entry point into studying queer archives), the strategies of autonomous LGBT information organizations are reflective of a distinctly “emotional” orientation, which

arises because they are focused on documenting areas of experience such as “intimacy, sexuality, love and activism” that “are difficult to chronicle through the materials of the traditional archive” (p. 241). The affects associated with LGBT and queer archives, particularly in the context of the body and embodiment, have recently been explored in the context of archival studies, such as through Marika Cifor’s (2015) meditation on Victoria Schneider’s hair and Jamie Lee’s (2015) “queer/ed archival methodology” for thinking critically about archival practice.

While queer theory valorizes some of the activities that emerged within LGBT information organizations, Lisa Duggan’s (2002) concept of homonormativity provides a foundational basis for critically interrogating LGBT information organizations.

Homonormativity, an extension of the term heteronormativity, describes the increased normalizing and mainstreaming of certain LGBT communities to the extent that they are aligned with predominantly white, middle and upper class culture. Autonomous LGBT information organizations are increasingly partnering with mainstream institutions and new LGBT information organizations are being created in institutional contexts that begin to align these organizations with more normative forms of information organizing. The concept of homonormativity, therefore, can be used to emphasize that LGBT information organizations are not necessarily or inherently queer. The concept of homonormativity can also be used to interrogate the representational politics of LGBT information organizations, most notably in terms of how LGBT communities are conceptualized within these organizations as well as how and which representatives from various lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities are included within these organizations.

The implications of the increasing institutionalization of LGBT information organizations are currently a major issue of contestation within queer and feminist theoretical work on archives. Cvetkovich (2003) poses the question of whether the two major kinds of LGBT archives models—autonomous and institutional—will ultimately end up in direct competition with one another (p. 246). She cautions that “as more institutionalized archives develop gay and lesbian collections it will be increasingly important not to forget the more queer collections and strategies of the grassroots archives” (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 245) Eichhorn (2013), however, argues that Cvetkovich’s fears have proven “largely unfounded” because the professional archivists and librarians Eichhorn researched for her book on queer and feminist archiving reported that autonomous archives are complementary to their work and that they themselves often collaborate with feminist and queer communities (p. 156). Since Eichhorn sees autonomous and institutional archives (whether they are feminist, LGBT or queer) existing productively in tandem, she suggests that we should be more focused on issues pertaining to the community-based information collections located within academic settings, and ask, for example, how institutions can maintain ties to the communities whose information they house and how we can prevent these collections from being subsumed under the mandates of the institutions that house them (p. 157). Eichhorn’s response to Cvetkovich’s work underscores the importance of keeping mainstream institutional relations in the frame when examining all current forms of LGBT information organizations.

Methods for Examining LGBT Information Organizations

With the frameworks and debates pertaining to LGBT information organizations in mind and with an approach undergirded by interdisciplinary theoretical issues primarily emanating from library and information science, feminist theory, and queer theory, I set out to examine the current and evolving contexts of LGBT information organizations through the specific multi-sited ethnographic vantage point of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Ethnography provided the ideal methodological approach for this project because the method elicits qualitative, community-specific, and rich descriptive data, all of which enabled me to gather the perceptions and observe the activities of the various stakeholders within these environments.

Emanating from anthropological and sociological traditions, ethnographic research focuses on a particular community's social organization and culture with an aim towards understanding their "daily lives" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 1). In order to gain deep insight into a particular social group, the ethnographer immerses themselves fully into that community, acting as a "participant observer" (Bernard, 2006, p. 344). Ethnographic research hinges on achieving a balance between an insider's and an outsider's perspective on a topic, also known as the "emic" and "etic" perspectives.

My methodological approach is a part of a growing movement that utilizes ethnographic research within information organizational settings in order to capture the cultural dimension of information-based activity (Asher, Duke, & Green, 2010; Cooper, 2011, 2013, 2015; Eichhorn, 2013; Foster, & Gibbons, 2007; Gracy, 2004; Hartel, 2010; Khoo, Rozaklis, & Hall, 2012; Rawson, 2009, Shankar, 2006; Flinn, Stevens, & Shepherd, 2009; Zeitlyn, 2012). This movement, in turn, reflects how ethnography has

been adapted beyond its anthropological roots to a variety of contemporary contexts in the academic social sciences, the professions and business more widely. In contrast to conventional information organizational research methods, such as user surveys, case studies and gate counting, ethnography provides a more holistic perspective on how people, organizations and technologies intersect, which is not only helpful for understanding variegated meanings and relationships between these figures but also for improving and designing new information services, spaces, tools and collections (see, for example, Foster & Gibbons, 2007). However, this study does not simply represent another example of where ethnography has been adapted to an information organizational context; it is also an opportunity to use ethnography to problematize how research is thought about and conducted in these contexts. Unlike most professional applications of information ethnography, the goal of this study is not to improve the offerings in mainstream libraries and archives, but to use ethnographic methods to critically interrogate professionalization as the benchmark of information organizing.

Multi-sited ethnography, as practiced in this dissertation, is particularly well suited to this orientation because it was not grounded in any one site or approach to information organizing. Following David Valentine's (2007) approach in *Imagining Transgender*, I conducted my research concurrently at multiple sites in order to challenge the assumption, commonly embedded in ethnographic research, that communities can be clearly defined within strict conceptual boundaries. Carrying out this research at multiple sites also enabled me to more fully capture the LGBT information organizational landscape as a spectrum as well as the relationships between organizations on that spectrum. The impetus for a multi-sited ethnographic approach to studying LGBT

information organizations emerged during earlier research. Prior to undertaking this study, I conducted single-sited ethnographies at the Lesbian Herstory Archives (Cooper, 2013) and the Pride Library at Western University (Cooper, 2011); my findings from these studies indicate that the organizations in question are valued as both social and symbolic spaces for the LGBT community. During my fieldwork at the Pride Library, however, I observed conflicts arising from the organization's affiliation with Western University, demonstrating the need to further examine the dynamic between LGBT information organizations and mainstream institutions. My participation in the 2011 and 2012 LGBTI Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) conferences also introduced me to a variety of LGBT information organizations, which demonstrated the need for comparative research on these organizations.

Following the "reflexive turn" in anthropology from the 1980s onwards, it is important to recognize the critiques of ethnography when engaging with the method. Feminist anthropology (see, for example, Behar & Gordon, 1995) has provided some of the most salient critiques of distance, objectivity, representation and writing conventions in anthropology (Lewin & Leap, 1996, p. 8). Social research, including ethnography, is a subjective pursuit on the part of the researcher. This method can also create an exploitative dynamic between researcher and subject because the researcher gains access to the experiences, perspectives and knowledges of their research subjects through prolonged social contact, which blurs the boundaries between research and other social relationships. Furthermore, the researcher derives the greater benefit because they are compensated and receive professional recognition for the work.

In recognition of ethnography as a subjective pursuit, researchers must account for themselves and the relationships they build in the field. LGBT information organizations have been highly accessible and productive sites for me to conduct research due to my positionality. I am a white, cisgender, queer-identified information professional with a Master's degree in Information and therefore I am both very much reflected in the sites that I study and highly familiar with the activities and issues at play in these sites. As is further discussed in Chapter 5, it is important to acknowledge that LGBT information organizations are not necessarily accessible or welcoming spaces, particularly for LGBT people of colour or for people whose sexual or gendered identities are not cisgender, lesbian or gay. My experience of comfort in these spaces is therefore reflective of the privileging of certain positionalities and identities in these spaces, particularly because I am white and often perceived as a lesbian.

Ethnography is an emergent method that unfolds organically, both in terms of the relationships and rhythms of work that develop in the field and in terms of the direction of study. Multi-sited ethnography, furthermore, has the added complexity of balancing how much time is spent at various spaces within the larger site. Over the course of my fieldwork, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives became the home base for my research. This was due in large part to the fact that Ron Dutton, founder and caretaker of the archives, was incredibly generous with his time and in making his space accessible. He allowed me to visit multiple times per week to conduct my own research in the archives and watch him work closely. Ron was very sensitive to ensuring that I saw every aspect of his archiving process, from making the "rounds" along Davie Street with him to collect ephemera and information sources to selecting and sorting clippings for the

subject files to negotiating with donors. Another reason why the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives became the heart of this ethnography was due to its physical accessibility: it is an organization where the information organizational practices are still rooted in a tangible practice that is easy to observe, and it was an organization that I could physically visit on a regular basis because it is located near another site of my study, Out on the Shelves Library.

This research project challenged me to think beyond identifying a specific organization as the “home base” for an ethnographic study of information organizations, which was the model I used in previous, single-sited studies. I could not immerse myself as fully in every organization, but I was able to adopt a good rhythm between sites, such as visiting the STAG Library when it was open once a month, regularly stopping in at Out on the Shelves in order to patronize the library and also to interview some of the volunteers, and attending other related events. I learned the limits of multi-sited work from the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria, which proved too far to visit more than once without sacrificing the time and energy necessary for engaging with the other sites.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to my previous experience of ethnographic research was including ALOT because it was not possible to approach the archives as a physical place for conducting research. Unlike my other sites, I could not regularly visit or observe much activity at ALOT because the archival collections are exclusively online and the day-to-day activity is relegated to ALOT’s archivist, Nailisa Tanner, who works

alone in the Special Collections offices of Simon Fraser University.² Once I had begun my fieldwork I was able to engage with the archives in a regular, meaningful way, particularly because of the relationship I developed with Nailisa. Nailisa and I have similar backgrounds: we are both queer-identified information professionals in our mid-to-late 20s and so the relationship we developed was concurrently professional and personal. While I lived in Vancouver we would socialize on a regular basis, including discussing my fieldwork and Nailisa's work at ALOT. While hanging out it was not uncommon for Nailisa to solicit my perspective on issues arising at the archives and I happily obliged her requests to help with the presentations and writing that are a part of a professional archivist's work. Our dynamic was therefore mutually beneficial, but I was always aware that I had to be careful so as to not take advantage of the insider's perspective this offered into the archives, specifically because I developed this perspective by virtue of our friendship and it is a perspective that I would not have otherwise gained.

A central concern when conducting ethnographic fieldwork is how researchers present themselves, and, by extension, how they relate to others while in the field. "Hanging out" is a fundamental skill that allows the participant observer to build rapport with informants (Bernard, 2006, p. 368). However, both feminist and post-colonial critiques of knowledge production as well as the reflexive turn in anthropology since the 1990s have increased awareness and acknowledgement of the ethical dimension that arises in the field in terms of the dynamics between researcher and subject (Detamore,

² The archives founder and director, Elise Chenier, was unable to provide time for the project beyond an initial meeting prior to my designing my formal dissertation proposal. Due to labour restrictions, I could not formally volunteer.

2010; Kulick, 1995; Newton, 1993; Tillmann-Healy, 2003; Wekker, 2006). It is important to acknowledge, as a form of accountability, that my friendship with Nailisa was one dimension of my gaining “insider” knowledge. Lisa Tillmann-Healy (2003), who explicitly advances the concept of “friendship as method” in qualitative research, also argues that the method necessitates an “ethic of friendship” (p. 735). She explains that this method “is neither a program nor a guise strategically aimed at gaining further access. It is a level of investment in participants’ lives that puts fieldwork relationships on par with the project” (p. 735). While my friendship with Nailisa evolved organically over the course of the project and I was very conscious of my actions so as to avoid taking advantage of the friendship in order to gain archival access, I ultimately disagree with Tillman-Healy’s assertion that friendship as method can rely on a supposed ethic of friendship. Ethnographic fieldwork is by nature intensely personal, including but not exclusively because of whether or not friendships develop, and, it is ultimately impossible to separate personal relationships from personal gain when fieldwork is involved. For me, transparency is far more ethical because it acknowledges what kinds of relations can arise in the field.

Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that this project is heavily weighted towards the practices of creating, staffing and managing LGBT information collections and organizations as opposed to their patrons’ actions and perceptions. Ethnography constructs and represents the actors placed at the centre of study and the method, like all methods, amplifies and silences certain perspectives by virtue of creating a subjective account by the researcher. Focusing on the caretakers of these collections unfolded by virtue of my methodological design, which was grounded in examining the evolving

contexts of LGBT information collections and organizations versus following around LGBT or queer information seekers in order to discover where they find information and how they use that information (regardless of where it may be kept).³ Therefore, the actors at the centre of this study are the creators and caretakers of the information collections as opposed to the patrons of those collections or other figures with roles in mainstream cultural heritage institutions.

Focusing on the perspectives of those who create and maintain LGBT information collections and organizations, and studying the relatively small and close-knit world of LGBT information collections and organizations also necessitates a particular approach to identifying research subjects. In most cases it was either impossible or undesirable to render these subjects anonymous because their identities are so closely tied to the collections and organizations under study. In addition, these subjects are considered experts on the topic of the study, which means that their identities serve as a form of authority. When applicable, I gained verbal permission from my informants to use their names, and when directly quoted from interviews, this permission was also secured in writing. Throughout the study the reader can assume that the informant is not rendered anonymous unless I explicitly state otherwise.

My data collection and analyses follow Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (1995) *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. I rely primarily on an ethnographic record produced via observation-based fieldnotes and semi-structured interviews. In addition to writing-based ethnographic data collection methods, whenever possible I also visually documented the

³ As highlighted in my opening anecdote about *Out on the Shelves*, my methodological approach meant that sometimes I found little to no patron activity at all and this non-activity is just as important to telling the story of the current context within LGBT information organizations.

spaces and materials I encountered through photography. The ethnographic research process explicitly weaves data collecting and analyses together through regular, prescribed writing activities, which become increasingly formalized over time. The chapters that follow represent a culmination point of writing that evolved over time from short jottings to fieldnotes to increasingly analytical memos. The data analysis process drew from Glaser and Strauss's (1967) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) "grounded" theoretical approach, which prescribes closely reading data samples towards analysis, or, from the "ground" up. The process is "iterative": I repeatedly read, analyzed and wrote toward developing an increasingly refined understanding of my topic (Bernard, 2006, p. 492).

Following the initial coding and memoing process, I identified and selected "core themes" and divided my data accordingly. Themes were selected based on: volume of data, resonance with activity patterns at the site, and significance to site members (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p.157). It is also important to note that the term "ethnography" not only refers to a research method but also describes the final writing product generated by this research method. Similar to the ethnographic research method, there are numerous approaches to producing the final ethnographic writing product. The write-up presented here follows the "fieldnote-centered" ethnographic writing format developed by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995). In contrast to writing structured around an explicitly and previously stated analytical argument, "fieldnote-centered" ethnographies invite readers to build an analytical perspective over the course of their reading (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 204).

Chapter Outlines

In addition to the methodological complexities associated with multi-sited ethnography, there is also the complexity involved in synthesizing and writing about multiple sites concurrently. In order to best reflect the aims of the multi-sited approach as opposed to a case studies approach, the following chapters are organized by overarching themes associated with information organizations and address specific theoretical discussions that accompany such themes: location (Chapter 2), collection development (Chapter 3), organization and dissemination (Chapter 4) and mandate (Chapter 5). Echoing these overarching thematic concerns, my methodological approach takes different inflections at different junctures; for example, Chapter 2 places a greater emphasis on spatial and visual analysis, while Chapter 4 takes a materialist approach to follow the techniques of organization and access. While some chapters focus more than others on individual organizations, the concerns of the various organizations are woven together to varying degrees throughout the study. Similarly, instead of providing one autonomous chapter that outlines the theoretical concerns associated with the study, each chapter engages with the theoretical concerns unique to its corresponding themes.

The title of the study, *Personal touches, public legacies*, reflects the tension and overlap between understanding LGBT information collection as a personal and public endeavour, which is a major and underlying theme that cuts across the findings. Throughout my research, I was constantly struck by how those involved with collecting LGBT information perceive their work as highly personal and bring personal touches into that work, even as this work is increasingly of interest and significance to the larger public. The title of this study also gestures toward the evolving concept of LGBT publics

and the ways in which LGBT communities are included within what constitutes “the public.” This study highlights how the relationship between the LGBT communities and the public is in great flux, even as some LGBT communities are increasingly considered a part of the mainstream public. LGBT information organizations shape and are shaped by the ways that these publics are defined and function in this present moment. I contend that it is precisely this oscillation and tension between concepts of the personal and public that defines LGBT information organizing activities in this current moment.

Each chapter addresses the issue of how the personal and the public intersect in correspondence with their associated and over-arching information-organizational themes. Chapter 2, “Semi-Public Home Libraries and Archives,” explores the meanings and activities associated with where LGBT information organizations are located. Focusing primarily on the home-based locations of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the now-defunct STAG Library, the chapter considers the significance of public spatial intervention in LGBT information organizational practice and to LGBT communities more widely. In doing so, LGBT home-based libraries and archives also challenge how library and archives spaces are defined in terms of where they are located, how they are run, and what materials they contain. This chapter also tracks the strategies of those who open up their homes to information organizational projects, which constitutes a delicate negotiation between private and public life.

Chapter 3, “Constructing the Self through Personal Collection,” considers how personal and public concerns are negotiated through the act of constructing an LGBT information collection. The chapter focuses primarily on the personal collection of Ken Brock, a gay-identified man whose documents and items were located in arguably the

most public site included in the study, the City of Vancouver Archives and the Museum of Vancouver. It examines how personal information collection relates to archival LGBT identity formation, while also highlighting how even the most personal form of information collection, the personal archive, is ultimately a construct for external audiences. Placing the Ken Brock collection in contrast with the other collections featured in the study, this chapter also demonstrates how the boundaries between personal and public information collecting are rarely straightforward.

Chapter 4, “The Techniques and Technologies of LGBT Information Organization and Dissemination,” surveys the wide and increasingly polarized spectrum of LGBT information organizational and dissemination techniques and technologies found at LGBT information organizations. While analog and more personalized techniques to organize information were used by the STAG library and remain in use by the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, there is also a proliferation of digital LGBT information organizations, including the recent formation of the exclusively online ALOT, which reflects changing public expectations around how information is organized and accessed. The chapter demonstrates that the convergence of analog and digital organizational techniques within LGBT information organizations disrupt hegemonic narratives that associate digital technologies with progress and critically examines how this tension relates to the politics of accessibility and labour, or the personnel dimension of “the personal.”

Chapter 5, “The Imagined Patron,” investigates how various LGBT information organizations articulate their mandates in relation to how they define their patrons. The patron is a powerful entry point for understanding how LGBT libraries and archives

navigate the complex interplay between the communities the organizations claim to represent and serve. By closely attending to the issues of identity and representation in the discourse on patronage, I bring into relief how LGBT information organizations define and delineate how LGBT communities relate to broader publics and, in particular, become increasingly indistinct from the public-at-large.

Chapter 6, “Conclusion,” returns to the underlying themes of the project. The chapter unfolds by considering how increased interest in digital connectivity between LGBT information collections in institutional contexts relates to issues of space, labour, identity and queerness in LGBT information organizational practice more widely. Revisiting key debates on the significance of increasingly institutionalized LGBT information organizational activity in light of the dissertation’s findings, the conclusion highlights how assumptions about LGBT information organizational activities should be constantly interrogated in terms of the spaces these organizations occupy, and the labour, technologies and funding sources on which these organizations rely. At this current moment it is equally possible for LGBT information organizations to conform to or subvert dominant models of information organizing, and this prospect must be acknowledged when discussing the challenges and opportunities associated with LGBT information organizing.

Chapter Two: Semi-Public Home Libraries and Archives

Always Take Your Books

On July 4, 2014, Ben Power, the curator of the autonomous, community-based Sexual Minorities Archives (SMA) in Northampton, Massachusetts, launched an online fundraising campaign for \$10,000 via gofundme.com titled “Save the Sexual Minorities Archives House—My Home!” (Power, 2014b). The SMA, as described by the Society of American Archivists’ (SAA) *Lavender Legacies* guide for Massachusetts (2012), “documents the lives of all sexual minorities (transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, queer, S/M leatherfolk, fetishists, and allies)” and currently holds 6000 books, 700 periodical sets, 12 four-drawer file cabinets of clippings and vertical files, and numerous music and multi-media tapes, queer artworks, rare posters, buttons, and t-shirts.

Founded in Chicago as the New Alexandria Lesbian Library, the archives changed its name in 1992 in recognition of the varying representation present in the archives’ collections and patrons. Power (2014a), who self-identifies as “a 64-year old, disabled, transgender man; a queer historian and an activist archivist,” has housed the SMA within his home for 31 years. Power was evicted from his home and was fundraising to purchase this or another home so that the archives could remain within the community. The archives has received some financial support in the past, for example, through the President’s Creative Economy Initiatives Fund at the University of Massachusetts; however, the archives’ mandate is to remain autonomous and community-based and the forms of funding the archives have received in the past cannot be used to purchase a house (Lederman, 2014; Power & Boucher, 2011).

As part of the fundraising effort, Power announced that the late Leslie Feinberg, the transgender activist and author most famous for their novel *Stone butch blues*, made a commitment to donate their personal research library to the archives. On August 15, 2014, under the heading “Update #8,” Power (2014b) posted to the GoFundMe page the following personal letter to Power from Feinberg, who was struggling with an ongoing chronic illness:

Since I can't fund-raise for anyone or any struggle right now, I have thought a lot about how I might make a unique donation that demonstrates my strong support for the communities-based archives...in the almost half century I've spent as an adult, I have never had a single library card. I never had the identification papers necessary in order to get one. I had no access to university libraries. I sought out books, magazines and other materials. This personal library was my only access. And so whenever I had to move from one apartment to another—which was frequent in some periods—I sometimes left behind lamps or dishes, but I always took my books.

Feinberg's statement in support of the SMA and the SMA's situation highlights the importance of and challenges to LGBT libraries and archives that are located in private homes. Libraries, archives and personal book collections located in private homes are utilized by LGBT people because of the systemic barriers that they, and, by extension, the information relevant to them, have historically faced in institutional settings. While locating an LGBT library or book collection in a private home circumvents certain forms of insecurity, home settings are vulnerable in ways that specifically arise from their setting (e.g., the instability of moving or the possibility of eviction).

The example of the SMA, as an archives located in a private home, is reflective of one significant way that the personal and public overlap in LGBT information organizing practices more widely. It also signifies the tensions—sometimes productive, sometimes precarious—that emerge from this overlap. Opening up one’s home and devoting part of one’s personal life to the collection of information for communities-at-large is an ongoing tactic in LGBT information organizing. How does one create and maintain an information collection in a private home for wider use by various publics? Where does personal life end and public information collecting begin in such a context? What possibilities are opened and foreclosed by providing information-based services in spaces that straddle the categories of public and private?

The SMA’s housing crisis arose when I was considering the above questions in the context of conducting fieldwork at two LGBT information organizations located in homes in Vancouver: the STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Although these organizations have very different mandates—the STAG Library was a short-term, informal lending library project based on a personal collection of books including but not limited to queer and feminist content, whereas the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives positions itself as the comprehensive collection of LGBT historical documents for the entire province—I observed similarities arising from their home-based environments regarding the significance of space, collection maintenance, preservation, and patron experience. Reflecting the significance of home-based libraries and archives for the LGBT community, this chapter unfolds as an in-depth exploration of the motivations behind, perceptions of and activities associated with organizations located in these settings through the specific contexts of the STAG Library and the BC Gay and

Lesbian Archives. The chapter begins with a discussion of each space and the divide between public and private in home-based libraries and archives. The chapter then takes up findings that articulate how the STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives operate as semi-publics and, in doing so, disrupt hegemonic relationships between information, privacy, power and space. By creating a textured account of the STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives as home-based organizations, we can not only begin to understand different LGBT and queer approaches to information collection but also articulate how these approaches complicate the ways that personal and public information activities are delineated.

Public, Semi-Public

Examining the physical sites and material qualities of libraries and archives enables us to understand how these organizations function as mechanisms of power by creating publics. Cvetkovich (2003) reminds us that “the history of any archive is a history of space, which becomes the material measure and foundation of the archive’s power and visibility as a form of public culture” (p. 245). Her statement echoes the beginning of Derrida’s (1996) oft-cited *Archive Fever*, where he traces the etymology and meaning of the word archives to the Greek “arkheion.” Here, too, we find the concurrent transition and overlap between private and public space:

[An arkheion was] initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded... On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* which is their house (private house, family house, or employee’s house), that official documents are filed...

It is thus, in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret. (p. 2-3, emphasis in original)

The history of libraries also involves a transition from private to public. Famous historic public libraries, such as the collections found in Ancient Alexandria or Renaissance Italy, were not actually intended for the general public. The major predecessor to public libraries as we now know them were public/private hybrids known as social libraries and sometimes more broadly as “community libraries.” These libraries, which can be traced to the 18th century, peaked in popularity in the 19th century. Organized by local groups operating independently rather than by the government or taxation, such libraries acquired books and made them available to their membership through an annual subscription (P. M. Valentine, 2011, p. 32-34, 37).

While the concepts of public and private are often presented as dichotomous, Michael Warner (2002) also reminds us that the two spheres “typically intermingle” (p. 27). Warner explains that “a private conversation can take place in a public forum; a kitchen can become a public gathering place; a private bedroom can be public and commercial space, as in a hotel; a radio can bring public discussion into a bathroom and so on” (p. 27). I would add that in the context of the public library, there are also debates as to what constitutes content appropriate for lending and what constitutes appropriate use of public library space and resources, such as whether or not public libraries are suitable spaces for homeless people to sit in if they are not using materials and whether or not patrons can access pornography on public library computers. In the context of public

archives, private life seeps into collections through personal records deemed worthy of historical value. For this reason, Richard Cox (2009) emphasizes that the personal recordkeeping practices of private individuals is an issue relevant to the archiving profession-at-large because many institutions ultimately acquire these kinds of collections (p. i, ix). Scholars aligned with feminist, post-colonial and/or queer theory challenge the conceptualization of the archives as exclusively public, and position domestic spaces as archives of the personal lives of marginalized subjects that remain otherwise undocumented in mainstream institutions (Arondekar, 2009; Burton, 2003; Cooper, 2016; Manalansan IV, 2014; Sheffield, 2014). In contrast to the cases discussed in theoretical explorations of the archives-as-home and in the archival literature addressing personal archives, the BC Lesbian and Gay Archives is idiosyncratic in its operations and larger in scope than are the records and other effects located in an individual creator's home. Shaunna Moore and Susan Pell (2010) emphasize that autonomous, community-based archives projects like the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives are ultimately public endeavours because they both enable emergent groups to intervene in the public sphere and constitute new publics: “[while] there is always the potential for obscurity, or even secrecy, at their root [autonomous archives] function as public places” (p. 265). However, Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Sheppard (2009) observe that in the context of autonomous community-based archives “the point at which the personal becomes institutional is not always entirely clear,” because these organizations are typically run by a small group of highly dedicated activists (p. 79).

Locating a library or an archives in a home is not an unusual strategy for LGBT communities in Canada and the United States. The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and

Transgender Historical Society of Northern California first occupied a spare bedroom of Bill Walker's apartment in San Francisco and the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) was originally located in Joan Nestle and Deb Edel's apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. While these specific organizations have since moved to more public locations, Cvetkovich (2003) argues that they are "semi-public," as per Michael Moon, "insofar as their existence has been dependent on the possibility of making private spaces—such as rooms in people's homes—public" (p. 245). The LHA, for example, fosters a home-like environment for several reasons: the new location is within a historic brownstone house, the archives still houses a caretaker on its upper floor apartment, and the décor and policies of the archives strive to maintain a warm, welcoming atmosphere (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 244-245). In fieldwork I conducted at the LHA in 2009, I further articulated how the LHA's home-like atmosphere creates a unique informational context for patrons that access the collection in public (Cooper, 2013).

Yet, the LHA is not a home but "home-like," and Cvetkovich's and my work focus on LGBT archives *previously* located in homes, rather than organizations that are *currently* located in homes. K. J. Rawson (2009) approaches this kind of analysis in his accounts of his experiences as a trans-identified scholar visiting various archives, including the SMA. Similar to my findings, Rawson's (2009) research emphasizes the importance of "environmental accessibility" for LGBT patrons (p. 126-130). A precedent for studying the spatial and visual significance of the STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives emanates from the broader tradition of LGBT and queer geographies as well as from the push to recognize libraries as meaningful physical and material spaces, and not simply as providers of information resources (Bell & Valentine, 1995; Buschman

& Leckie, 2007). The findings presented below extend these investigations of LGBT libraries and archives as places and the significance of LGBT spaces more broadly into the specific realm of LGBT libraries and archives as semi-publics located in homes.

A Necessity for Community Engagement

Private homes, out of a necessity perceived by their founders, are the spaces wherein the STAG library was once located and where the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives are located. Echoing Cvetkovich, STAG Library founders Aja Rose Bond and Gabriel Saloman described the library as a “semi-public, semi-private” endeavour to highlight and intervene into the shrinking opportunities for public, community activity in Vancouver (Bond & Saloman, n.d.). Ron Dutton, founder of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, explained to me that the archives are located in his home for similar reasons: “It has been very helpful to have [the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives] in my home, in a sense. There is no public space at this point, [and] the obvious place, the gay and lesbian centre [QMUNITY] is so heavily used that there is simply no room to house it.” Ron argued that in the case of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, the service of providing LGBT information is more important than where the information is located: “I think they [the LGBT community] get that there is no other place for it and I think they are more grateful to get the material than they are worried about that it isn’t in a shiny new office somewhere.”

The former STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives both relied—and, in the case of the latter, continue to rely—on the volunteer labour of their founders. The home-based locations of these organizations enabled their founders to work on these projects flexibly when schedules permit (Ron Dutton to this day at the BC Gay and

Lesbian Archives and Aja and Gabriel at the STAG library while it was in operation). As Ron says, “I’m working at [the archives] almost daily and adding material to it and organizing and using it with clients so to have it here where I can get at it and work away on it at my leisure has been very helpful.” Aja and Gabriel are both artists who work from home and when visiting the STAG Library I observed Aja working on various projects, either alone or with collaborators. Locating a library or an archives in one’s home also provides flexibility in terms of determining what parameters of operation are most convenient for the facilitators. At different points, the STAG Library had been open once monthly and at other times once weekly depending on the demands of Aja’s and Gabriel’s schedules. Ron books appointments for researchers based on his own availability.

Operating a library or an archives in a private home not only means that the caretaker can work on the project at their leisure but also that it bleeds *into* their leisure, therefore rendering the activity larger or more all-encompassing than regular employment. When I asked Ron whether it is possible to push the archives out of his mind, considering that it is in his home, he replied, “I kind of live and breathe it; I know it sounds very dull and perhaps a little obsessive but I’m never very far from it.” This explanation is understandable because Ron is very passionate about LGBT archiving and it is, in a way, his life’s work. At the same time, it isn’t just “work.” For example, one afternoon when I was at the archives Ron remarked that he’d rather index clippings at home on a Saturday night than go to the baths. Home archiving, for Ron, is equally fulfilling as or equivalent to other LGBT-related leisure activities.

Leisure activities blur into home library and archives activities in other ways, too. At the STAG Library, for example, Aja and Gabriel's friends often dropped in during open hours. Both Aja and Gabriel have very friendly demeanors, so there was always an air of "hanging out" at the library. I found a similar "hang-out" culture during my fieldwork at the Pride Library at Western University; this parallel suggests that encouraging hanging out is an important tactic for bridging the public/private divide in LGBT libraries more broadly (Cooper, 2011, p. 86-89). At the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives the atmosphere is somewhat different because Ron generally only schedules one researcher at a time and the focus is on conducting research, not browsing. Yet, unlike institutional archives, the environment does not feel hermetically sealed off like institutional archives because researchers work at Ron's dining room table, and Ron's cat Buster is often sleeping nearby on the living room couch (see Figures 5-6). If a patron happens to be at the archives later than business hours, they may also encounter Ron's partner Ed as he returns home from work. In addition, Ron does not necessarily engage in archiving activities during research appointments. As I conducted my research in the summer, Ron, who is an avid gardener, would often be out gardening while I looked through files.



Figure 5. Research at the dining room table. Photo by the author.



Figure 6. Buster overlooks the garden. Photo by the author.

The neighbourhoods in which the STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives are located also hold significance to these organizations and have implications for how they operate. The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives is currently located just off Davie Street in Vancouver's gay village in the West End of the city; its only other location was in Ron's previous apartment, which was also in the gay village. Ron explained that the archives' base in the village is important because "[the archives] was out in the community, particularly within the agencies out in the community where people went looking for information...so people would often be calling in there and looking.... and they all had my name and phone number." While conducting my fieldwork, I witnessed this process firsthand on numerous occasions, not only because callers and visitors would mention that they had been referred there by others in the immediate community, but also because I accompanied Ron on his regular "rounds" along Davie Street to visit various regular community sites, such as Little Sisters Bookstore and QMUNITY, to see if there was any relevant information to be collected

for the archives and to re-stock the archives' business cards, which he leaves at many organizations on the strip.

In contrast to the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, which is located in a now-gentrified area in Vancouver's West End, the STAG Library was located in the Strathcona neighbourhood, which is near Chinatown and the downtown Eastside. This part of the city was historically working class but is now changing with the onslaught of younger residents seeking more affordable rentals. The area is also where more and more queer events are taking place in lieu of the gay village. The fact that the STAG Library was *not* located in the "gay village" is therefore reflective of the larger trend toward the expansion of LGBT and queer activities and networks beyond gay villages due to the continuing evolution of LGBT movements and communities in larger cities in Canada and the US.

Crucially, the locations of the former STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives reflect the complex and ongoing relationship between LGBT communities and gentrification in Vancouver (Murray, 2015). It has been widely documented that the homonormativizing of LGBT lives and politics is connected to the gentrification of LGBT neighborhoods because of the associations now made between LGBT neighbourhoods and safety and creativity (see, for example, Ghaziani, 2014; Hanhardt, 2013; Schulman, 2013). Gentrification is not a static process; it involves ongoing cycles of displacement and intensification. In Vancouver, younger queer-identified people cannot afford to reside in the already-gentrified West End gay village; however, in the process of seeking more affordable space in the East End, these people pushed out members of working class and racialized communities. Consequently, with the influx of

younger “creative” people, the East End is now perceived as more desirable, leading to further gentrification. Aja and Gabriel no longer host the STAG Library and have left their Strathcona home because they were no longer able to afford to live in the area. LGBT libraries and archives may be located in private homes out of necessity due to lack of public space; nonetheless, private home locations are still implicated in the public issues that neighbourhoods with private residences face.



Figure 7. Exterior, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. *Figure 8.* Sign and main gate, the STAG Library. Photo by the author
Photo by the author

The STAG Library was not positioned as an explicitly LGBT information organization, but rather as an organization aligned with queer politics more broadly. Neither “queer” nor “LGBT” appeared in the description of the STAG Library on the library’s website, but Aja and Gabriel told me informally that the STAG Library was a deliberately queer and feminist organization. When asked why this position was not included in the library’s official mandate, Gabriel explained they had preferred to keep this element of the collection “stealthy” for patrons to discover upon visiting. As I will discuss later, the STAG Library’s position that their queer mandate was to be “discovered” by patrons parallels how Aja and Gabriel encouraged patrons to discover library materials during their visit as opposed to coming to the library with specific titles in mind. The library’s stealthy queerness, furthermore, was a better reflection of the

library's status as Aja and Gabriel's personal collection rather than a library explicitly founded to collect books on queer topics.

The organization's position on queerness emerged from the founders' experiences as queer-identified individuals and their perspectives on what constitutes queer community. The latter issue emerged when, during a visit to the STAG Library, I had a conversation with Gabriel about queer places in Vancouver. While browsing through books together, Gabriel mentioned that there aren't really places in Vancouver that he feels are spots for him. He cited a bar that sometimes has bear nights as one of the very few spaces in which he is comfortable, but noted that there is nothing beyond that. He cited events in East Vancouver that have more of a mixed atmosphere and that are aligned with an expansive concept of queer as the kinds of events that he and Aja are more likely to attend. Our discussion about queer spaces in the city highlights how the physical location of home archives and libraries is significant in relation to LGBT communities, but, at the same time, demonstrates that these communities vary in relation to different locales. To be more specific, the STAG Library engaged with a different community than the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Considering the size of Vancouver, the STAG Library, which was located in the central-east part of the city, was in a very different part of the city than the gay village in the West End.

Sheltering Information and Ideas

These organizations' home-based locations were seen by the founders of the STAG library and continue to be seen by the founder of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives as a necessity but also as an opportunity to shelter, physically and metaphorically, meaningful projects and information that would be otherwise overlooked

by mainstream society. The STAG Library was not just a library but also a publication residency: artists interested in preparing a publication were invited to stay in a spare bedroom upstairs in Aja and Gabriel's home as they worked on their projects. This reflects how the STAG library was part of the larger artistic practice of Aja and Gabriel, who sought to foster various forms of cultural exchange and production through their home. When Aja and Gabriel first moved in to the home, the living room area was originally used as a gallery space. That room became the STAG Library somewhat incidentally about a year later when Gabriel's parents moved out of their San Francisco home and thus forced Gabriel to discard and relocate a lot of the materials—including many books—that he still had stored there. The library's inception, though circumstantial, represented an evolution of their gallery project at a time when Aja and Gabriel wanted to move on from hosting the gallery, but it was also a solution for dealing with a newfound and large book collection.

Similar to the way that Aja and Gabriel gave a home to books that otherwise would have been rendered homeless, Ron sees the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives as a home to information that would otherwise have been discarded. For example, one day I was at the archives when a man came by to donate some posters. As Ron gave the donor a tour of the archives I overheard bits of their conversation. The man told Ron he was “happy this is going somewhere where it won't get shredded,” and Ron replied by saying that “the stuff here is known and it gets used.” Ron often receives donations when people are moving and no longer can or want to house the information. During our interview, Ron explained that he has been receiving a lot more donations from “personal archives” in the last ten years because his generation is retiring and downsizing their residences.

“Hence,” he said, “that material is frequently flowing into the archives when they’re ready to release it...or they need to do so because they can’t store it any longer.” As will be discussed later, this “frequent flowing” is leading to a practical challenge for the BC Gay Lesbian archives, that is, the shrinking availability of space.

Ron operates the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives as a shelter for valuable LGBT information otherwise ignored by the academy. He explained:

I’ve never trusted their willingness to passionately collect on our behalf...I think that they seem secure [but] that is not the case. [The archives] could be snatched away and history proves that’s happened before. And if that occurs then the official collections will do what they will do with that material, but at a minimum they will stop collecting so I think we have to do this work.

Underlying Ron’s perceptions about the academy is not only his desire to have personal control of his collection but also his larger distrust of the academy in general to do anything on the behalf of the LGBT community. He explains that this aversion stems from his own experiences as a gay-identified man involved in LGBT activism from the era of gay liberation onwards: “I come from a generation that had good reason to fear the official version of everything and I am passionate on the subject of retrieving our story and keeping it within the community...an archives is an essential part of that occurring.” Ron’s distrust of institutions is consistent with the motivations that Flinn, Stevens, and Sheppard (2009) found when researching community archives in the UK (p. 71).

The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives does not harbour dumpster-worthy information; rather, it stores information that has historical value for members of marginalized communities but that has typically been disregarded by mainstream

institutions. Brandy, a BC Gay and Lesbian Archives patron, estimated that she found about 75% of the information for her research at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives after fruitless searches at public institutions, including the Vancouver Public Library and the City of Vancouver Archives. Brandy used the Archives as part of her work with the Be the Change Group, creating a video series for The 30/30 Project as part of the 30th anniversary of AIDS Vancouver.

In other cases, however, Ron has to sift through information that has little value but that donors are too anxious to discard. Over the course of two months I observed Ron have a number of exchanges with a man who was in the process of moving and wanted to donate some of his now-deceased ex-lover's photographs (and accompanying slide projector). During an initial visit, the donor explained to Ron that he was not sure what was worth keeping, but that he wanted the items to go to the gay community, to someone who cares. Ron assured the donor that he would take care of it. One month after the donor's initial visit, though, Ron had determined that most of the collection was not of much value in relation to his mandate for the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, because it was mainly photos of random men whom the photographer found attractive and not specifically queer men or men of relevance to LGBT history in Vancouver. In relaying this news to me, Ron remarked, "I'm the last stop before the dumpster." As will be discussed below, Ron takes great care to distance himself from hoarders—people who cannot discern between what to keep and what to discard to the point where it interferes with their lives—as he does not keep everything that is donated. But, echoing the fact that the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives operates on an emotional register, Ron admitted to me that he has to make "brutal choices" when deciding what to throw away and what to

keep. Ron also mourns the collections that are discarded before he has an opportunity to collect them. For example, Ron was unable to acquire the records of the Vancouver Lesbian Connection (although he does have their newsletter, *Rumours*) because as one former member of the collective was in the process of arranging for Ron to take the records, another former member, who had been housing the records in her basement, threw them out; given her stronger separatist leanings, she thought this preferable to giving the records to a man.

Ron not only gives a home to LGBT information by storing the archives in his home but also through his archiving methods. As part of his practice of regularly looking through newspapers, Ron combs through obituaries and then files appropriate entries in vertical files labeled “Biography A-Z.” These people are not necessarily famous, but Ron knows to include them in these files because it is apparent from the text of their obituary that they were LGBT-identified or had connections to the LGBT community. In some cases, Ron personally knew these people were LGBT even if this is not formally acknowledged in the obituary. Often, these people’s obituaries were written by family members who deliberately omitted any LGBT-related references. Ron says he loves doing this work because he feels like he is “returning these people to their homes,” by which he means he is positioning the archives as a metaphorical home for LGBT people. He says that it does not matter if these people self-identified as LGBT, for their posthumous identification as such is important to us living, self-identified LGBT people.

Ron also returns subjects to their LGBT homes through his historical research. For example, he has been conducting ongoing research about the Dunsmuirs, a wealthy BC family. In the 1920s, the family included Dola, who was friends with Tallulah

Bankhead, the libertine Hollywood actress who was rumoured to have had relationships with other women. It also included Dola's sister Eleanor, who liked to smoke cigars and wear men's clothes. Ron contends that these women are important not only because they were wealthy but also because they were doing the same sort of things as people like Gertrude Stein, such as travelling to Paris. Considering his undertaking of these additional projects, I asked Ron if he thinks of himself as an historian in addition to being an archivist. He replied that he is "a historian of a peculiar sort" because although he does this research, he does not publish his findings.

Fires, Floods and Death

Although locating an LGBT library or archives in a private home enables certain forms of accessibility and security, both for the people who run the organizations and for those who use them, there are also challenges to safety and accessibility associated with private residences. Visiting the private home of a person you are not acquainted with can be dangerous, or, at the very least, anxiety provoking. In her case study of the LHA, Sheffield (2015) notes that a welcoming, home-like environment can be a deterrent for visitors because the intimacy, as well as the aura of exclusivity that can sometimes accompany an intimate setting, may alienate or be too overwhelming for some patrons (p. 236).

My own research reflects these challenges. Upon my first visit to the STAG Library, I made the following observation in my fieldnotes: "even though I have a lot of experience with libraries and archives in homes, it makes me anxious every time I go to one of these places for the first time because you are going into someone's private space and really have no idea what it will be like." In my experience, this anxiety lifts after the

initial few minutes of being acquainted with the new surroundings; however, for some, the initial anxiety may be enough to prevent them from ever visiting. While the STAG Library was in the ground-floor living room of a house, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives is located in a condo. To enter the archives, the patron must call Ron from the lobby, and, once inside, enter a bedroom to view the archival collection. Ron is highly sensitive to the fact that people, particularly women, may not be comfortable coming to do research in the bedroom of a man's house, and so he is willing to take the collections to researchers to use in public areas. Requests of this nature have been made only a few times. Ron once commented during a visit that people are generally comfortable with coming to his apartment because, "I am harmless and I am old."

Locating a library or an archives in a home can be considered a financially sustainable decision because the cost of hosting the organization is folded into living expenses that are already being incurred. Yet, this viability is predicated on the assumption that maintaining a home dwelling is financially accessible. Ron is able to provide the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives with a stable "home" because he is a retired professional with a pension and he owns his own condo. Similarly, in the case of the LHA, Sheffield (2015) suggests that the organization will likely maintain autonomy as long as Deb Edel, one of the archives' co-founders, owns the Brooklyn brownstone house in which the archives is located (now valued about \$2 million USD) (p. 302). Still, Sheffield (2015) highlights the financial strain that owning an archives house entails for the LHA, both in terms of its maintenance as well as loss in monetary donations to the archives for, as LHA co-founder Joan Nestle suggests, the house creates the perception that the archives is financially stable (p. 214, 302).

In contrast to the LHA and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, the former STAG Library was located in a rental home, which exposed the library to the kinds of vulnerabilities that renters typically face. Gabriel remarked to me once when I visited the library that he was unsure how much longer he and Aja would be able to “donate” a portion of their month to hosting the STAG Library and their artist residency in the spare rooms of the house; due to gentrification, the rent had increased considerably since they initially moved there. In order to mitigate this increase, Aja and Gabriel did not conceptualize their projects, including the STAG Library, as long-term. They argued that creating deliberately temporary projects was a way to make activism sustainable for organizers because it prevents burnout. On January 1, 2015, Aja and Gabriel announced via the STAG Library listserv that the library would cease operation on May 1, 2015; however, they also indicated that the STAG Library as an entity more broadly would continue to exist and evolve into a new project in to-be-determined ways. Since the closure of the STAG Library, Aja and Gabriel continue to update members on their other projects, but they have not revived the library. Most notably, Aja authored a zine that reflects on the STAG Library project (Rose Bond, 2015) (see Figure 9).

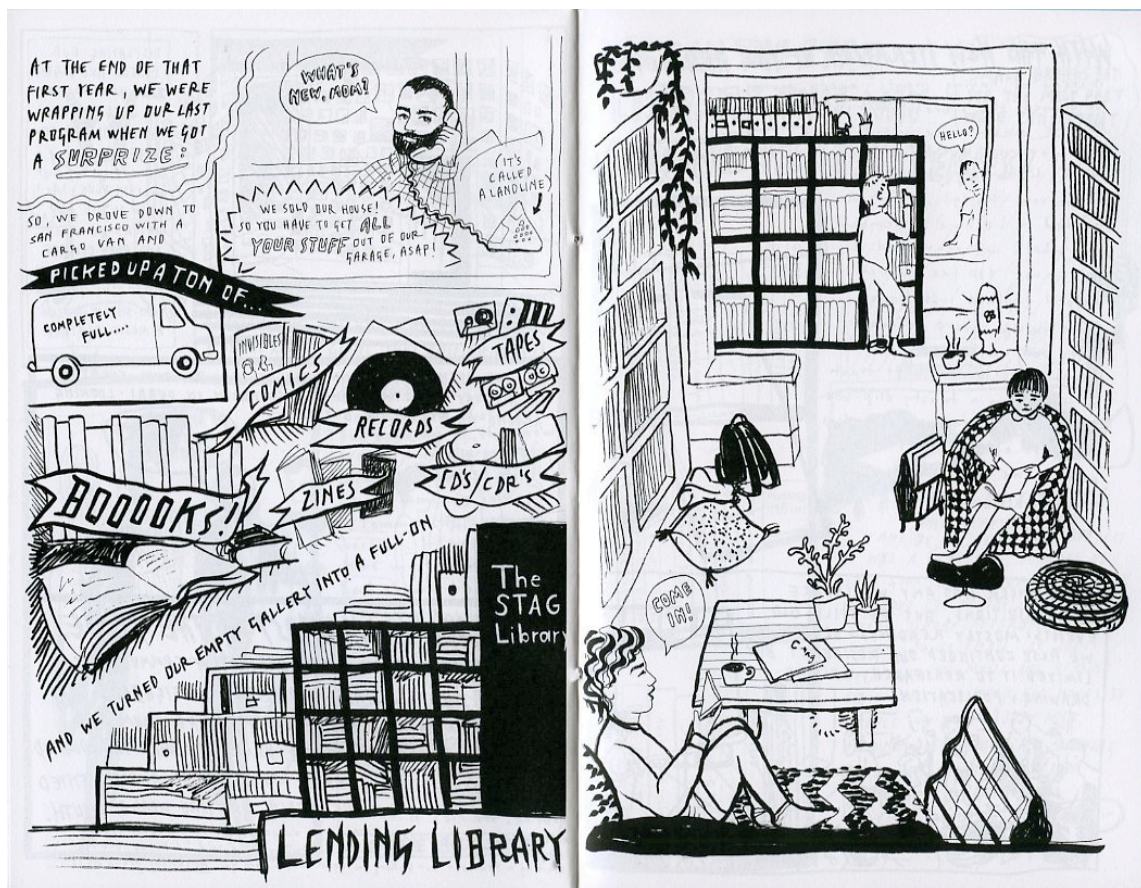


Figure 9. "The STAG Library" in *Home Body #1* (Rose Bond, 2015).

According to Aja and Gabriel, The STAG Library could be temporary given the nature of the project: the library was primarily composed of their personal collection of materials, and the operation was small-scale. But, in the case of grassroots LGBT archives that house one-of-a-kind historical documents, the issue of permanency is central, as is the issue of protecting the documents. Some grassroots LGBT archives have been able to maintain their mandates to be autonomous from other institutions by raising the funds to purchase locations for the organizations. Some of these archives moved from private to more public spaces, like the LHA, whereas others, like the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA), were always located in public spaces. Owning the location in which the archives or library is housed does not automatically guarantee stability for

LGBT libraries and archives because organizations such as these must still secure funds to maintain the properties. Thus, fundraising is an ongoing challenge for many LGBT libraries and archives.

In order to offset some of the costs associated with maintaining the collections and spaces, some LGBT libraries and archives charge research or membership fees. The STAG Library charged a one-time fee of \$10 for a membership card. The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, in contrast, charges no fees and Ron regularly conducts research for inquirers remotely. Brandy remarked to me in an interview that she was concerned about how Ron funds the archives entirely himself:

I had been talking to him early on about a couple of things, the fact that he doesn't take any money or any funding and I've been trying to say to him, "Ron why don't you just charge people a minimal fee? You have people who are doing their PhDs, people from the Centre of Excellence, people who have money or at least funding of some sort to at least pay you a nominal fee, you could do it on a sliding scale, a small AIDS organization you charge them nothing but if it's the Centre of Excellence, which has millions of dollars, you charge them." So I've been talking to him about that because I thought that would help him make it more sustainable as well and possibly grow it.

Brandy emphasizes that because Ron chooses to self-fund the archives, he can neither expand nor ensure that the archives is sustainable beyond what he can provide. Yet, taking in money would make the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives a more complex organization that Ron might not be able to maintain by himself: he would need to be accountable to fundraisers, and in growing the operations, the archives would need more

volunteers and a governance structure. While some may argue that the archives' current organizational structure enables Ron to be a benevolent dictator accountable to no one, others may understand his archives as a practice in radical accessibility in that the archives is entirely free for anyone who needs it, including people who are very far away. The archives' logbook bears testimony to the fact that many different kinds of people use the archives, not just scholars with access to funds for research-based travel.

Some of my informants who have patronized the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives expressed worry about possible accidents. Because the archives is located in Ron's home, the project may be threatened by such occurrences as fire or flood. These informants also indicate that, because it is maintained exclusively by Ron, the archives may perish upon Ron's death. In their discussion of community archives in the UK, Flinn, Stevens, and Sheppard (2009) highlight that the "individual dimension" of these kinds of projects lend to both their dynamism and also their potential downfall. They caution that "one of the most dangerous times for the long-term sustainability of a community archive is in the period after its original driving force moves away or passes on" (p. 80). In the following section, I will further discuss how Ron maintains the archives to prevent the forms of decay typically associated with historical records; however, here I focus specifically on the issue of total destruction arising from the archives' home-based setting. Brandy, for example, remarked in our interview that:

We need to digitize this stuff as well because beyond Ron dying, heaven forbid, [or] there's a flood or a fire or whatever, this is the only place that has the history of HIV in Vancouver and that's what I can speak to with confidence, it's the only

place that has the comprehensive history and I think digitizing it also makes it more accessible as well globally.

While fire or flood could arguably happen to archives in more institutional settings as well, and, while it is also debatable as to how sustainable a strategy of digitizing a whole collection is in terms of labour and costs, Brandy's comments emphasize that the broader historical record is at risk when Ron's archives are the only source of HIV history in Vancouver.

Another informant, Willow Yamauchi, a journalist who used the archives to conduct research on radio programs about her father's gay activism and drag career, also echoed Brandy's fears about the archives. She stated in our interview that "that was something that struck me too, what happened if there were a fire or a flood, just because it is in a home, it's not somewhere else." Yet, Willow mentioned later in the interview that, despite these threats, she still trusts Ron with the documents:

I don't think it's going to end up in the wrong hands... it [is] important for the LGBTQ community to tell their story and for them to be the keepers of that history. I want him to keep them safe and for him to find out whoever the next keeper of that will be, I'm quite pleased, I trust that he will find the right person to keep those stories.

Willow's remarks underscore how, in the case of an archives located in a private residence, trust in the individual who is housing the archives is paramount. Her remarks also reflect an underlying assumption about archives in homes, namely, that having information in a "community" setting is a form of accessibility that trumps other forms of accessibility because it makes the community the agent of its history. This echoes the

stance of the LHA, as articulated by co-founder Joan Nestle (1978): “the archives should be housed within the community, not an academic campus that is by definition closed to most women...an isolated building that continues to exist while the community dies” (p. 11). The STAG Library and the BC Lesbian and Gay Archives both preserved and continue to preserve the LHA’s aims by privileging community access over other facets of information organizing.

Ron is able to mitigate concerns that the home-based BC Gay and Lesbian Archives is in danger because he takes great care to maintain a “serious,” professionally run archives. The professionalism of the archives is recognized by patrons such as Brandy, who suggested to me that the archives is the most appropriate place for relevant materials that are becoming newly available. For example, when discussing records pertaining to the history of the AIDS epidemic in Vancouver, Brandy described this era as a “tipping point” for preserving the information associated with this history and noted the importance of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives to this preservation. She explained that “the unique part of the epidemic is that everyone who was there in the beginning is now retiring, they’re dying, they’re moving so we were at a tipping point of losing all that stuff so now we also [must give] it to [Ron].” As I mentioned earlier, while doing her research for The 30/30 Project, Brandy found most of the information at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. She is also in the process of donating original documents she collected elsewhere for her research to the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, and, when that is not possible, copies of documents. For example, she is making sure that copies of the medical records of Brian Willoughby, a doctor involved with early AIDS care in Vancouver, will be donated to the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. While both Brian and Ron are older

men keeping records in their homes, Brandy argues that “the only safe place is with Ron” because he is systematically creating a collection but also has a mandate to collect; as such, he cares for the information and its history on a deeper level.

House Proud

While the comments of some of my informants demonstrate how it is easy to worry about the worst-case scenarios associated with archival collections in homes—fire, floods, and death—I observed that Ron was more concerned with the day-to-day challenges associated with maintaining a standard of quality in his archives. For Ron, quality refers to acquisitions, organizational techniques, adequate storage, a dust-free environment, and temperature and humidity control. His concerns highlight how one of the challenges associated with running a library or an archives in one’s home is that patrons or information professionals may not take the organization seriously, because they view the organization as an informal extension of the home. I observed these concerns primarily at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives because Ron positions the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives itself as *the* archives for BC LGBT history. In contrast, these concerns were less prevalent at the STAG Library, which was more of an experimental project than a comprehensive resource.

While the STAG Library utilized some of the mechanisms of standard library operation, such as maintaining a record of patrons and their circulation activities, cataloging the book collection, and categorizing the books by subject, these methods lacked formality and were not strictly adhered to. For example, item sign-outs were noted on a clipboard but there was no procedure for pursuing or fining people who had items overdue (see Figures 10 & 11). Books were shelved by category; however, they were not

assigned a catalogue number and sometimes, such as in the case of a book on ferrets that was located in the “Queer” section on my visits, shifted around. On the shelves, other items surrounded the books, and patrons could potentially take out any item they found in the space if Aja and Gabriel were amenable. For example, my friend enjoyed the music that was playing when we once visited the library and, upon commenting about that, Aja took the CD out of her laptop and allowed my friend to sign out the CD as a library loan (see Figures 12-14).



Figures 10 & 11. Sign-up sheet and member's card, the STAG Library. Photo by the author.



Figures 12, 13 & 14. Close-up of shelves, the STAG Library. Photos by the author.

The STAG Library's approach to presenting and loaning materials was rooted in its aesthetic philosophy, which is simultaneously warm and “home-like,” and imbued with informational content (see Figures 15 & 16). The space, with its comfy couch, art on every surface (including the walls, floors and windows), and objects on every shelf echoed the aesthetic of the LHA, and created an “all-over” informational effect by placing ephemera throughout the archives (see Figures 17 & 18; Cooper, 2013, p. 532-

533). Aja and Gabriel explained that the library was organized as such because they envisioned the space as an “anti-digital refuge” that encouraged visitors to discover non-digital materials such as books, tapes and zines by browsing the collection or by talking to Aja and Gabriel about the collection. As introduced earlier in this chapter, the STAG Library’s approach to books encouraged patrons to discover the library’s queer orientation. The library’s emphasis on discovery further resonated with my observations at the LHA, where the space also encouraged organic exploration as a form of information seeking (Cooper, 2013, p. 533-536).



Figures 15 & 16. Interior views, the STAG Library.



Figure 17. Ephemera, the Lesbian Herstory Archives.



Figure 18. Interior view, the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

In contrast to Aja and Gabriel, who embraced the blurring between their private home life and their semi-public library, Ron focuses on containing the archives, not only to maintain the archives’ respectability in his view but also so that the archives does not

take over his home. During our interview, he explained why the archives is kept in the guest bedroom and will not be allowed to spill over into other rooms of the house: “That room is a spare bedroom and an office so it is the room in this condo that is out of sight and where I can load it up with file boxes and not have it in my home. My partner, this is our home, the rest of this house where we live and I don’t want that, I don’t want file boxes everywhere.”

Consistent with Ron’s account of maintaining a separation between the archives and his home, I had the following impressions when I first visited the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives in November 2013:

The bedroom was very neat and non-archive-y looking and Ron has done this deliberately: he explained that all of the materials are stored in closets which he had specially made and some other materials are hidden behind a Japanese screen. The exception to this is a box he has beside his bedside table, which is a donation he got only three months ago from the partner of the late drag queen Adrienne Alexander de Vander Vogue, which he has left in the corner because he hasn’t processed it yet...He also mentioned that he keeps this bedroom cold, dry and dust free to “approximate archival conditions.”

This excerpt reflects Ron’s concerns about the space the archives takes up in his home, including: the challenge of maintaining the delineation between home and archives, the constant threat of new collections to spill over and take up too much space, and the work of approximating archival conditions. These concerns are not necessarily mutually exclusive. On my first tour, for example, Ron allowed me to take pictures of the room, but he made sure to make the room as neat as possible because this is a “serious

archives.” In using the term “serious archives,” Ron is referring to the fact that he strives to maintain the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives according to the professional standards associated with institutional archives. He explained to me that, in his current and previous apartments, he works hard to approximate archival conditions: “I set up shelving units in the spare room because it was dark and dust free and dry and all the things it has to be, and cool, all the things that are necessary to preserve paper” (see Figures 19 & 20). He also explained on that first tour that “I am house proud,” in that he wants his place to look neat and nice in general, which is evident from the apartment’s consistent and well-thought-out décor.



Figure 19. Closet storage, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Photo by the author.



Figure 20. Poster storage, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Photo by the author.

In addition to keeping the archival materials in closets equipped with custom shelving, Ron stores posters in a unit he himself built. The posters are covered with a blanket to keep out dust. When, during my first visit, I expressed my amazement at the fact that he is able to keep his apartment so neat while also housing an archives, he

replied by emphasizing his professional status: “I’m a librarian and a neat person, not a hoarder” who feels that the archives “needs to be organized to death” in order to convey that it is an archives, not just his home.

For Ron, one of the major motivating factors for possibly moving the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives out of his apartment is that he is running out of available space for the archives. Even though Ron is incredibly neat and diligent, some minor spillover to other areas of the apartment still occurs. For example, the Adrienne Alexander de Vander Vogue collection was located beside the bedside table because it had yet to be processed (see Figure 23). Over the course of my fieldwork, this box remained unprocessed and in the same spot in the room and was joined later (in August) by some artifacts from another recent donation. Despite this overflow, the room remained orderly. Once during a visit, Ron noted to me that he is currently in the midst of re-organizing the closets that hold the collections because he is running out of space. “In the last number of years,” he said, “I’ve really had no more room for any more shelves and the files continued to expand and the number of boxes continues to expand that we’re now at some sort of, a decision and a location needs to be found within the next few years.”

Because the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives is located in the bedroom of an apartment, it may create an impression of privacy and intimacy. Ron believes he can mitigate this perception by taking a professional approach to archiving but the tension with privacy and intimacy remains because he stores the collection in an inhabited apartment (see Figures 21 & 22). Informants who used the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives for their own work reported to me that they were initially surprised that the archives is located in an apartment. Brandy discussed her first visit: “We were in his small West End

apartment, and it's so neat and you're thinking, 'How comprehensive can it be?' ...So then he takes us into his room and the sliding doors open and...we realized that this was our research." Brandy's revised opinion was also echoed in my conversation with Museum of Vancouver (MOV) curator Viviane Gosselin, during a tour I had of the museum. We discussed her visit to the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives as part of her work assembling artifacts from the archives for the "Sex Talk in the City" exhibition at the MOV from February to September 2013. Viviane told me she was initially skeptical of the archives but was then impressed when visiting Ron's home because of how meticulously he kept the documents. She also mentioned that he is a librarian.



Figures 21 & 22. Concealed storage spaces, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Photo by the author.
Figure 23. Minor "spill over," the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Photo by the author.

Willow had similar recollections about the location of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives:

It's rather remarkable, it's in his bedroom, in his home in the West End and I find it challenging organizing my family photos so [the fact] that he has 750,000 pieces of archival material is truly amazing and it's so beautifully organized and he's a librarian and an archivist by training and that's abundantly obvious, everything is so well catalogued and documented and a thing of beauty, I was struck by it all, I couldn't believe it was in someone's home, that someone had

committed 35 years of their life to this project...it had never occurred to me that such an important archives could be in a private home...

Like Brandy and Viviane, Willow stresses the scope of the collection in contrast to the collection's location in a bedroom. Willow, like Viviane, focuses on the fact that the archives is well organized and run by a professional as a testament to the project's legitimacy. For his part, Ron emphasizes both his background as a professional librarian and his objective approach to organizing and preserving the documents in the archives in order to demonstrate that the archives is a collection for others to use and not just his personal hoard. At the same time, Ron told me that it is critical that the archives be one day relocated to a public space, because public space signifies legitimacy whereas an archives in a home is typically perceived as a hobby.

Conclusion

While Ron envisions that the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives will eventually move to a more public location, the archives will be housed in his home for the foreseeable future. The STAG Library, always conceptualized as a temporary project, closed in 2015 when Aja and Gabriel moved from their home in Strathcona. Also in 2015, Ben Power purchased a new home for himself and the SMA in Holyoke, Massachusetts. On April 1, 2016, Leslie Feinberg's personal research library arrived to its new home at the SMA's new location (Power, 2016).

The various, current outcomes of the SMA, the STAG Library and BC Gay and Lesbian Archives are reflective of how LGBT libraries and archives, as semi-publics located in private homes, contend with, negotiate around and deliberately challenge commonly held expectations of public information collections, including the expectation

of permanency. Extending Cvetkovich's (2003) argument that LGBT grassroots archives constitute semi-publics, this chapter focused on the unique motivations, activities and challenges of the SMA, the STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives as LGBT libraries and archives that deliberately straddle the divide between what is considered public and personal space by being located in private homes but having public mandates. The chapter began by placing contemporary, home-based libraries and archives, which have been otherwise ignored in LIS and archives studies literature, within the context of archives histories and theories, linking the spaces that libraries and archives occupy to the authority and power afforded to the information housed therein. LGBT libraries and archives may be located in homes by virtue of the lack of importance mainstream society traditionally afforded to LGBT information collections; however, this chapter demonstrates how certain organizations use private, home-based locations as a powerful tactic to circumvent this marginalization. Semi-public, home-based LGBT libraries and archives demonstrate how public and private spaces are not dichotomous and that information organizations are powerful mechanisms for challenging the limits of how personal space can be used.

Focusing primarily on the examples of the STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, this chapter explored in depth how and why some LGBT libraries and archives are located in private homes and why these organizations' caretakers and some (but not all) of their patrons view these locations as viable and necessary despite the associated risks. The STAG Library and the BC Gay Lesbian Archives remain located in private homes out of a perceived necessity, not only because the information would then not be housed anywhere, but also because their homes are located in the

particular communities for whom the information is being collected. In doing so, the caretakers of both organizations position their organizations as physical and metaphorical shelters for locally relevant information.

This chapter also explored how, by virtue of straddling the divide between personal and private space, home-based LGBT libraries and archives must constantly negotiate tensions between what is accessible and inaccessible, sustainable and unsustainable, safe and unsafe. The caretakers of the former STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives have different strategies, respectively, for managing these tensions. The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, for instance, aims to preserve BC LGBT history and is positioned as one, if not *the*, major organization working toward this aim. In order to accomplish this objective, Ron strives to maintain a clear delineation between his personal space and the archives by approximating as much as possible the professional standards for archives spaces. In contrast, the STAG Library was a temporary project and as such deliberately eschewed many of the formal, spatial trappings associated with more public libraries. Aja and Gabriel endorsed impermanency in order to provide a non-normative information-based experience where highly visual, non-digital discovery points were emphasized.

Finally, this chapter explored the unique contexts of home-based LGBT libraries and archives like the STAG Library and BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. These kinds of organizations disrupt assumptions about what library and archives spaces are by virtue of where they are located. The personal touches associated with locating an LGBT library or archives in a home can be an opportunity to intervene in how and what kinds of LGBT information is made available to the public, but, in the context of the BC Gay and

Lesbian Archives in particular, such personal touches can also lead to uninvited questions about an organization's legitimacy. The following chapter continues this exploration of how the personal dimensions to public LGBT information organizations is both a challenge and opportunity by shifting focus from the personal spaces where LGBT libraries and archives are located to the motivations and activities associated with assembling the materials in those collections.

Chapter Three: Constructing the Self through Personal Collection

A Gay Man's Shoes in the Museum of Vancouver

In July 2014, I participated in a group tour of the Museum of Vancouver's (MOV) storage facilities. Our tour guide, MOV curator Viviane Gosselin, focused on artifacts significant to the city of Vancouver, as part of the museum's new mandate to focus on the city itself as a site of geographic specificity. After we looked at memorabilia from the 2010 Vancouver Olympics we were shown a pair of seemingly ordinary Converse shoes. These shoes, Viviane explained, belonged to Vancouver resident Ken Brock and were acquired by the MOV as an example of contemporary gay men's attire. After the tour, I learned from Viviane that both the MOV and the City of Vancouver Archives have an ongoing relationship with Ken in order to document his experiences as a gay man living in Vancouver. The notion of memory institutions collecting seemingly mundane artifacts because they were once associated with a gay-identified man piqued my interest. Through Viviane, I made contact with Ken and subsequently interviewed him in order to learn more about his relationship with the MOV and the City of Vancouver Archives.

Ken Brock is a retired, gay-identified, white man currently living in Vancouver's West End, off of Davie Street in the gay village. He is originally from the US and was a social worker by profession prior to his retirement. Most notably, in 1984, he worked as the first coordinator of AIDS services for the California State Department of Health.⁴ This chapter focuses on Ken's project to document his life through a series of journals, which has resulted in collections held in two memory institutions in Vancouver. While

⁴ Interestingly, Ken has the rare genetic mutation that results in HIV resistance, placing him in the 1% of the population descended from Northern Europeans who are immune to the virus' infection. For more information on this genetic mutation see Paoli (2013).

the project of recording his life began as a form of catharsis and therapy, it grew to the point that Ken donated other personal documents and artifacts in addition to the journals to a variety of institutions including the MOV and the City of Vancouver Archives.

While the previous chapter examined the personal act of locating an LGBT archives or library in a private home, this chapter considers the work of assembling and creating the content for LGBT information collections in public institutions. This chapter emphasizes the ways that personal motivations for documenting and collecting intersect with the intention to make that information publicly available to others. Ken's actions in leveraging public institutions to become part of his very personal documentation project both echo and diverge from the underlying aims of the organizations discussed in the previous chapter and demonstrate the complex interplay between personal and public motivations for LGBT information collecting. At the STAG Library, Aja and Gabriel temporarily transformed their personal collection of books and artifacts into a lending library in their living room for others to use, whereas Ken works to permanently place the artifacts of his life into mainstream institutional collections. Ron wants the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives to be a permanent part of the cultural record; however, and vitally, Ron's intentions differ from Ken's in that Ron does *not* want the collection to reside in a mainstream institution. The personal nature of these collections also differ: although Ron collects the materials of others as opposed to documents pertaining to himself, his personal touches pervade the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives at the level of collection and organization; in contrast, Ken is involved in the acts of self-documentation and concrete self-insertion into existing institutions and narratives. Ken's work—creating a personal collection of his life with the explicit goal of mainstream institutional recognition—

connects to ongoing scholarly debates about the nature and significance of LGBT archives' increasing institutionalization.

Focusing primarily on Ken's work, this chapter seeks to complicate how LGBT information collecting, and information collecting more widely, is read in the context of collectors' personal and public motivations for doing this work. The MOV collection was created through Ken's initiative: he contacted Joan Seidel, the then-director of the MOV, to see if there was interest in his personal materials. The MOV accepted Ken's collection because it aligned with the institution's mission. The Society of American Archivists' (SAA) *Lavender Legacies* (2012) guide includes an entry on the MOV and describes that the MOV's mission is to "actively [collect] objects and ephemera that enables the Museum to interpret continuity and change in the ways of life of Vancouver residents, and to view Vancouver experiences in a global context." The guide's entry on the MOV notes that in addition to Ken's collection, the institution has a second LGBT-related collection on the 1990 Vancouver Gay Games.

Since the aim of this chapter is to explore the ways that personal motivations for documenting and collecting intersect with the intention to make the resulting information publicly available to others, it primarily focuses on Ken's perspective as a creator. This focus is important because the personal collection is generally recognized as a distinct form in archival studies but it is not analyzed in depth in the literature on LGBT archiving emanating from LGBT and queer studies. In archival studies, Ken's collection is considered a collection of "personal records" or "personal archives" because it comprises "documents created, acquired or received by an individual in the course of his or her affairs," whereas other collections featured in this dissertation, such as the BC Gay

and Lesbian Archives, are positioned as a “collecting archives” or “a repository that collects materials from individuals, families and organizations other than the parent organization” (Pearce-Moses, 2005, p. 76, 292). As this chapter will demonstrate, however, the division between “personal” and “collecting” archives is not neatly made in the context of LGBT information organizing, which is relevant to ongoing debates in archival studies surrounding how individuals are represented in archival collections. Jennifer Douglas (2013) highlights how personal records and archives are not merely created as organic by-products of living individuals and, by extension, do not represent an individual’s innermost private self; rather, they are artifacts that are consciously constructed by records creators for outside audiences (p. 19). Following Douglas’s observations, this chapter seeks to highlight the public motivations in Ken’s personal collection, both in terms of his personal creation of the collection and the MOV’s public curating of his materials.

The personal motivations driving Ken’s collecting habits are significant because they point to what kinds of LGBT and queer people can seek personal validation from mainstream institutions at a time when institutions are increasingly seeking to offer new representational opportunities for members of marginalized communities. This chapter opens by providing contextualizing information about Ken’s collection. It then moves to examine Ken’s material practices of self-documentation as well as how those practices relate to his goals of first making a personal collection documenting his life and then depositing that collection into public heritage institutions. From there, the chapter examines Ken’s underlying motivations to document his life as a form of self-healing with collective benefits and as a way of creating a legacy in lieu of children. Throughout,

I demonstrate how Ken's self-documentation practices connect to but also complicate theories of personal archiving, self-care and reproduction.

The conclusion to this chapter returns to Ron Dutton's work at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives to explore how, despite his best efforts to maintain detachment and neutrality, the personal infringes upon the archives specifically because Ron maintains the collection almost entirely by himself. A comparison between the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the Ken Brock collections is useful because, despite their diametric opposition, both collections ultimately expose the active construction of and the wider politics behind seemingly personal record-keeping practices. Examining Ken's practices alongside Ron's practices in a manner that highlights their diametric opposition is instructive for understanding the relationship between the self and institutional and personal archives, which is an issue of ongoing concern in archival theory. The cases of Ken Brock's and Ron Dutton's collections also demonstrate how specific individuals with personal motivations are actively constructing the public LGBT historical record. Understanding who constructs the LGBT historical record as well as how that record is constructed is important because the active role of the myriad players shapes how and which LGBT lives are represented in the dominant, public discourse.

Ken's Collection in Vancouver

Ken's collection in Vancouver is divided between the MOV and the City of Vancouver Archives, which are located less than five minutes from one another in Vancouver's West End. The collection at the MOV is digitally catalogued via the museum's online "openMOV" catalogue, and it can be found on the MOV's website. The catalogued collection features 334 assorted items, ranging from Boy Scout paraphernalia

to leather jewelry to vintage glass bottles (see Figure 24). Some of these artifacts were previously displayed at the MOV through its Sex Talk in the City exhibition, which ran from February to September 2013 and also included artifacts from the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Another of Ken's artifacts was featured in Bill Richardson's (2011) news article promoting the MOV in *The Tyee*, an independent online news magazine that focuses on British Columbia. Ken's collection at the MOV is also included in the 2012 *Lavender Legacies Guide*, a survey of archival collections with LGBT content that is produced by the Lesbian and Gay Archivists Roundtable (LAGAR) of the Society of American Archivists (SAA).

Unlike his collection for the MOV, Ken's collection at the City of Vancouver Archives as well as information pertaining to this collection is not currently available. Ken created privacy restrictions that will make the collection unavailable until 25 years after his death, with the exception of four photographs that are currently available through the City of Vancouver Archives' online catalogue (C. Yung, personal correspondence, April 29, 2015). Figure 25 below is an example of the content of the photographs currently available to the public through Ken's collection at the City of Vancouver Archives.

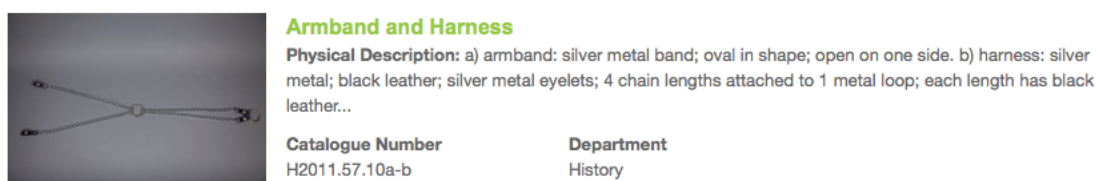


Figure 24. Armband and harness, openMOV catalogue record.



Figure 25. “Vancouver Opera Theatre presents: ‘La Traviata’” by F.W. Sunday (1956).

In order to learn more about Ken’s collection at the City of Vancouver Archives, I contacted Ken and interviewed him at his apartment. His personal collection at the City of Vancouver Archives features a series of journals and a genealogy that he created and also donated to a number of other institutions, including the Library of Congress (American Folk Life Center, Veterans History Project), Stanford University Libraries’ Department of Special Collections, Humboldt County Historical Society, California State Library (California History Section), St. Louis County Library (National Genealogical Society Library) and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Family History Library).

There are very few collections of LGBT-relevant material in Vancouver’s municipally affiliated heritage collections. According to the *Lavender Legacies Guide* (2012) the “LGBT holdings of note” for British Columbia at the City of Vancouver Archives are the “Malcolm F. Crane Pride Archives,” which comprise 3.8 metres of textual records, ca. 200 photographs, 11 videocassettes, 5 audiocassettes, 2 plaques, and 15 buttons “donated by his partner Stanley Weese as a gesture of tribute” (n.p.). This collection includes personal records and organizational records pertaining to the many gay/lesbian organizations in Vancouver with which Crane was involved over the course

of his lifetime, including The Society for Education, Action, Research and Counseling on Homosexuality, the Pride Festival Association, and the Pride Community Foundation. While Ken's collection at the MOV is listed in the 2012 *Lavender Legacies Guide*, his collection at the City of Vancouver Archives is not because of the aforementioned access restrictions. It is certainly possible that there are other existing LGBT-relevant collections at the City of Vancouver with similar restrictions.

Documentation with a Personal Touch

Ken's self-documentation project involves actively creating his identity through the mechanisms of documentation and biographical narrative. The project contains a series of journals he began writing in the mid-1990s, the content of which recollects his life from his birth in 1949 to the present, and a separate "Genealogy" that details the history of five generations of his family. There are a total of 28 volumes in the journal project, and Ken plans to conclude this part of the project with the volume spanning 2012-2014. These works were assembled and bound in hardcover, and, as mentioned in this chapter's introduction, were distributed to various institutions in addition to the City of Vancouver Archives. Since all volumes of the journals remain unavailable until 25 years after Ken Brock's death, my analysis in this chapter is limited to the "Genealogy" and "The Military Years," which is the one volume of the journal that has been made available.

While Ken bound the volumes to appear as books, they maintain the distinct appearance of Ken's personal touch. Ken's material practices echo his underlying metaphorical goal to take an active hand in constructing the narrative of his life. For example, the books are bound with minimal text, stating "Ken Brock, MSW" (see Figure

26); this reflects the fact that they were self-published. In addition, some photographs are captioned in Ken's handwriting and displayed in a manner reminiscent of a family photo album (see Figure 27). While some documents, mainly letters, are transcribed, other primary documents and ephemera are inserted into the text, which echoes the aesthetic of a scrapbook (see Figure 28). The pages are unnumbered and have handwritten corrections and the visual display of individual pages reveals that the project was written and formatted through a basic word processing program with minimal attention to professional book design and formatting (see Figure 29).



Figure 26. Cover of "The Military Years," a volume of Ken's journal. Figure 27. Handwritten captions, Ken Brock's "Genealogy."

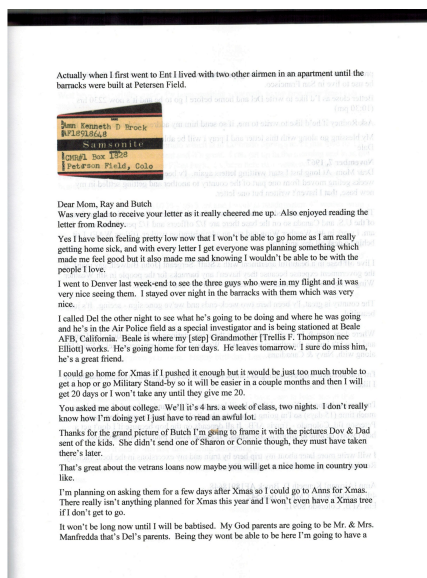


Figure 28. Ephemera, "The Military Years"

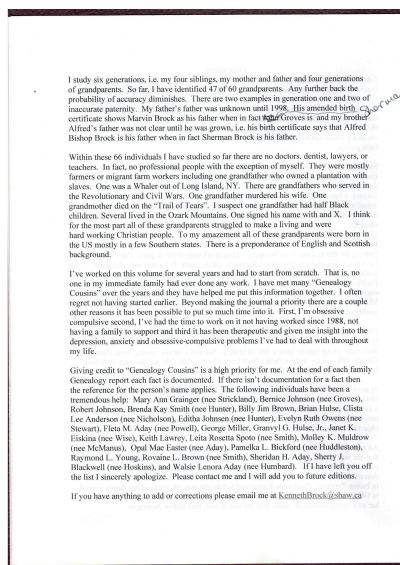


Figure 29. Handwritten corrections, Ken Brock's Genealogy

Ken's approach to self-documentation is not a handmade but an idiosyncratic organizational method. This idiosyncrasy supports the argument of some archival theorists who suggest that the seemingly "untamed" or "wild" individualistic quality of collections developed over the course of an individual's life demonstrates both a key characteristic and the underlying value of personal archives, in contrast to archives that are organized per and described by the functional terminology used by professional archivists (Cunningham, 1996; Harris, 2001; Hobbs, 2001). However, Douglas (2013) counters that personal records and archives are not created in organic ways, and not solely reflective of the unconscious mechanisms of the individual's mind; rather, she suggests, they are artifacts that have been intentionally collected on the part of the records' creator (p. 19). Her arguments resonate with Ken's records, for he individually organizes his records using a method that is not "wild" but rather highly organized, albeit idiosyncratically so from the perspective of professional archivists.

Ken describes his self-documentation project as an extension of his personality. He explained to me: "throughout my life—it's intuition or something—I have known that

this stuff was important. From 1986 until now I documented almost on a daily basis, but before that I did have short periods of journals.” While his practice became more systematic from 1986 onwards, Ken noted that his tendency to collect personal documentation began much earlier: “I had always been interested in photographs and I collected photographs from when I was a kid. It was always in the back of my mind as something I never put a label on.” Ken’s heightened sense of the importance of recording is partly what enabled him to practice systematic self-documentation throughout his life; however, and as will be discussed in Chapter 5, there are distinct socio-cultural forces that have enabled his personal practice to be elevated to the point of institutional sanction.

Beyond a sense of intuition, Ken argues that his drive to systematically document his life is reflective of his mental illnesses, which include depression and bi-polar and obsessive-compulsive disorders. He explained to me that “people who really know me say ‘this [the journal project] really fits with you being obsessive compulsive’; there’s a bit of neurosis on my part in doing this with the archives and the museum.” According to Ken, it is the journal project’s voluminous nature that can be attributed to obsessive compulsive disorder. “It just kept growing and growing,” he said, and went on to indicate that “one of the effects of being obsessive compulsive is that you can’t finish a project, you just keep adding on to it.” Ken’s extreme attunement to detail is evident in the journals’ content because seemingly mundane information is riddled throughout, such as when Ken had his wisdom teeth pulled or what movies he watched. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, this level of detail is also reflective of Ken’s perceptions of when and for whom his life history will be relevant in the distant future.

Ken's project can be located and understood in the context of new archiving projects specifically designed to give agency to those with mental illnesses. A notable example is the Mental Health Recovery Archive created by Anna Sexton in collaboration with the Special Collections Department at the Wellcome Library in London. From 2012 to 2013, Sexton utilized participatory action research to develop an online exhibition featuring the narratives of four contributors with lived experiences of mental illness. The circumstances of Ken's project are unique in that he was able to leverage his position as a person with relative educational and financial privilege in order to navigate institutional processes and have his work collected by public archives, libraries, and a museum. This exception underscores the importance of Sexton's work with the Wellcome Library, which made archiving accessible to those with mental illness who lack Ken's relative privilege. Like the Wellcome Library project, Ken's project suggests that mental illness is not only an impetus for creating new collections, but also a specific approach to developing collections by recognizing the unique perspectives and activities of those with mental illnesses.

Ken's documentation project is not only an extension of himself and his personal activities, but, as discussed earlier, also a means for crafting his identity and narrative. As will be discussed in the following section, this record was not only designed as a testimony to his life but also as a mechanism for self-improvement through therapy. Ken perceives the record as having a beneficial function for him and for greater society because it serves as a testimony to the particularities of marginalized experiences. As will be discussed later this chapter, Ken's motivations are similar to Ron's insofar as both perceive their collections as being of value to the wider community. Yet, Ron has a

substantially different approach to fulfilling those objectives because he is documenting the wider community. In contrast, Ken's project highlights how a personal records creator can be motivated to construct their records because they perceive that they will be of value to the wider community. Therefore, while archivists attribute greater significance to seemingly idiosyncratic personal archives, personal records creators influence the very meanings of the archives.

Documentation as Self-Healing

Ken's documentation project is not only a means for Ken to construct his personal life narrative, it also serves as a form of self-healing. Understanding Ken's project through the lens of self-healing further reveals how highly personal motivations and acts are imbued within increasingly public manifestations of LGBT information collection. The project had a beneficial impact on Ken's life by serving as a form of therapy and as a leisure activity during his retirement. In the "Personal History/Overview" section of the "Genealogy," he writes that "[the project] has been therapeutic and given me insight into the depression, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive problems I've had to deal with throughout my life." He writes that "[the project] has contributed to my lifelong quest towards personal growth and actualization." In my interview with him, Ken elaborated upon this effect of the project, and said that the project began as an aide to the therapy that he began in an attempt to help himself understand his mental illnesses. Similarly, in the overview section of "The Military Years" journal, Ken states that the purpose of the journal was to "work through [his] emotions" at different points in his life, such as in 1986 when he was dealing with AIDS concurrently on a personal and professional level

because he knew he was HIV+, his partner was dying of AIDS, and he was coordinating AIDS services as part of the California State Department of Health.

The project, therefore, not only enables Ken to bear testimony to his experiences with mental illness, it has supported him in his mental health treatments. While at first Ken found that the project “kept growing and growing” because it was fuelled by his obsessive-compulsive disorder, medication and therapy helped him better manage the project. As he explained, “I’ve balanced out and I don’t need to—I can actually finish the project, which I did about three years ago. I said ‘Ok, this is it, I’ve covered my whole life, I’ve covered the genealogy for five generations before I was born’.” The project has evolved with Ken’s professional treatment and thus reflects his journey of self-healing, particularly in the context of his obsessive-compulsive disorder.

While the self-documentation project did not explicitly begin with the goal of being placed in an archives, institutional recognition has a therapeutic dimension for Ken. As he explains in the “Personal History/Overview” section of the “Genealogy,” “I tried to heal myself through looking for institutions to belong to,” and cites the military, the Catholic Church, the University, and marriage as examples of institutions in which he sought solace. He concludes that “these institutions would not accept me being gay. University being the exception to a degree in which I feel fulfilled and accomplished.” Now, institutions such as the MOV and the City of Vancouver Archives are not only accepting of Ken’s being gay but are also actively pursuing his records because he is gay. Ken, in turn, values this recognition because he preferred to donate his records to mainstream institutions over grassroots organizations like the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Mainstream institutions offered the kinds of services and support that he

deemed necessary for his collection but that could not be provided by grassroots organizations.

Ken's orientation towards institutional recognition contrasts with the hostility to mainstream institutions that is exhibited by those engaged in LGBT archiving, such as Ron Dutton at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, and at other grassroots LGBT libraries and archives like the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, New York and the Sexual Minority Archives in Northampton, Massachusetts. Ken's focus on institutional recognition, therefore, has implications for wider scholarly debates on the significance of LGBT information organizations' increasing institutionalization. As discussed in Chapter 1, feminist and queer theorizing about archives is also deeply divided on the meaning and significance of institutional affiliation with LGBT community archives. Cvetkovich (2003) highlights that queer approaches to archiving, undertaken by grassroots LGBT archives that have historically distrusted and maintained distance from mainstream institutions, are at risk of being lost in the wake of increasing mainstream, institutional interest in LGBT archival collections.

In contrast, Eichhorn (2013) contends that the perceived dichotomy between the LGBT collecting that takes place in mainstream institutions and the collecting practices of LGBT communities themselves is false. Instead, she suggests that the relationships between the two groups can be mutually beneficial. Echoing Eichhorn's position, Ken's actions reflect how some LGBT community members are now trusting and even valuing what mainstream institutions have to offer them as the custodians of their collections—institutions are not necessarily seen as a source of oppression but as a platform for retribution and healing. Yet, it is also important to acknowledge that, despite his

marginalization as a gay-identified person with mental illness, Ken still occupies a position of relative privilege because he is an older, white man with a professional background. For many LGBT people, institutional affiliation remains an undesirable or impossible destination for their personal records. As partnerships between LGBT community members and mainstream archives, libraries and museums are becoming increasingly common, the case of Ken Brock's collection also suggests that those who will seek to have their records recognized and preserved will be those who are comfortable in, can identify with, and are able to derive benefit from institutional affiliation. This, in turn, will shape the public, institutional LGBT historical record, for the people who experience comfort within and desire for mainstream institutional recognition typically have certain forms of racial and class privilege.

In addition to serving as a form of therapy for his mental illnesses, Ken also identifies the self-documentation project as having positive value because it has enabled him to take control of the narrative of his life. In our interview he explained this by saying, "I'm able to tell my story. It isn't the story even my mother had of me; I can put my emphasis on the story by my physical stuff or the journals so that's what's important." He elaborated and said, "I can see somebody doing research and coming across my collection...and it gives me a lot of satisfaction knowing that my story is being told the way I want it to be told." Ken's statements reflect how personal documentation projects, which are ultimately generated to make a contribution to the broader historical record, can also have positive value for their individual creators in that they may constitute a form of self-healing.

Ken's therapeutic experiences with self-documentation resonate with Michel Foucault's (1980, 1997a, 1997b, 2005) arguments that self-writing constitutes a form of care of the self. Foucault highlights that this genre of writing constitutes confession, which is pervasive in modern Western culture (Foucault, 1980, p. 60, as per Gannon, 2006, p. 479). Like auto-ethnography, which is understood to be a therapeutic mechanism for processing emotions, Ken's journals have enabled him to heal by helping him know himself better (Foucault, 1980, p. 60 as per Gannon, 2006, p. 479). Ken's project also reflects the earlier conceptualizations of "self" and "care" found in the classical and early Christian traditions of personal writing, as per Foucault's second model for understanding how self-writing relates to the self. In contrast to the confessional model, the classical and early Christian techniques were employed more as a form of self-improvement than as a method for uncovering the hidden or secret self. Through reflexive techniques, writers were able to achieve self-transformation, and, by extension, be more productive figures in the greater world in which the self interacts (Foucault, 1997a, p.211 as per Gannon 2006, p. 479). Ken's objective—to ensure that his project did not remain merely a personal exercise, but was placed in various institutions so that others could learn from his experiences and build further scholarship—resonates with the larger ethical imperative in classical and early Christian self-writing activities because his project is about looking inwards and, subsequently, how inward reflection can lead to greater outward transformation.

While Ken's self-documentation project signifies a commitment to collecting personal records and artifacts towards wider societal benefit by making LGBT individuals visible in the historical record, it is important to acknowledge that this project

has an ambivalent relationship to the concept of a queer ethics. Michael Warner (1999) argues that a queer ethics privileges sex and sexual cultures as the locus of queer community, and, in particular, sexual activities that are considered shameful by mainstream society. A queer ethics, therefore, differs greatly from mainstream LGBT ethical projects that bracket sex and advance the more “respectable” cause of accepting identity-based diversity (Warner, 1999, p. 24-25). Due to my limited access to Ken’s journals, I cannot state categorically whether his self-documentation project entirely eschews references to non-normative sex or queer sexual cultures, nor can I comment on how Ken’s project will be represented or utilized by the City of Vancouver Archives when the access restrictions are lifted 25 years after Ken’s death. Thus far, based on what is accessible through the MOV, it is evident that Ken’s project has been used in ways that align more with an LGBT identity-based politics of respectability than a queer ethics. For example, in the openMOV catalogue, the armband and harness are given a sanitized description as a piece of “jewelry”; their connection to S/M or leather communities goes unacknowledged (see Figure 24). While the openMOV catalogue description states that “Ken Brock collects personal items that document his life as a gay man in Vancouver...as well as artifacts which document his life in Vancouver,” it appears that their collections will only highlight what mainstream society already accepts as the palatable details of gay life.

The implications of what kind of ethic of care Ken’s self-documentation project constitutes is significant because it points to what kinds of LGBT and queer subjectivities can seek validation from mainstream institutions at a time when these institutions are increasingly offering new representational opportunities for marginalized selves. The

aims of Ken's personal documentation project relate to Sue McKemmish's (1996) arguments in "Evidence of Me," particularly when she says that personal records do have an important societal function because the documents serve as a form of witness or testimony to the particularities of lived experience, which shapes collective memory and can be used to achieve healing and social justice for marginalized communities.

However, it is questionable to what extent Ken's positionality as a white, educated gay man places him within a currently marginalized community. And, while Ken was able to develop his self-documentation activities into a larger project of institutional recognition, which for him led to self-healing and provided a service to greater society by increasing representation and awareness of LGBT subjects, the project's fixation on "respectable" LGBT identity indicates that the project is not so much transformative but rather re-inscribes the already-established LGBT status quo. The issue of whether Ken's self-documentation project represents an ethic of care for the LGBT self or the queer self continues in the following section, which explores how Ken's work resonates with a desire to leave a historical legacy in lieu of producing children through biological reproduction.

Self-Documentation as Legacy

Emanating outward from the theme that self-documentation is a mechanism for Ken to construct a narrative of his life for therapeutic purposes is his objective that self-documentation is a way to leave a larger legacy. Ken envisions his journal project as a way to create his legacy in that it allows him to insert his personal experience into memory institutions and broader historical narratives. He argues that, by effectively sharing his life story, his project replaces the predominant, heteronormative mode of

creating a legacy through biological reproduction. As he declares in the Overview section of “The Military Years” journal, his self-documentation project is important because “I haven’t any heirs so this is also an attempt at immortality.” He makes a similar declaration in the Personal History/Overview section of the “Genealogy” volume, writing that “what will mark my life long after my contemporaries and their children and their children are dead will be that [my life] is documented.” He made a similar point when he said to me that “it gives me a lot of satisfaction to know that 100 years from now this will be my legacy; I won’t have a family, children...this will be my legacy 100 years from now when people are doing research.”

Ken’s strategy for using self-documentation in lieu of biological reproduction reflects his perception that legacy strategies are differently valued. According to Ken, self-documentation is superior to biological reproduction because it has the potential to last longer. Further, he maintains that self-documentation will be more faithful to the specific memories he has crafted through self-narration as opposed to the knowledge that is passed down between people with biological relationships and/or in heteronormative family structures, which, he argues, tends to be disseminated less systematically. As such, Ken’s position resonates with feminist, LGBT and queer studies’ rich critiques of reproduction and kinship, including that of Lee Edelman (2004), David Eng (2010) and Kath Weston (1991), among others. By replacing kinship with self-documentation, Ken takes a queer position of elevating or replacing documents and objects over people. Yet, by privileging his own genealogy in his self-documentation projects, Ken is arguably reinforcing the norms of kinship just as much as he is disrupting them.

Ken's words particularly seem to echo that of Edelman's (2004) in *No Future*, which problematize the heteronormative emphasis on the importance of reproduction, children, and the future in general. In contrast to Edelman, who suggests that the queer position exists in opposition to biological reproduction because it embraces negative orientations such as death, the unchangeable, and amorality, Ken's project is an "attempt at immortality," not a celebration of mortality. However, as Daniel Marshall, Kevin P. Murphy and Zeb Tortorici (2015) contend in their introduction to the special issue on Queer Archives in *Radical History Review*, queer archives, in some conceptualizations, "not only reproduce memories of past queer life but also stand in for hitherto impossible queer children" (p. 6). This argument resonates with Ken's position, for while Ken sees his self-documentation project as better than biological reproduction, is it unclear whether his project can be interpreted as "queerer" than biological reproduction.

Interpreting Ken's actions as queer extends from his attitude towards self-documentation to his approach to depositing his materials. Over the course of his life, Ken has sought institutional recognition as a mechanism for self-healing, and he acknowledges that the university in particular has been a successful venue for this pursuit. Beyond healing, however, Ken's interest in inserting himself into institutions can be interpreted as means for furthering his legacy because it enables his history to be preserved and accessed by others. The act of institutional insertion can be considered a radical act because Ken's collection challenges what is conventionally collected; alternatively, it can be considered an act of mainstreaming, because Ken privileges mainstream institutional recognition and dominant models of legacy and history that favour stable documentation instead of challenging the structures of these institutions that

excluded LGBT people and narratives for so long. Most notably, when looking for institutional homes for his collections, Ken considered donating his materials to the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. He ultimately chose the City of Vancouver Archives because the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives could not meet his donation requirements, which included leaving his documents sealed off from the public for 25 years after his death. While Ken also donated a copy of his journals to the ONE archives in California, it is important to note that he donated to this institution in addition to other mainstream institutions and that this particular LGBT archives has an ongoing relationship with the University of Southern California.

I talked to Ron at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives about Ken Brock's donating his materials to the City of Vancouver Archives and the Museum of Vancouver. I noted in my field notes that Ron said "he had good timing because he had stuff to donate at a time when institutions were starting to appreciate the value of and need for LGBT items." Ron's comments underscore that, considering the timing, Ken's donations to mainstream institutions can be interpreted as fortuitous because they coincide with a period where there is increased recognition of and interest in LGBT history, and, by extension, a need for institutions to acquire such content. Moreover, in a period where there is increasingly less funding for acquisitions, Ken is an attractive donor for institutions like the MOV and the City of Vancouver Archives because he contacted the institutions, made his project legible in terms of its relevance, organized the materials in a logical fashion (in the case of the archives), and provided funding for the collections' upkeep through provisions in his estate.

In addition to inserting himself into mainstream memory institutions like archives and museums, Ken's self-documentation project also gives him the opportunity to be represented in larger historical narratives, particularly those pertaining to LGBT people and underclass North Americans. The conflation of Ken's personal history with public history begins with the material organization of his journals: in "The Military Years," the background of the Vietnam War blends seamlessly into a section about Ken's own recollections of the war, making it difficult for the reader to determine where the broader historical survey ends and Ken's personal history begins. The way that Ken describes how his life relates to a broader history suggests that he simultaneously characterizes himself as both exceptional and unexceptional. For example, in the Overview section of "The Military Years," he states that "maybe everyone think[s] their life story is interesting and that they are as exceptional as I [think my life is]. I believe that my life is more interesting than most and less interesting than some." In regards to his exceptional status in the context of his perception of LGBT history, Ken offered a number of explanations in our interview ranging from: a) his unique status as being HIV+ with no medical difficulties; b) his work beginning in 1984 as the first coordinator for AIDS for the California State Department of Health, which had the first public funding in the world for HIV epidemiology; and c) his broader experiences "liv[ing] through a transition period in North American society's acceptance of gay people." He further explained that, in 1971, he exchanged matching wedding rings with his partner and that this is also unique because "gay people, prior to 1960, were closeted; they mixed in because they were forced to mix in. In my lifetime I think it was unique, afterwards I don't think there will be much distinction between gay men and straight men, dress and that kind of thing."

Understanding Ken's framing of his life, and, by extension, his collection as a unique chapter in LGBT history is important because it contextualizes how an exceptional personal collector is framing narratives of the significance of LGBT lives and actions in mainstream heritage institutions.

Even though Ken positions himself as an exceptional individual in LGBT history, he concurrently acknowledges that in many ways he is not exceptional. Echoing his statement in the Overview section of "The Military Years," Ken remarked to me in our interview that "my life is not all that interesting, I say that it's probably less interesting than some, more interesting than most." When I asked what it was like to be the representative for LGBT life in the Museum of Vancouver and the Vancouver Archives he responded as follows:

I wouldn't say it's true for me at all. I don't think I am representative and I wouldn't encourage them; in fact, part of my agreement with them in terms of the money is that they do outreach from now on to gays and lesbians that have done similar stuff to mine, that have something to contribute. They need to reach out. I think that that's an important role for them and they haven't done it to my knowledge.

Ken's comments above highlight that while he does think his personal story is exceptional and therefore important for inclusion in the LGBT historical record he does not think that he is representative of all LGBT people. Ken understands that greater representation requires more narratives, and so he built this into his agreements with the MOV and City of Vancouver Archives. Due to the limited amount of funding available for new acquisitions, it is entirely possible that there will not be many opportunities for

organizations to acquire collections that increase representation across the spectrum of LGBT communities. Therefore, Ken may still end up being the exclusive representative or one in a small sample of representatives of LGBT life in these institutions, regardless of whether he intended to be or not.

In addition to inserting his life story into mainstream memory institutions and broader historical narratives, Ken's self-documentation project also produces the effect of inserting other people's life stories into the historical record. This occurs in part as a corollary of telling an individual life story, for others are always implicated. Ken was very sensitive to this reality and, borrowing from a principle of keeping information about living people private, which he learned from doing genealogy research, he created conditions that keep his records confidential until 25 years after his death. He explained, "I thought that everybody listed in the book would be dead, so I wouldn't be telling any tales of living people."

Yet, despite his commitment to the privacy of others, Ken observed that, over time, people began bringing their stories to him specifically so that they could be incorporated into his documentation. He said that "people would bring their stories to me, the stories that they would put in an archives or they wanted documented, so I have a lot of stuff...you name it, stories have come my way." In our interview, he spoke about how he recently informed his junior high school classmates about his project. Some felt threatened and subsequently ostracized Ken, while others wrote letters asking for their stories from the same period to be included:

This one girl said "I was raped by my boyfriend and one of his friends when we were in high school; I never told anyone this story before." She went into great

detail and gave me some names and all that and that's in my journal and that's her contribution. Why else would she have given that information to me? There would be no reason. Did she send out a form letter to everyone in the class? No. She confided in me.

Ken used this incident to highlight how the content of his journal is not just LGBT-specific, which relates back to his position that his project is historically relevant on a broader scale.

Ken's process of crafting his life story, and, by proximity, the stories of others, into a self-documentation project included within institutional collections is perceived by him to be a method of inserting himself into the historical record and thereby creating a legacy in lieu of biological reproduction. This aim is what differentiates his project from other forms of self-documentation, such as family albums and scrapbooks, that are created and remain within the sphere of private consumption. Only some of these latter items end up in public memory institutions as rare glimpses into private life. Ken, in contrast, personally asserted his significance by documenting his life and then donating copies of that documentation to a variety of public institutions, in turn inserting himself into larger narratives of the history and significance of 20th and 21st century LGBT life.

Conclusion

The significance of Ken's act of self-insertion into public institutions remains ambivalent and unpredictable. His actions can be traced through a lineage of radical insertion: by asserting the significance of his life, which, by his own admission, is largely "unexceptional" aside from its intersections with marginality, Ken's work connects with the larger projects of social history, oral history, and grassroots archiving that LGBT and

other marginalized communities have been involved in in the 20th and 21st centuries. At some points, Ken's aims resonate strongly with the concept of "queer" as he positions his actions as both a replacement for and superior to biological reproduction. Yet, Ken's actions can also be interpreted as the acts of an individual who, given his relative privilege and institutional savvy, leveraged growing institutional interest in LGBT history towards his own inclusion while others who do not have access to and continue to experience distrust of these institutions remain under- or unrepresented. Ken's collection, therefore, is indicative of the mainstreaming of LGBT history and suggests that this mainstreaming involves the ongoing canonization of white men in gay-identified form.

This chapter focused on Ken Brock's self-documentation project, which has led to collections of his effects at both the MOV and the City of Vancouver Archives, in order to explore the constructed nature of personal collections as well as the implications of this construction for the broader LGBT historical record. By tracing how Ken has utilized self-documentation to craft a sense of self and a self-narrative, this chapter demonstrates how a personal collection is beneficial to the individual by serving as a form of empowerment that is also perceived by that individual as having positive effects for society-at-large because it creates space for new forms of representation and testimony within mainstream memory institutions. This chapter also acknowledges, however, that self-documentation in mainstream institutional contexts has potentially ambivalent qualities because, just as Ken's project can be interpreted as an act of insertion into institutional narratives, the project can also be seen as co-constituting and reinforcing the emerging status quo within mainstream institutions' efforts to historicize LGBT lives.

Ken's self-documentation project can be considered alongside the organizations examined in the previous chapter in order to further understand how the concepts of "personal" and "personal collection" operate within the spectrum of LGBT information collecting. For example, Ken's self-documentation project appears to occupy a seemingly opposite position to that of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives in terms of how the "personal" is approached and understood. Ken's project operates on a personal register: the project is driven by Ken, focuses on him exclusively, has origins as a form of personal therapy, and was written, prepared, and published in an idiosyncratic style.

In contrast to Ken's project, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, is not a collection of artifacts representing Ron's life; rather, it is a collection that aims to gather the experiences of LGBT lives more widely. Ron works hard to ensure that the archives is received as an organization as opposed to a personal collection in order to maintain a reputation with donors and researchers, something that is particularly challenging because the archives is located in Ron's home. Ron has a variety of strategies for ensuring that his archives is construed as what he terms a "serious" organization by emphasizing his objectivity and professionalism; however, evidence of his personal touch can be found throughout the archives. His personal touch is present in part because he is the sole source of the archives' labour, which is voluntary, and the sole source of its funding. His personal touch is also present in the project's aims: Ron characterizes the archives as his way to "give back" to the LGBT community and that it is concurrently his hobby, his passion and his political statement, which suggests that there is slippage between the professional and non-professional profile of the archives that extends beyond its location and into its activities and mandates. While some of my informants reported

that, upon meeting Ron and visiting the archives in person, they re-evaluated their initial skepticism of the archives as an informal, personal collection, others do not view the archives as professional enough for their needs. Ken, for example, told me that he met with and talked to Ron in the 1990s when he was looking for institutions to donate his project to, but he ultimately disqualified Ron's archives. Ken said that "it wasn't really an option because he wasn't a formal organization and that was important to me, somebody who had structure and [is] able to keep my stuff out of the public eye for 25 years. So he didn't meet the criteria I was looking for."

Despite their seeming opposition, the cases of Ron's and Ken's work illustrate how neat divisions between "personal," "objective" and the "public" or "wider collective" break down in the context of LGBT information collection. While Ron's project maintains an objective aim, the personal does intrude: the collection is located in his private home and it is exclusively maintained by him; in addition, his collecting practices are often whimsical, such as his work to provide a "home" in the archive for LGBT people by filing their obituaries in vertical files labeled "Biographies A-Z." Similarly, Ken's collection, while deeply personal, was constructed over time to be included within wider institutional collections, and, in the case of some of the institutions that feature his collection, his life serves as an institutional representative for a larger LGBT whole; thus, his artifacts and documents become one of the major examples of LGBT life for those institutions.

Chapter Four: Information Organization and Dissemination in a Context of Non-Digital Persistence

Digitally Divided

During my visits to the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, I regularly encountered Ron engaged in activities to organize the collections without the use of a computer. Ron relies on an organizational system he developed during the early days of the archives in the 1970s, which includes handwritten indexing systems for different collections that are organized either on index cards or as handwritten entries kept in duotang folders. Some of the collections, like the photography collection and the poster collection, do not have a meta-organizational structure; rather, it is the physical organization of and the information recorded on the artifacts proper that demonstrate their configuration. None of the records Ron creates are available in digital format or online, nor are any of the collections available online as the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives does not have a website. The major entry point for discovery of the collections is Ron himself.

While the previous chapter explored the motivations and activities associated with creating an LGBT information collection, this chapter shifts focus to examine how these collections are organized and disseminated. How an information collection is organized has implications for both the personal and public realms in terms of who organizes the information, which publics are prioritized with regard to access, and how that access functions. The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives' analogue system recalls an earlier era of LGBT information organizing that is increasingly perceived as anachronistic in comparison to the contemporary organizational approaches now found at some LGBT libraries and archives. The predominant theme currently running throughout LGBT information organization and dissemination is the push to make LGBT collections as

digitally accessible as possible for patrons, both in terms of how content is made available and how patrons search for that information. Another organization included in my study, The Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony (ALOT), typifies this increasingly common focus: as stated on the organization's website, the organization's primary goal is to "digitize and make available online lesbian oral history and testimony" and the major point of entry for patrons is through the archives' website (n.d.). Also, ALOT is one of the major partners of the LGBTQ Oral History Collaboratory, which seeks to "connect archives across Canada and the U.S. to produce a collaborative, digital history hub for the research and study of gay, lesbian, queer, and trans* oral histories" (n.d.). LGBT libraries and archives that pre-date the push to digitization are also increasingly focused on digitization activities. The LGBTQ Oral History Collaboratory, for example, is collaborating with the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA), while the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) collaborated with the Pratt Institute School of Information to develop the Digital Collections section of the LHA website. The LHA is a resolutely lesbian-feminist organization that has always accepted volunteers and interns on the basis of "personal interest in and commitment to the Archives' mission...[with] no specific coursework or academic background...required." Now, it also recruits a parallel track of interns with professional library backgrounds to digitize content and make it available online (See Appendix A for sample recruitment text).

One way to understand the differences between these organizations' technological capacities is through hegemonic narratives of what constitutes progress in terms of information organization. The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives represents an older, now-outdated analog approach and ALOT represents a present or even future orientation that

emphasizes digital access. Yet, during my fieldwork, I also encountered the recently established but now-defunct STAG Library, which included some experimentation with digital techniques and technologies for organizing information but remained strictly analogue in its orientation. The STAG Library had a deliberate aim to encourage in-person collections browsing and to create a refuge from the digital. This chapter surveys the wide and increasingly polarized spectrum of LGBT information organization and dissemination techniques and technologies found at LGBT libraries and archives in order to disrupt normative assumptions about the techniques and technologies associated with information organizing. This chapter contends that issues surrounding organization and dissemination techniques are not only relevant to broader concerns about access to information but also, and crucially, to the labour associated with information access. Navigating the labour issues associated with information access highlights the “personnel” dimension to the personal theme that cuts across current LGBT information organizing.

In order to explore these issues, this chapter begins by contextualizing contemporary approaches to information organization in relation to their historical and theoretical precedents. I place particular emphasis on LGBT and queer approaches through the LHA’s lesbian-specific methods as well as the critiques of information organizing that are emanating from queer theory. I then provide an account of the analogue information organizational approaches at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the former STAG Library, which, when read in contrast to the proliferation of digital LGBT libraries and archives-related projects, queer normative assumptions about how, by whom, and to what ends libraries and archives are organized. By relying on non-

normative information organizational techniques and technologies, the STAG Library demonstrated and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives continues to demonstrate how analogue information organization techniques can be utilized to challenge the information organizational status quo, which increasingly includes LGBT libraries and archives.

The Emotional Labour of LGBT Information Organizing

The techniques and technologies associated with information organizing are discussed in tandem in this chapter because the two topics are mutually informative and constitutive: the technologies associated with information organizing determine the techniques—or labour—associated with those informational activities, and vice versa. The intellectual organization of information in and of itself can also be problematized from the perspective of identity politics, which includes LGBT identity politics. For example, Sanford Berman's (1971) research examines Library of Congress subject headings to identify bias towards social groups based on various attributes including race, class, gender and sexuality. There is also a body of literature that seeks to disrupt underlying concepts of information organization, drawing on queer theory to point out that because the underlying meaning of information is sufficiently static, information can be described and organized using fixed naming and categorization conventions (Billey, Drabinski, & Roberto, 2014; Campbell, 2000; Drabinski, 2013; Keilty, 2009).

This chapter focuses on the labour and material processes of organizing information and defers issues of representation to the following chapter. For the purposes of this chapter, therefore, the term “organization” denotes not only how information materials are physically organized but also how labour methods are organized within LGBT information spaces such as libraries and archives. To this end, I take cues from

new media studies approaches such that of as Lisa Gitelman (2014), who focuses on “the document” as a material object in order to articulate the larger institutional contexts in which documents are produced and circulated (p. 5). In doing so, I share similar concerns as Cait McKinney (2015), whose work on feminist information activism, including at the LHA, seeks to challenge the dichotomy between analogue and digital practices (p. 26).

The concept that LGBT-specific approaches to information collection involve not only the collection of LGBT information but also the development of LGBT-resonant methods for organizing and disseminating that information can be traced back to the earliest lesbian and gay libraries and archives. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, grassroots, activist-inflected organizations relied on volunteer labour and emphasized community-based approaches to information organizing over exclusively professional ones. This tactic led to unique lesbian- and gay-specific approaches to library and archives work. The most overt example of this method is perhaps found at the LHA, which seeks to advance a specifically lesbian approach to archiving. In “Notes on Radical Archiving from a Lesbian Feminist Perspective,” Joan Nestle (1978), one of the founders of the LHA, highlights the following principle of the LHA: “the archives should be staffed by Lesbians so that the collection will always have a living cultural context. Archival skills shall be taught, one generation of Lesbians to another, breaking the elitism of traditional archives” (p. 11). These archiving skills are not merely a method of taking traditional, professional archiving skills and bringing them into the lesbian community, they are also a mechanism for re-adapting professional skills to the purposes of lesbian and feminist archives as well as developing entirely new skills and technologies.

My ethnography of the LHA highlighted some of its distinct approaches to information organizing (Cooper, 2013). In particular, the LHA seeks to create a home-like atmosphere, which involves decorating the space with ephemera that is still useful for research, creating an “all-over” approach to organizing information. During my fieldwork, I observed that while more conventional forms of information were organized systematically at the archives through finding aides and a computer database, the predominant advice given to researchers by the “archivettes” was to not overly rely on the archives’ discovery tools, whether analogue or digital, but rather to spend time in the archives exploring information openly. For many patrons, navigating the physical archives represented a major element of their research. Although patrons initially reported feeling lost, they ultimately credited the archives’ “all-over” information organizational approach with their ability to make more creative discoveries (Cooper, 2013, p. 526-541).

My line of inquiry into the LHA was influenced greatly by Ann Cvetkovich’s *An Archive of Feelings* (2003), which positions LGBT libraries and archives, including the LHA, as queer organizations. For Cvetkovich (2003), these organizations’ queerness emanates from their distinctly “emotional” orientation, which arises because they focus on documenting areas of experience—“intimacy, sexuality, love and activism”—that “are difficult to chronicle through the materials of the traditional archive” (p. 241). My further exploration of the discovery techniques at the LHA, however, demonstrated that the organizational approaches to LGBT libraries and archives can also be understood as queer because they are designed to encourage non-normative forms of information seeking.

It is important to acknowledge that the division between grassroots and professional information organizing in LGBT libraries and archives has never been a strict dichotomy. For example, both the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives involve volunteer efforts by gay-identified information professionals who strive to bring their professional knowledge into the realm of their grassroots LGBT archiving efforts. I contend that the rigors of volunteerism, even when informed by professional skills and knowledge, create a more emotionally charged environment than that which is fostered in most exclusively professional realms. As was explored in the previous two chapters, balancing the professional with the personal, as necessitated in grassroots, volunteer, information-based work, is a fundamental component of Ron's archiving practice.

The queer, emotionally oriented approach to information organizing at the LHA is more representative of past rather than present LGBT library and archives methods. The more recent focus within LGBT libraries and archives has been on creating new projects and organizations oriented towards digital techniques and technologies. Many of these new projects place emphasis on experimentation with new digital technologies and future-driven aims. In Canada in particular, these kinds of projects are increasingly receiving institutional and governmental support. In the past six years, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), a research funding agency of the federal government of Canada, has funded several LGBT or queer digitally oriented experimental projects. All of the projects that have been funded in this manner are either affiliated in some capacity with an existing LGBT library or archives or have been funded to create a web-based, digitally organized LGBT or queer library or archives.

These include: The Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony (ALOT), the LGBTQ Oral History Collaboratory, the Cabaret Commons, and the Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada project.⁵

A corollary to the increased emphasis on digitally enhanced experimental approaches to information organizing within LGBT library and archives projects is a shift in labour practices. In this context, the kinds of labour that are made possible by these projects change, as does the relationship between those labours and the emotional labours originally sustained in LGBT library and archives settings. ALOT's SSHRC funding, for example, enabled founder and director Elise Chenier to hire a professional archivist, with the contract earmarked for a recent graduate who is developing their professional career. Elise herself works on the project under the auspices of her faculty position at Simon Fraser University. ALOT cannot accommodate volunteer labour due to labour regulations associated with their affiliation with Simon Fraser University, which thereby places the project in a different realm than its grassroots predecessors. LGBT community members and organizations collaborate with ALOT mainly by donating materials. While the LGBTQ Oral History Collaboratory has a framework that enables more direct collaboration with LGBT community members and organizations, the project's funding structure and mandate also involves utilizing professional labour and fostering the development of professional labour skills for graduate students. The Collaboratory involves a variety of stakeholders ranging from professors, information professionals,

⁵ Whether or not these projects constitute "archives" in a traditional scope is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, it is important to acknowledge that digital humanities projects that invoke the concept of "archives" do not necessarily fall within the purview of archives as delineated by the archiving profession. For more detailed exploration of this, see Theimer (2012).

graduate students funded by the SSHRC grant who work to develop their professionalization in emerging areas such as the digital humanities, and community members affiliated with grassroots LGBT archives such as the CLGA. In the cases of both the Collaboratory and ALOT, funding from SSHRC enables new forms of labour to emerge in the context of LGBT libraries and archives, such as that of the information professional and the academic, both of whom are expressly deriving professional benefit from their association with the work.

The recent focus on creating digitally enhanced and technologically explorative LGBT libraries and archives projects enabled by federal funding has implications for how the issue of labour is taken up in these spaces. In a recent article, T. L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault (2014), founders of the Cabaret Commons, reflected on the experience of creating a SSHRC-funded archives. Cowan and Rault provide a critical perspective on the labour practices that these new LGBT library and archives projects foster, in particular the model of collaboration between grassroots community members and those located within the academy, such as academics and professional librarians and archivists. The Cabaret Commons was envisioned as a “fantasy project” comprising “an integrated, user-generated, open-source platform, digital archive and anecdotal encyclopedia for trans-feminist and queer (TFQ) grassroots performance artists, audiences, activists and organizers” (Cowan & Rault, 2014, p. 471). A major assumption of the project was that research participants drawn from the grassroots TFQ cabaret community would provide free labour towards building the archives; for Cowan and Rault, this represented a form of collaboration with them as well as with other professionals that might be needed to develop the project’s infrastructure.

Over the course of developing the project, Cowan and Rault came to the realization that the archives' labour model was reflective of a distinctly 21st century form of labour exploitation. In the process of expecting cultural producers to donate their work to the Cabaret Commons, Cowan and Rault realized that their project perpetuated the “affective industry of Web 2.0 data mining,” in which the concepts of “labour of love” and labour as immaterial in the digital realm converge to force marginalized people to work for free so as to benefit others; in this case, the beneficiaries are Cowan and Rault as well as the academy more broadly (p. 473-4). Ultimately, the underlying mandate of the Cabaret Commons was to “activate the kind of archive of feelings that Ann Cvetkovich argues is central to feminist and queer social, cultural and political lives” (Cowan & Rault, 2014, p. 482). However, through affective archiving, the project ultimately “reproduced the new media capitalist technique of relying upon users to supply and rank online media content, then using the attention this content generates to present advertisements to audiences...[and thereby] turns users into affective processors” (Gehl, as cited in Cowan & Rault, 2014, p. 482). Cowan and Rault's experience with the Cabaret Commons demonstrates the contradictory conditions facilitated by the push to create technologically enhanced, digitally innovative practices within LGBT libraries and archives. While these initiatives allow LGBT libraries and archives to experiment with technological innovations, there is great risk of creating problematic labour environments in the process. These issues demonstrate that it is important for researchers to be attuned to labour conditions when discussing the technologies associated with LGBT information organizing, and, furthermore, to provide context into organizations that pursue digital innovation at the expense of equitable labour politics.

Non-Digital Persistence

This section traces the anti-digital choices of two organizations—the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the STAG Library—in order to articulate their diametrically opposed approaches to LGBT information organizational labour. Although these organizations' approaches are atypical in the greater context of LGBT information organizing because they do not emphasize digital solutions, Gitelman (2014) reminds us that, when understanding the material realities of the larger technological landscape, we ought to consider the importance of the “little tools of knowledge” as opposed to the larger, more mainstream techniques and technologies (p. 19). My interest in the continued use of older, non-digital techniques and technologies also takes inspiration from Walter Benjamin's Natural History Method, in which obsolete objects and materials are examined as fossils in order to understand past economic processes (Gabrys, 2011, p. 6). Similarly, I focus on the “enduring past” of analogue techniques and technologies in current LGBT libraries and archives in order to explore the material realities of LGBT information organizing more broadly. In doing so, I take heed of Cvetkovich's (2003) warning that the unique qualities of LGBT grassroots information organizations risk being forgotten in the wake of their institutionalization and her call for these unique qualities to be documented and remembered (p. 245).

In the following section, I begin by detailing Ron's “hands-on approach” at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, and then move on to considering the affects and perceptions Ron assigns to this work, which range from a tedious to a superior form of computation. From there, I explore the STAG Library, which presented an even more extreme case of an analogue approach than the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives because

the STAG Library adopted these techniques in a resolutely digital age. Taken together, the two organizations provide an alternate vision of how LGBT libraries and archives can organize information in the 21st century, one that challenges the increasingly techn-utopian sentiments within LGBT libraries and archives discourse today.

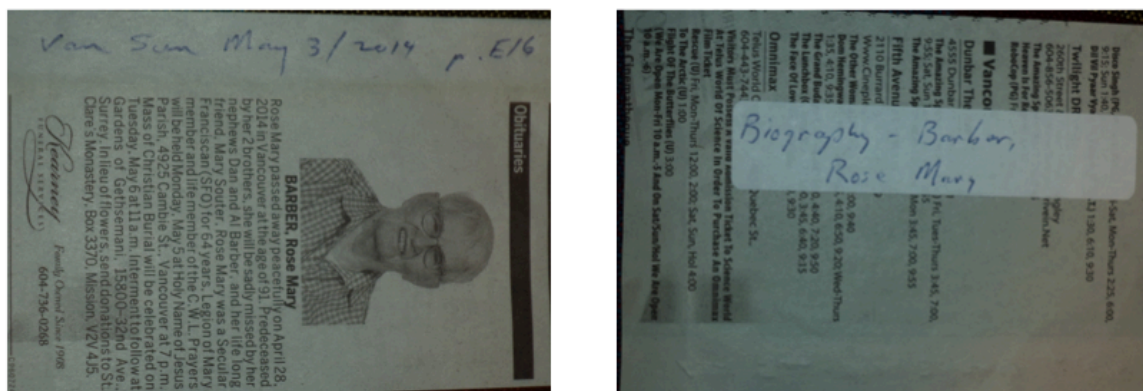
“No One Does This Anymore”: Labour at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives

The techniques Ron employs to organize information at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives are unique insofar as they are done entirely by hand and rely primarily on processes that were once utilized in mainstream libraries and archives but have long since been replaced by technological innovations such as digital repositories and discovery tools. What follows is a detailed description of the techniques and technologies that Ron has devised to support his work with the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, which, I suggest, articulate an increasingly rarified approach to LGBT archiving.

Ron’s archiving activities focus primarily on developing subject files. Unlike records on specific people or organizations, subject files feature information from various sources, including published media, and are gathered together thematically on relevant topics. The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, for example, has files and sub-files on such topics as AIDS, same-sex marriage and drag queens. In any given subject file, then, patrons will find an assortment of information, usually in the form of newspaper clippings and other photocopied documents. The files are stored alphabetically by topic in cardboard boxes, which are then stored in the closets that were described in Chapter 2 and depicted in Figure 19.

In order to maintain the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives’ subject files, Ron scours newspapers and other media sources and makes regular trips mainly around Davie Street

to find relevant information. When I visited Ron at the archives I would often find him either at the dining room table or in the living room engaged in vertical filing activities, which involve clipping articles out of the newspaper, hand-writing citations onto the physical clippings, and then applying labels with hand-written subject designations so that the clippings can be properly filed (see Figures 30 & 31). Once, while I was watching Ron vertically file, he commented to me that “it is labour intensive” and “if there were steps I could cut out I would” because “no one does this anymore.” Ron was referring to the fact that while vertical subject files were once quite common in both libraries and archives because they enabled patrons to search by topic in a time before electronic databases, the practice is no longer maintained to the same scale in archives and has been altogether abandoned in libraries.



Figures 30 & 31. Handwritten citation and handwritten label on clippings, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Photos by the author.

Vertical filing not only involves the initial task of clipping, creating citations for, labeling and sorting new articles as well as ongoing manual maintenance work. In my field notes, I recorded an example of the typical maintenance work I regularly observed Ron conducting:

When I enter the apartment the dining room table is covered with newspaper articles and Ron explains that he is doing maintenance work...he is re-labeling

clippings where the labels have come off, splitting folders that have too many clippings in them and creating new headings. Ron creates the headings of his files by adapting pre-existing classification systems ranging from the mainstream, like Library of Congress and Sears, to those more specifically geared towards LGBT content, such as the classification systems found in other LGBT libraries and archives. Once when he was explaining the system to me he commented that due to my professional background I must understand how important neutrality, control and standardization are for subject headings, including the fact that you can't use slang. He said that he has to be careful and detailed when doing this work because otherwise "there is no point to doing the work."

In addition to labeling and creating citations for vertical files, Ron uses card catalogs and lists as meta-organizational tools. These systems date back to the earliest days of the archives. Ron currently uses one card catalogue to keep track of the existing subject headings and uses another card catalog, which was more recently designed, to keep track of periodicals and books in order to prevent the collection of duplicates (see Figure 33). He attempted to organize his posters by card catalogue as well; however, that endeavour proved too labour intensive. The posters are currently organized chronologically, but Ron hopes to also develop a system to organize the posters thematically since this is what patrons prefer. Similarly, Ron hopes to one day have photographs organized thematically by topic in folders and to also assign numbers to each photograph and index them with metadata. VHS tapes and DVDs are organized through handwritten records kept in a duotang folder (see Figure 32). Ron also maintains

handwritten lists of BC-based drag queens including their stage and civilian names; he recently started two new lists: one for drag kings and another for radical faeries.

As will be discussed in the following chapter, Ron also strives to create meaningful categories that are representative of the LGBT communities that are represented in the collections. Unlike the LHA, Ron does not seek to create an emotional experience for patrons as they seek information and his information organizational methods are distinctly unemotional. Yet, Ron's personal touches permeate the archives in terms of the techniques of organization, not only because he creates the organizational tools by hand, but also because he personally designs the systems based on a hybrid approach in which he combines his professional knowledge with what materials are easily accessible and enable him, a retired person, to craft those systems.

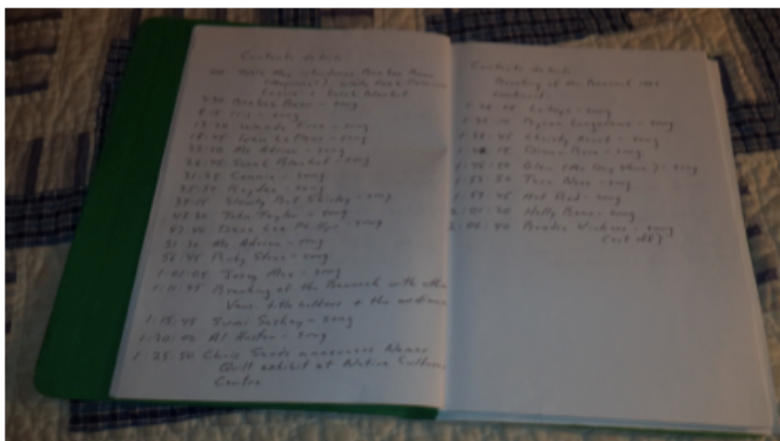


Figure 32. Duotang with film metadata, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Photo by the author.



Figure 33. Card catalog, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Photo by the author.

A “Library Mind”: Mind as Search Engine

Ron characterizes his organizational processes at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives as labour intensive and tedious, but necessarily so, because these processes enable him to maintain control over the collection. Unlike most of the other LGBT

libraries and archives I have encountered in the past, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives does not have any volunteers, in part because Ron believes that you need to have a unique skill set and the inclination to do the work and, by extension, that most people are without both this skill set and the inclination to persevere through the tedium. For Ron, the process of information organizing is one that needs to be affectively distant but that also creates unpleasant affects in the form of boredom; he suggests boredom can be endured because it is counterbalanced by the satisfaction that he gets from knowing that he is doing his work effectively and for a good cause.

Ron also characterizes the orientation required to do the work of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives as that of a “library mind,” which revolves around attention to detail and dedication to maintaining the archives at an optimal level because, as he explained, the archives, “isn’t for next week, it’s for the next millennium.” He does involve others in the archives by enabling them to gather content—one man who used to be involved with the archives now lives in Victoria and regularly sends Ron content from “the islands” to include in the collection—but Ron claims that no one has ever expressed interest in volunteering to help specifically with the archives’ organizational tasks. Ron contrasts the orientations of most other people, who do not have the aptitude for or interest in the tedious, specialized work of archiving, with his own, as someone who sometimes genuinely enjoys the labour and is willing to persevere because of his dedication to the archives’ underlying mission. In fact, Ron often disclosed to me that the work could be incredibly boring. For example, once, when discussing his ongoing project indexing the VHS and DVD collection, he explained to me that it gets boring to watch through so

many drag videos (that same summer, Ron put the project on hold until the following winter so that he could enjoy the nice weather).

Ron also argues that his analogue approach is necessary because he perceives newer, digital approaches to information organization as inadequate in comparison to his “library mind.” I was able to observe his library mind at work one day at the archives when Ron outlined in detailed his process for sorting through newspaper articles. In my field notes, I recorded the following: “While reading through the newspapers he collected, Ron mentions that he looks for buzzwords and that he often finds things ‘buried in the middle of articles’ and finding this information is about ‘mind over search engine’.” While searching through another newspaper article a few minutes later he reiterated again that he finds information that is impossible to Google because it is “really buried in the middle of articles” and as such “would never come back in keyword searches.”

Ron’s skepticism toward incorporating new digital techniques into the archive is due to the perceived efficiencies of maintaining his pre-existing approach. He says:

You can’t redo this stuff because you’re never going to do it, it’s going to be an onerous task if every generation of computer systems require you to go back to square one and start over again. If you can data suck it from one system into another that’s a different matter but it’s a matter of understanding that technology will continue to evolve and you have to put it into a form that can be electronically converted into those new systems. And, it’s material that I don’t understand well and I’m happy to leave that to smart young people like you.

There are several inefficiencies associated with digitization including duplicated labour as well as the associated costs of employing professionals with relevant expertise and purchasing equipment. As mentioned earlier, Ron is able to maintain the archives because of the relatively low costs associated with its operation: he provides all of the labour for free and he hosts the archives in the guest bedroom of his home. Incorporating digitization projects would turn the archives into an organization that is more complex than Ron can maintain. Ron envisions that this work will only begin to be undertaken once the archives moves elsewhere, which, as discussed earlier, he hopes to achieve by partnering with QMUNITY, Vancouver's queer resource centre.

Ron, the self-professed "luddite," does recognize that incorporating digital technologies into the archives' operations is important; however, this is a task for the future generations he assumes will be involved with the archives. He explained that "it is a huge job for my successors, hopefully young and energetic and as willing to put in the hard work. It's got to be done and it will be done. It won't be me doing it." Ron is not the only person who believes it is the role of other community members to ensure that the information associated with the archives is available and searchable digitally. Brandy, who patronized the archives while conducting research for The 30/30 project, expressed a similar position: "[the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives] is the only place that has the comprehensive history [of AIDS in Vancouver] and I think digitizing it also makes it more accessible...and I don't think it's just Ron's responsibility I think it is our responsibility as a community to support that."

While Ron leverages his analogue approach to information organizing deftly, there are drawbacks to this approach. Ron acknowledged this to me once by stating, "I

don't see everything." I observed this firsthand when reading through local newspapers with Ron to find articles to include in the archives' vertical files. Upon my pointing out an article on Shout Back!, an annual anarchy-feminist, queer, radical, anti-capitalist DIY music festival in Vancouver, Ron said that he had not heard of it and did not clip it out because while skimming the article he only noticed the term "feminist" as opposed to LGBT or queer. I later went online to re-read the article, and I noticed the article does mention the terms queer and LGBT. A few days later I returned to the archives with some of the ephemera associated with Shout Back!, and, upon demonstrating to Ron that the festival is indeed queer in its orientation, he was more than happy to include the associated content. This experience not only demonstrates the potential for human error and interpretive bias when relying exclusively on the analogue information organizational labours of one person, but also bolsters my previous observation that Ron is more likely to encourage participation from others when it comes to content building as opposed to content organization.

In addition to acknowledging the possibility for human error and interpretive bias in his approach, Ron is aware that search engines are increasingly effective tools for finding LGBT information on "big topics." He persists in his approach, however, because he feels that a lot of content is still not searchable or overt in comparison to his long-term knowledge. Willow, a patron of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, reflected on the inadequacy of searching using Google's search engine: "I [had] done a number of searches online looking for photographs of my father as a drag performer because I didn't have a lot prior to meeting Ron and I didn't find anything using typical search terms...[and] that was about the extent of my searching [prior to contacting Ron]"

...Google search.” Willow’s comments challenge the commonly held assumption that digital search engines, Google in particular, are the best way to find information. While Ron’s approach to information organizing is idiosyncratic and arguably not sustainable beyond his engagement with the archives, his analogue techniques prove to be an adequate and sustainable search system for patrons like Willow.

Ron positions his labour as professional and tedious in order to maintain an air of seriousness and an underlying professionalism about the archives, which provide a counterpoint to the seemingly idiosyncratic nature of his work. Yet, tedium has an emotional dimension, and, as Ron also emphasizes, he is more likely to persist despite the tedium because of his personal, not professional, investment in the archives’ cause. Ron’s experiences ultimately challenge the connection between analogue LGBT information organizing and positive LGBT-related affects. However, the analogue approach of the STAG Library, which is detailed below, demonstrates how information organizing approaches can also be used in highly deliberate ways to invoke specific experiences for patrons.

Analogue by Choice

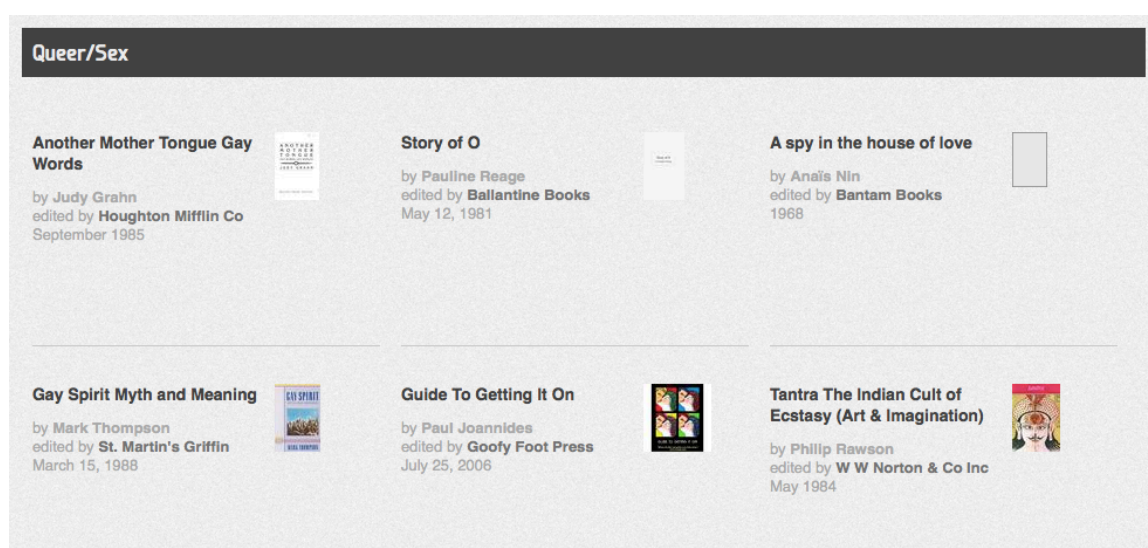
Similar to the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, the STAG Library utilized techniques of information organizing that were steadfastly non-digital; however, unlike the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, these analog techniques were not a continuation of practices from a less digital era, but rather, a highly intentional commentary on contemporary contexts. While the STAG Library embraced technology for promotional purposes, such as maintaining a Tumblr (a micro-blogging platform and social

networking site) and sending monthly email updates to members, their information organization and circulation techniques were intentionally and exaggeratedly analogue.

The items at the STAG library were organized idiosyncratically. By extension, there was no formal cataloging system in place. Aja and Gabriel organized materials in a way that made sense to them, employing thematic categories handwritten on the bookshelves, such as “feminist” and “queer,” as opposed to using a formal cataloging system like the Library of Congress or Dewey Decimal classification system. This kind of system challenges top-down approaches to knowledge organization and meaning-making, facilitates the in-person discovery of items and fosters an appreciation of the materiality of objects. For instance, Aja and Gabriel observed that the people who came to the library discovered items either while they were there or by talking to Aja and Gabriel as if they themselves were a personalized reference service. As the library was composed entirely of Aja and Gabriel’s personal collection, it was possible for them to provide in-person reference services without the aid of a discovery device like a catalog. During my first visit, when they were explaining the library’s mandate to me, Aja and Gabriel both described the collection in “anti-digital” terms. They explained that, as artists, they really valued materials and conceived of the library as a refuge for books because people still crave material objects, including textual objects. The STAG Library also featured other non-digital materials including tapes, zines and records.

The STAG Library’s emphasis on the analogue and the material increased over time, as its digital endeavours did not evolve beyond short-term experimentations. Aja and Gabriel had originally had a computer set up in the library so that patrons could upload materials from the digital collection onto USB drives, essentially “borrowing”

digital items. That project did not resonate with the library's patrons so Aja and Gabriel removed the computer and concentrated on lending out physical materials as opposed to digital materials. In addition to concentrating on analogue materials, Aja and Gabriel also learned through experimentation to concentrate on analogue circulation and cataloging technologies. During a STAG artist residency from November 2010 to July 2011, Sarah Foulquier and Sylvain Daval initiated a book cataloging project for the library, which was later expanded by Yves Saint-Larry and Simon Foutaiz, who migrated the cataloging efforts onto Self Shelf Swap, a free, open source, micro-library social networking project that enables people to share information online about their book collections (see Figure 34). Aja and Gabriel did not continue with the project after it was initially catalogued. The STAG Library's Self Shelf Swap account was not the main way patrons searched for books nor was it used to support circulation activities. The online catalogue created with Self Shelf Swap only enabled browsing, not keyword searching, which rendered it an incomplete digital replica of the major analogue discovery technique employed at the library: physical browsing.



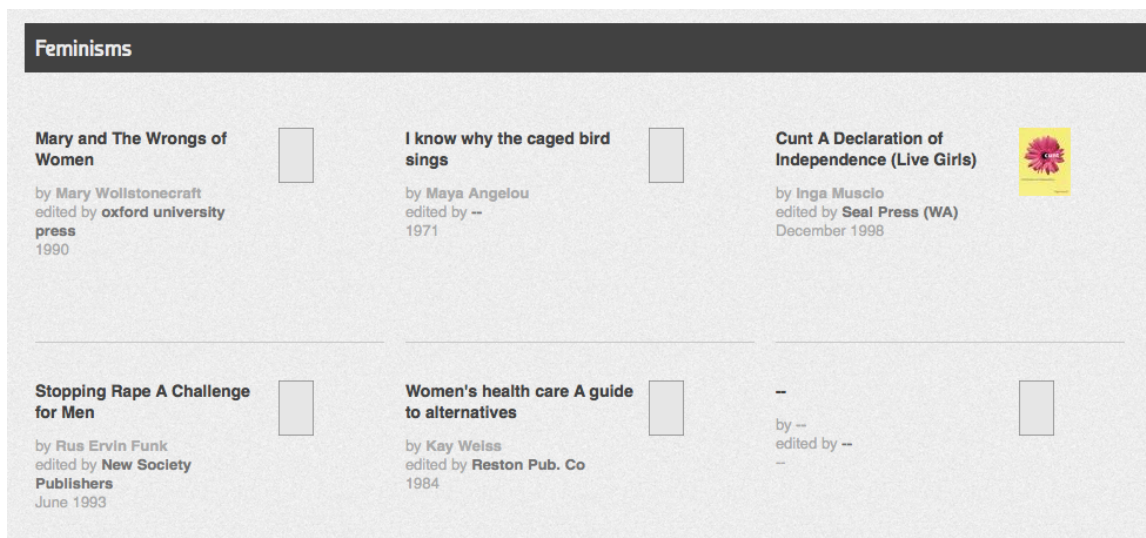


Figure 34. Examples of entries from the STAG Library's Self Shelf Swap profile.

Aja and Gabriel were comfortable with rather than dismayed by the fact that the USB drive project and Self Shelf Swap project were never fully implemented because the STAG Library emphasized experimentation. The STAG Library was an experimental project that extended out of Aja and Gabriel's artistic practice as opposed to an investment in developing specific library skills. Those who had been involved with the labour of the STAG Library had also been involved in larger STAG projects in their capacities as artists participating in residencies. As the library was designed as a small, temporary experiment there was no need for Aja and Gabriel to expand beyond themselves for the labour needed to maintain the organizational structure of the library because the library traffic was manageable enough for them to monitor the flow of circulation.

Conclusion

A rationale towards utilizing analogue information organizing techniques not only to create ease of functionality for the organizations' creators, but also to provide an opportunity to oppose and critique digital technologies, links together the former STAG library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Yet, between these two organizations

there are also significantly different philosophies behind these rationales for applying analogue techniques: where Ron applies an information professional's perspective, the STAG Library was a more artistic experiment.

For Ron, maintaining his pre-existing analogue techniques is a priority because he is more comfortable with these techniques and anticipates that it will be easier to make the transition to digital technologies when the archives is one day moved from his apartment. Crucially, he is also skeptical of the costs associated with digital technologies because he suspects that it will be more expensive and time consuming to regularly update and migrate the information as digital technologies evolve. For the STAG Library, however, an anti-digital approach aligned more with the organization's alignment with DIY culture, and by extension, served as a reaction against techno-saturation in mainstream society.

The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives' and the STAG Library's largely analogue approaches to techniques and technologies of information organization also open up alternative possibilities for how labour is envisioned and enacted in library and archives contexts. Ron's techniques for information organizing are grounded in his professional knowledge; however, they are scaled to be accessible to him as a retired person who is funding the archives with his own income. By positioning his methods as existing in opposition to search engines, Ron also challenges the notion that digital technologies are superior for information discovery, particularly in the context of specialized knowledge contexts like a small archives. At the STAG Library, the labour of working in a library remained understood exclusively in the experimental realm, which enabled Aja and Gabriel to explore different approaches to information organizing without the obligation

of seeing any particular project past the experimentation phase because the functionality of the library ultimately relied on the intimate knowledge they had of their collection coupled with simple analogue tools.

When measured against the standards of progress and innovation that dominate mainstream archival practices and institutions, both the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the former STAG Library fall short. Yet, when the intentionality of these organizations' practices is taken into account, it provides a wider picture of the kind of information organizing techniques and technologies associated with LGBT libraries and archives, and demonstrates how these techniques and technologies can queer normative assumptions about the way that libraries and archives are organized. Some digital projects associated with LGBT libraries and archives, such as ALOT do not invoke the concept of queer in association with their mandate, but rather, understand their use of digital technologies on a purely functional basis to the extent that they are aligned with a specific sexual orientation or identity. Their purpose is to increase the possibilities for preservation and dissemination for the materials collected. Other more speculative projects, such as the Cabaret Commons created by T. L. Cowan and Jasmine Rault, invoke "queer" in the context of information organization through their focus on using experimental digital technologies in order to organize and disseminate the information in new ways. However, other components of these projects are decidedly normative insofar as they are funded by and conform to the agendas of mainstream institutions (as noted earlier, many of these projects receive government funding and/or are integrated into government institutions). In some cases, these projects rely on labour models that exploit already precariously employed individuals and communities (Cowan & Rault, 2014). In

contrast to the digital LGBT Library or archives project, an intentional resistance to institutional agendas that make digital technologies the priority for information organizational activities links together the former STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian archives. In turn, both organizations present a queer challenge to the established values of progress and ease with which these mainstream priorities are aligned.

The analogue approaches of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the STAG Library broaden how queer information organizing techniques and technologies can be conceptualized and analyzed. The STAG Library's approach resonated with that of the LHA because, like the LHA, it emphasized browsing as a primary form of discovery, yet took this approach further by not relying on any digital technologies to record or organize the metadata of the materials. The STAG Library was unique because it deliberately chose to eschew digital techniques and technologies; the organization's analogue techniques are not a by-product of an organizational legacy that predates the digital technologies encountered in libraries and archives today. By taking an analogue, DIY approach to information organizing, the STAG Library ultimately illustrates the complexity of contemporary information organizing practices.

While the STAG Library had an experimental motivation for relying on analogue technologies, Ron Dutton's work at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives is more strongly prompted by practical functionality and professional archival standards. Ron has passion for his work, the labour component of which can appear personal and idiosyncratic because he does the work by hand. In actuality, Ron's techniques reflect his background as a professional librarian and are analogue by virtue of their accessibility. It is Ron's doggedness in maintaining these archives as an individual and in a way that is perceived

as “out of fashion” by dominant library and archives discourse that makes his archival practice non-normative. Ron’s account of analogue labours, in which he readily admits to the tedium associated with maintaining the archives by hand, challenges the romanticized notions that are typically associated with analogue-informed LGBT archiving practices. Yet, Ron’s experience also speaks to a more general characteristic of organizing information in LGBT settings that goes unacknowledged in both analogue or digital contexts: organizing libraries and archives is work, even when that work is taken up as a voluntary, leisurely pursuit.

The following chapter shifts focus away from the labour and material processes of organizing information and toward issues of representation, focusing on how the patron is invoked at some of the LGBT libraries and archives included in this study. While this chapter addressed some of the ways that patrons are able to physically search for and access information in the organizations discussed, the following chapter delves more deeply into who these patrons are perceived to be in terms of why they are searching for LGBT information and what their backgrounds are. Taken together, this chapter and the following chapter address the issue of which publics the LGBT libraries and archives in this study purport to serve and how these publics can be most effectively served.

Chapter Five: The Imagined Patron

Present Assimilation, Uncertain Future

During the time that I conducted my fieldwork, *USA Today* published an article on the “uncertain future” of gay bathhouses, which I came across through a Facebook post by the Society of American Archivists’ (SAA) Lesbian and Gay Archivists Roundtable (LAGAR). The article describes how the popularity of gay bathhouses has steadily declined, first in the 1980s due to the AIDS crisis, and more recently because of the increasing mainstream acceptance of LGBT people (Hamilton, 2014). The growing acceptance of LGBT people has led to opportunities to meet romantic and sexual partners elsewhere, often in spaces not necessarily designated for this purpose, as well as through online dating platforms. The article quotes one owner of a gay bathhouse who explains that “the acceptance of gays has changed the whole world. It’s taken away the need to sneak into back-alley places” (Hamilton, 2014, para. 4). Another owner remarks in the article that “bathhouses were like dirty bookstores and parks: a venue to meet people...today, you can go to the supermarket” (Hamilton, 2014, para. 7).

The comments of the owners of gay bathhouses echo my informant Ken Brock’s rationale for collecting and making available his journals and personal effects, which, as discussed in Chapter 3, are housed at various archives including the City of Vancouver Archives as well as the Museum of Vancouver. In the overview statement that accompanies his journals, Ken explains:

There are several reasons I think my life story will be interesting in the future...I’ve lived through a transition period in North American society’s acceptance of gay people. Documented gay life before 1960 is rare and after gays

become mainstream will not be as distinct from the population as a whole. In the future this period of time will have greatest historical significance.

Ken further elaborated to me that “in the future you won’t be able to tell the difference between gay and straight men for the most part, not that you can really tell the difference often now.” For Ken, like owners of gay bathhouses, distinct gay culture is being subsumed into the mainstream.

The sentiments of Ken and bathhouse owners are not unique: in the past few years a number of different projects spanning multiple genres and levels of institutional affiliation have emerged to document disappearing LGBT cultural sites. These initiatives are developing particularly in Canada and the United States by recognizing these sites as public heritage. Examples include: “Preserving LGBT Historic Sites in California,” an “interactive, online archive” that functions primarily as a Facebook group with regular posts about places pertaining to LGBT history; the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Heritage Initiative, organized through the US National Parks Service; and the “All We’ve Got” project that Alexis Clements created to document “the disappearance of physical spaces where lesbians and queer women gather” (n.d.). Similarly, recent art projects such as Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue’s “KillJoy’s Kastle” and Macon Reed’s “Eulogy for a Dyke Bar” recreate sites of feminist and queer gathering, such as bars and consciousness-raising groups, in order to experientially engage with the types of sites that the documentation projects listed above also seek to remember.

And yet, caught in this moment where past LGBT cultural forms are disappearing is also the rhetorical act that re-inscribes these cultural forms as visible or, in the cases of

some cultural forms, like the ever-fleeting lesbian bar, may even re-inscribe them as more widely visible than they ever were during their periods of operation. As an archival illustration of Foucault's repressive hypothesis, these lamentations on the disappearance of LGBT culture reflect the exponential growth of recent efforts to historicize and preserve that culture. However, what these statements suggest but do not explore is the complex relationship between LGBT communities and their pasts, presents and futures. With every project that invokes a disappearing LGBT past in the face of an increasingly mainstream and potentially assimilated LGBT future, one wonders, for whom is LGBT culture disappearing and for whom is this culture being remembered and preserved? What personal touches of the LGBT past will maintain in its public legacy?

This chapter explores this question through invocations of the patron in the context of LGBT libraries and archives. The patron is a powerful entry point for understanding how LGBT libraries and archives navigate the complex interplay between the LGBT communities these organizations claim to represent and serve in the present and the LGBT communities these organizations claim they will represent in the future. As such, this chapter argues that understanding how LGBT libraries and archives conceptualize patrons is as important as understanding the activities of existing patrons.

I begin by considering the topic of the patron methodologically and theoretically, focusing on how the patron is explored in library and information science and then on how this figure may be analyzed by queer theory. I then explore how LGBT identity and community are defined and delimited in relation to patronage in some of the LGBT libraries and archives included in the study, and consider other forms of identity within those facets. I demonstrate that those involved in creating and developing LGBT libraries

and archives are anxious about whether or not their organizations adequately reflect the diversity within the spectrum of gender and sexual LGBT identities through outreach activities and the collections proper. However, as I also explore, the ongoing pervasiveness of whiteness in these organizations' cultures signifies how possibilities of participation from the full spectrum of LGBT communities continue to be foreclosed. I then examine how LGBT libraries and archives conceptualize their patrons temporally, or, in other words, whether LGBT libraries and archives see their patrons as having present LGBT information needs. Focusing on the perspectives of those involved in the creation and maintenance of LGBT libraries and archives underscores how patrons are actively constructed in these settings and what discursive moves are involved in this creation. How the patron is constructed in these contexts speaks to how those involved with creating and maintaining LGBT libraries and archives have imagined LGBT identities and communities over time as well as the changes to LGBT identities and communities in the wake of increasingly mainstream acceptance.

Finding the Patron Through Method and Theory

My focus on conceptualizations of the patron as opposed to observing and analyzing existing patron activities was motivated in part by the absence of patrons at any of the libraries and archives I studied. Thus, the resulting emphasis in my findings is from the perspective of those associated with creating and maintaining the libraries and archives included in the study. In most cases, the lack of patrons was not surprising: Ron can only host one researcher at a time at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives because the archives is located in his apartment. The volume of patron activity is still relatively high in relation to the size of the operation, but ultimately it is not a large volume of patrons

overall. By extension, casual interaction with patrons at the archives was not possible because when I was at his apartment I counted as the one researcher he could host at any given time. Ron keeps a handwritten log book of his visitors so I knew that he averaged about one to two researchers a week over the course of the year and he also put me in touch with a few past patrons to interview them about their experiences. Due to the relatively small size and scope of the former STAG Library, I was also not surprised to only encounter one or two other people at the library when I visited; our overlap was relatively brief. It was impossible to casually observe patrons at the Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony (ALOT), because the archives only exist online.

I was surprised, however, by the lack of patrons I observed at Out on the Shelves (OOTS). Every time I visited the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, which was usually several times a week, I made a practice of also walking down the street to browse and take out a few books from OOTS. I always spoke to whichever volunteers were on shift; however, I only once encountered a patron taking out books. My findings were consistent with the observations shared by the OOTS volunteers I interviewed: the heaviest volume of patrons the volunteers observed was about one or two patrons per volunteer shift. Many of those were there just to take advantage of the free Wi-Fi, although there were some regulars. The OOTS volunteers had recently acquired new software to support circulation activities, which would have enabled the volunteers to better capture circulation statistics—one way of measuring patron activity—however, as discussed in Chapter 1, about six months after my fieldwork, QMUNITY closed the library, citing the need to use the space for other programming, so this information was ultimately not captured.

Echoing my own fieldwork experiences, finding the patron in library and archives studies and information studies more broadly is also a complex issue. These professions have a relatively long history of recognizing and interrogating the relationship between the structures of information representation, including: how information is collected and organized, where the information is collected and by whom and for whom.⁶ In regards to the LGBT-identified library or archives patron, there is a professional literature that focuses on programming and resource recommendations for LGBT-identified patrons in public and academic library and archives settings (Greenblatt, 2010; Martin & Murdock, 2007; Mehra & Braquet, 2007). This literature, however, focuses only on LGBT-identified patrons in mainstream library or archives settings as opposed to grassroots LGBT libraries and archives. As discussed in Chapter 2, K. J. Rawson's (2009) work provides another entry point into LGBT-identified patron experience through his auto-ethnographic account as a trans-identified scholar visiting various archives, located within both mainstream and more grassroots settings.

Where the LGBT patron appears in library and archives studies is reflective of how patron studies are conducted within these professional practices and their affiliated academic disciplines. Within professional practice, for example, librarians overwhelmingly rely on quantitative metrics for evaluating patron activities internally, and these data gathering activities include gate counting, circulation statistics, and, in the case of academic libraries, surveys, all of which focus on a specific range of measurable

⁶ These efforts extend back to information activist work from the 1970s including: the formation of a lesbian- and gay-specific task force in the American Library Association (the first of its kind in a professional association); successful lobbying of the American Psychiatric Association by activist librarian Barbara Gittings and others to remove homosexuality as a mental illness; and the work of Sanford Berman to problematize discriminatory Library of Congress Subject Headings.

activities. Qualitative research, including ethnography and “user experience” techniques adapted from the technology sector, are growing alternatives for gathering rich, descriptive information on libraries, including investigating patron perceptions and activities (Fagan, 2013; Khoo, Rozaklis, & Hall, 2013).

There is also the broader framework of information-seeking behaviour and use, which challenges the focus within library practice on the more narrowly defined “patron.” This framework emerged through T. D. Wilson’s (1981; 2000) observations that pre-existing models for understanding information activities, based solely on the concept of need for particular resources, failed to capture the range of observable activities associated with information seeking. His concept of “information behaviour” included all aspects of activity and settings in relation to seeking information, both active and passive. Information-seeking behaviour has evolved from Wilson’s work into a multi-disciplinary framework applicable beyond settings specifically designed to provide information resources. Sociologist Elfreda Chatman (1992) articulates how retired women, for example, have unique information needs because they need to seek out particular kinds of information pertaining to their health and finances. From this type of work on information-seeking behaviour, it becomes apparent that patronizing information-based organizations like libraries or archives represents only one form of information-seeking activity within a much broader spectrum.

While evaluating patron activities is common practice within library settings and the framework of information-seeking behaviour and use enables us to think about how information activity occurs more widely, the topic of patronage and information seeking is virtually non-existent within archives research (Meyerson, Galloway, & Bias, 2012;

Yakel & Tibbo, 2010). It may initially appear surprising that, in an era where self-assessment is a widespread and ever-growing practice within organizational and institutional culture, there is no culture of self-assessment in archives, including assessment of patron needs in ensuring optimal services. A 2008 survey of archivists by Duff et al. revealed that archivists are reticent to develop and apply user-based evaluation methods not due to lack of interest or a conviction that these methods will elicit useful information, but rather due to their perceived lack of time and/or expertise towards developing these forms of evaluation (p. 158).

The dearth of patron-focused research in archives and archival studies is also due to the perceived cultural role of archives. The dominant conceptualization of archives is that they collect documents of enduring value and therefore the value of these institutions cannot be simply measured by how many patrons visit and how they use the collections at any given time. Archives often collect materials that cannot be made available for decades, sometimes for almost a century after acquisition, meaning these institutions are playing a “long game” where the value and use of collections may not be apparent until much farther in the future. As the value of archival information is evidentiary it is also arguable that the act of collection in and of itself constitutes the archives’ purpose as opposed to the specific use of the collections. For this reason, Richard Pearce Moses (2007) argues that the Roman god Janus (see Figure 35), who simultaneously looks forwards and backwards is the “perfect patron” for archivists because they “are committed to preserving the record of what has been, [but they] do so for the future” (p. 13). To archive, therefore, is to always be on the threshold between past and future (Pearce-Moses, 2007, p. 13).



Figure 35. Roman coin depicting Janus. (source: *Journal of Nuclear Medicine*)

LGBT libraries and archives are thus institutions on the threshold between past and future, not only in terms (to varying extents between organizations) of being cultural institutions with a mandate to preserve materials for future use, but also due to the shifting concepts of LGBT identity and community. LGBT libraries, by virtue of their functioning as libraries, are generally more oriented towards serving the present information needs of their patrons. It is important to acknowledge, however, that LGBT libraries often have archives collections and vice versa, which leads to LGBT libraries and archives having temporal foci that cannot be as easily categorized by virtue of their labeling as “libraries” or “archives.” Furthermore, a unique characteristic of the grassroots LGBT archives that emerged during the period of gay liberation and lesbian feminism was that these organizations were oriented towards serving LGBT communities in the present as well as in the future, such as by having a greater emphasis on programming and outreach than mainstream archives.

For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Lesbian Herstory Archives had the express mandate to be staffed by lesbians so that the archives would maintain a “living cultural context” (Nestle, 1978, p. 11). The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives was

founded during the same period as the LHA and continues to be maintained by Ron, who participated in and continues to identify with that era of gay and lesbian activism. As the following section explores, however, the temporal aims of some of these organizations and collections are now changing. In particular, more recently created LGBT archives imagine their LGBT patrons as part of mainstream society, and, at the most extreme, entirely assimilated beyond having unique LGBT identities.

The concept of “the future” and other meditations on time—often invoked through LGBT figures’ relationship to time—are of ongoing theoretical significance within queer theory more broadly and can be helpful for contextualizing the issue of temporality within LGBT libraries and archives. Lee Edelman (2004) argues that imaginings of the future in political discourse constitute “reproductive futurism” through the figure of the child, meaning that the future is bound to the heteronormative order of biological reproduction (p. 2). Queerness, by extension, is the condition arising from being outside of the heteronormative time order, aligned with negativity as opposed to optimism and death as opposed to reproduction. While the seeming lack of future preparedness and the “at-risk” nature of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, as discussed in Chapter 2, seems to align the organization with the sentiment of “no future,” Ron also envisions that the archives will continue to exist and be important to the LGBT community. Ken Brock’s motivations behind creating a collection of personal documents and artifacts are also oriented towards the future because he perceives that his legacy will be more effectively preserved through archiving than through the more traditional route of biological reproduction. Similarly, J. Jack Halberstam (2005) argues that there exists a distinctly “queer time” that is “about the potentiality of a life unscripted by the

conventions of family, inheritance and child rearing” (p. 2). Following Halberstam’s (2005) model, the LHA’s allegiance to the living lesbian community reflects queer experiences focused on the here and now of people who historically could not access “the time of inheritance...within which values, wealth, goods and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next” (p. 5).

A focus on the present can also manifest itself in the ways in which collecting practices are oriented. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ron’s interest in giving an LGBT “home” to the figures associated with the information he collects, regardless of whether or not those figures self-identified as such, recalls queer historiographical work on the relationship between the present and past figures. Heather Love (2007) writes of a similar phenomenon of the “queer reader” who sees themselves “as reaching back toward isolated figures in the queer past in order to rescue or save them” (p. 8). This reflects an effort “to forge communities between the living and the dead” (Love, 2007, p. 31). Love’s work is informed by Carolyn Dinshaw (1999), the medieval historian who articulated the “queer historical impulse,” a desire to “touch” between the “lives, texts and other cultural phenomenon left out of sexual categories back then [as well as] those left out of current sexual categories now” (Dinshaw, 1999, p.1).⁷ The following section expands this work by emphasizing the significance of information collection for those in the present, articulating how the mandates and manager/creators of LGBT libraries and archives envision LGBT community and who is excluded from these articulations.

L, G, B, T

⁷ The ongoing utility of such tactics extends beyond LGBT communities; for example, my work with Ela Przybylo (Przybylo & Cooper, 2014) on asexual resonances advocates for examining *moments* of asexuality as opposed to becoming fixed on locating historical or literary figures who might today “pass” as asexual.

The ongoing tension between being committed to representing past and present LGBT communities and their connections to past artifacts—how institutions imagine their patrons—can be examined by asking how LGBT libraries and archives define their mandates for representing LGBT identities and communities. As discussed in Chapter 1, this question is also reflected in the ongoing tension in many LGBT libraries and archives regarding which identifiers—that is, lesbian and gay versus LGBT—should be included in an organization’s name.⁸ Who is imagined to be included in the archives’ collections, therefore, is a reflection of who is imagined to be the target patron of those collections.

When Nailisa, the archivist for the Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony (ALOT), was invited to speak about ALOT at New Westminster Public Library as part of its Pride programming, she asked me to help her with her presentation. New Westminster is a small city that is part of the Greater Vancouver regional district but located about an hour from Vancouver by Sky Train, a journey Nailisa and I took the following week for the presentation. Sitting on her porch in Vancouver’s East End, we went over the entire presentation, discussing what would be compelling and accessible for the audience, whom we presumed would have an interest in LGBT history and culture but might not necessarily know much about LGBT archives, oral testimony, or archives in general.

While working through the presentation we focused mostly on the issue of which clips of video testimony Nailisa wanted to show. One clip in particular was giving her pause because, in it, the speaker discusses their experiences at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, which has been criticized and boycotted by many over the years for its trans-exclusionary policies. As Nailisa has transwomen friends, one of whom was invited

⁸ As discussed in Chapter 1, this tension also informed my choice to use “LGBT” as the acronym to refer to all of the organizations included in this study.

to the New Westminster Public Library event, she tried to imagine if the clip would be interpreted as disrespectful of transwomen. We watched the clip together and observed that the clip was not simply an expression of support for the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, but rather a more nuanced discussion about how the speaker had ambivalent feelings about the festival, their enjoyment being greatly tempered by the exclusion they experienced as a member of the dyke S/M community because the festival was not S/M inclusive. I told Nailisa that I thought this was actually a great clip to show because while it did not explicitly address trans exclusion it highlighted how there are many different angles from which the festival can be criticized—including trans exclusion—and how many people involved had complicated feelings about the festival for this very reason. Nailisa agreed, and showed the clip during the presentation with the contextualizing information we discussed and there was at least no overt opposition from the audience.

My experience helping Nailisa with her presentation is indicative of a conversation that recurred during my fieldwork: there is an underlying anxiety, displayed by those involved with creating and developing LGBT libraries and archives, to adequately reflect the diversity within the spectrum of LGBT identity in the pursuits of their organizations, both through outreach activities and the collections proper. This desire to reflect the diversity of LGBT communities at the level of the archivist and within archival institutions' mandates underscores the importance of the imagined patron as an avenue through which to consider LGBT information organizations. Specifically, it reveals that these organizations operate in a way that reinforces certain ideas of diversity and inclusion at the expense of others, and demonstrates the difference between the intent to include and actual inclusion.

Ron and I had a number of conversations about his awareness of these issues. For example, once, when we were discussing his filing procedures, I asked Ron if he has had to change the filing categories much over the years. He said yes, and gave the example of reading a review of *Gender Failure*, a book by Rae Spoon and Ivan E. Coyote. He told me that learning about the book made him realize that he needed to change how he approached gender issues. He had always had a file on transsexuality, but it was now inadequate because its content only pertained to more linear transitions from one gender identity to the other, whereas Rae Spoon and Ivan E. Coyote made him aware of how people do not necessarily want to transition and can occupy positionalities between gender categories or even opt out of them altogether. He wondered if he was perhaps slower to realize this than others.

This exchange with Ron was striking to me because I had not expected Ron, an older, gay-identified white man, to be cognizant of or interested in issues pertaining to transgender representation. Ron firmly believed that transgender issues were within the scope of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and actively collected materials on these topics. I gave Ron a copy of the Transgender Archives of the University of Victoria's recent publication, *The Transgender Archives: Foundations for the Future* (Devor, 2014) and, while perusing the publication, Ron mentioned that he had recently given that archives some copies of material he found in the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives while helping an SFU student on a paper on representations of transgender people in advertising. The content was a pictorial spread from a BC-area women's magazine from the 1970s in which the photographer of the shoot, who was also Ron's friend, covertly used a transwoman as the model. This anecdote opened up a larger discussion in which

Ron explained to me that despite the emergence of trans-specific archives, it is important for the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives to also collect trans-specific materials because transgender people are part of the community the archives represents and maintaining this inclusion is a “political statement.”

Ron strives to be as inclusive as possible of lesbians and women more broadly through how he treats this group as patrons. In Chapter 2, I explored Ron’s awareness that the space of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives is the home of a man and discussed his policy of meeting patrons elsewhere if they request it. Ron also insinuates to potential patrons that his archives is not gay-man-only by rotating the images he puts on the archives’ business cards such that they feature images of men and women (see Figures 36-38). When he is going to distribute cards to individuals or an audience composed mainly of lesbians, Ron makes sure to bring cards with women on them; in some cases, people in the audience have recognized the women on the cards.



Figures 36 & 37. Business card fronts, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.



Figure 38. Business card back, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives.

Considering that Ron is the only person primarily involved in the archives, however, the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives is limited to his own interpretations of what

constitutes the LGBT community and what patrons will want to learn about that community. Returning to the issue of trans representation, while Ron perceives the topic as important, his approach to the topic is limited to his own perceptions of it. He explained that when he first started the archives, the field of BC-specific information available was much narrower, particularly on transgender issues: “when [trans-related] material actually began to be produced in BC I wasn’t even clear that it was an appropriate subject for gay and lesbian archives; I didn’t understand the phenomenon. Like most people, I was perfectly ignorant about it but something kind of told me that they probably were [appropriate] somehow.” Note that Ron’s claim that transgender people were part of the community that already included lesbians and gays, and are therefore relevant to the archives, reflects his own learning and experience of transgender issues. He further explained: “So I began to collect on ‘spec’ more than anything and it really was many years later that it became evident that these people were in fact part of our micro society within the larger queer community.”

Ron’s explanation demonstrates an expansive orientation towards what constitutes LGBT-relevant information. His expansive orientation is also reflected in his choice to include information on AIDS that not only pertained to the LGBT community but also to children and ethnic minorities. He noted, “I made a choice at that point to completely document this crisis. So there is a ton of material in the AIDS files that isn’t directly related to gays, lesbians and bisexuals, etc., but it felt like the right decision at the time and it’s the only exception I’ve made.”

Ron mitigates lack of feedback from others by having a wide collection policy to ensure adequate representation in the archives. However, without the regular feedback

from anyone other than those who visit the archives, one could argue that the concept of the LGBT community and, by extension, the concept of what patrons are interested in LGBT community issues, is largely left to one person's perception and interpretation. However, this approach is not unique among LGBT archives and libraries, as many other organizations are similarly small or are "one-person" operations. One could also argue that larger governance structures do not make other LGBT libraries and archives immune to the possibility of privileging certain perspectives and positionalities over others.

In some rare cases, the organizations I studied made explicit gestures to diversity and attended to representational unevenness within LGBT communities in libraries and archives through targeted programming. Out on the Shelves, for example, had a monthly book display that was created by the volunteers. This display at OOTS was sometimes used as an opportunity to discuss issues pertaining to representation, such as when the monthly theme was "gender non-conforming youth." The Moving Trans History Forward conference, hosted by the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria, included presentations that covered a variety of identities on the gender-non-conforming and trans spectrum, including two-spirited people and eunuchs.

Overwhelmingly, however, I observed that, aside from the one-on-one conversations I had with those involved with the organizations, the issue of representing diversity in the LGBT community beyond the categories of l, g and t, was largely relegated to the implicit and the unspoken. Furthermore, bisexuality did not emerge at all as a topic or theme during my fieldwork, which reflects the ongoing issue of bisexual invisibility in LGBT communities (McLean, 2008). This is not to say that those involved with the organizations I studied were entirely unaware of the various permutations of the

non-normative sexuality and gendered umbrellas, which now also include such categories as asexual, intersex and pansexual, among others; rather, it suggests that this awareness does not translate into major discussions, gestures or actions in terms of organizational culture or policy, including acknowledgement of the futility of fixing these kinds of definitional categories in and of themselves.

The statement on donations on the ALOT website, for example, includes information on how “testimony” can be defined, but it does not include equivalent information on how lesbian can be defined:

ALOT is actively seeking donations of materials related to lesbian history and testimony. Testimonies come in many forms: while much of the collection is comprised of oral history interviews in audio and audiovisual formats, we accept a variety of materials that bear witness to the lives and stories of lesbians and the lesbian community.

ALOT is more flexible in terms of its representational scope and the type of content collected than their official mandate suggests. One example of the flexibility in ALOT’s collection is that the archives holds QMUNITY’s Stories of Queer Elders, which features LGBTQ oral histories as opposed to exclusively lesbian oral histories; another example is its “Program Pride” collection, which not only has a broader LGBT scope but is also more than an oral history project as it was a Canadian public-access television show produced in the mid-1990s. When giving her presentation at the New Westminster Public Library, Nailisa discussed how the term “lesbian” can be complicated. ALOT founder Elise Chenier also acknowledges, in an article she published about the archives, that “lesbian” is no longer a stable identity category. She wonders what implications this

destabilization might have for how contemporary researchers perceive and engage with lesbian archival materials (Chenier, 2016, p. 172). However, these kinds of discussions are not found in the official media associated with ALOT (such as on the archives' website) leaving the concept largely unexplored in public contexts.

Perhaps most surprising finding during my fieldwork was the lack of discussion I encountered regarding the “queer” identity category, considering that this was a major issue in academia in the 1990s and into the 2000s. Ron mentioned to me on several occasions that he was skeptical of the academy's embracing of the concept of queer; at the time, he saw queer as a passing trend that would have greater implications for the future care of LGBT archival materials in academic contexts. Ron's skepticism around the concept of queer, however, was reflective of his distrust of the academy and not of an aversion to queer as an identity category. Only one organization, OOTS, explicitly included “queer” in its mandate. The STAG Library had a “queer” section of books and was oriented towards queer more as a theoretical concept than as a sexual or gendered identity.

Always-Already White

Beyond exploring how LGBT libraries and archives approach representational issues pertaining to sexuality and gender-specific categories, it is also important to attend to how these organizations address issues of intersecting marginalized identities, meaning those relating to such categories as race, class, age and ability. If anything, I was surprised by how little the issue of representation at the intersections of sexuality, gender and other forms of subjectivity emerged over the course of my study and when it did it was mainly when my informants acknowledged a paucity of materials pertaining to

certain representational categories. Similar to the issue of representation within the categories of gender and sexuality, the issue of intersecting identities at the organizations I studied was only addressed through one-on-one conversation and only when raised by others or me, as opposed to being present in policies or programming.

The few encounters I had pertaining to racial representation at LGBT libraries and archives hinged on brief acknowledgements and barely spoken about issues. A typical example of this was at the New Westminster Public Library presentation described earlier, at which an audience member asked Nailisa if the ALOT collection is mainly white and middle class. She answered affirmatively and acknowledged that “more representation is needed.” She mentioned that ALOT would be receiving the interviews that formed the basis for *Forbidden Love*, the seminal documentary on lesbian lives in Canada from the 1940s-1960s. Nailisa noted that there is one Haida woman interviewed in the documentary and that she was looking forward to seeing the extended version of the interview.

There are currently no publicly written statements about prioritizing racial representation either on the ALOT archives’ website or in the pieces about the archives, both of which are written by ALOT founder and director Elise Chenier (2009; 2016). The descriptions of the collections on the ALOT website do not include information about the racial identity of those providing testimonials, nor do searches on the ALOT website (conducted at the time of my writing) yield results for terms associated with racial representation such as race, white, black, Asian, Indigenous, or native. This result suggests that this information is not captured in the metadata.

Nailisa explained ALOT's position. There had been a plan to tag transcripts based on various positionalities including race, class and gender and that tagging vocabulary was developed towards this end; however, the transcription process itself took up too much time for this tagging work to be done over the course of the SSHRC-funded project that employed her. While the tagging could have already been applied to a few of the completed videos, it was decided that it was better to wait until the system could be applied to the entire corpus. Nailisa argued that relying on SSHRC funding was a deterrent to completing this kind of work because such a project requires more money than SSHRC allots to projects of this nature.

Ron admitted to me in casual conversation that he has a hard time documenting intersections between marginalized communities at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives but that he tries his best due to his personal conviction that the LGBT community should be expansively defined. This principle is reflected in his approach to combing through as wide a variety of publications as possible, including free ethnic and religious publications. In cases where there is not much content, Ron still makes the effort to give the content its own "space" through separate subject files and headings. For example, the Indigenous file was scant but Ron spoke at length to its significance. The file consisted solely of images from an Indigenous rendering of the International Court System, which is a network of LGBT not-for-profit fundraising organizations best known for coordinating coronation balls for its members. Ron mentioned the example of the term "Native Canadian" which is now "First Nations" in his archives, but noted that he did not go back and change every label, just the name of the file (there is also a note about it in the card catalogue). He also said that sometimes it takes a few years for new topics or

issues to develop and then solidify and that he has to watch them develop before it becomes clear how the changes should be manifested in his archives.

The situation I observed in Vancouver is not much different than what I have observed at other LGBT libraries and archives elsewhere in Canada and the United States, as some organizations are attempting to rectify heavily skewed past racial representational biases. The CLGA, for example, has for many years been criticized for being dominated by and primarily geared toward white, older, gay men; however, there are now efforts within the organization to try to rectify this through more diverse programming, such as the 2014 exhibition entitled “Imaging Home: Resistance, Migration and Contradiction.”⁹ Whether or not these efforts at the CLGA are an effective or appropriate corrective to the issue of racial representation falls beyond the scope of my dissertation. At the LGBT libraries and archives I studied in Vancouver, however, it is notable that these spaces and scenes remained almost entirely white in terms of their founders, managers and occupants, which suggests that at these organizations the imagined patron is always-already white.

I was not altogether surprised that, in Vancouver, LGBT libraries and archives were white-dominated spaces. The attempts made by some LGBT libraries and archives elsewhere to foster more racial diversity, such as at the CLGA, are arguably belated reactions to a long-running conflict pertaining to racial inclusivity in these spaces, communities and histories. The case of the LHA is perhaps the most visible example of this tension, which is best encapsulated by Cheryl Dunye’s 1996 film, *The Watermelon*

⁹ This kind of critique includes my previous work on how the CLGA’s newsletter historically depicted a distinctly white conceptualization of gay Canadian history (Cooper, 2015).

Woman, which follows a young black woman as she tries to make a movie about a black actress from the 1930s. The film features an unflattering depiction of an excursion to a disorganized, exclusively white-staffed lesbian archives to find materials—most likely a reference to the LHA. As Sheffield (2015) highlights, scholars have explored the meaning and significance of this scene as an interrogation of the whiteness of lesbian archives and lesbian activism more broadly (p. 186-188; see also, for example, Cvetkovich, 2002; 2008; Foote, 2007; Sheffield 2014). As Sheffield (2014) also documents, those deeply involved with the LHA maintain that the film misrepresents the centrality of racial inclusion to the organization's mandate, particularly through the figure of Mabel Hampton, a black woman who had a longstanding relationship with archives founder Joan Nestle and lived at the archives when it was located in Nestle's apartment (p. 162-165, 186-188).

White dominance in LGBT archives and libraries demonstrates how these organizations share similar issues with their mainstream institutional counterparts for several reasons. For example, there are the privileges associated with being able to participate in information-based work that offers low to no pay in professional and volunteer settings. The libraries and archives professions have historically been white dominated, in part, because the profession is low paid relative to its graduate-level educational requirements. This presents a major barrier to entry for low-income folks, a group which includes a higher proportion of people of colour (Vinopal, 2016). It is also important to recognize the relationship between information organizations and historical subjugation, that is, recognizing the deep historical links between information collection and colonization which continues to impact these organizations today. As argued by

numerous historians of colonialism, the solution is not simply inclusion, but also rights to self-determination and autonomy (see, for example, Metoyer & Doyle, 2015; Stoler, 2010).

In response to the ongoing white-centrism in LGBT archives and libraries and in the wider study of history, LGBT and queer people of colour have created their own spaces and practices to assert the validity of their information and heritage. There is a growing number of archives and historical projects in the US focused on people of colour including the Black Gay and Lesbian Archive, the Latino GLBT History Project and Mobile Homecoming. There is also a rich, wider literature that interrogates the inherent whiteness and colonial, Western-centric underpinnings of archival institutions and asserts the validity of informational activities and organizational entities deployed by those historically subjugated by such institutions. For example, the work emanating from performance theory challenges notions of evidencing and documentation that rely on text (Muñoz, 1999; D. Taylor, 2003). Also, the semantic shift that metaphorically declares a phenomenon “an archives” in contrast to “actually existing archives” was discussed in Chapter 1 as rooted in feminist post-colonial theory that articulates the agency of non-Western colonized subjects. For example, in *Dwelling in the Archive*, Antoinette Burton (2003) suggests that 20th century Indian women’s narratives about home not only demonstrate how “home” serves as an archives but also how “discourse and reality creates a vast interdependent archive where contests over colonial domination can be discerned and historicized” (p. 6). Therefore, considering that people of colour continue to experience marginalization in conventional LGBT libraries and archives and that their interventions are largely located outside of these spaces, it is not surprising that I

encountered a preponderance for the white subject in the organizations included in this study.

The Future is Now

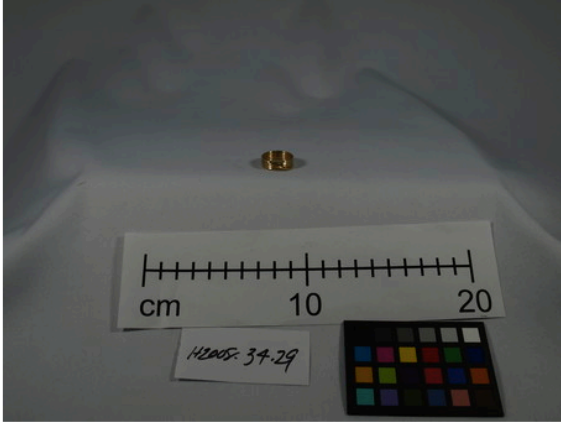
The previous sections explored how LGBT libraries and archives currently envision their patrons and wider membership in terms of personal identifiers pertaining to gender, sexuality, and race. It is also important to acknowledge that conceptualizations of patronage stretch across time because these conceptualizations reflect assumptions made about how communities were, are, and will be defined and delimited, particularly in the wake of greater visibility and possibly even assimilation. Returning to Ken's remarks cited in the introduction to this chapter, for example, Ken sees his materials being relevant in the more distant future, when visible gay culture has entirely disappeared. He explains:

My vision is this material really won't be valuable for 100 years even though it will be available to the public before then. So I envision what is common today...[and] I try to have in the back of my mind, what will be unique in 100 years that will reflect my life, and clothes are important in telling who the individual is.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Ken sees the collection as his legacy in lieu of biological reproduction, which will enable him to be remembered far into the future and by many more people than if he had continued his family line. He proclaims, "I won't have a family, children...this will be my legacy 100 years from now when people are doing research."

Crucially, Ken’s statements also explore who he thinks will be thinking of him in the future. For him, it is researchers and not specifically members of whatever the LGBT community may become. He further explained his choice to include the rings that he exchanged in the 1970s with his partner: “now...people are having families and having children, but it hasn’t always been like that and prior to 1960 I can’t imagine any gay men wearing a wedding ring, so that’s how I choose which artifacts are included in the collection.” The Museum of Vancouver’s catalog, openMOV, includes the rings that were exchanged during that ceremony (see Figure 39) and the following “artifact history” accompanies the artifacts:

Ken Brock wore this ring during his union with Mel McElree; See Ken Brock's journal for July 15, 2006...this is part of the first installment of a collection of personal items selected by Ken Brock to document his life as a gay man during the years between 1960s and the present.



MOV museum of vancouver

openMOV

Keyword... Search Advanced Search ▾

← Back to results list

H2008.34.29 - Ken Brock's ring shared with Mel McElree 2006

Catalogue Number
H2008.34.29

Object Name
ring

Use Country
Canada

Use Province / Territory
B.C.

Use Municipality
Vancouver

Dates/Period
2000s

Ordering Information

Image Ordering | Image Terms & Conditions | Image Fees | Other Access

Figure 39. Ken Brock’s ring, openMOV catalogue.

Ken's statements demonstrate that he perceives that LGBT culture is becoming indistinct because of the homonormative privileges that are increasingly bestowed on LGBT people, such as marriage and the opportunity to create and raise families, but also that the historical items he presents from his life should speak to this homonormative turn. Through his artifacts, Ken is presenting himself as a point of origin, distinctly placed between the present and an earlier time (roughly before 1960), when, as he states, "gay people...were closeted, they mixed in because they were forced to mix in." Ken positions himself as being from a time of unprecedented gay visibility, which can be differentiated from the future, in which he perceives that gay visibility will be replaced by assimilation.

While Ken sees his collection as being of greatest relevance to researchers in the distant future, the MOV already sees the value of his artifacts. He explained to me, "I am surprised that the museum has started using my stuff. I thought this would be something of interest 100 years from now [but] they said they would use my stuff in exhibits; they are already saying it's valuable to show." Ken's artifacts were shown by the MOV as part of the 2013 Sex Talk in the City exhibition, which was discussed in Chapter 3, and as part of the 2011 "Five Things" exhibition (see Figure 40), a regular programming feature in which a person with a unique vantage point on Vancouver is invited to select five items from the permanent collection. In 2011, gay-identified radio host Bill Richardson selected Ken Brock's Mardi Gras mask as one of his "Five Things," and explained his choice as follows:

Everything about it speaks of roguishness and party-time and exuberance: the stuff of Mardi Gras, and certainly the stuff of gay party culture, once upon a time. Perhaps it still is, for the young and/or the stubborn...As a mask, it also speaks to questions of identity and concealment; it's a symbol of what, just a very few years ago, was a requirement for survival but that, thanks to the heroic action of first a few, and then of many, is something that can find a place of rest, in a case, in a museum.

Bill's statement, when read in conjunction with Ken's, reflects the slippage and complexity behind the trope of invisibility and visibility in LGBT culture: for Ken, his artifacts are of a highly visible era that is increasingly being replaced by LGBT mainstreaming and assimilation. For Bill, the artifacts are representative of a time of LGBT repression, which he equates with hiding but that has now been replaced by recognition, and, subsequently, increased visibility. For both Bill and Ken, as older, white, gay-identified men who have experienced increasing privilege and recognition in their lifetimes, the items and the survival strategies they represent can finally rest and be relegated to the past.



Figure 40. Ken Brock's Mardi Gras mask, Museum of Vancouver exhibition, 2011, as featured by Bill Richardson (photo unaccredited).

When Ken and others argue that distinct forms of lesbian and gay culture are disappearing, therefore, what they mean is that some 20th century cultural values, objects, beliefs and practices are moving out of circulation. Their lamentations for a lost past reflect the fact that these older values and objects, while moving out of recognition, are still visible to us for the moment because neither the items nor those who were affiliated with them have yet to entirely disappear. New forms of non-normative sexual and gendered culture continue to emerge and they may take on names and practices that seem only distantly related to the LGBT expressions that came before such that we may not know about or remember these connections. When Bill suggests that the “masks” LGBT people once wore can now “rest,” he is speaking to a specific kind of mask—the masks that were tactics for him and other older, white, gay men of his generation, like Ken.

The disappearance of certain forms of lesbian and gay culture, therefore, does not mean that LGBT culture is altogether disappearing. Ron highlights how the

mainstreaming of LGBT issues and LGBT culture can be understood as expanding, both in terms of the materials generated and the notion of the LGBT community:

The amount of material that is being generated is so vastly greater than it was...there [are] entire departments of queer studies or gender studies in practically every university now and they're all generating materials and historians are going backward...there's [a] huge amount more government interest and support for programs for the queer community [and] reportage has grown vastly in terms of magazines and daily newspapers and [things] like that. Organizations have grown enormously so that there's gay poker clubs and gay volleyball leagues and all those services that are within the community have proliferated vastly. The number of people in the community was so much smaller and the communities were fewer [but] we now have an acronym that goes on for 15 letters at this point to try and describe the community.

An expanding and changing LGBT community has implications for how LGBT information is collected and to what ends. Ron maintains the position that the objective of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives has been, since its inception, to be a grassroots, gay-liberation-era organization and to accommodate and serve the LGBT community in its present and future iterations. As Ron continues on alone in this task he is confronted with an increasing volume of material. He explains: "I'm now retired six years and I'm spending more time than I was 10 years ago and a lot more time [on it than I was] 15 years ago, 20 years ago. The amount of material that is being generated is so vastly greater than it was."

Ron continues to collect these materials, despite the increasing volume and complexity of the task. He believes that the LGBT community should maintain their own collections because mainstream institutions are not to be trusted to collect on the community's behalf. Therefore, while Ron collects with the present LGBT community in mind, he is also thinking of the future; in contrast to Ken, however, Ron's conception of the future involves LGBT community members still engaged and interested in their own past, and not just researchers or the public-at-large. For example, when Ron engages in the collecting strategy of inserting obituaries into the archives and thereby "returning people to their homes," he is demonstrating his belief that it does not matter if the people inserted into the archives identified as LGBT or not because the archives is "important to us, the living."

Ron's investment in the LGBT community as a community not only implicates the present, but also the future. He explained to me that he "think[s] millennially"—that he thinks about what will be interesting to people, for example, in 50 years. He admitted that that "may seem like overkill" because "this information is not as useful at this moment." Like Ken, Ron perceives that present information will become more meaningful over time once the information is approached with some distance. However, Ron is not convinced that mainstream institutions are the best place for LGBT information collections for the future. He wonders, with institutional collections, "what's in it for the...community?" He worries that institutions might be unwilling to collect the content of non-famous LGBT people and therefore will not be able to recognize the value of their information and that of other LGBT community members.

Unlike Ken, Ron collects for the future because of his aforementioned distrust of mainstream institutions collecting on the LGBT community's behalf. For example, one day, Ron and I perused the online catalogue of the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria, and I asked Ron if he felt less of a need to collect transgender materials now that this had become a part of the mandate of Archives and Special Collections at the University of Victoria. His two-fold answer gestures to the insecurity of any given archives and institutional archives in particular. First, Ron believes it is good practice for multiple archives to concurrently collect on the same topic because this will lead to a more complete and secure historical record. Second, he considers the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives to be a long-term project, but he is not sure about how long other archives projects, including the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria, will persist, since he has seen other LGBT-history-oriented projects come and go.

Ron's unwillingness to trust the longevity of other archives projects, especially those located in institutional settings, may sound ironic considering the seemingly precarious nature of the BC Gay Lesbian Archives. Yet, for Ron, institutional affiliation appears to be a far more precarious situation than the fact that the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives is located in his home and run exclusively by him, particularly because he cannot trust how long any given institution will be interested in LGBT materials. While Ken assumes that LGBT history will continue to be interesting to mainstream society 100 years from now, Ron is not convinced. Ron thinks that while LGBT and queer issues are currently popular within the academy, this will not always be the case, and once these issues are no longer popular institutions will no longer pay due attention to their LGBT and queer collections. He warned me that "we" won't be the focus for very much

longer,” that “we will vanish if we leave this to others” and that “we must control the narrative.” Ron sees LGBT culture at risk of vanishing in the future, if it is not attended to by LGBT community members, an opinion that is diametrically opposed to that of Ken, who sees LGBT culture as in need of preservation by mainstream institutions because this culture has already been subsumed by the mainstream and therefore rendered unnoticeable through assimilation.

Conclusion

The range, complexity and gaps in the assumptions made about patrons by creators of LGBT libraries and archives by those who create them in both the present and the future are reflective of ongoing transitions in the concept of LGBT community and its relationship to the community-at-large. In terms of representation within the LGBT community, the creators of LGBT libraries and archives attend to evolving issues of diversity within the spectrum of gender and sexual LGBT identities while neglecting the ongoing pervasiveness of whiteness in their organizations’ cultures. As such, the creators of LGBT libraries and archives conform to pre-existing library and archival structures, which are also white-dominant institutions.

The patron as imagined by the private, individual creators and curators of LGBT libraries and archives has long-lasting effects on the public legacies of these identities and histories. Organizations that conform to the earlier models of LGBT libraries and archives created under the auspices of gay and lesbian activism place LGBT community in opposition to the mainstream and assert the necessity of organizations that privilege the needs of LGBT-identified patrons in both the present and the future. This organizational model increasingly co-exists with others that seek to place LGBT

information in more mainstream institutional spheres, which reflects the increasing visibility and relevance of LGBT people and subject matter to those spheres. The patron of LGBT information now is no longer perceived as necessarily and primarily interested because the information bolsters a sense of identity or community, but rather, in the case of the academic, to bolster a professional career that may or may not be informed, and certainly not exclusively so, by their gender or sexuality. And, in the most extreme conceptualization, the patron of LGBT information is now also envisioned as someone from the future, who exists at a great temporal distance from our own when the concept of LGBT community has been rendered culturally illegible.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

On January 22, 2016, the Digital Transgender Archive website went live (see Figure 41). Developed by professor K. J. Rawson and based, like Rawson, at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, the archives does not collect individual materials but rather connects seekers of trans information to other archives by “virtually merg[ing] disparate archival collections, digital materials, and independent projects with a single search engine.” In doing so, the archives seeks to “digitally localiz[e] a wide range of trans-related materials” and “expand access to trans history for academics and independent researchers alike in order to foster education and dialog concerning trans history” (n.d.). The Digital Transgender Archives’ mandate is reflective of an ongoing trend in archives: developing tools for archival description that facilitate new discovery points for records and collections beyond finding aides such as digital catalogue records and linked data technologies (Gracy, 2014, p. 240). The Digital Transgender Archives is connected to at least three of the organizations that surfaced in this dissertation in that the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria, the CLGA and the SMA are listed among its 20 partner institutions and projects. The Digital Transgender Archives’ mandate also resonates with the aims of the Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony (ALOT), another organization included in this study, which seeks to work in collaboration with other archives in order to make lesbian oral testimony available online through open access, including access to collections not created or held by the archives. As Elise Chenier (2015), founder and director of ALOT, states, “rather than compete with existing archives, ALOT strives to assist them” and therefore the goal of ALOT “is to build a community, not an institution” (p. 130). Similar to the Digital Transgender

Archives, ALOT is focused on using digital technologies to transcend some of the physical barriers associated with accessing information, both in terms of accessing collections online and fostering connections between collections.

The Digital Transgender Archives' mandate to digitally assemble various transgender archival collections and ALOT's mandate to help other archives make information available online reflect post-modern understandings of information organizing that recognize that individual information collections are inherently incomplete. What we are only at the beginning of understanding, however, is what implications this increased interest in linkages might have for various individual collections. Not only must we contend with the fact that digital assemblages are also always ultimately incomplete, we must also acknowledge that an emphasis on digital spheres of access has implications for the ongoing viability for non-digital information environments.

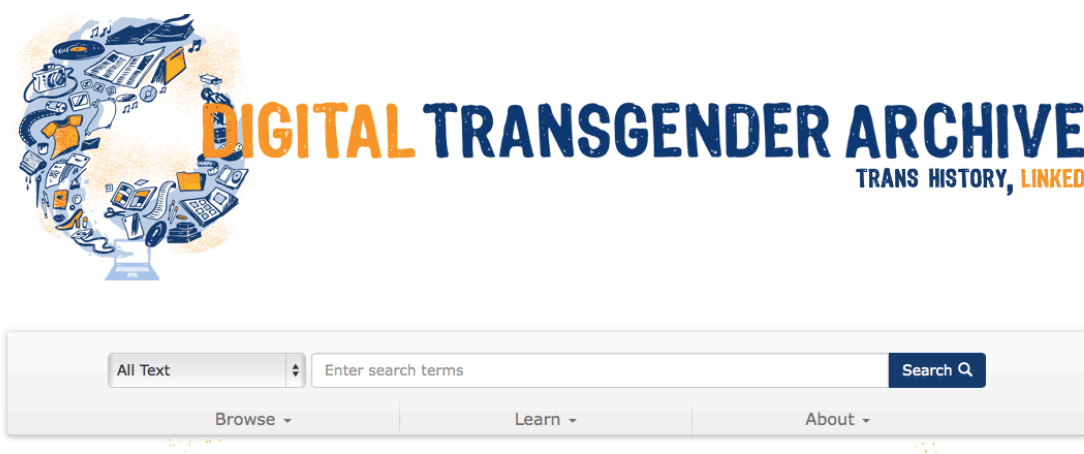


Figure 41. Search engine, The Digital Transgender Archive.

While the greatest debates on the import and legacy of LGBT and queer archives have arguably focused on the dynamic between grassroots organizations and their institutionally located counterparts, the spaces these organizations occupy is inherently

connected to and therefore as significant as the kinds of organizational frameworks they employ. On one level, Kate Eichhorn's (2013, p.156) argument that grassroots and institutional LGBT and queer information organizations can exist productively in tandem and in collaboration seems to have come to pass at the Digital Transgender Archives, which lists a mix of grassroots and more institutionalized organizations as partners and therefore seemingly brings together this collaboration for mutually beneficial aims. Similarly, ALOT "supports rather than usurps the critical role archives play" by using the archives' access to digital resources to help other archives make their collections available online (Chenier, 2015, p.130).

Yet, on another level, it can be argued that, as institutional players increasingly dominate the LGBT information organizational landscape because they have better access to digital resources that in turn enable patrons to transcend geographic barriers to information and research, there is an unequal dynamic between the organizations that participate in digital collaborations and those that do not. The opportunity to become digitally localized can be potentially construed as a marker of normativity, institutional sanction and information organizational privilege, which, as the findings of this dissertation suggests, is not universally accessible or desirable to all LGBT information organizations. "With institutional support and federal funding in hand, ALOT is taking steps" (Chenier, 2015, p.132) that neither the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives nor the STAG Library are or were interested in taking. While organizations like ALOT and the Digital Transgender Archives may not be explicitly geared towards "institution building," it is important to acknowledge that these organizations are nevertheless already connected to higher education institutions. Recall that I could not do much fieldwork at

ALOT because its’ “only” physical location was an office space in Simon Fraser University’s Archives and Special Collections, a physical space that I could not gain much access to.

There remains an ambivalent relationship between LGBT information in the digital realm and the activist legacies associated with LGBT information collection historically. Chenier (2015) acknowledges this ambivalence when discussing the ethical challenges at the heart of her archives, which have an open-access, non-proprietary mandate for making lesbian oral testimony available online. This mandate is reflective of the historical impetus for creating lesbian oral testimony, a political act to make visible the experiences of those previously silenced and persecuted for their gender and sexuality. These political motivations towards openness and visibility, however, must be tempered with the ethical issues associated with making testimonies available in a sphere that the speakers never envisioned or consented to. This leads Chenier (2015) to not only suggest specific and practical best practices but also to conclude that “as collections shift to online environments, the politics of the personal must be rethought anew” (p. 139).

This dissertation also wrestles with the politics of the personal and the public in the context of who collects, organizes and disseminates LGBT information. The creators/caretakers of the organizations featured in this dissertation work independently but also claim to be doing work that is beneficial to wider communities, which challenges neat divisions between personal and public motivations for LGBT information collection. Furthermore, while LGBT information creation, organization and dissemination were historically underfunded and under-recognized endeavours associated with and constituting a form of activism, this dissertation highlights the political implications for

some of this work shifting to individuals with institutional support and federal funding in hand. As Christina B. Hanhardt reminds us, “the idealization of recovery in LGBT social movements and archival projects functions not only as a bringing into visibility but also as a normalizing aspiration” (as cited in Arondekar et al., 2015, p. 230).

The politics of LGBT information organizing is associated with the relationship to that organizing and the concept of queer archives. Ann Cvetkovich observes that queer archives is now a “movement with tremendous vitality” (as cited in Arondekar et al., 2015, p. 219). As part of that movement, Cvetkovich’s (2003) warning to not forget earlier queer information collection strategies as more LGBT collections are created in conjunction with institutions resonates deeply with this study (p. 246). At a time when much movement in LGBT information organization is focused on “digitally localizing” collections through grant-funded academic outputs, this dissertation has demonstrated that organizations and projects that emphasize local geography and public space continue to exist, persist and offer alternatives to the information organizational status quo, including what kinds of information can be gathered, what kinds of spaces can be occupied, and how and what information should be collected. As such, my ethnographic approach to study a loose grouping of information organizations in the same geographic area offered, in part, a mechanism to record, rethink and remember non-normative information organizational strategies that seek to carve out physical locales and privilege locality, implemented most notably at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the STAG Library.

This study is not simply constitutive of an impulse to remember past practices but rather aims to consider disparate and proliferating manifestations of what constitutes an

LGBT information organization at a moment of dynamic transition. I provided two thematic structures for exploring this moment of transition. The first was a structure where each findings chapter was organized around meta-themes relevant to information organizational activity: location, collection content, labour, and patronage. The second tactic was to tease out a theme that cut across the findings chapters, namely, the ongoing oscillation between what constitutes private and personal information organizing in LGBT contexts in relation to the public or publics.

Chapter 2, “Semi-Public Home Libraries and Archives,” explored the significance of the spaces that LGBT libraries and archives occupy. It focused on two organizations, the STAG Library and the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives, which use private, home-based locations to interrogate the delineations between public and private space and the information services that can be offered therein. Chapter 3, “Constructing the Self through Personal Collection,” examined Ken Brock’s collection at the MOV to consider how personal information collecting practices intersect with increasing public interest in making LGBT collections available more widely via cultural heritage institutions. Also, the chapter compared Ken’s practices to Ron’s work at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives to highlight how clear separations between “personal,” “objective” and the “wider collective” break down in the context of LGBT information collection. Chapter 4, “The Techniques and Technologies of LGBT Information Organization and Dissemination,” contrasted the analogue approaches of the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the now-defunct STAG Library to the increasingly digital approaches at many other LGBT libraries and archives. The chapter highlighted the personal implications of information-based labour practices that seek to widen public access to information and disrupt

hegemonic narratives of progress associated with the adoption of digital technologies. Chapter 5, “The Imagined Patron,” focused on how LGBT libraries and archives and their respective founders and caretakers define the relationship between their organizations, their patrons, LGBT communities and the public-at-large. The chapter examined how these organizations conceptualize their patrons in terms of gender, sexuality, race, and relationship to the mainstream public in order to demonstrate how these conceptualizations reflect ongoing transitions in the concept of LGBT community more widely.

At the same time that grassroots LGBT information organizations persist, emerge, and dissipate, others are staking claims for LGBT information organizing within the mainstream cultural institutional sphere. This dissertation discussed who can make those claims, and argued that these claims are not exclusively being made by academics and professional information workers. For example, Ken, a retired social worker with idiosyncratic collecting practices and a sense of personal importance, has become highly legible in mainstream environments that are characterized by an eagerness to bolster stories of “exceptional LGBT lives” by making LGBT holdings available to the wider public. On the surface, the story of Ken’s institutional recognition within the MOV and the City of Vancouver Archives may seem removed from the story of grassroots LGBT organizations, like the work of Ron Dutton at the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives. Yet, they are similar stories of two retired, older, white gay-identified men, working on highly personal collections, but with significantly different outcomes equally possible in this transitional moment for LGBT information collecting.

The re-occurring theme of the personal in this study—including the intersection of the personal with the individual and the idiosyncratic—contrasts with prior research that emphasizes the relationship between LGBT information organizations and lesbian and gay social movements (Sheffield, 2015; Wakimoto, Bruce, & Patridge, 2013). As Aaron Devor and Nicholas Matte (2004) argue, however, the roles of some key individuals are crucial to the histories of LGBT information activism and the relationship between LGBT information organizing and LGBT movements. Deborah Gould's (2009) work on the AIDS movement also highlights how periods of activism can take affective turns that intimately connect personal feelings to political action. A. Finn Enke's (2007) work on how activities and locations that are often excluded from narratives of feminist activism, such as softball games and coffee houses, nonetheless constitute activism; this reminds us that the work of social movements can operate on smaller, intimate and even individual scales.

Yet, even Enke's smaller-scale approach hinges on the presence of collective activity, even if it is more loosely organized and shorter lasting. This dissertation demonstrates that the relationship between LGBT information organizations and the social movements from which they emerged is complex and tenuous. With the proliferation of LGBT information organizations coupled with the evolution of the LGBT movement and the mainstreaming of some LGBT lives, the relationship between LGBT information organizing and collective LGBT social movements is not necessarily direct and in some cases may not even exist at all.

Throughout this dissertation, some of the creators of the collections and organizations interviewed continue to invoke concepts of “public” and “community” but

their work is not necessarily connected in formal ways to organized LGBT activism and in some cases represents subjective assumptions about what LGBT communities are and should be as opposed to statements based on formal research and/or data about those communities. The BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the STAG Library challenge us to consider how the work of individuals operating almost exclusively on their own can relate to the larger community and its collective movements. The work of Ron Dutton and Ken Brock, respectively, force us to consider the ambiguity between the personal and public benefits of LGBT information organizing in relation to “marginal” and “normative” communities. Therefore, we cannot speak of LGBT information organizing assuming there is only one particular form of association with LGBT and queer social movements.

Taken together, the meta-themes of informational activities and the shaping and re-shaping of LGBT publics in relation to the larger public converge around the issue of what constitutes LGBT information organizational practice, and whether and how this practice relates to the concept of a queer information organizational practice. As discussed in this study, the literature on this topic can be characterized by ongoing slippages and difficulties in the labeling of information organizational practices as LGBT and/or queer. My research also faced challenges in this regard and ultimately offers an imperfect but necessary solution to LGBT- and queer-related terminological labeling by relying primarily on “LGBT libraries and archives” to describe the organizations included in the study. This phenomenon of difficulty and slippage in the terms and discourses of sexual identity in part mirrors debates in LGBT and queer studies more broadly and can be traced back to the inception of queer theory.

This dissertation points to a moment where slippage continues to occur between “LGBT” and “queer” information organizations and distinctions are sometimes still difficult to make. While LGBT information is becoming an increasing interest in mainstream institutional contexts, this dissertation demonstrates that alternative grassroots organizations continue to exist and challenge normative institutional information organizations. However, it is just as likely, if not more likely, for non-LGBT information organizations to be queer than for information organizing that occurs in an LGBT context to be queer. For example, the STAG Library did not have an LGBT-specific mandate but collected LGBT and queer materials and operated with an underlying queer orientation to library services by operating out of a private home.

This dissertation also demonstrates that queer information organizing persists in LGBT information organizational contexts, but not in ways necessarily anticipated by the existing literature on the topic. The findings on the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives and the STAG Library grapple with the precarity and ephemerality of conducting information activity outside of mainstream cultural institutions and the non-normative impulse to persist in these activities despite a lack of mainstream support. The work of Ken Brock reveals how similar impulses can be taken in an entirely different direction: where highly idiosyncratic collection practices are coupled with a desire to transcend heteronormative notions of reproduction and family legacy, this can still lead to the creation of information collections in mainstream cultural spheres.

The divide between what constitutes normative and non-normative information collection and organizational practice is neither simple nor stable, but, like the concept of queer, is ever-shifting and transmutable. This dissertation illustrates how the concepts

and contexts of LGBT life and information are also in flux, and, by extension, how our assumptions of LGBT individuals, communities and information intertwine and change. This dissertation has asserted the importance of constantly interrogating how the activities associated with LGBT information organizing relate to the realities and norms of LGBT life—and sometimes to queer life—as well as to the realities and norms of information organizing and information more broadly.

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APPENDIX A: LHA INTERNSHIP ADVERTISEMENT

“Lesbian Herstory Archives Internships” as advertised through the “History of Sexuality” listserv on September 21, 2012.

The Lesbian Herstory Archives<<http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org>> (located in Park Slope, Brooklyn, NYC) is looking for graduate and undergraduate students who are interested in library and/or archives with a demonstrated interest in Lesbian Studies, History and Activism. We have a number of exciting projects for the upcoming academic year including the digitization of our newsprint collection, ongoing digitization of our audio collection, processing the video oral histories of the Daughter's of Bilitis, a retrospective of Dyke Action Machine, planning for our annual Valentines Day fundraiser and so much more. We'd love to have you come join the fun.

What We're Offering

- * Interns will have the opportunity for practical application of archives and library skills.
- * Course credit and letters of recommendation will be provided upon request.
- * Interns will also receive the opportunity for workshops and classes outside of LHA
- * Interns will be supervised by professional librarians and other archives staff

Requirements

- * Available for a minimum of 10 hours per week.
- * 1 year of experience working in a Library/Archive or completion of core M.L.S. courses
- * Familiarity with cataloging and archival processing
- * Skilled in the use of MS Office and/or Google Docs and regular office equipment

COLLECTION AREAS

Periodicals - 2 Spaces

Intern will process incoming newspapers, newsletters, journals and magazines, update cataloging records and prepare collections for digitization where necessary.

Special Collections & Reference - 2 Spaces

Interns will process collections and create electronic finding aids, staff the reference desk and provide researcher assistance.

Photographic Digital Imaging - 2 Spaces

Interns will assist with the processing digitization and cataloging photographs and graphics.

Special Preference: Proficiency with Content DM and/or Photoshop

Video Working Group - 2 Spaces

Interns will process and catalog film /videos including relabeling and shifting collections.

Audio Digitization - 2 Spaces

Interns will assist with the cataloging, digitization, indexing and re-housing of audio tapes.

OPAC Working Group - 2 Spaces

Interns will perform database cleanup in a variety of collections and contribute to the design, testing and launch of the LHA's new OPAC.

Programming Non-Profit Management and Development - 2 Spaces

Interns will have the opportunity to research and write grants, create fundraising campaigns, write press releases, plan events and get first-hand experience in non-profit management in an LGBT organization.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications accepted on a rolling basis. Please read the instructions below very carefully.

Candidates must submit a Cover Letter (indicating skills, experience, relevant interests/activities and availability) and Resume to lha_interns@earthlink.net<mailto:lha_interns@earthlink.net> Please include the word "Internship" and the area in which you wish to work in the subject line. All documents must be attached as a PDF.

NOTE: LHA cannot provide housing for interns. LHA will provide confirmation of internship acceptance for candidates who may need this documentation to accompany a grant or fellowship application.

LHEF, Inc, 484 14th Street, Brooklyn, 11215. Please, no phone calls.