CHAPTER 12

The Importance of Archives
Hearing Our Own Voices

Key Questions

1. Why is history important? Why is trans history important?
2. How do archival materials differ from other research sources?
3. Ephemera refers to printed materials like fliers, postcards, and announcements that are usually seen as useful only in the short term. Why is it important to keep various types of ephemera?
4. Why is it important to have archives that focus on specific topics or specific groups?

Chapter Overview

This concluding chapter is different from the other chapters in this textbook. It begins with my own voice and an example of a brief newspaper article that mentions my summer visit to my grandparents' farm in the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas. The chapter then offers examples of how we can use archival materials to uncover stories and histories. The chapter ends with a look at specific transgender archives and the importance of keeping trans history alive.

Introduction: A Small Local Notice

A brittle and yellowed clipping from the *Madison County Record,* the local newspaper serving rural northwestern Arkansas since 1879, notes that I visited my maternal grandparents for two weeks in July 1972. This short notice, just three sentences long, stated that I visit my grandparents annually and that I came from Oklahoma City. Aside from the fact that news may have been slow in northwestern Arkansas that week, what does this short article of "local interest" tell you about me as an eight-year-old staying with my grandparents in the Ozarks?

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The word *annual* tells readers that I visited the Ozarks every summer. Readers also learn that I came from Oklahoma City, so if you look at a map app, you can see that it was not a long trip—about 250 miles. The notice also identifies me as my grandparents' granddaughter, so the paper identified me as a girl (although that never felt quite right to me). My grandparents' names are in the notice, and so is mine, so you could go online and begin a family search. From a three-sentence newspaper clipping, you have the tools to learn quite a bit about my family and my background.

What other parts of my childhood story lie within this old newspaper notice? In other words, what other elements of my past are hinted at? It was July 1972. What was happening in the United States at that time? The Watergate scandal in Washington, D.C., had broken the previous month. The United States was still heavily involved in the Vietnam War. You might wonder if either of these national events affected my family. Were my grandparents and I, tucked away in the safety of those beautiful old hills, worried about my cousin who had been drafted and was in Vietnam? Conducting online research by searching my grandparents' names, you could find a genealogy that might lead you to other articles from the newspaper that covered the Madison County residents who were on active duty in the war. You could discover my cousin's name there (he had the same last name as my grandfather). Further research might show you that he survived to come home, get married, and have children. It will not tell you about his permanent disability or his body-wracking bouts of sickness from being sprayed with Agent Orange, a poisonous defoliant used in the jungles of Vietnam. It will not tell you about his posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or his sleeplessness because he feels he needs to keep watch and protect his family through the night.

Furthermore, my cousin's history does not tell you that I loved emulating my grandfather. I wore Big Smith overalls that were just like granddad's; I followed him and did chores with him all over the hills that made up their farm. He taught me to milk cows. My two favorites were Tiny (a funny name for a cow) and her daughter, Ginger, who was the only cow at the farm who still had her horns. He taught me that the best place to keep the watermelon we had just cut off the vine was in the large and near-freezing water cooler that held the milk cans until the dairy truck came to collect them. Nothing was more sweet than sitting outside and eating that cold fruit in the thick and heady Ozark summer evening air.

The article does not tell you that on hot afternoons I loved sitting in the cool musty cellar carved into the limestone hill behind the house, snapping green

beans with my grandmother. She taught me the art of canning fruits and vegetables. On really special days, when there was not an afternoon chore, she and I would sit in the living room with the fan on high as we played a board game. Her favorite was *Shakespeare,* in which you moved around the board gathering the Bard's quotes. For the most part, my grandmother read only the Bible, but Shakespeare was her guilty pleasure.

The newspaper clipping doesn't say how much I hated being stuffed into a scratchy dress to go to church on Sundays. I used to sit on that hard wooden pew, itchy and sweating, because the church was a former one-room schoolhouse without air conditioning or a fan. I would stare into the corner, fascinated at the spider building a web. And just as it kept getting hotter and hotter, the preacher seemed to get more warmed up to the topic of that day's sermon. The newspaper clipping doesn't tell you how I jumped into the bed of my grandfather's truck for the nine-mile ride over the dirt road home, catching dust and the breeze in anticipation of exchanging the dress for my T-shirt and overalls.

The article doesn't mention my sense of myself as different because I wanted to be just like my granddad, but everyone expected me to be like my grandmother. I loved them both, so why couldn't I emulate the best parts of each one of them?

These recollections and feelings are not something you can learn from a brief, old newspaper article. Those three sentences are a beginning, however, an opening into a past, if you are ready to ask questions and do some research.

Go Ahead, Get Dusty!

When was the last time you completed a research project? You may even be worried about one due soon. Do you conduct your research online? Do you go to the library, check out books, and research articles in the academic databases?

By way of an example, let's assume you will be researching the famous Mexican artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. You will find a lot of information online about their rocky relationship, their art, and their lives. If you go into a library and check out some books on them, you will probably find even more detailed information about their art and their relationship. Now, what happens if you have access to a library ***archive*** that has a collection of letters from Frida to Diego?

Imagine the difference between a published book of their letters (sorted and selected by an editor, and then typeset for the book) and actually holding (with a gloved hand) a letter from Frida to Diego. You are holding a piece of paper that

FIGURE 12.1 "Archives" by Cameron Rains. In the final image they created for this book, Cameron Rains has envisioned what an archival space that holds information about various people and events discussed in this book might look like.

Frida Kahlo once held. You can see where her pen made a heavier indentation and where she crossed one word out and wrote another. At the bottom of the letter, there is a lipstick kiss. Decades after her death, the red of the lipstick still looks bright and glossy on the paper, as though it was placed there yesterday.

What are some of the differences between a published book of the authors' letters and the letter you are holding? The published book provides more material and more information. And, if you do not read Spanish, then a book that includes translations will be easier to understand. Think beyond the information and consider how the two different sources *feel* to you. Archives are often about the combination of feeling and gathering information. A printed book's typeset version of the letter's content provides the same information as the handwritten letter. But when you hold the letter, Frida's small drawings in the margins and her lipstick kiss give you a sense of the love and playfulness she may have been feeling at the time. The archival letter provides more emotional depth; it might even make Frida Kahlo come more intensely to life for you.[1]

Dancing Archives?

The San Francisco–based Sean Dorsey Dance troupe (discussed in detail in Chapter 11) often uses historic archives as the raw material for dance projects. In the troupe's 2009 award-winning show, *Uncovered: The Diary Project,* a section entitled "Lou" was dedicated to the life of Louis Graydon Sullivan. Chapter 3

provides more information about Lou Sullivan and his tireless work on behalf of trans men, including his efforts to help get the Standards of Care (SOC) changed. He was also one of the first people to discuss the problems with assuming that a trans identity automatically meant a heterosexual orientation after transition. These biographical facts about Sullivan are important, but for Sean Dorsey it was more important to know how Lou Sullivan *felt* as a gay trans man in a world that told him no such thing existed. What were Lou's deepest feelings about himself? What were his desires and his dreams?

Dorsey had already looked at some of his own childhood diaries, in which he was attempting to work out ideas about his gender identity. The first part of *Uncovered,* "Lost/Found," combines parts of his diary entries with music and dance to portray his own coming-out process. From this deeply personal place of reading his own writing, Sean started to wonder what it would be like to read Lou Sullivan's diaries, if any existed. With some quick research, Sean discovered that the San Francisco GLBT Historical Society has Lou Sullivan's diaries. In fact, Lou Sullivan had bequeathed thirty journals from childhood into early adulthood *precisely* so that other people—but particularly trans people desperately looking for role models—could visit the archive, read his words, sit with his thoughts and feelings, and leave with a sense that they are not alone.

Sean Dorsey spent hours poring through Sullivan's journals, and as he did so, he began to imagine parts of the dance choreography. Lou Sullivan died in 1991 at the age of thirty-nine, but his words, his thoughts, and his feelings touched Sean Dorsey in 2008. The power of Lou Sullivan's diaries spoke to Sean Dorsey and his dance troupe. Beyond that, though, each and every night that Sean Dorsey Dance performed *Uncovered: The Diary Project* in sold-out venues around the United States and Canada, every person seeing that show also experienced the *archives* of Louis Graydon Sullivan's life. In the show, Lou was alive again, telling us his story.[2]

Don't Throw That Away!

Are you part of a student group at your college? Have you attended any events on campus? If you have gone to a dance performance, art show, or campus movie night, how did you find out about it? Or, if you joined a student group or are thinking about joining one, how did you find out about it? Although social media are an excellent means for reaching out to people, there are still plenty of good old-fashioned posters, postcards, and fliers up on campus billboards, lampposts, and kiosks. If you look at campus kiosks closely, you will

see the bones of thousands of staples (some of them rusty) from years of public posts. And what usually happens when an event is over? The notices come down and are thrown away.

Picture this: in 1987, at the University of Colorado, Boulder, colorful fliers were posted all over campus announcing a drag show at the campus venue, Quigley's. The entry fee was five dollars because the show was a fund-raiser for several different student groups. Why would someone keep a copy of this flier to look at thirty, forty, or even a hundred years later? Most of the fliers were taken down and discarded after the show. Some of the fliers were taken down before the show because people had written homophobic things on them. But what can this flier tell you about a student fund-raising event in 1987?

If you look at a list of the student groups that cosponsored and benefited from the show, you might see something interesting. The first group on the list was Gays and Friends (not terribly surprising for a drag show). The next group was the Lesbian Caucus. Now, you might be curious: Why was Gays and Friends different from the Lesbian Caucus? Weren't they all gay? Why were there two different groups in 1987, and there is one large group on campus now? Other sponsors of the show included the Black Student Alliance, MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), and a few other student groups focused on historically marginalized communities. Just from this flier you might infer that these different student groups, which represented different marginalized communities on the university campus, came together for a fund-raising event. And you would be right. In fact, this was the first event on which all these student groups worked together. This was an example of intersecting identities before that phrase was coined.

Not only did the event sell out (which many believed would never happen), but the collaboration between the sponsoring groups also created important working bonds between student groups that, despite representing marginalized parties, might not necessarily have considered supporting other groups.[3]

The Importance of Transgender Archives

The Louise Lawrence Transgender Archive (LLTA, figure 12.2) is in the process of being built. The LLTA is named in honor of the Northern California transgender pioneer Louise Lawrence, who began living full-time as a woman in 1942. Lawrence was responsible for publishing, along with Virginia Prince (another trans pioneer), one of the earliest underground and longest-running trans publications, *Transvestia,* beginning in 1952.[4]

FIGURE 12.2 Louise Lawrence Transgender Archive, logo created by Robyn Adams. The Louise Lawrence Transgender Archive opened in Vallejo, California, in 2018. The archive was founded by Ms. Bob Davis and is named after the trans pioneer Louise Lawrence.

For well over forty years, the founder of and collector for the archive, Ms. Bob Davis (see "Writings from the Community" in Chapter 8) has been painstakingly collecting newspaper clippings, underground trans magazines, historical photographs, and other pieces of ***ephemera***. The LLTA will be housed in a remodeled and climate-controlled building in her backyard in Vallejo, California. The archive Ms. Bob is building is a grassroots effort because she does not have a major institution (such as a university) supporting her efforts. Nonetheless, she is already hosting scholars who want to look through forty years' worth of trans materials that could have wound up in the garbage. Through grant support and community fund-raising, the LLTA is coming to life. The nearby GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco has also been supportive.

Another trans-specific archive is the University of Minnesota's Tretter Collection's Transgender Oral History Project, whose director is Andrea Jenkins; the University of Victoria, in British Columbia, Canada, holds the world's largest transgender archive. Dr. Aaron Devor is Chair in Transgender Studies and founder and academic director of the Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria.

What if you have no way of traveling to these archives and yet you want to be able to study trans history? First of all, these archives are increasing their

online presence. At this time, for example, you can go to the Transgender Oral History Project and read the transcripts of Jenkins's interviews, which are available in PDF format. There is also the Digital Transgender Archive, which is solely online and was created by K. J. Rawson, professor at the College of the Holy Cross. This ever-expanding archive offers links to trans materials from around the world. Finally, it is important to remember that any local public library, museum, or college or university library has archival material. Harrison Apple's writing at the end of this chapter discusses the local archive in Pittsburgh where they were able to find historic material on a local trans figure. Within these local museums and libraries, you, like Harrison, can find trans histories. It may take some digging, but trans people have always been in all communities everywhere in the world.

Why are transgender archives so important? Andrea Jenkins and Aaron Devor give their answers in "Writings from the Community" at the end of this chapter. For my answer, I would like to leave you with an *imagined* scenario. What if, somewhere in a dusty London attic, someone uncovered the diaries of a young doctor in training? He was looking forward to going abroad to work as a British army surgeon in South Africa. The diaries recount the hours of physical discomfort from binding his breasts and the oppressive heat and smells from the operating theater where he worked twelve-hour shifts with his mentor. He didn't dare faint for fear of his clothing being stripped off in an effort to revive him. He did not go out drinking with the other medical students because he always had to keep his guard up, and yet he knew he was as much a man as any of the other medical students. What would happen if diaries like these existed and found their way into a mainstream archive? In the best of all possible worlds, of course, the archive would have the integrity to respect Dr. James Miranda Barry as the man he was. (See Chapter 8 for Dr. Barry's full story.) In a transgender archive, we are assured that his modern-day community would embrace his history as a trans man. Imagine if Dr. Barry had kept a diary. Imagine what his life story could have done for someone like Lou Sullivan. Trans people have a long and rich history, and we owe it to future trans people to curate it well so that they do not feel as alone as Lou Sullivan did, or as Dr. James Barry must have.

WRITINGS FROM THE COMMUNITY

ANDREA JENKINS

The Transgender Oral History Project: Huge Undertaking

In 2017 Andrea Jenkins became the first African American transgender woman to be elected to the city council of a major city. She now proudly represents Ward 8 of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Andrea is an artist-activist and award-winning poet and writer. She has been awarded fellowships from the Bush Foundation, Intermedia Arts, and the Playwrights Center and has won writing and performance grants and scholarships from the Givens Foundation, Intermedia Arts, the Loft, the Napa Valley Writers Conference, and Pillsbury House Theater. Andrea is the co-curator of Queer Voices at Intermedia Arts (the longest-running series of its kind in the nation) and, in 2018, completed several years' worth of work collecting oral histories from hundreds of people in the upper Midwest transgender community as an oral historian in the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies.

Andrea is the author of three chapbooks of poems and a full-length book of poetry, The "T" Is NOT Silent: New and Selected Poems. *She has been published in several anthologies, including* Gender Outlaws Two: The Next Generation; When We Become Weavers: Queer Female Poets on the Midwestern Experience, *edited by Kate Lynn Hibbard;* The Naked I: Wide Open and The Naked I: Inside Out, *edited by 20% Theater; and most recently* Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Civil Rights: A Public Policy Agenda for Uniting a Divided America, *edited by Wallace Swan. She was also a contributor to the widely acclaimed anthology* Blues Vision, *edited by Alexs Pate, Pamela Fletcher, and J. Otis Powell! (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2015), as well as the anthology* A Good Time for the Truth, *edited Sun Yung Shin (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2016). To learn more about her, visit http://andreajenkins.webs.com.*

The Tretter Collection Transgender Oral History Project at the University of Minnesota

It has been an amazing time since the Transgender Oral History Project began in April 2015. It has been a tremendous learning experience for me. After spend-

ing the first three months setting up the project, attending workshops to learn the intricacies and ethics of developing an oral history project, recruiting and organizing a great advisory committee, researching and purchasing the appropriate equipment, and hiring a transcriptionist, I began to interview members of the trans and gender-nonconforming community in Minnesota and around the country. The Transgender Oral History Project has completed sixty-eight interviews across a wide variety of identities, ages, and ethnicities.

"Big Mama"

Our oldest interviewee so far is an eighty-three-year-old trans woman named Donna "Big Mama" Ewing. Her story is fascinating. Born on a farm in southern Minnesota, she states that she felt like and was treated as a little girl from the age of eighteen months. She asserts that she began working in the farm kitchen as early as five. She served food to the farmhands and other workers, and they all treated her like the little girl that she believed she was.

At nineteen she moved to the Twin Cities and began to truly express and embrace the woman she was. She later became one of the first people to access gender-confirmation surgery at the famed Program in Human Sexuality at the University of Minnesota. She worked for twenty-one years after her surgery as the self-described coat-check girl at the Gay 90s, a club in downtown Minneapolis. She was one of the first transgender persons that many members of the Twin Cities gay and lesbian community had ever met. She served as an ambassador for the community as someone who was able to successfully transition and create a new life for herself.

Her story reflects the type of compelling oral histories that I've been so honored and humbled to collect for this project. Some of the luminaries thus far include Kate Bornstein, Chrishaun "CeCe" McDonald, Roxanne Anderson, and Ignacio Rivera. While these may not be household names in the broader community, these are folks who have shaped the modern movement for transgender equality here in Minnesota and throughout the country through advocacy, writing, and the arts.

Why is this important? The project is critical to countering the negative narratives that are being espoused by mean-spirited politicians and others who wish to ban transgender folks from using the bathroom of their choice, as we have witnessed in North Carolina. This project is important because there were twelve trans people of color murdered in the United States in 2016 and twenty-four murdered in 2015. This project is important because the rates of trans suicide calls have doubled in 2016, and unemployment and homelessness rates continue to grow in trans communities throughout the country.

Beyond the amazing oral histories that I've been able to the collect, the project has provided me a platform to travel throughout Minnesota and the country

to discuss issues facing the community. I've been a panelist and keynote speaker in places like Augsburg College, Macalester College, Hamline University, State University of New York at Geneseo, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and a meeting of the Organization of American Historians in Providence, Rhode Island. I've also served as a contributor on multiple publications and events in many of those locations. I even attended and presented at the "Moving Trans History Forward" conference in Victoria, British Columbia, at the University of Victoria — home to the largest transgender historical archives in the world — with the local actress and participant in the Trans Oral History Project, Erica Fields.

These stories that I've been privileged to witness are fascinating in their everydayness but also inspiring in their messages of triumph over adversity. One participant stated, "The Trans Oral History Project humanizes and connects the transgender narrative through space and time in an unprecedented compilation of personal and collective stories. Growing up, I felt isolated because I did not see my trans identity reflected in the broader cultural discourse around gender. I wish I would have had a resource like this when I was younger. I am honored to contribute my story to the collection so that future generations of trans folks know that we have always been here, and we aren't going away."

AARON DEVOR, PHD

The World's Largest Transgender Archives: The Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria

Dr. Aaron Devor, FSSSS, FSTLHE, holds the world's only research chair in transgender studies and is the founder and academic director of the world's largest transgender archives, both at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. Studying and teaching about transgender topics for more than thirty years, he is the author of numerous frequently cited scholarly articles and the author of the widely acclaimed books FTM: Female-to-Male Transsexuals in Society *(1997, 2016); the Lambda Literary Awards finalist* The Transgender Archives: Foundations for the Future *(2014); and* Gender Blending: Confronting the Limits of Duality *(1989). He has delivered more than twenty keynote and plenary addresses to audiences around the world. He is a national award–winning teacher, an elected member of the International Academy of Sex Research, and an elected fellow of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, and he has been a member of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's (WPATH) Standards of Care committee since 1999. Dr. Devor is overseeing the standards' translations into world languages.*

The Transgender Archives

The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.

GEORGE ORWELL

Study the past if you would define the future.

CONFUCIUS

What Are the Transgender Archives and Why Are They Important?

Many of the things that people do also leave behind some kind of record. In some cases, it is only what resides in the memories of people who were there when something happened. Many times there are documents that record some version of what happened. These records may exist in computer files; on paper; embedded in DVDs, CDs, vinyl, film, or magnetic tape; as works of visual art; as poetry or music. The documentation for what has happened may be a kind of formal "official" version, or it may represent alternative views and experiences. When historians want to understand how something happened, they turn to records from the past and try to reconstruct as true a version as possible by using as many different sources as they can. The job of archives is to collect, organize, safely store, and make accessible records from the past so that people can know how we got to where we are today, which, in turn, can help us build a better future.

The Transgender Archives, held at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada (figure 12.3), are the world's largest collection of original materials documenting the work of transgender activists and researchers about trans, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit people. The collection is composed of thousands of books; hundreds of newsletter and magazine titles from eighteen countries on five continents; newspaper clippings files reaching back to the 1920s; hundreds of short books of trans fantasy fiction; activist organizational records; informational pamphlets; personal papers of trans, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit activists; historic court case records; audio recordings on magnetic tape, vinyl, and CDs; mass culture, specialty, bootleg, and conference videos on magnetic tape and DVDs; art and amateur photographs; erotica; original works of visual art; and ephemera including items such as T-shirts, matchbook covers, business cards, trophies, and plaques. The collection documents nearly 60 years of activism and traces more than 125 years of research. If you put all the books and bankers' boxes on one long shelf, it would stretch the length of one and a half football fields (approximately 533 linear feet or 162 linear meters).

FIGURE 12.3 "Do Not Destroy! This material is NOT junk": sticker, Transgender Archives, University of Victoria. The Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria is the largest trans archive in the world. This sticker is a reminder of the importance of ephemera in archival collections.

The University of Victoria is a large Canadian research-intensive, publicly funded university. It serves over 20,000 students, including a large component of graduate students, and has been repeatedly rated among the world's top 1 percent of universities by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. It is also located in a quiet, midsized city on the southernmost tip of a large island (larger than the state of Israel) off the west coast of Canada that is best known as a bucolic tourist destination—not the kind of place that one would immediately think of as a magnet for trans research and activism. When most people first hear of the Transgender Archives, they assume that they are small and limited to Canadian content. When they understand its size and scope, the first thing that that they generally say is "How did it end up there?"

The Beginnings of the Transgender Archives

The start of the Transgender Archives was not planned. One day I was having lunch with Rikki Swin, the founder of the Rikki Swin Institute (RSI) of Chicago, which had closed in 2004, and I asked her what the status of the RSI was. She told me she was contemplating relocating it to Victoria, and I somewhat impetuously asked her if she might consider donating it to the University of Victoria.

To my great pleasure and astonishment, she agreed to consider the idea. I immediately contacted the university librarian to find out if UVic Libraries actually wanted the collection that I had already solicited. After learning more about the RSI and its archival collections, the university librarian was completely in support, and the entire institute ended up coming to the University of Victoria as a gift.

The next major donation came about as a result of the research work I had then been doing for over a decade on the life of the activist, philanthropist, and trans man Reed Erickson (1917–1992), founder and funder of the Erickson Educational Foundation (1964–1984). Over the years, I had become friends with his daughter. When she had decided that it was time to donate his papers to an archive, she chose the University of Victoria. Up until this point, none of us thought of ourselves as amassing a transgender archive. However, with the acquisition of the Reed Erickson papers, we realized that we then had two large and historically significant trans collections. We started to think that we were developing a transgender archive as we added a few small collections to what we already had. Near the end of 2011, we officially launched the Transgender Archives.

Word got out through our publicity and networking efforts. As it did, more small and medium-sized collections were donated to the Transgender Archives. Whenever I was in contact with people whom I knew from working with trans activists and researchers, I would ask them about their plans for their papers. Many of them held cherished collections going back decades. They understood that they and their colleagues had been doing activist and research work of historical importance that needed to be recorded and preserved. Many of the items in their collections often also reminded them of times when such things acted as lifelines for trans people during a period when the isolation and loneliness of being trans was profound. These were not collections that would be parted with lightly, both because of their personal significance and because of the moral obligations that the collectors felt to past and future generations of trans, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit people.

However, many of the people with whom I spoke were old enough that they were considering their mortality, or simply downsizing. We talked about ensuring that their collections did not end up in the trash because of inattention or neglect. At the same time, they knew that most trans community organizations were fragile and transitory. Many people holding collections were wary that community groups might not have the resources to safely preserve their documents over the long term. The University of Victoria offered them an ideal home for their collections: a publicly funded and publicly accessible institution with high-quality facilities, an exceptionally strong institutional commitment to trans studies, and the prospect of long-term stability. The Transgender Archives continue to grow steadily.

What the Transgender Archives Do for Trans People

First and foremost, the Transgender Archives preserve raw materials from which the history of trans activism and research may be written. Brave people have been working for over one hundred years to increase social understanding, acceptance, and integration for gender-variant people. All people today and in the future—trans, cis, nonbinary—need to know and appreciate the work done by these pioneers. The original records of their work need to be safely held and made available to the public at no cost to users. The Transgender Archives do this and more.

Every year, high school, college, and undergraduate university students from the region around the University of Victoria make use of the Transgender Archives as part of the courses that they take and the papers that they write. Every year, masters and doctoral students from around the world travel to the Transgender Archives to do research for research papers, theses, and dissertations on topics as diverse as science policy, political theory, pop music performance, pulp fiction, queer archives, and prison policy. Many professors and librarians also visit us. Some of the areas that they have been researching include Japanese trans publications, trans culture before the Internet, the history of trans rights for adults and children, and how to build a queer archive. Other people come to the Transgender Archives just because they want to know more about history, or because they want to learn how to do something similar in their location, or they come to borrow some things to show as part of an exhibition back home.

Every two years, the Transgender Archives and the Chair in Transgender Studies sponsor Moving Trans History Forward conferences. They span several days and attract hundreds of people, teens to octogenarians, from all across Canada and the United States, as well as from Latin America, Europe, and Asia. The conferences are designed to be of interest to a mix of students, academics, and community-based people, a place where people from the entire spectrum of trans life—transsexual, transgender, nonbinary, drag, cross-dresser, families, and cis allies—can interact in a positive and respectful environment. We also make many speeches and arts events open to the public for free. After the conferences, we post online as much of the proceedings as we can.

The Transgender Archives and the Chair in Transgender Studies also work to communicate with the interested public through a variety of means. We run a Facebook page with a stream of relevant news and information about modern and historical trans life. We also run a Twitter feed about our collections and about general trans events and activities. Almost every day we post new images from the Transgender Archives to our Instagram account. Our YouTube channel runs videos from the Moving Trans History Forward conferences and our other

events. You can also download for free our Lambda Award finalist book, *The Transgender Archives: Foundations for the Future*.

The Future

The Transgender Archives will continue to grow and serve. As our collections grow, we hope to fill some of the gaps in what we now hold. The materials in our archives have come to us as gifts from private collectors. Private collections reflect certain realities about their collectors. To amass a significant collection of historical materials, one must have enough money to purchase items, enough space to store them, and enough housing stability to preserve them. Furthermore, people collect what interests them and what is available to them. In the trans world, as in much of the rest of society, this means that what has been created in the first place, and what has subsequently been collected, largely reflects the experiences of middle-class white people assigned as males at birth. Thus, one of our projects is to acquire holdings that better reflect the diversity of trans, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit lives.

Although the Transgender Archives are completely free and open to the public, we recognize that few of the millions of people who might want to visit us will be able to do so. Therefore, we will continue the work already begun, both in partnership with the Digital Transgender Archive and on our own, to make larger portions of the Transgender Archives available online for free public access. Fund-raising is also ongoing to provide subsidies to assist visitors with travel expenses.

As the largest collection of transgender archival materials in the world, the Transgender Archives are a unique and invaluably rich resource from which to learn about the complexity of human gender variation. Our collections bear witness to the courage, vision, and perseverance of our elders and forebears. They had the wisdom to see that there was much important work to be done to make the world a more just place for all. Each, in their own ways, took on a piece of the job of making the world safer and more hospitable for people who do not easily fit within prevailing simplistic binary and hierarchical systems and structures of gender. They all took risks in doing this. Some suffered significantly for their boldness. All contributed to advancing gender freedoms. We owe them more than we can know.

The Transgender Archives stand as a testament to those brave souls who risked so much to forge a pathway for today's advances. By keeping their names alive, and by preserving the records of the work they have done, we can repay some of our debt to our pioneers. Thus, those who have had the foresight to do the work of collecting and preserving also do the work of advancing social justice. All people need to know their history; this is even more true for people who

have been so abject that, through much of our history, our very survival has depended on our ability to keep our gender variance hidden.

We welcome community members, scholars and independent researchers, activists and allies to come to the Transgender Archives to explore our diverse collections, and thereby to learn about who we are and how we got to where we are today. Open to the public, free of charge, and accessible to all, the Transgender Archives safeguard a broad spectrum of trans heritage so that the work that our pioneers have done will not be forgotten. We remember. We respect. We preserve. We persevere. We invite you to join us.

HARRISON APPLE

Finding Trans Context in Everyday Newspaper Archives

Harrison Apple is the founding codirector of the Pittsburgh Queer History Project (PQHP) and a PhD student of gender and women's studies at the University of Arizona. Their work on the PQHP documents the emergence of a queer after-hours nightclub community in Pittsburgh between the 1950s and 1990s and its influence on contemporary community politics. Since 2012 they have been collecting oral histories and ephemera that offer divergent and complementary accounts of gendered and sexual practices in the Steel City. Their doctoral work combines transgender studies and archival science to critically engage the criteria of "evidence" when presented with radically conflicting accounts of shared histories.

The Most Livable City: A Reading of Pittsburgh's 1976 Massage Parlor War

Renaissance II—a civic and corporate partnership campaign to restrict air and river pollution, construct public parks, and demolish decrepit buildings in Pittsburgh's downtown between 1944 and 1984—was simultaneously responsible for the regulation of gender and sexuality of the population of Pittsburgh. Specifically, the rise in violence over control of the massage parlor and pornography industry, located on downtown's Liberty Avenue, is a well-documented historical moment in which city officials and the press circumscribed an abject corner of its population and expelled it with full support of public opinion.

Pittsburgh's downtown, also known as the Golden Triangle, is located where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers meet to form the Ohio. It is a historic juncture for river transportation, and for that reason it has been a consistently documented site of power struggle since at least the eighteenth century. The triangle was controlled by the French military in 1754, seized by the British in 1758 during the French and Indian War, later used as a fort for the Union Army during the Amer-

ican Civil War, and, at the start of the twentieth century, it was a site of impoverished dwellings among mixed industrial warehouse space. This Gateway to the West, as it came to be known, has been inscribed repeatedly with imperialist practices of domination, and by the 1950s it was the center for Pittsburgh's post–WWII Renaissance.[5]

Pittsburgh's Renaissance was the work of a public-private partnership known as the Allegheny Council for Community Development. Since 1944, the Allegheny Council has designed and funded projects to lift Pittsburgh out of its industrial past, echoing urban planning philosophies that revere wide green spaces and hygienic urban landscapes.[6] The Allegheny Council began with projects to reduce air and water pollution, addressing the infamous smog that was so thick it required street lamps to be on all hours of the day.[7]

By 1976 the Pittsburgh Convention Center (which didn't open for another five years), planned as one of the final gems of downtown urban renewal, promised to attract reinvigorated industrial investment, but it faced the conundrum of being only blocks from the stretch of Liberty Avenue that had been home to a cluster of massage parlors and porn theaters, serving a diverse nightlife and sex-work economy. This stretch of Pittsburgh was strategically circumscribed, demonized, and exorcised from the city's history and replaced with a monument to public culture aptly named the Cultural District.[8]

The Massage Parlor War

The Massage Parlor War is in large part a story drawn from the headlines of two daily newspapers, the *Pittsburgh Press* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Both publications had followed the career of a former "rub parlor" kingpin George Lee and his empire of sex-for-pay businesses. However, after his murder in 1976, the coverage of the massage parlor industry transitioned from a moral quandary to austere politics of public safety.[9] Until this moment, the historical narrative of Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle had been structured on invasion and defense, architecturally memorialized in the brick outlines of Fort Duquesne, Fort Pitt, and the preservation of the block house still standing on Point State Park. However, the Massage Parlor War demonstrates a shift in historical narrative from defense against invasion to the management of life through Pittsburgh's Renaissance II. The deployment of "war" in the coverage of the massage parlors illustrates the French philosopher Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics, whereby modern power primarily and pervasively works to regulate the "health" of populations. For Foucault, modern power is exercised, in other words, through discourses and disciplines (e.g., urban planning, criminology, sexology, medicine, and journalism) that delimit which subjects can be known and discussed. In this theoretical framework, power becomes relational, discursive, and enacted through the disciplining of knowledge and management of life.

The Massage Parlor War began on 23 December 1977, as a yellow cab pulled away from the Gemini Spa at 641 Liberty Avenue, owned by Nick DeLucia— a former employee of George Lee and inheritor of a handful of his businesses. The driver had been instructed to deliver a white Christmas package, addressed to the parlor's star masseuse, Joanna "Sasha" Scott. Only moments later, the package exploded, sending glass, blood, and debris out of the second-floor parlor and onto Christmas shoppers below. In the blast, gold calling cards for the Gemini Spa flew into the street with the words "twelve beautiful girls to serve you, private and intimate," along with the names of their many clients.[10] As paramedics tended to victims of the blast, police collected evidence from the parlor, and journalists rushed from their downtown office buildings to document the beginning of the Massage Parlor War.

The parlor explosion came at an opportune time for the Allegheny Council and ancillary committees, which were focused on the construction of the Pittsburgh Convention Center. With plans in place since the early 1970s, there were hopes for the Convention Center to attract new industries to make their home in the Steel City. However, their construction plans had begun to push against the nightlife that had made its home in downtown since the 1960s. The cover of a 1976 issue of the *Pittsburgh Gay News* features a photograph of one of the many porn theaters with the caption "Massage parlors were under attack—are we next?"[11] In a two-part report, Jonathan Bowden followed the popular opinion of city planners and invested parties that the strip of massage parlors on Liberty Avenue must be eliminated to execute their vision of a hygienic postindustrial landscape.

For the council, the rebirth of Pittsburgh depended on excising the massage parlors, which despite their long-term residency were not the kind of "historic charm" the city could sell to investors. In response to the explosion, Mayor Richard Caliguiri—whose mayoral term inaugurated Renaissance II—told the press, "Every law abiding citizen has reason to be as outraged as I am by [this] vicious bombing . . . *aside from the death and destruction it dealt to those in the massage parlor,* the explosion endangered the lives and property of the innocent people in the area."[12] Though it would remain unclear who was responsible for this particular act of violence for many years, the mayor's statement arranged the event as an internal assault on the population of Pittsburgh. He directed public outrage not toward the single perpetrator but toward the industry of the city's criminal underbelly, their profane sexual industry becoming conflated with an indictment of reckless endangerment.[13]

Caliguiri's multilayered public comment and its framing with a photograph of the blast zone by the *Pittsburgh Press* initiated a panic beyond the crime itself and toward the business owners and employees whom the reporter casually defined as "flesh merchants."[14] Lisa Duggan and Nan Hunter's 1989 essay "Sex

Panic" takes on the National Endowment for the Arts scandal, in which the public expressed similar outrage that taxpayer dollars supported the creation of "pornographic images" by Robert Mapplethorpe, gnawing at the tenets of American national culture. What Duggan and Hunter salvage from the uproar is that sex panic, along with witch hunts and red scares, are in fact staples of American history. The American tradition of moral outrage and subsequent acts of "moral reform" had become an effective tool for disregarding systemic issues of racism, sexism, and poverty.[15] Their argument suggests that public sex scandals most often reinforce social hierarchies rather than shed light on social inequities, and that moral reform becomes nothing more than political theater.

Mayor Caliguiri's call to action revealed the neoliberal urban redevelopment plans that demanded the positioning of the massage-parlor industry as an internal threat to the Pittsburgh population and gathered public support for its ejection from the Golden Triangle. As reported in the newspapers, the blast turned Pittsburgh's sex-work communities from something "private and intimate" into something "public and violent," which had to be destroyed without a trace to ensure the continued life of the population. This narrative emerges as a regulation of public sexuality and gender—and transgender bodies in particular—in order to turn an "industrial wasteland" into an attractive, productive, and lively service-industry metropolis. In so many words, a portion of the population would have to die to facilitate the city's rebirth.

Tex Gill's Killer Publicity

Over an eight-year investigation, Dante "Tex" Gill, a white trans-masculine massage parlor owner, was indicted on charges of fraud, ranging from the juridical to the gendered. He emerged in the Massage Parlor War narrative as a criminal element whose various fronts for processing income from sex work—a paintable pottery shop and various health spas—declared him criminally inauthentic.[16] The narrative of his professional deception is echoed in the stock language used to describe him in nearly every article among more than sixty published as "a woman who dresses as a man and prefers to be known as Mr. Gill." In piecing together the Massage Parlor War, we see that his alleged *inauthenticity* as both a man and a parlor owner positioned him as a threat to the sexual moralism expounded by Renaissance II and the fantasy of postindustrial Pittsburgh.

Tex's masculinity was taken to task repeatedly while his substantial tax evasion was investigated. Unlike his parlor peers, who were cisgender heterosexual married men and who retained an unexplained distance between their personal life and their life of crime, Tex is identified as a lesbian in a scare-quoted "marriage" to another woman, who despite having legally changed her name, is not reported as Cynthia Gill but as Cynthia Bruno.[17] In contrast to George Lee

and Nick DeLucia, Tex did not participate in heterosexual reproduction; he did not have children or a normative family structure to balance his pornographic career. His gender nonconformity was part and parcel of his criminality in the eyes of the law and court of public opinion.

Though Tex would never be convicted for sex work, U.S. District Court Judge Gustav Diamond, who oversaw Tex's sentencing, went so far as to ask the jury to consider Tex's "line of work" (a thinly veiled reference to sex work) in his trial for tax fraud. Despite the lack of evidence to charge Tex with prostitution, the specter of sexual immorality was intentionally attached to Tex's legal experience and the city's war on massage parlors. To quote Judge Diamond, the state's investigation into Tex Gill promised to "pierce the sham" of his career in deception.[18]

This language of exposure, veneer, and representation of the Massage Parlor War entangled pornography, sex work, and trans bodies into a discourse of *authenticity* versus *inauthenticity*. Tex's case migrated from an insinuation of public safety hazard to an inquisition of economic and gendered deception. What's more, his public image of fraudulent business and fraudulent masculinity was publicized by being awarded both the Year's Most Dubious Man and Most Dubious Woman by the Pittsburgh Press in 1984.[19]

Tex's publicity positioned him as a distinct foil to the language of moral integrity, sexual conservatism, and nuclear family structure written into Pittsburgh's Renaissance. In newspaper accounts, Tex's criminality and gender became fused as a pornographic representation of sex out-of-place, the legal consequence of which is to padlock the massage parlors, and padlock Tex in federal prison. In this logic, the city had to lock up the pornographic in order to contain its threat to the postindustrial rebirth of Pittsburgh, always on the horizon.

Devoid of Life . . . All Uninhabited Seemed Totally Ours

The Gateway area on the "town" side of the freeways, for all its office towers, seems to be essentially suburban in tone. The placing of the buildings among the ornamented open spaces has been handsomely accomplished, but there is a little too much openness. From the Liberty Avenue entrance of the quarter, one has a sense of tremendous sweep and verve that is entirely pleasing but even at noonday there seems to be a kind of busy emptiness about these spaces. After five o'clock, when the office workers, like homing pigeons, head for the distant suburban hills, the gardens become really vacant. We, in the past, have dined al fresco *on summer Sunday evenings at the Hilton, and the great spaces stretching away from the terrace were often quite devoid of life. Those green pleasances stretching out, all uninhabited, seemed totally ours. How grand and how sad!*

JAMES D. VAN TRUMP, "AN ANTIPHON OF STONES" (1983)

The above quotation from the founder of the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation describes the Golden Triangle in the early years of Pittsburgh's Renaissance. Van Trump's poignant essays included in *Life and Architecture in Pittsburgh* express the sentiment of development as it assigns life to some places and "busy emptiness" to others. In his sentimental vignettes of Pittsburgh's landscape, he expresses the desire to inscribe the triangle with life. These spaces, evacuated by suburban office workers, appear as a tabula rasa, inscribable without consequence. Through a strategic use of moral outrage, the development teams for Renaissance II reinscribed the downtown landscape of sex-for-pay businesses as a blank slate for the rebirth of a postindustrial metropolis. While Pittsburgh continues to brand itself as the "most livable city," the contestable record of Tex Gill and the Massage Parlor War poses the question, "Most livable for whom?"

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Key Concepts

ephemera (p. 444)

archive (p. 440)

Activities, Discussion Questions, and Observations

1. Library archives have historically collected written materials and ephemera that give us a rich sense of communication and the material culture of a specific period. Today many events are publicized online and might even take place entirely online. How do you think our "wired world" will change the nature of archives and future research? What needs to be saved? How will these items be saved? What might be worth saving for future researchers to get a sense of today's culture?
2. Harrison Apple provides a terrific example of what happened when they decided to delve into a local newspaper archive in Pittsburgh. There Apple found a rich and complex history about the ways that gender identity, and more specifically trans embodiment, gets tied to a "less desirable" side of a city and the ways that urban development gets tied into conversations about gender identity. What Harrison discovered in their research into the Massage Parlor Wars is similar to the conditions found in the specific locations of some of the early trans riots in the United States, Cooper's Donuts and Compton's (see Chapter 4). For this exercise, check out your local newspaper archives. No matter what size town you live in or near, there will be a local newspaper, and there will be an archive. Pick a random date, preferably before you were born, and start reading various stories in the newspaper from that day. Instead of national news, choose a local story, photograph, or informational item. What did you learn from it? What information does it give you? What information can you infer from it? What other questions do you have?

3. Andrea Jenkins is working painstakingly to record oral histories for the transgender oral history archives. Although not all the stories from her interviewees' lives are online in transcript form yet, several are now available. For this project, go to the oral history website (https://www.lib.umn.edu/tretter/transgender- oral-history-project) and choose someone's history that is available to read. What did you learn about the person? How did they tell Andrea their story? You may wish to compare two of the stories, which will also provide insight into the different ways people respond to the interviewer. Why is it important to have both an oral history and a written record of the person telling their life story?

4. It might not be convenient for you to get to the Transgender Archives in Victoria, British Columbia. (If you can get there, I highly recommend it; the staff are very welcoming to everyone wanting to look through the archive.) Several pieces of the collections are available for viewing on the archives' website: www.uvic.ca/transgenderarchives/index.php. If you click on "Our collections," you will see a sidebar menu. Have some fun clicking around in the various collections. From items such as underground trans gatherings and newsletters (which you will find in the Stephanie Castle and the Zenith Foundation's pages), to informational pamphlets like the one Lou Sullivan worked on for trans men (found in the Reed Erickson pages), to archival photographs in the Fantasia Fair section, you can click through the various pieces of the collection and study them. What did you find, and what interested you? What did you learn? Most of all, just have fun going through the materials.

Archives Websites

Digital Transgender Archive
https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/

A Gender Variance Who's Who
https://zagria.blogspot.com/p/index.html#.WVf-Brvyu34

GLBT Historical Society, San Francisco
www.glbthistory.org/

Hoover Institution Library and Archives
www.hoover.org/library-archives

Louise Lawrence Transgender Archive
http://lltransarchive.org/

Online Archive of California
www.oac.cdlib.org/

Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria
http://transgenderarchives.ca

TransGriot Archive and Blog by Monica Roberts
http://transgriot.blogspot.com/

Tretter Transgender Oral History Project at the University of Minnesota's Tretter Collection
https://www.lib.umn.edu/tretter/transgender-oral-history-project

University of Michigan, Labadie Collection: Transgender Items
http://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=282858&p=1884819

NOTES

1. Many of Frida Kahlo's letters are held at the Hoover Archives at Stanford University in Stanford, Calif. The Hoover Archives were first established by President Hoover and are dedicated to collecting anything and everything from around the world that has something to do with war, peace, and revolution. The Hoover Archives are free and open to everyone. You do not have to be affiliated with Stanford to research in the archives. You can go online and check out some of the holdings at www.hoover.org/library-archives.
2. Heidi Landgraf, "*Uncovered: The Diary Project:* Sean Dorsey's Fifth Home Season," *dancersgroup*, 1 January 2010, http://dancersgroup.org/2010/01/uncovered-the-diary-project-sean-dorseys-fifth-home-season/ (accessed 30 June 2017).
3. In 1987 I was the president of the Lesbian Caucus at CU Boulder. It was the first time that the Lesbian Caucus joined together with Gays and Friends to put on a fundraiser. At the time, I caught a lot of flack from many of the women in the Lesbian Caucus because they felt that it was not okay to work with Gays and Friends. They were also opposed to a drag show on feminist principles. I realize in hindsight that this event was the beginning of the two groups' working together, and I am still very proud of that. I was often much more comfortable around the members of Gays and Friends, so it is ironic that I was president of the Lesbian Caucus, where I never felt I really fit in. Of course, given that I identify as nonbinary trans and given my love of many things that are associated with gay male culture, it is not surprising that I wanted to work on a drag show.
4. The Louise Lawrence Transgender Archive homepage, http://lltransarchive.org/ (accessed 16 July 2017).
5. Robert C. Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), 21, 25.
6. "About Us," Allegheny Conference on Community Development, www.alleghenyconference.org/AboutUs.php (accessed 1 January 2015).
7. "Smoke Control Lantern Slide Collection," University of Pittsburgh Digital Libraries, http://historicpittsburgh.org/collection/smoke-control-lantern-slides (accessed 25 April 2018). Pittsburgh's reputation for smog was so prevalent that a 1942 English slang dictionary included an entry for shouting "PITTSBURGH!" to alert someone that the toast was burning; Lester V. Berrey and Melvin Van den Bark, *The*

American Thesaurus of Slang: A Complete Reference Book of Colloquial Speech (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1942).

8. John Tierney, "How the Arts Drove Pittsburgh's Revitalization," *Atlantic*, 11 December 2014, www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/12/how-the-cultural-arts-drove-pittsburghs-revitalization/383627/.
9. Doug Harbrecht, "Massage King's Heritage Bloody, Estate Small," *Pittsburgh Press*, 25 December 1977.
10. William Wisser and Rich Gigler, "4 Rub Parlors Shut Down after Fatal Blast," *Pittsburgh Press*, 24 December 1977.
11. Jonathan Bowden, "Gays and Liberty Avenue: Establishment's Next Target?" *Pittsburgh Gay News*, April 1976.
12. Wisser and Gigler, "4 Rub Parlors Shut Down after Fatal Blast"; emphasis added.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter, "Sex Panic," in *Sex Wars*, ed. Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter (New York: Routledge, 2006), 71–75.
16. Jerry Byrd, "Miss Gill's Ceramics Low-Profile," *Pittsburgh Press*, 23 May 1979.
17. "Name Change Asked," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 20 September 1979. Cynthia has since contacted the author and is collaborating on a project to revisit the Massage Parlor Wars from the position of some-one inside the business and close to Tex. Besides confirming how frequently the papers misrepresented events (both public and private), she also confirmed that her marriage to Tex was legal and occurred during a trip to Hawaii.
18. Al Donalson, "Reputed Rub Parlor Chief Tex Gill Gets 13-Year Term for Tax Evasion," *Pittsburgh Press*, 3 January 1985.
19. "Tracing the Trends from AIDS to Yuppie," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 25 December 1989.

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