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Dear Journal of Digital History Editors,

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my article draft “Secret Societies and Revolving Doors: Using Mapping the Gay Guides to Study LGBTQ Life in the United States, 1965-1989” to the Journal of Digital History. I am pleased that the second round of peer review from both readers was positive and that both recommend the project for publication with minor modifications. I have revised the article again and will respond to the major critiques within the reader reports here.

Reviewer #1 had just two small suggestions both of which I have completed. One was to add the citation to Elizabeth Armstrong’s book which I mentioned in my previous letter but must have accidentally omitted in the article itself. And the other was to take one more crack at the final sentence in the conclusion which I have done in hopes of clarifying it further.

I appreciate the reviewer’s attention to typos, and I have gone through and fixed all of these. I also fixed the factual error that describes Stonewall as occurring a year too early. In terms of conceptual feedback, the reviewer had several points that I’d like to respond to.

The first, is that Reviewer #2 brought up the title which was also a critique in the first round of feedback. I believe the reviewer may not have realized that I addressed this concern because the title could not be changed in Scholar One. I did amend the title to reflect this concern and the article is now titled: “Secret Societies and Revolving Doors: Using Mapping the Gay Guides to Study LGBTQ Life in the United States, 1965-1989.”

Second, the reviewer recommended that I find another example to demonstrate how the dataset can address historical research questions in new ways. Rather than find a new example I have tried to clarify the point in this paragraph – and really the entire section. The intent of this paragraph is to demonstrate how MGG can be used to complicate a claim like Sandifer’s and examine change over time in the guides. Subsequent paragraphs in this section examine the new types of locations that appear in the guides and compare Jackson to other southern capital cities. To clarify and ensure I do not imply that my intent is to disprove Sandifer’s claim, I’ve added a new sentence that sets the section up. I’ve amended the first two sentences to: “Jumping off from the 1979 description of Jackson as an “insular and secret society,” it is possible to **explore and question Sandifer’s assumption as well as to explore how Jackson’s queer landscape shifted in the 1980s** using the dataset provided by MGG. **To begin its worthwhile to look at Jackson’s growth in the 1970s and 1980s.**” (bold are changes and clarifications.)

For ease of discussion, I’ve copied the second critique here and broken it into 3 parts.

- 1) This sentence: “In many ways the growth in the Damron guides is an indicator of success elsewhere in the 1970s. During this decade LGBTQ issues saw far more visibility in mainstream

straight culture with more depictions of gay life in Hollywood films and political gains such as civil rights laws being passed in several cities.” I am concerned about how general this claim is, and how it lacks any references. I wouldn’t consider the 1970s as a watershed decade in terms of queer visibility in Hollywood cinema, for example; also what civil rights gains, exactly?

- 2) On the contrary, the 1970s was also a period of rightwing backlash (think Anita Bryant). If the author wants to make this argument, they need to provide evidence for it.
- 3) Just after this sentence, the author uses the growth of gay establishments to claim “Moreover, it is clear from Damron’s guides that these gains were felt everywhere, not just in the bi-coastal cities of New York and San Francisco.” [Not also the type here with ‘its’.] But really, that’s not the case. The guides can show the increase of gay friendly establishments across the country, which is useful. But the data can’t show “these gains were felt everywhere.” To make that claim, the author would need to rely on other methodologies, such as qualitative interviewing or close analysis of textual sources (diaries, local newspaper columns, etc) to understand the affective landscape on the ground.

First, in response to #1 above: I simplified this claim by removing the mention to Hollywood and civil rights. To be more specific I have rephrased to “In many ways the growth in the Damron guides is an indicator of LGBTQ visibility and activism elsewhere in the 1970s.” I cite the points made here at the end of this paragraph but have repeated several relevant citations at the end of this sentence. Based on the examples I provide within the paragraph about the beginning of Pride celebrations and the removal of homosexuality from the list of psychiatric diseases, I believe this statement is now better supported.

Second, I agree with the reviewer that the 1970s were also a period of backlash. I make that very point a few sentences later in that paragraph. After providing several examples of the gains that were made, I write (and cite Bryant): “Of course, gains also often triggered backlash. For example, the passage of an anti-discrimination bill in Miami in 1976 led to local backlash and the rise of figures like Anita Bryant who argued that these laws would discriminate against her “children's right to grow up in a healthy, decent community’.”

The reviewer’s last point in this critique (#3 above) is about gains and where they were felt. I stand by this claim and believe it is supported by the evidence, but I have added a couple sentences to clarify and narrow my claim. The appearance of LGBTQ spaces or friendly spaces in areas around the country outside of major cities does in fact demonstrate new visibility in the 1970s and 1980s. But I have added two new sentences to clarify the claim I am making here. It now reads: “Moreover, it is clear from Damron’s guides that these gains in visibility were felt across the nation in both small and large cities, not just in the bi-coastal metropolises of New York and San Francisco. Further study would be required to evaluate the local politics, cultures, and experience of those that lived in cities where Damron's guide showcased a changing landscape in the 1970s. But the growth in the sheer number of locations during this time, suggests a more visible community of gay and gay friendly establishments in cities across the country.”

Lastly, reviewer #2 had two concerns related to the data behind the project.

One is a critique of the website’s visualization. The reviewer is correct, the visualization does not allow for a range of dates and we do that for a very important reason. If we allowed users to query a range of dates the visualization would show locations stacked on top of each other when they appear in multiple years. So, for example, if the Steak n’ Eggs showed up in 1970, 1971, and 1973 in the same location – it would be difficult to see because it would stack them on top of each other. That would be problematic and bad practice for a visualization, and it would actually prevent users from seeing change over time in a useful manner. Changing this would be a much more complicated task than it may seem. Because of variations in title and the way locations were described by Damron, we don’t currently have an ID number that establishes which locations between years are the same. So, in other words, it isn’t possible to map only the unique locations within a date

range. I don't disagree that it's a desirable feature, but I'm not sure it would work as the reviewer suggests, it would be a technical lift, and its outside the scope of the possible and reasonable changes for this article.

We plan to release a new visualization that will make it possible to ask such questions in the next six to twelve months, but it is not referenced in the article due to the fact that the visualization is a work in progress and not ready for release. In the meantime, all our data is freely available to download from our website. We hope to publish the entire dataset along with a more nuanced set of documentation once we finish digitizing all of the data through 2005 which will likely be this summer or fall.

Similarly, the concern about Toronto and Mexico City appearing on the map is a concern that understandable but something we describe in the methodology. Our dataset currently is focused on the listings Damron included for the contiguous United States and we are committed to transcribing these sources into data in a way that is as faithful to the primary sources as possible. That means we have not corrected mistakes or altered choices that were made when publishing the guide. It was frequent, especially in the early years of the guides before Damron started listing international entries, for Mexican locations to be listed alongside border cities like El Paso or San Diego. These locations, like the Mexico City and Toronto, locations that Reviewer #2 mention were included with the listings for US border cities. To avoid removing them and altering the imagined geography of these border cities that Damron is describing, we have chosen not to remove these types of entries but map them in the appropriate location. They may have been mistakes by Damron (Mexico City isn't really just across the border from a US city) but to remove them would be to alter the guides and depart from our established methodology. There are potentially interesting questions about gay travel and international locations in the guides and to remove these would be to obscure this interesting quirk within the guides. This will be explained in more detail once we publish the dataset.

Again, I'd like to thank both reviewers for their time in reviewing this article. I found their feedback immensely helpful and it has made this article better at every stage. I look forward to discussing next steps for this article. I have pushed these revisions and all related code up to the GitHub repository for the project. I'll send this link via email to the editors and will look forward to hearing back about next steps.