

Prospectus for Society of American Archivist Publishing

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Theme: Describing queer feminist collections in the archives

Archival Focus/Scope: Arrangement and description, specifically the creation of finding aids for collections relating to underrepresented and historically silenced groups

Premise: This book is meant to acknowledge the silences that queer people have faced regarding the historical record as well as provide a resource for archivists tasked with describing their collections. It will connect practical work with the large amount of research, publications, and discourse of archivists working to create more inclusive descriptions. I plan to write on archival descriptive standards and best practices used in the construction of finding aids by a wide array of institutions utilizing the Ethics of Care three phased framework. I will analyze Library of Congress subject headings, tags, series titles and other word choices used in the contextual information of finding aids, specifically regarding descriptors of identity and work to integrate Ethics of Care into the workflows of archivists describing queer feminist collections and beyond.

I will address how finding aids connect to the historical record as well as provide examples for how to add to the historical record in a respectful, inclusive, and accurate way. I will reflect upon my own work with queer feminist collections within academic archives. I will compare this work experience and the wider archival discourse with description, arrangement, and finding aids at other institutions such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the History of ARCW and AIDS in Wisconsin Exhibit at UW-Milwaukee, GLBT Historical Society, the ONE Archives at the University of Southern California, and others. I will be using theoretical frameworks outside of the archival profession including Joan Tronto's three phased Ethics of Care framework. Drawing on literature outside of the archival field offers context to queer feminist materials, and this also forces consideration of the individuals involved and their personal and emotional connection to the materials. Queer Feminist collections were chosen to create a focus for the book and to narrow the topic. Overall, the primary goal of this book is to provide a practical resource for archivists to have on hand as they process and describe collections.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction/What is in a name?
2. Queer Feminism in the Archives
 - i. Explains what queer feminist collections are
 - ii. Exploring how previous archival theories apply to these collections
 1. This would require a look into the history of archival theory including the work of Jenkinson, Schellenberg, Zinn, and Greene/Meissner. Their work and archival legacy would be

analyzed and theoretically applied to LGBTQ+ materials. This would show an evolution of archival practices, and it would expose areas for growth that queer and feminist theories could fill.

3. Utilizing the Ethics of Care in the Archives
 - i. Introducing the ethics of care
 1. Providing definition of ethics of care and how it will be applied to archival description
 2. See *Archivists Care* attached at the end of the prospectus
 - ii. Connecting ethics of care to queer feminist collections
 1. Addressing the care of both the historical record and the people involved, paying specific attention to the collection creators, donors, and patrons
 2. Analyzing mission statements for archives as the first step in care
 - iii. Focus on community connections and relationship building
4. The Impact Intellectual Arrangement has on the Historical Record
 - i. Quick discussion of the implications of original order, MPLP, and institutionalized oppression as discussed in archival publications
 - ii. Examples of series arrangement from queer and feminist collection finding aids from institutions such as UW-Madison, UW-Stout, Lesbian Herstory Archives, UW-Milwaukee, GLBT Historical Society, the ONE Archives, and others
 - iii. Analyzing how choice of series titles and intellectual arrangement effects the historical record
 1. It is important to acknowledge that standardization of series titles and arrangement would be a disservice to many of these collections. In the queer and feminist communities, terminology is constantly changing, and this impacts how it is remembered. Standardization of series titles, for example, may create a controlled vocabulary that does not reflect this terminology evolution.
5. Rethinking the Biographical/Historical Note
 - i. How to be careful of exposing too much or too little information

1. Answering and understanding the following questions: What is the purpose or argument behind the collection? Why was it collected? Who would be impacted by the information in the biographical/historical note and how would they be impacted?
 - ii. Touching on the right to be forgotten
 - iii. Examples of how relationship building and community involvement would be helpful – Georgia LGBTQ Project, UW-Madison LGBTQ+ Project, UW-Stout Introduction to Queer Studies Course Oral History Project, and others
6. Questioning Controlled Vocabularies
 - i. Questioning Library of Congress Subject Headings
 1. Understanding the potential trauma attached to collections and complications with political correctness
 - ii. Examples, through collections from multiple different institutions, on the evolution of language and descriptors of identity
 1. These identifiers or subjects are fundamentally personal, and they are meant for those who are using or have used them. In other words, they are meant for the donors or the creators of the collections. By working with the donor/creator, archivists would be able to accurately create tags and subjects that reflect the collection and time in which it came from. It also would make it easier for those within the community to find and research their history. This rejects the use of controlled vocabularies, specifically the Library of Congress Subject Headings, in certain cases. These do not keep up with the evolution of language in the queer feminist communities, and they reflect heteronormative and patriarchal practices.
 - iii. Details on the use of user-generated tags and keyword search capabilities
 1. Utilizing the donor, when possible, for creating accurate subjects and tags
7. Understanding the Implications of Collection Descriptions
 - i. Examples and analysis of content warning statements for finding aids and digital collections

1. Examples from Drexel University, Library of Virginia, UW-Milwaukee, and others
 - ii. Examples on how or when to use ‘warnings’ in finding aids
 1. Warnings can be placed in finding aids, on boxes, and/or on folders when there is a possibility that the materials’ content may illicit an emotional response
 - iii. Understanding the context of the material, especially with ephemera – How does it impact the patron? The donor? The historical record?
 - iv. Discussing how using ethics of care allows archivists to focus more on those involved with the collection
8. How to Initiate Changes in Your Archive
 - i. Balancing backlog and changing workflows
 - ii. Analyze finding aid and collection survey workflows from different archival institutions
 - iii. Identifying collections and materials within current repository that need to be reevaluated
 1. While the text up until this point focused primarily on queer feminist materials, the discussion and conclusions can be applied to materials from other underrepresented voices within archives.
 2. Identifying policies that need to be reevaluated
 - iv. Give examples of what this means for research searchability, community connections, and accessibility of materials
 1. This will include examples from archivists as well as personal examples from work at UW-Madison and UW-Stout. One example will be from my work with students from an Introduction to Queer Studies course on conducting and analyzing LGBTQIA+ oral histories.
9. Conclusion

Intended Audience

The most immediate audience would be archivists working to describe collections relating to populations that are underrepresented in the historical record; however, this approach can be adapted and used for collections of all kinds and in any institution. It is meant to be a resource and a guide for archivists to think more critically about the materials they hold and how they impact the historical record. It will provide practical ways for archivists to intellectually care for their records effectively. I will provide an overview of the theoretical frameworks used, so readers will not need any background knowledge to understand the text. Outside of the archives

world, this book could reach those who are studying the ethics of care and how it can be applied in nontraditional ways. This approach pulls heavily from the field of gender, women, and sexuality studies, so it could also be intended for that academic circle as well.

It is important to note that the queer feminist community is constantly evolving, and it deserves to have a record of their own history. This book hopes to recognize that these materials exist and are an important part of history. They provide evidence and examples of wrongs, discrimination, protests, victories, and everyday life. Ultimately, queer feminist history has been neglected. It is a subset of LGBTQIA+ history and Women's history, which both are already widely undocumented. However, this group is not the only one. Archivists can create a more inclusive and accurate historical record through how they present these materials to researchers. This book would give practical description processes to all archivists from large institutions to those lone arrangers.

On another note, this book primarily references collections of ephemera, so it also connects directly to people outside of the archival or academic community by working to create a pathway of trust between them and archival institutions. There is a distrust between some people within underrepresented communities and institutions. They fear that their legacy and history will not be taken care of, respected, or treated as important. This book hopes to alleviate some of that pressure and fear. In a zine that I worked with entitled, "Queers Read This Too," an anonymous contributor wrote, "I have a right to be recognized, affirmed and respected for who I am." This book would address this concern that many donors, patrons, and researchers have when handing over their personal records to archivists. It hopes to show that archivists do take their responsibility of care seriously, especially when dealing with collections that are so personal.

Prospective Value to the Archives Profession

This book will further archivists' goals of accessibility and inclusivity. It will provide a different approach to the creation of finding aids that rejects complete standardization and encourages creativity. It follows the archival trends of implementing community involvement and the activist archivist. By putting an emphasis on queer and feminist materials, it attempts to expose destructive norms that have become ingrained within the profession.

The relationship of the Proposed Publication to...

- **Select Literature within the Archival Field**
 - Baucom, Erin. "An Exploration into Archival Descriptions of LGBTQ Materials." *American Archivist* 81, no. 1 (2018): 65-83.
 - Cox, Robert. "Maximal Processing, or, Archivist on a Pale Horse." *Journal of Archival Organization* 8 (2010): 134-148.

- Cifor, Marika. "Aligning Bodies: collecting, arranging, and describing hatred for a critical queer archives." *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 756-775.
 - Meissner, Dennis. "Bare Necessities." *American Archivist* 80, no. 1 (2017), 6-18.
 - Vavra, Ashley Nicole. "The Right to Be Forgotten: An Archival Perspective." *American Archivist* 81, no. 1 (2018): 100-111.
 - Gerrard, Morna. "'No Frame Required': Collaboration, Community, and the Georgia LGBTQ Archives Project." In *Appraisal and Acquisition: Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections*, edited by Kate Theimer, 1-15. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.
 - Light, Michelle and Tom Hyry. "Colophons and Annotations: New Directions for the Finding Aid." *American Archivist* 65, no. 2 (2002): 216-230.
 - Benoit III, Edward. "#MPLP Part 2: Replacing Item-Level Metadata with User-Generated Social Tags." *American Archivist* 81, no. 1 (2018): 38-64.
 - Zanish-Belcher, Tanya and Anke Voss. *Perspectives on Women's Archives*. Society of American Archivists, 2018.
 - Farley, Laura. "The Participatory Finding Aid and the Archivist: How User Annotations are Changing Everyone's Role." *Archival Issues* 35, no. 2 (2014): 79-98.
 - Caswell, Michelle and Marika Cifor. "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives." *Archivaria* 81 (2016): 23-43.
 - Henry, Ray Laura. "Library Technologies and the Ethics of Care." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 42, no. 3 (2016): 284-285.
- **Select Literature from Other Academic Fields (Primarily from Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies)**
- Barker, Meg-John and Julia Scheele. *Queer: A Graphic History*. London: Icon books Ltd, 2016.
 - McCann, Hannah. "Epistemology of the Subject: Queer Theory's Challenge to Feminist Sociology." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (2016): 224-243.

- Cossman, Brands, et al. “Gender, Sexuality, and Power: Is Feminist Theory Enough?.” *Columbia Journal of Gender and the Law* 12, no. 2 (2003): 1-25.
- Winter, Alexandra. “Unlikely Alliances? Lesbian-Feminism and Queer Theory.” *Hecate’s Australian Women’s Book Review* 14, no.1 (2002): 1-4.
- Rubin, David A. “‘This Kinky Practice of Freedom’: On Lips, Restoring Rifts, and Huffer’s Queer Feminist Ethics of Eros.” *Feminist Formations* 29, no. 3 (2017): 179-185.
- Kroeger-Mappes, Joy. “The Ethic of Care vis-à-vis the Ethic of Rights: A Problem for Contemporary Moral Theory.” *Hypatia* 9, no. 3 (1994): 108-131.
- Drabinski, Emily. “Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction.” *Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 83, no. 2 (2013): 94-111.
- Fischer, Mia, et al. “A conversation: Queer digital media resources and research.” *First Monday* 23, no. 7 (2018): 1-13.

Potential Graphics and Illustrations

There is a possibility that images of artifacts or materials I have worked with at the UW-Madison, UW-Stout, and the National Museum of American History archives could be used. This could include materials such as a Madison version of “Queers Read This Too” zine, images of Dykes on Bikes, political and social buttons, posters from protests across the country, student newspaper artwork, and other materials.

I will also be including examples of finding aids and parts of finding aids from a variety of archival institutions including UW-Madison, UW-Stout, National Museum of American History, Lesbian Herstory Archives, UW-Milwaukee, GLBT Historical Society, the ONE Archives, and others.

Contributors

I do not currently have contributors to list by name. If this proposal is accepted, I plan to reach out to archivists who work directly with queer feminist records at institutions such as the GLBTQ Historical Society, Lesbian Herstory Archives, ONE Archives, Stonewall National Museum and Archives, and others. I already have connections with Midwest archivists working with LGBTQIA+ collections, but I hope to expand upon that for this book.

Methodology

I will analyze publicly accessible finding aids through the lens of Ethics of Care. Ethics of Care frameworks will be utilized, and primarily, a focus will be made on the frameworks used by Joan Tronto and Carol Gilligan. Using this process to inform my selections as well as other archivists' willingness to participate, I will conduct interviews with archivists from select institutions that work directly with describing queer feminist collections. These interviews, overarching research, and analyses of practices will inform my conclusions within this book.

I feel that it is also important to note that this will be a research-intensive project. I plan to pull from the wide array of publications from archivists that relate to descriptions and other topics mentioned in this prospectus to create a resource book for archival description and intellectual arrangement. My list of resources above is far from exhaustive, and I am continually adding to it.

Estimated Length: About 30,000 words

Anticipated Timeline

Months 1 to 3: Gather sources, secure interviews, and initiate research

Month 4 and 5: Chapters 2-3 written

Month 6 and 7: Chapters 4-5 written

Month 8 and 9: Chapters 6-7 written

Month 10 and 11: Chapter 8, Introduction, and Conclusion

Archivists Care: Brief Introduction to Ethics of Care

Throughout this book, I will analyze archival description practices and finding aid norms through the lens of Ethics of Care. More specifically, I will draw upon primarily Joan Tronto's three phases of caring—caring about, caring for, and care giving (1993), and Carol Gilligan's work that weaves Ethics of Care with feminism (1993). I believe our ultimate responsibility as archivists is to care for the historical record, and one way we demonstrate that care is through our descriptions. It is more obvious to say that we care for our records through preservation, and that is true. Everything from the type of folders we use to the digital repositories we utilize is a form of care. For this book, I focus more on intellectual care, rather than the physical. I argue that this care can be just as complicated and just as important. Our finding aids and our descriptions are how knowledge is passed on.

Tronto's third phase of caring is what I will focus on most extensively in this book; however, all three phases are relevant to our work. The caring about phase is, in simple terms, identifying the problem. It can be assumed based on the many publications from the archival field, that we already know the problem, and it is two pronged. The first prong being that archivists work make knowledge accessible and best practices for accessibility are continually changing. Archivists provide the primary resources for research, and "without archivists, archival research would be impossible or at best extremely difficult."¹

The second prong of the first phase of caring is about diversity and inclusivity. In Elizabeth W. Adkins Society of American Archivists Presidential Address, Adkins discussed diversity within the archival profession. Ultimately, she expressed that this push to diversify was not a new idea in 2007. It was at least a thirty-five-year journey at that time, and Adkins said, "the journey cannot stop; we must keep moving forward – not just with words, but with action."² By combining these two prongs into one overarching problem of accessing diverse archival resources and knowledge, we have phase one of caring. Both accessibility issues and diversity concerns are not new to the archival profession. Therefore, I would argue as a profession we have moved past phase one, but we do return to it regularly. That is how the phases of care work. They blend, and each phase is dependent on the others.

The second phase of caring, caring for, addresses who is responsible for the care. Again, we already know who is responsible here: archivists. For this, I go back to the very definition of an archivist as stated on the Society of American Archivists website that specifies that archivists "assess, collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to [these] records."³ We are responsible for the problem identified in phase one, and that responsibility is a form of care.

¹ Friedrich, Markus. 2018. *The Birth of the Archives*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

² Adkins, Elizabeth W. 2008. "Our Journey toward Diversity—and a Call to (More) Action." *The American Archivist* 71: 21-49.

³ Society of American Archivists. 2016. What Are Archives?. September 12. Accessed 05 13, 2022. <https://www2.archivists.org/about-archives>.

Care can and should be applied to all our records and the stories they hold, but when pulling from the Ethics of Care work of Carol Gilligan, I found it necessary to focus more intently on one subset of archival collections. I have chosen to analyze queer feminist collections which are traditionally hidden from the overarching historical record. Ethics of Care has been used in conjunction with feminist movements and histories for years. For example, Gilligan mentions that she began writing her book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, as early as the 1970s, and it explored this overlap.⁴ Therefore, using queer feminist collections, repositories, and descriptions for this book will allow for deep and rewarding analyses.

I believe that through our historical lack of care, both intentional and unintentional, these collections and their stories are not easily accessible. It is our responsibility as archivists to make the resources we have connecting to queer feminist history available for researchers and beyond. This leads us to phase three: care giving. This, I believe, can be accomplished through our finding aids and other descriptions. This includes rethinking our use of controlled vocabularies, being creative with our historical notes, analyzing our current priorities for processing, and other practices.

Care is typically thought of as something between people. As you use this book as a resource for description, I encourage and challenge you to think of care beyond the way a nurse cares for a patient. I challenge you to see our profession as one that provides care both physically and intellectually. I encourage you to think of our work with collections as a relationship, one that takes and gives. Care is “an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone.”⁵ In the archival profession, it is about establishing a connection between our collections and the historical record so that no one group's history is kept hidden.

⁴ Gilligan, Carol. 1993. *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

⁵ Ibid.