

Research Report: LGBTQ+ Memory and Archives: Power, Community and Intersectionality

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Abstract: This work aims to study the relationship between community archives and institutional archives on LGBTQ+ memory treatment from 1970 in the Western world.

Introduction

Traditionally community archives and institutional archives have followed different methods in LGBTQ+ memory treatment. This work attempts to study the relationship between these two approaches.

Problem Statement

Institutional archives have had a negligent behavior in the treatment of LGBTQ+ memory. We think this can be solved through a critical transfer of the diversity of treatments and methods applied by community archives.

Methodology or Method:

The work follows these steps:

- 1-The study of LGBTQ+ documents, records and archives genealogy through specific literature.
- 2-The approach of a taxonomy of LGBTQ+ related content in archives.
- 3-Some case studies of good practice examples in institutional archives through their websites.
- 4-The design of a series of guidelines to apply in institutional archives.

Results

We have found that institutional archives usually don't adopt a queer perspective or point of view about their collections and records. To the actual day, institutional archives have mistreated the memory of LGBTQ+ community. The records and collections kept by National, State or municipal archives are mainly only referred to LGBTQ+ people in a negative way, showing them as sick and criminals (Maynard, 1991, 196-198). This position reflects the idea about sexual minorities socially widespread until the rise of Lesbian and Gay liberation movement in the second half of 1960 decade. Stonewall riots in 1969 suppose an inflexion point in that process. From here LGBTQ+ community organizes its own archival initiative outside the institutional archives and the first project in this sense was the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) in New York. There were past experiences, the first one intended to be the archive of WhK, created by Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin between 1897 and 1933.

The LGBTQ+ content in archives can be divided in two groups in function of provenance:

- 01-At institutional archives
- 02-At non-institutional archives

In the first case records and collections are testimony of oppression and retaliation against LGBTQ+ people; in the second case records are created and kept to care about the legacy and memory to represent the community in all its richness and diversity.

Findings

Institutional archives are walking the path of LGBTQ+ inclusion. The vast majority of national archives, however, doesn't pay attention to LGBTQ+ memory and does not have nor a specific treatment to the records related to. Only a few of them could be considered as a good practice example through the work shown at their websites, as The National Archives UK (TNA). TNA have displayed a complete section at their website referred to LGBTQ+ community in their records and collections. So has done London Metropolitan Archives in the field of municipal archives.

Here we have the distribution and studied examples on community archives:

01-Tangible and non-tangible archives: LHA

02-Exclusively non-tangible archives:

02.01-Website: Digital Transgender Archive

02.02-Blog: LGBTQ Game Archives

02.03-Social Media: Archivo Queer Bogotá YouTube channel

Every model has its own characteristics, advantages and problems, depending on the purpose and the scope of action.

Conclusion

The work proposes a series of guidelines to follow in the path of adopting a queer perspective in institutional archives, mainly derived from the diversity of processes and methods applied by community archives:

01-The design and implementation of archival policies that recognize invisibility and marginalization of LGBTQ+ people within the framework of intersectionality with other discriminations and adopting a gender perspective regarding the acquisition, treatment and dissemination of documentary collections, the users, individuals and organizations transferring documentation and archival staff.

02-These policies should be materialized through instruments such as practice guides, intersectional inclusion manuals or inclusive archival description tools, with the aim of transforming the archive in a safe space.

03-Creation and maintenance of specific LGBTQ+ community and intersectionality records and documents sections at institutional archives websites.

04-Horizontal collaboration with LGBTQ+ community organizations offering them the resources, services and skills institutional archives can provide: not to compete in the archival activism, but to assist.

05-The interaction with LGBTQ+ community in the digital environment through social media tools with a special care on intergenerational relationship and other intersectional aspects, such as race, ethnic origin and functional diversity. All the documentary references on AIDS and HIV should be specially considered.

06-The critical incorporation of unorthodox archival practices inspired by LGBTQ+ community archives, from the collection of ephemera or zines to the introduction of artistic residencies in the institutional archives.

Resources

Archivo Queer Bogotá, 2020. YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdBCi5y3r7QZRIWnVgLdMJg>

Digital Transgender Archive Website.

<https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/about/overview>

Lesbian Herstory Archives Website.

<https://lesbianherstoryarchives.org/about>

LGBTQ Game Archives Blog.

<https://lgbtqgamearchive.com/>.

London Metropolitan Archives. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Archives at LMA Website Section.

https://search.lma.gov.uk/SCRIPTS/MWIMAIN.DLL/500113408/2/2/51?RECORD&DATABASE=RESEARCH_GUIDES

Maynard, Steven, 1991. "The Burning, Willful Evidence: Lesbian / Gay History and Archival Research". *Archivaria*, 33, winter 1991-1992, ACA.

<https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/11811/12762>.

The National Archives UK, 2020. Sexuality and Gender Identity History Research Guide Website Section.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/gay-lesbian-history/>