

**FINDING DIRECTIONS WEST:  
READINGS THAT LOCATE AND DISLOCATE  
WESTERN CANADA'S PAST**  
Edited by George Colpitts and Heather Devine

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## Discombobulated Remnants?: Preserving LGBTTTIQ Histories<sup>1</sup>

*Cheryl Avery and Shelley Sweeney*

Records are the foundation of any history, whether those records are published or unpublished, contemporaneous or later, oral or textual, and so on. Records created in the normal course of activity that are deemed of permanent value are acquired by a variety of archives. But much conspires against the acquisition of such records. The process from creation to preservation is filled with opportunities for loss. “Complete” collections, particularly those documenting the lives of individuals, are rare. Within this context, to have archival repositories described as “institutions that ... contain discombobulated remnants of human experience”<sup>2</sup> is not entirely unexpected. On the whole, disconcerting fragmentation within collections is not the result of malice, but of time and chance and human nature. But what of the broader scope – not specific collections, but documentation of whole segments of society? Our attention was drawn to the work of a graduate student at York University, whose research took him to the archives in a small town in Saskatchewan where he hoped to find evidence of the history of the local gay community. Instead he found “silences and absences,” yet it was in those very spaces that the archives became “full: full of questions [and] power relations.” Ultimately, the experience left him wondering about the very existence of the LGBT community’s history, asking, “Where do we find ourselves?”<sup>3</sup>

Significant absences in the evidentiary record can only diminish us as a society, and so this chapter began as a brief exploration of that question.

The approach was twofold. We set out to determine the extent to which public archives in Canada, and those in Western Canada in particular, have retained a record of the LGBT experience. We also sought to identify and consider the various factors which have affected, or still do affect, the collection of those records. We began by examining our own institutions' LGBT resources. We then reviewed some of the responses to an earlier survey on archivists' values.<sup>4</sup> We further surveyed Canadian archivists to get a glimpse of current practice in acquisition, description, and access, to try to determine the relationships between archivists and donors, and to ascertain how archivists viewed LGBT materials generally. To a large extent we were influenced by our own experiences as Western Canadian archivists and were interested in seeing if our institutional experiences were common or exceptional. We also reviewed existing descriptions available on ArchivesCanada, the Canadian Council of Archives national database of archival holdings, and its constituent parts from each province and territory.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note, however, that archival associations in the West – from British Columbia to Manitoba, and extending to both the Yukon and the Northwest Territories – were significantly in advance of other regions when it came to creating and populating their provincial database of holdings. In part this was due to a high degree of co-operation between the western provinces; but they were also simply in the vanguard of this work. For a variety of reasons, despite its national scope, Western Canada remains better represented on ArchivesCanada than the Maritime provinces. Additionally, some significant collections – the archives of the University of Toronto, McGill, or the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, for example – have not been added. This unquestionably gave our survey of holdings a western bias but has not invalidated our observations.

Not surprisingly, many of the issues brought to light by our surveys have been the subject of a great deal of scholarship in the field of archival theory. However, we discovered very little relating archival theory specifically to any identifiable type of record or to LGBT holdings in particular. The closest related study we found was a survey of an allied profession, librarians, in South Africa. In that paper, the impact of the South African constitution was instructive: the concept that “difference should not be the basis for exclusion, marginalization and stigma” has been legally upheld in various instances, importantly (in one ruling) with the observation that “acceptance of difference is particularly important in South Africa with

its history of discrimination.” Yet this was clearly still a point for argument and persuasion, not a foundational principle reflected in changed behaviour. More interestingly was the authors’ second “motivation”: the “mission of the public library to contribute to social inclusion and justice.”<sup>6</sup> In this, there was a direct connection with archival theory. In particular, archival literature analyzes identity – specifically community identity – and its impact on the development of thematic archives.<sup>7</sup> Institutional mission statements, and differences between community-based archives and collections found within (often larger) “mainstream” archives, are a focus of this literature.<sup>8</sup> Work has also been done collating existing holdings, most notably with the Society of American Archivists’ “Lavender Legacies Guide.”<sup>9</sup> To date, no similar national, thematic guide has been created in either Western Canada or in Canada as a whole, and we found no other survey of archivists – in any country – specifically addressing the impact of the individual professional on the acquisition and accessibility of the records of an identifiable group.

A full discussion of the shifting attitudes toward the LGBT community is impossible here, but a few dates are important in terms of official Canadian policy. Homosexual activity, particularly between men, had been deemed an “offence” at least as early as 1777<sup>10</sup> in what is now Canada. “Gross indecency,” an ill-defined term but once again specific to an activity between men, was entered into the Criminal Code in 1890.<sup>11</sup> In 1953 the wording was amended to be more inclusive: “*Every one* who commits an act of gross indecency with another person is guilty of an indictable offence [emphasis added].”<sup>12</sup> Another significant change to the law did not begin to take place until 1967, when (then) Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau famously noted that “there’s no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation ... what’s done in private between adults doesn’t concern the Criminal Code.”<sup>13</sup> On 14 May 1969, Bill C-150 was passed, decriminalizing homosexuality – in private and between consenting adults over twenty-one years of age. Although this did not provide full equality under the law for lesbian and gay Canadians, and certainly did nothing to diminish homophobia and various acts of discrimination, large and small, it was nevertheless a watershed moment.

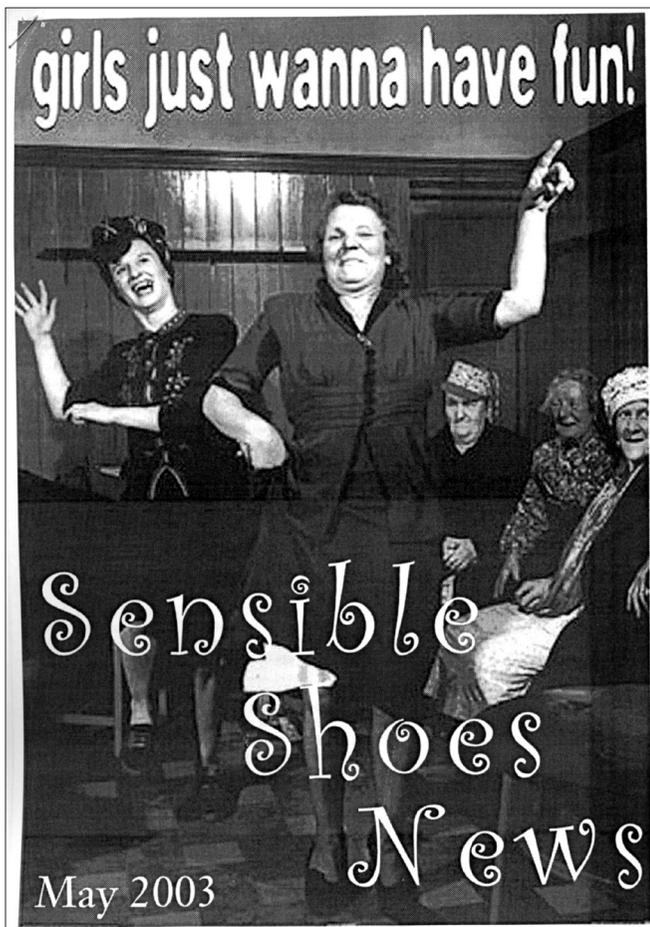
The year 1969 was notable for two other events: the Stonewall Riots in New York, a “militant assertion of gay rights over [a] six-day period of rioting [against police],” and the subsequent (and very visible) establishment



2.1 “National Gay Conference 1975,” Manitoba Gay & Lesbian Society Fonds, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, A08-067, box 13, folder 10, item 16.

of the University of Toronto Homophile Association. Other Canadian organizations soon followed. Throughout the 1970s, however, there were continuing police raids on gay bars, meeting places, and bathhouses in Canada’s major cities. A “national beacon moment” occurred on 5 February 1981, the day following one such raid on bathhouses in Toronto, when “over 3,000 protestors took to the streets to mobilize against the discriminatory arrests and unlawful invasion of these gay spaces.”<sup>14</sup>

These events effectively politicized the LGBT individual twice: first through criminalization, then as part of a community actively pursuing human rights. Both criminality and activism have an impact on the nature of the archival record, where that record is retained, and how it is described. And whatever LGBT associations might have existed earlier, the shift in 1969 toward organized advocacy within the community also clearly created a potential dichotomy between personal records documenting an individual life and those of a social movement.



2.2 *Sensible Shoes News*: the newsletter of Saskatchewan's lesbian communities. May 2003. University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Richards Collection HQ76.3 .C3S4

Our own institutions, the University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections and the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, have significant assemblages of LGBT archives. In the case of the University of Saskatchewan Archives, a former employee has been both instigator of the LGBT collection generally and a significant collector (and donor) of materials. As a long-time advocate for human rights, this individual has substantial ties throughout the LGBT community and has personally made the many introductions necessary for soliciting valuable collections. While LGBT archives are not part of the official collecting mandate of the University of Manitoba Archives, a significant and sizable collection was initiated through the donation of the Manitoba Gay

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Gay and Lesbian

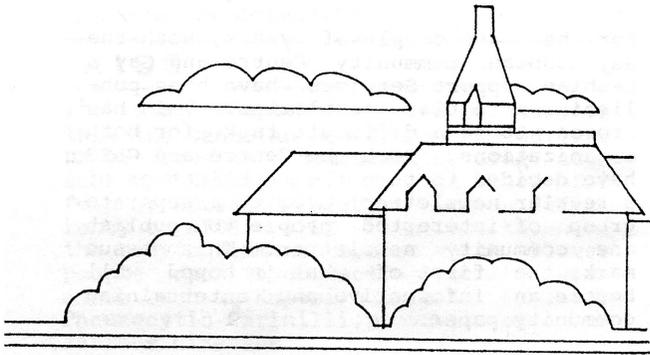
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# PERCEPTIONS

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SASKATOON

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## INSIDE

CONFESSIONS OF A GAYLINE VOLUNTEER

G.L.U.S. - A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

SASKATOON'S NEWEST COUPLE - "GAZE" AND  
"GAY TIMES" JOIN HANDS

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MARCH/APRIL 1983

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No. 1

2.3 *Perceptions*, no. 1, March/April 1983: the longest continuously published gay and lesbian newsmagazine in Canada. University of Saskatchewan Archives & Special Collections, Richards Collection HQ76.3 .C3G3

and Lesbian Archives of the Rainbow Resource Centre in 2008.<sup>15</sup> That first organizational donation unleashed a flood of papers coming to the University of Manitoba Archives from individuals, which does not seem to be abating. Researcher response to this collecting has been swift and overwhelmingly positive: the LGBT archives are becoming one of the most popular series of private archival collections at the University of Manitoba.

In addition to our own institutions' significant LGBT archives, we were also aware of the recent acquisition by the University of Victoria's Transgender Archives, established in 2007, and the University of Winnipeg Archives and Records Centre of the Two-Spirited Collection in 2011 as indicators that Western Canadian public institutions are acquiring LGBT records.<sup>16</sup> The LGBT collections at these four institutions made us wonder about the nature and makeup of such collections at other archives in Western Canada and indeed the rest of Canada and, further, to wonder how those collections were acquired and what roles the archivists and the donors might have played in these acquisitions.

Two aspects of the early "Values" survey were suggestive, providing a broad framework for our more specific enquiry. First: Why might we even assume publicly funded archives are acquiring LGBT materials?<sup>17</sup> In most instances for *public* archives, collecting LGBT materials would require *private*-sector acquisition: Can we legitimately assume that, collectively, archivists are managing to do so in a broad and comprehensive manner?

In the "Values" survey, although just under 55 per cent of archivists agreed to some extent with the statement that "archives document society as a whole," only 38 per cent agreed without qualification, suggesting most archivists are aware that the issue is complex and there may be gaps in the evidential record. As one respondent noted, this question was phrased in a manner that made the results unreliable. However, even a broad interpretation – that governments touch the lives of most individuals, so retention of government records alone document society – does not hold true for all communities, or tell a complete story. As has been noted, even early census records, so useful for much of social history, are silent on LGBT history; the question of sexual preference simply was not asked. And, for decades, most government interaction with the LGBT community was coloured by the perception of criminality, hardly conducive to a multi-dimensional record.

Many of the survey respondents indicated they had distinguished between the collective and the individual institution. That interpretation coincided with a belief that as a network, archives were acquiring broadly and documenting society comprehensively. More important, perhaps, were archivists' views on factors that might influence acquisition. A bare majority – 50.71 per cent – agreed to some extent with the statement that “archivists are in control of their acquisitions policies,” but 81.69 per cent agreed that funders or sponsor agencies affected those policies. With this in mind, we would not have been surprised to see a number of respondents citing narrow acquisition mandates, or a move toward accepting sponsorial records only, as reasons why LGBT materials had not been collected.

The other interesting feature of the results of the questionnaire was a frank acknowledgement: just under 78 per cent of archivists agreed that they could not “avoid subjectivity in their acquisitions policies.” Such self-awareness might in fact help mitigate uneven collecting practices, but also suggested at least the potential for some archivists to ignore LGBT records through personal bias, either consciously or unconsciously. Discrimination against the LGBT community would hardly be new.

Several historians argue that archivists have, in fact, actively destroyed LGBT history. For example, Martin Duberman writes that “all scholarship on sexuality was suspect – curtailed or suspended by archival custodians,”<sup>18</sup> Steven Maynard refers to “conscious and unconscious suppression of lesbian/gay materials in mainstream archives,”<sup>19</sup> and Gary Kinsman suggests that because “same-gender eroticism was stigmatized, historically valuable diaries and letters have not been preserved.”<sup>20</sup> Finally, Marcel Barriault writes that “gay and lesbian materials had often been deemed by archivists to be of little or no historical value.”<sup>21</sup> As Lisa Duggan bluntly stated, “lesbians and gay men have had their existence systematically denied and rendered invisible.”<sup>22</sup> Clearly, archivists are thought to have been complicit in the loss of LGBT records.

The primary evidence for this is absence: researchers have failed to find early records relating to what is a known history. No written institutional policies against collecting LGBT material have yet been cited. However, there is anecdotal evidence that in some cases, suppression or destruction of relevant materials occurred. If true, then to what extent might this have happened? The appraisal decisions of individual archivists made while

working through private funds are not easily quantified; and even less so are the decisions of donors concerning privacy.

In our follow-up survey specifically about LGBT materials, we did not find significant evidence of overt bias on the part of archivists. That said, at least one of the responses was ambiguous at best. One of our questions asked why LGBT materials were not being collected, and one of the answers was, “Never been offered any. Never thought of going to look for any in the community. Don’t really see the need to document this aspect of society – just as I don’t see the need to document heterosexuality,” which seemed to couch discrimination in liberal phrases. And, when asked if they would accept sexually explicit material (of any persuasion), at least some archivists recognized their own limits, together with the implication that had for research. For example, one respondent admitted, “I would not accept anything that could constitute child pornography ... I know this is a grey area in terms of sexuality studies, but it is not one I am willing to cross.” Although the latter was not related to LGBT materials, both these responses do indicate the types of barriers archivists can create to halt the acquisition of any record. On the whole, however, there was a general sense that LGBT records were a valid area for acquisition, and no different from any other type of record in the archives’ holdings. When asked if they had the same acquisition and access policies for controversial materials – hetero or homosexual – archivists overwhelmingly responded in the affirmative. “We don’t make distinctions based on subject matter,” one wrote.

But the sense that there was lack of interest among archivists, joined perhaps with distrust of publicly funded institutions by the LGBT community, has meant the development of private, community-run LGBT archives. An early, and initially viable, private archives in Western Canada was formally established in Winnipeg in 1988. The Winnipeg Gay/Lesbian Resource Centre was supported by the Manitoba Council of Archives and the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.<sup>23</sup> The centre gathered materials from a variety of sources, creating an exceptionally useful local resource. But with funding issues, the materials eventually ended up in storage – paid for by one individual – who finally donated the collection to the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections. Within the space of a few years the centre had gone from being cited as a community success story, to an inaccessible resource, to a problem, and finally, to incorporation within a larger institution. The largest independent archives is the Canadian

Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) in Toronto, which was founded in 1973; it is largely volunteer-run and privately funded. Just how sustainable such institutions can be in the long run has yet to be determined: even the successful CLGA has had significant funding crises in the past and has been sustained largely by the extraordinary efforts of long-standing volunteers and donor bequests. And when we consider in the past decade the funding cutbacks to many archives, local, provincial and federal, such concern is not out of place.

But what of the opposite: active acquisition by public archives? Regardless of interest or willingness to house LGBT materials, only 56 per cent of archivists in our survey indicated they had LGBT materials; and only 26 per cent indicated their repository actively collected in that area. A majority (53 per cent) indicated LGBT materials had been found in personal papers acquired for other reasons; in such cases, 88 per cent indicated those materials would normally be retained. Most (61 per cent) would not consult with the donor before making the decision on retention, although many identified privacy as an issue, particularly when uncertain if the donor was fully aware of all the materials in the collection. Two comments in particular, however, stand out: “We inform donors as a matter of standard procedure in situations where appraisal leads to the *removal* of records [emphasis added]”; and “We do not destroy material that has archival value because someone does not approve of it.” Both, as opposite approaches, are nevertheless essentially in agreement with another, quite firm, statement: “Retention is solely the decision of the archivist.”

Curiously, if there was a suggestion of bias it was most clearly evident in the response to acquisition of “anti-gay” materials. Only 15 per cent indicated they had records of this kind – although as a means of documenting the LGBT experience, these records, which help identify the nature of discrimination and some social attitudes, are surely useful.

But there are several problems inherent simply in identifying the extent of relevant collections across the country. Not least is a changing lexicon: the Hungarian writer Karoly Maria Benkert first used the word “homosexual” in 1869, but the term did not enter into the English language until the 1890s through the work of Havelock Ellis and in medical literature.<sup>24</sup> “Transgender” is another, more recent, example, dating to the late 1980s;<sup>25</sup> and over time words such as “gay” or “queer” have transitioned from non-sexual terms, to slurs, to re-appropriation within the community.

All of these shifts have implications for description. More important for the issue of discovery, however, is the extended period when homosexual relationships were identified as criminal behaviour. At least until 1969 in Canada, that official categorization would have significantly affected how relevant resources would have been acquired, retained, and described.

For “official” sources, in particular for court records which have proven so useful in documenting gay history, descriptive records – including finding aids – are likely quite generic. Indeed, for any large record group – immigration or homestead records, for example – detailed indexes tend to follow, rather than anticipate, high researcher demand. Relevant information within sources like court records would likely not be found by specific descriptive terms provided by an archivist but by those researchers who understand the relationship between function and record and who are willing to spend time searching through the records.

The question of the archival response to personal fonds is even more interesting. Barriault suggests the loss of records was due not to overt censorship on the part of archivists but to a combination of concern over ethics, privacy, and donor reluctance: “There is much anecdotal evidence ... to suggest that archivists routinely segregated records of a homosexual nature from the fonds they were processing, and returned these materials to the donors or to their heirs.”<sup>26</sup> Few archivists would be as likely to return such records today, unless specifically requested to do so by the donor. This would bring the practice more into line with what archivists would do now with other personal concerns, such as keeping information about extramarital affairs in the papers, information which might be restricted but would not be removed.

Nevertheless, one must wonder if there were not also some archivists retaining these records, either by chance or design. The weight of being defined as “criminal” would have demanded a circumspect life to some degree, and may well have resulted in coded language being used by gay men and lesbians in some correspondence – or even in personal diaries; a language which archivists may or may not have interpreted correctly.<sup>27</sup> Even with clear or more explicit records, how might archivists have dealt with materials which were documenting activities then considered illegal? They almost certainly would not have signalled the fact in their descriptive records, which could have put at risk either the donor or other individuals. It seems reasonable to assume that at least some relevant records remain to

be “discovered” in files, hidden under the generic rubric of “correspondence” or “diary.” What is profoundly unlikely, however, is any significant action on the part of archivists to revisit old descriptions and process collections to create the “thorough, accurate cataloguing” necessary for easy discovery.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, when asked about their descriptive practices when dealing with any potentially sensitive materials in LGBT collections, our survey respondents admitted that “it usually just gets described at a fonds- or series-level in a general sort of way”; “we describe textual material at the folder level. Therefore, descriptions are usually vague”; and, along similar lines, “the records [are] described at the file level (subject files), and the file names don’t create any issues,”<sup>29</sup> that is, the file titles alone may not provide any useful information for discovery of LGBT content. A number of comments were reflective not on the substance of archival description but its structure, possibly suggesting a neutral response from many archivists toward LGBT holdings. “Record the title proper and other title information based on the contents of the series, file, item, or publication” was typical of this type of response.<sup>30</sup>

At best we can say that specific language in archival description appears to have followed the broad shifts in public policy relating to the LGBT community. Our survey of materials accessible through ArchivesCanada revealed a relatively modern collection. We found 77 collections in total.<sup>31</sup> Based on the first year in inclusive dates, 68 per cent of the collections reflected materials created in 1960 or later. Only 4.16 per cent contained materials dating from before 1900. That survey also revealed a somewhat fragmentary collection: although collectively, these records amounted to 236 linear metres in total, half of the collections were 1 metre or less in extent. This amount cannot be considered extensive by any means. Although much work remains to be done in terms of adding descriptions to ArchivesCanada, unless the holdings of the CLGA are included, it does not seem likely that numerous LGBT collections will be added. British Columbia, with 22 collections, has the largest number, but this represents only 0.2 per cent of the BC holdings described online. Saskatchewan, with a smaller population and fewer archives, has 12 LGBT collections and does somewhat better proportionately, but LGBT materials still represent just 1 per cent of the total number of collections as available through that province’s online descriptions.<sup>32</sup>

Only 14 of the 77 descriptions we found suggested collections documenting the “personal,” through the correspondence, diaries, or known biography of a single individual. Another three collections – the records of an artist, a poet, and an unpublished literary manuscript – might be considered within this category as well. By contrast, 29 collections were directly related to issues of LGBT history and/or social justice, through the records of LGBT organizations specifically or within other institutions (for example, policies within religious denominations, at universities, etc.). Seven collections related to issues of health, most often HIV-AIDS, and ten were print collections (books, newsletters, or ephemera), the records of feminist bookstores, or publishers’ records. As noted earlier, only four were records expressing “anti-gay” sentiment, including large collections such as the *Alberta Report* fonds, records of a weekly newsmagazine with a socially and politically conservative viewpoint.<sup>33</sup>

The difference between the number of collections documenting an individual and those documenting a social movement is surely a legacy of the decades of official persecution and continuing discrimination. As discussed, some early collections may actually contain evidence of sexuality not identified explicitly in descriptive records. But the opposite might also occur, in that the descriptive records might serve to narrowly focus on one facet of a person’s life, emphasizing the notion of the homosexual as someone “whose very existence [is] defined by his sexuality.”<sup>34</sup> And so to another, difficult aspect of acquiring LGBT collections: that of donor reluctance.

The graduate student whose work influenced our title asked his question – where do we find ourselves? – in the context of the small town, rural LGBT experience, and whether that history would be retained in local archives rather than in larger urban centres. As part of the constraint in establishing a local collection, he mentioned a gay lawyer who had placed an ad in *Perceptions*, published in Saskatoon since 1983 and the longest continuously published gay and lesbian newsmagazine in Canada. When this individual considered the magazine, he did so expecting it to be read in Saskatoon and Regina, Saskatchewan’s larger cities – but suddenly felt uncomfortably “open” when he discovered the magazine was also being kept by his local library/archives.

The reluctance by some individuals to acknowledge aspects of their private life is exacerbated in the LGBT community through past and present discrimination, some of it violent. But such reluctance is not unique:

heterosexual donors may feel the same and, indeed, archivists may suggest the option of suppression. One donor noted an archivist had provided him with “the opportunity to excise what he called the embarrassing bits” in a personal fonds; the “letters and diaries, the intimate revelations.” They were precisely the type of record, the donor noted, his “grandmother ... would have consigned to the burning barrel because, she used to say, ‘they are nobody’s business.’”<sup>35</sup> Donors, too, may independently excise materials before they reach the archives; consider Henry James’s statement that “a man has a right to determine, in so far as he can, what the world shall know of him and what it shall not.”<sup>36</sup>

And increasingly, so too shall various levels of government. Rather than the “age of information,” this might more accurately be termed the “age of privacy,” as evidenced by both federal and provincial legislation concerning privacy generally, and its safeguards in any publicly funded sphere, in some instances with additional emphasis on health records and electronic records. But the influence of such legislation may extend these boundaries: there is little point in closing institutional records if the papers of a private individual could release the same information. Sexual orientation is not necessarily explicitly identified in all access legislation but is nevertheless normally considered the type of information meant as “personal,” and therefore subject to access restrictions. When asked if they restricted personal names in LGBT archives if those names might reveal sexual orientation, archivists were evenly divided: half would restrict the information. Of those, 73 per cent cited existing privacy laws as the reason. Donors of every persuasion may have materials they consider “nobody’s business,” but the LGBT situation is unique. Archival literature has highlighted how uncomfortable even LGBT *researchers* may be, simply by undertaking research in public archives – Steven Maynard refers to his “trepidation,”<sup>37</sup> and K.J. Rawson notes the numerous “environmental cues” that signal to individuals whether or not they are welcome in an archives.<sup>38</sup> One must wonder, then, if archives might be considered to be not welcoming spaces for research, how easily could they be considered trusted repositories for the documents revealing the personal lives of individuals.

With so few and such relatively small collections, it seems clear that absences exist within the collective holdings for LGBT history in Canada’s publicly funded archives, but the spectre of larger and growing absences is looming. The most surprising finding of our survey – certainly the most

disturbing – was the number of responses which indicated archivists were taking a passive approach to collecting in general. “We are interested in this material but are not able to be proactive – we accept fonds as they are offered,” wrote one respondent; another “did not have the time or resources to actively pursue” LGBT collections, despite identifying them in an acquisitions strategy. “Collecting is passive generally” was the consensus. Many apparently were willing to consider LGBT materials but only when specifically offered. It would seem the donor and not the archivist was more influential in determining the holdings of the archives. Only one respondent was proactive:

We acquire material relating to all aspects of Vancouver’s history and actively seek out archival material for those communities, such as the [LGBT] ... communities, that we perceive as under-represented in our holdings. In addition, we have a good working relationship with the BC Lesbian and Gay Archives ... we are proud of [our] acquisition, processing and access practices.<sup>39</sup>

Should this approach really stand out? Should it really be the exception, rather than the norm? Passive acquisition, to the point of inertia or complete moratoriums, is a significant issue for archives and one which clearly has implications well beyond LGBT records. Indeed, with shrinking budgets, non-existent grant funds to hire extra staff to process records, huge backlogs of unprocessed records, and overfull storage spaces, the pressure on archives is to slow down or stop acquisition entirely.

As it stands, the majority of the LGBT holdings we found on Archives-Canada (44.11 per cent) were in university or college archives. The close ties between universities and the first LGBT movements may have encouraged leaders in the community to donate to a familiar place. This donation pattern may also reflect a willingness within universities to acquire more “special” collections, and undoubtedly reflects the growing trend in LGBT research. As one respondent noted, “Sexual diversity is a research interest among faculty hired by the university in recent years, which has encouraged the acquisition of private archives and collections of printed material that deal with this topic.” Surprisingly, religious archives had the second-highest number of relevant holdings, at 20.5 per cent of the total.

Despite the fact that the federal and provincial archives are the largest in the country, their LGBT holdings were not extensive. Instead (at 14.7 per cent) they were tied for third place, together with municipal archives, the group most likely to claim a narrow mandate as the reason they had not actively pursued LGBT materials.

Several respondents did note limited mandates and particularly stretched resources when indicating why they were not collecting LGBT material: “volume of work,” “do not have the resources,” were typical comments. And indeed, we might look to increasing constraints from sponsor agencies willing to manage their own records but less inclined to acquire more broadly. In 2012 our largest archives, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), cut a significant number of positions in the private archives sphere but left those responsible for government records untouched. It has also long signalled its intention that “more will be done in cooperation with Canada’s 800 plus archives,” including the possible transfer of existing collections to those institutions “where they will get the greatest use and visibility.”<sup>40</sup> These statements are generally interpreted by the Canadian archival community to mean the LAC will not only reduce its private-sector acquisition in the future but also de-accession a significant number of its existing non-governmental holdings and disperse them among other institutions. The trend away from active acquisition in private records is growing, exacerbated by funding and space issues affecting many Canadian archives. The question is: Will universities remain willing and able to acquire broadly as significantly larger, better-resourced and better-staffed institutions do not? *Should* archives document society as a whole? *Do* they, in fact, do this? In ten years’ time these might prove useful questions to ask of Canadian archivists.

The existing LGBT holdings in Canada’s publicly funded archives are not extensive, although those in Western Canada, particularly our own current institutions, are actively being added to. With passive acquisition, in particular, it is increasingly important for the LGBT “advocate/collector” to help ensure an appropriate record is preserved. Archives exist to reflect society: to ensure its authentic, reliable evidence of our lives and actions are preserved. But this is ultimately a joint project, that of donor and archivist together, and it requires public policy support. Some archivists are trying to acquire a broad spectrum of materials, despite narrowing mandates, but ultimately we cannot retain the record without at least some

participation and action by individuals, organizations, and governments who understand the long-term value of retaining our shared history.

So we end where we began: asking where the LGBT community's history can be found. The answer, unfortunately, is: still fighting for recognition.

## Notes

- 1 LGBTTTIQ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two spirit, intersex, and queer. Hereafter "LGBT." Portions of this paper were previously published by Cheryl Avery, "The Reticent Archives: Preserving LGBTTIQ Histories," *Comma* 2013, no. 1 (2014): 69–77.
- 2 From Bryan Ganaway's review of Carolyn Steedman's book *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-german&month=0307&week=b&msg=w3TdAlzWE3ofD77HMaHe5w&user=&pw=> .
- 3 Joseph Wickenhauser, "Finding Ourselves: LGBTQ Archives and the Small Urban Centre," paper presented at the Knotty Encounters Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference, Toronto, Ontario, 3 March 2012.
- 4 Cheryl Avery, "Actions, Purposes and Values Survey." Hereafter referred to as "Values survey." Although useful, the results from both the "Values" survey and our subsequent LGBT survey cannot be considered conclusive. The surveys were both conducted over Arcan-L, the Canadian archivists' listserv, and were entirely voluntary; in both instances, the sample group was informative but not statistically conclusive.
- 5 At the time of writing, ArchivesCanada is in transition between platforms. The change is expected to enable significantly more entries to be added, and more regular updates.
- 6 Genevieve Hart and Ncumisa Mfazo, "Places for All? Cape Town's Public Library Services to Gays and Lesbians," *South African Journal of Library and Information Science* 76, no. 2 (2010): 98.
- 7 An excellent discussion of this can be found in Bill Lukenbill, "Modern Gay and Lesbian Libraries and Archives in North America: A Study in Community Identity and Affirmation," *Library Management* 23 (2002): 93–100.
- 8 See also Brittany Bennett Parris, "Creating, Reconstructing, and Protecting Historical Narratives: Archives and the LBGT Community," *Current Studies in Librarianship* 29, no. 1/2 (2005): 5–25.
- 9 See <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/lesbian-and-gay-archives-roundtable-lagar/lavender-legacies-guide>.
- 10 Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities*, 2nd ed. rev. (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1996), 104.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 102.
- 12 The wording had previously been "every male person." See "A History of Canadian Sexual Assault Legislation 1900–2000," [http://www.constancebackhouse.ca/fileadmin/website/gr\\_indec.htm](http://www.constancebackhouse.ca/fileadmin/website/gr_indec.htm).
- 13 A clip of the news scrum with reporters can be viewed at the CBC's digital archives site: <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1811727781>.

- 14 For useful histories of the LGBT community in Canada, see Neil Richards's chronology on Saskatchewan Resources for Sexual Diversity (<http://library2.usask.ca/srsd/history.php>) and Graham Stinnett's essays for the Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives ([http://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/digital/gay\\_lesbian/index.html](http://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/digital/gay_lesbian/index.html)).
- 15 See <http://nanna.lib.umanitoba.ca/atom/index.php/manitoba-gay-and-lesbian-archives%3brad>.
- 16 Based in part on promotional posts over Arcan-L.
- 17 Referred to hereafter simply as "public archives."
- 18 Martin Bauml Duberman, *About Time: Exploring the Gay Past* (New York: Sea Horse, 1986), xiii. Duberman suggests that in part this was due to sexuality being treated as "a shameful part of our history – diaries bowdlerized, relationships concealed, photographs and letters burned."
- 19 Steven Maynard, "The Burning, Wilful Evidence": Lesbian/Gay History and Archival Research," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92): 196.
- 20 Kinsman, *Regulation of Desire*, 66.
- 21 Marcel Barriault, "Hard to Dismiss: The Archival Value of Gay Male Erotica and Pornography," *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009): 225.
- 22 Lisa Duggan, "History's Gay Ghetto: The Contradictions of Growth in Lesbian and Gay History," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. S.P. Benson, S. Brier, and R. Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 284, quoted in Maynard, "The Burning, Wilful Evidence," 198.
- 23 The Manitoba Council of Archives is now the Association for Manitoba Archives. The Provincial Archives of Manitoba is now the Archives of Manitoba.
- 24 Kinsman, *Regulation of Desire*, 61.
- 25 K.J. Rawson, "Accessing Transgender // Desiring Queer(er?) Archival Logics," *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009): 124–25.
- 26 Barriault, "Hard to Dismiss," 225n17. In that instance, the family appeared eager to suppress evidence of a gay liaison.
- 27 A recent example, popularized through film, are the diaries of Yorkshire landowner Anne Lister, "uncovered" by a historian in the Calderdale archives, England.
- 28 Suzanne Fischer, "Nota Bene: If You 'Discover' Something in an Archive, It's Not a Discovery," *Atlantic*, 19 June 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/06/nota-bene-if-you-discover-something-in-an-archive-its-not-a-discovery/258538/>.
- 29 Survey results, Shelley Sweeney and Cheryl Avery, survey on Canadian archivists' collection practices: LGBTTTIQ archives, conducted over Arcan-L.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Representing English-language descriptions only.
- 32 Figures based on Memory BC feature, "browse archival descriptions," which lists a total of 10,794 descriptions (<http://memorybc.ca;/informationobject/browse>); and the administrative site for the Saskatchewan Archival Information Network (SAIN), which lists 1,147 public fonds-level descriptions.

- 33 See John Lund, "Representation of Homosexuality in the *Alberta Report*" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Association of Canadian Archivists, Calgary, Alberta, 15–17 May 2009), for an interesting discussion of LGBT images from this fonds.
- 34 Kinsman, *Regulation of Desire*, 68.
- 35 David Carpenter, "Private Life," in *Lights to Each Other: University of Saskatchewan Interdisciplinary Collections* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 2004), 33.
- 36 As quoted in Andrew Taylor, "'The Same Old Sausage': Thomas Carlyle and the James Family," in *The Carlyles at Home and Abroad: Essays in Honour of Kenneth J. Fielding*, ed. D. Sorensen and R. Tarr (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 126.
- 37 Maynard, "'The Burning, Wilful Evidence,'" 197.
- 38 Rawson, "Archival Logics," 127.
- 39 Leslie Mobbs, City Archivist and Director, Records and Archives, City of Vancouver.
- 40 Library and Archives Canada, "Modernization – Myth Busters," <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/about-us/modernization/Pages/Myth-Busters.aspx>.

