

The Case of LLACE: Challenges, Triumphs, and Lessons of a Community Archives

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ABSTRACT

This article uses the Lavender Library, Archives, and Cultural Exchange of Sacramento, Incorporated, a small queer community archives in Northern California, as a case study for expanding our knowledge of community archives and issues of archival practice. It explores why creating a separate community archives was necessary, the role of community members in founding and maintaining the archives, the development of its collections, and the ongoing challenges community archives face. The article also considers the implications community archives have for professional practice, particularly in the areas of collecting, description, and collaboration.

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KEY WORDS

Archival Records, Archival History, Local History Collections

Activism, social justice, and community involvement in the archives have become hot topics as of late,¹ but activism is nothing new for community archivists and volunteers. For decades, members of marginalized groups have collected, preserved, and curated collections of materials for and by communities through the work of individual activist archivists. For underrepresented groups, the creation of community archives is a political act in defiance of marginalization.² Furthermore, community archives provide a safe space for community members to come together for study, leisure reading, and socializing. This article extends our understanding of critical issues of relevance to the entire profession found in the literature by using a small queer community archives as a case study. These issues include why founding a queer community archives was necessary; the role played by community members in creating and maintaining the archives; the development of collections and descriptive practices; and the ongoing challenges of sustaining community archives.

The Lavender Library, Archives, and Cultural Exchange of Sacramento, Incorporated (hereafter referred to by its acronym, LLACE) provides a useful case to expand our understanding of these issues in community archives and archival practice.³ Created in 1998 by a small group of dedicated activists and volunteer librarians, LLACE has become a community center serving the Sacramento area through its archival collections, circulating library of books and videos, and public programming. LLACE not only documents the rich cultural heritage of queer communities throughout the Sacramento area, it also provides meeting rooms for multiple groups, making it a popular gathering place. Located in Northern California, LLACE is not in an epicenter of queer rights activism, as compared to neighboring San Francisco, which is home to the larger and more well-known GLBT Historical Society. However, as the state's capital, Sacramento is important legislatively, and, therefore, a study of LLACE can provide a new geographic focus for community archives research. Also, as LLACE is much newer and smaller than the more famous ONE: National Gay and Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles and the Lesbian Herstory in New York, an understanding of its experience expands our appreciation of queer community archives beyond these better-known organizations.

The word *queer* is used throughout this article as the most general, overarching term to describe communities and individuals who support LLACE and make it possible. As Marcel Barriault and Rebecka Sheffield, guest editors of a special section on queer archives in *Archivaria*, explained, they opted for the term *queer* for its inclusiveness and practicality.⁴ Susan Stryker and Jim Van Buskirk also used *queer* in their book *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area* because they felt that it encompasses identities, genders, and sexualities not included in popular initialisms, such as LGBT.⁵ Stryker also used *queer* in her *Transgender History* because it denoted commonalities

within communities and, as she put it, avoided “historical nit-picking” over the terms used.⁶

Literature Review

Research on community archives has been expanding within the last decade. While still arguably a nascent field,⁷ a number of articles focused on the reasons for creating these archives, their funding and staffing, their collection development, their description and access practices, and the challenges they faced. This section highlights the current state of research in these areas and positions LLACE as a case contributing to the literature on community archives. Although numerous underrepresented and marginalized communities have created community archives, this review emphasizes literature specific to queer community archives since that is the focus of this study and the mission of LLACE.

CREATING COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Communities create archives because of a lack of representation in or access to records from their pasts. Much of the literature emphasizes how marginalized groups distrusted institutional archives after seeing how their lives had been represented or, in some instances, completely omitted. As noted by both Joan Nestle and Maxine Wolfe in their histories of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, there was a great need to create a community archives to document histories being lost or ignored.⁸

Like queer history in general, activists and community members have written much of the literature on community archives; only relatively recently have scholars and academics begun to study seriously and write about them.⁹ One of the most prominent is British researcher Andrew Flinn. His research into community archives supported the earlier writings by community archivists who stated that when mainstream archival institutions marginalize certain groups, these communities create their own archives and collect materials that would otherwise be lost to the historical record.¹⁰ Archivist Elizabeth Knowlton studied this phenomenon in the late 1980s by conducting a survey of gay community archives and institutional archives located in the same city or state. Published in 1987, her survey showed that institutional archivists had little knowledge of gay archives or gay rights movements more generally.¹¹ The only queer community records available in these cities were stored in individuals’ homes or in community archives.¹²

More recent literature shows that an important motivation behind the initial founding of community archives was to maintain control over the

communities' records. This continues to be the case, even as institutional archives have begun collecting community records as well. Published interviews with community archives' founders often contain commentary on the importance of community control over archives. Ajamu X and Topher Campbell of rukus! in the United Kingdom¹³ noted this in their article with Mary Stevens as did Joan Nestle of the Lesbian Herstory Archives¹⁴ in New York and William Walker of the GLBT Historical Society¹⁵ in San Francisco. Interviews and other published accounts of the beginnings of queer community archives also attest to the grassroots, activist attitudes of their founders and the strong support given by community members who also desired to control their historical collections.¹⁶ As Nestle wrote about the Lesbian Herstory Archives, she and other founders wanted "our story . . . preserved by us."¹⁷ Accounts by community archives' founders support findings in subsequent research by Flinn with his colleagues Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd on the importance of dedicated founders and volunteers in creating community archives to preserve history and strengthen community identities.¹⁸

FUNDING AND STAFFING

The literature on community archives shows that one of the main challenges to community archives has been the need for sustained funding and the importance of community support in maintaining the archives. Writings by archivist Marcel Barriault and community archivist Polly Thistlethwaite discussed the fact that community archives face many difficulties in funding, which means they must rely heavily on community support.¹⁹ For example, Barriault reported that the Canadian Gay Archives was not granted charitable status until November 1981, as Revenue Canada ruled that because it "did not acquire government records," it did not qualify as an archives.²⁰ In her article about the Lesbian Herstory Archives, Thistlethwaite emphasized the continuing reliance on support from lesbian community members to preserve and provide access to records.²¹ Nestle, who was instrumental in creating the Lesbian Herstory Archives, further explained that the archives refuses to accept government funding, as its founders and volunteers do not believe the government can be relied upon and that support must come from within lesbian communities.²²

Other writings show that funding comes through donations, grants, other nonprofit organizations, and noncommunity archives partnerships.²³ For instance, Aimee Brown's overview history of queer community archives in the United States gave the example of the GLBT Historical Society depositing collections with the San Francisco Public Library to provide greater researcher access. She also mentioned other community archives that, because of sustained

funding issues, donated their collections to institutional archives for safekeeping and continued public access.²⁴

The literature also suggests, however, that these arrangements and partnerships are not without their own issues. Partnerships can go sour, as when the Lesbian Herstory Archives created a joint exhibit with the New York Public Library. In the end, the volunteers from the Lesbian Herstory Archives felt that their work was slighted in the exhibit's credits.²⁵ Newman, as well as the research team of Stevens, Flinn, and Shepherd, similarly found that community archives remain skeptical of working with institutional archives. Based on their research, they suggested that organizations desiring to partner with community archivists must ensure true collaboration and respect to build trust and mutually beneficial programs.²⁶

Community archives' funding has significant implications for staffing, particularly in terms of whether a volunteer or paid staff manages the archives. The ethnographic analysis of the British black LGBT archives known as rukus! by X, Campbell, and Stevens found that archives' staff members are often a mix of activists and volunteers.²⁷ As Nestle noted in her article on the Lesbian Herstory Archives, some archives take great pride in training their volunteer staff in-house.²⁸ The literature also reveals that some well-funded archives have paid professional staff, while still others, such as LLACE, have volunteers who are professional archivists and oversee volunteers.²⁹ This diversity in staffing and funding models is partially a product of differing levels of support of the archives.

COLLECTIONS AND COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

More so than in other archives, community members dictate collection development in community archives. Many archives rely almost exclusively on donations from community members. The resultant archival collections reflect the passions and experiences of individual donors and often include materials not traditionally considered archival records. For example, in interviews with volunteers at the rukus! Archives, Stevens found that 'zines,³⁰ posters, and other ephemera are collected.³¹ Barriault found that the Canadian Gay Archives similarly collects ephemera, including buttons, trophies, and uniforms, as well as items commonly thought of as museum pieces, such as furniture and art.³²

Consciously or not, these nontraditional acquisitions by some community archives, align them with the integrative work of GLAM, an area of research that has recently seen a resurgence in popularity.³³ An acronym for galleries, libraries, archives, and museums, GLAM emphasizes the interconnections among these cultural information centers and their potential to serve as holistic spaces for education and research. As Lisa M. Given and Lianne McTavish noted, the conception of spaces that integrate the similar missions and features

of libraries, museums, and archives dates back to at least the nineteenth century.³⁴ Interest in GLAM is being revived in part due to the collaborative efforts of GLAM institutions in creating digital repositories.³⁵ Jennifer Trant has studied this movement, noting its strong online presence in terms of metacollections from multiple institutions.³⁶

While many community archives rely extensively or even exclusively on donations for expanding their collections, this does not mean that community archives do not have collection development policies. The literature shows that many community archives' collections started with donations of records that might otherwise have been thrown away.³⁷ But rapid growth has strained archival resources, and now most repositories, such as the ONE: National Gay and Lesbian Archives and the GLBT Historical Society, have policies that focus collecting priorities and goals.³⁸

DESCRIPTION AND ACCESS

A number of studies focus on descriptive standards, especially those relating to historically marginalized communities, which are of great relevance to community archives research. Begun decades ago with Sanford Berman's 1971 piece on discrimination in the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), subsequent work by Ellen Greenblatt and others looked at ways to eliminate discriminatory and derogatory words in existing thesauri or advocated creating alternative vocabularies to use when describing certain collections.³⁹ For instance, Matt Johnson's report on "GLBT Controlled Vocabularies and Classification Schemes" for the American Library Association's GLBT Roundtable noted that many controlled vocabularies are created specifically for cataloging queer collections.⁴⁰ One of the best known is a thesaurus created by Dee Michel.⁴¹

Another issue raised in the literature concerns physical access to collections in community archives. While archives traditionally have closed stacks, some community archives do not. For example, the Lesbian Herstory Archives is not a closed stacks archives, but makes its materials available for browsing.⁴² Other community archives, such as LLACE, especially those that collect nonarchival materials, open certain sections of their stacks for browsing. These differences in access policies, like those in description and collecting, are related to community support and needs, demonstrating again the influence of community members on the archives.

CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

While researchers find high levels of involvement in community archives, the archives still face challenges to their continued survival. As the current

literature reveals, community archivists must always develop sources of funding and find ways to increase their visibility. Meeker noted this need in his article on the GLBT Historical Society,⁴³ emphasizing the importance of community involvement and visibility in generating the funds needed to support the archives' work. Researchers identified sustainability as one of the most pressing challenges for community archives as they continue to serve their missions of collecting, preserving, and providing access to records by, from, and important to queer communities.⁴⁴

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

While literature continues to grow on community archives' histories and practices, numerous gaps still exist. As community archives is a relatively recent field of study, with much of the research being done outside of the United States, many archives have yet to be documented. This study of LLACE fills a geographical niche by examining a community archives in a relatively understudied location. Also, while histories of multiple community archives have been recorded in firsthand accounts by their founders and in studies by archivists and historians, outside of the work by Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd, literature on applying the findings to archival practice is limited. This study of LLACE attempts partially to fill this gap by using the archival work being done there to push forward the discussion of evolving professional archival practices.

Key Issues at LLACE

LLACE provides an exemplary case for exploring issues raised in the literature and expanding our understanding of community archives and their intersections with other types of repositories. This study used oral history interviews with LLACE's archivist, Ron Grantz, and lead cataloger, Buzz Haughton, as well as archival collections and newspaper articles. Ron Grantz also provided copies of LLACE's collection policy and a speech he delivered about LLACE's history and current status. This discussion section looks at each of the key issues raised in the literature review as it relates to LLACE.

KEY ISSUE I: CREATION OF LLACE AS DEDICATED SPACE

Previous researchers almost universally have noted that one of the primary reasons for creating community archives is because institutional archives were not collecting and providing access to community records.⁴⁵ This was true for LLACE, which was established on June 21, 1998, as the Sacramento Library

Project, and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.⁴⁶ LLACE's original mission was to provide a library and archives for the city's queer community members, which Sacramento lacked. At the time, the Jayne Rountree Commemorative Library and its host organization, the Lambda Community Center, were experiencing financial difficulties that imperiled the viability of a dedicated space for collecting materials by and about queer communities in Sacramento.⁴⁷ This uncertainty was a great blow to community members, as no other dedicated spaces existed in the Sacramento area for the collection, preservation, and sharing of records by and for queer community members. Therefore, an organization such as LLACE was needed to provide space and visibility to the collections and work of community members. As an article appearing in the July 1, 1998, issue of the newspaper, *Mom Guess What*, explained, the purpose of creating the archives was to preserve "artifacts that document our rich cultural heritage" through this new community-based organization.⁴⁸

LLACE was the brainchild of Gail Lang, who persuaded many people to help her plan a resource center for Sacramento's queer communities. Lang studied nursing and was an occupational therapist in New York before moving to California in 1979 and becoming an employee at The Open Book, a LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex) bookstore.⁴⁹ LLACE was Gail Lang's vision, but its establishment required much community support. For example, during the library's formative years, many individuals, including Michael Bennett⁵⁰ and Kimberly Weer,⁵¹ helped Lang. Bennett had been involved with the Rountree Library while it was part of the Lambda Community Center (another queer community organization in Sacramento),⁵² while Weer was one of the first presidents of LLACE's board of directors. But it was Lang's personal connections that enticed many other people to assist with LLACE's formation and later volunteer. As Buzz Haughton, current LLACE board treasurer and lead cataloger, said, "I think a lot of people who became active in the Lavender Library did it out of a sense of loyalty to Gail because we loved her so much."⁵³ Indeed, Lang has been described as the library's "guardian angel."⁵⁴ Due to Lang's and other community members' unflagging effort, LLACE would quickly become an archives, library, and popular community gathering space.

KEY ISSUE 2: BUDGET AND STAFFING

LLACE faces the same budgeting and staffing issues noted in previous studies on community archives. Its archives, along with its circulating collections, operates on a shoestring budget or, as LLACE's archivist Ron Grantz noted, "We don't really have a budget here. So if you need something, within reason, they'll [the board] order it. Many times we just chip in our own."⁵⁵ To address these financial issues, LLACE obtained certification from the United Way to become

eligible for donations.⁵⁶ Certification also meant that LLACE could receive matching donations from state workers, providing another funding stream.⁵⁷ A major source of income is the Gail Lang Trust Fund, created by Lang before her death in 2003, which, according to Haughton, consisted of “one-quarter of the value of her property.”⁵⁸ This trust fund provides a safety net for LLACE; on occasion, the principal has been used to pay expenses. Other funds come from grants and donations from private individuals and local organizations, such as the Sacramento Valley Leathermen and the Sacramento Valley Bears.⁵⁹

A final source of funding comes from membership dues paid by the Pride Preservers, who donate money and time to ensure the organization’s continued success.⁶⁰ When first developed, five levels of membership were based on amount donated, with each amount equated to different borrowing privileges for the lending library. For example, at the yellow level, a member would donate twenty-five dollars and be able to check out two items at a time. At the purple level, a member would donate one hundred dollars and be able to check out five items at a time.⁶¹ There are now two levels of Pride Preservers, and these membership dues enable LLACE’s continued operation.⁶²

LLACE has an all-volunteer board that directs day-to-day operations and plans for the future. The board is comprised of six positions: president, vice president/president elect, secretary, treasurer, volunteer coordinator, and archivist.⁶³ LLACE’s board has regular meetings during which it shapes the direction of the organization. In 2011, the board began work on a five-year plan to determine organizational goals and strategies to reach these goals.⁶⁴ The primary goals of the new plan are to make the organization self-sustaining and more attractive to potential donors and grant organizations. As LLACE is still quite young, defining its goals is critical so that its limited resources are used to support activities deemed most important by its members and volunteer staff.

KEY ISSUE 3: COLLECTING AND COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Except for a small collection development fund for videos and the yearly subscription to *The Advocate*, LLACE’s collection continues to grow exclusively through donations, again emphasizing the importance of community support. A good example of this support is LLACE’s clippings file of newspaper articles about queer communities. As Haughton explained in his interview, LLACE receives many of its clippings from

one elderly friend of ours, a member, in Davis who subscribes to the *Sacramento Bee* and the *Davis Enterprise*. Anything LGBT related he clips out and gives to me. I have dinner with him once a month and he gives me everything he’s clipped out and it goes into our clippings file.⁶⁵

According to Haughton, these clippings files are used “a fair amount” by high school and college students.⁶⁶ In this one way, LLACE functions as an archival repository for local history utilized by students who may or may not self-identify with being queer. This clippings file also provides another reason for social interaction between members and is one way in which LLACE functions not only as an archival repository, but also as a community gathering space.

Collections are the heart of community archives, and the collections at LLACE are no exception. By the time LLACE had its grand opening celebration on May 22, 1999,⁶⁷ its collection numbered over one thousand books as well as periodicals and videotapes. By September 2000, LLACE had over three thousand volumes, including “Le Theatre Lesbian Archives of Original Plays,” copies of the Daughters of Bilitis’s magazine, *The Ladder*, and newsletters from the Mattachine Society.⁶⁸ The archives had also acquired a wide variety of ephemera and memorabilia, including posters, fliers, buttons, and postcards.⁶⁹ Having received a small grant from the Lambda Freedom Fair to purchase books, LLACE began collecting in the area of “transgender, children, youth and ethnic gay studies”⁷⁰ as well. In its early collecting, LLACE was affirming its commitment to document communities neglected by institutional archives and libraries.

LLACE’s founders were very aware of the communities’ concerns for the long-term preservation and safeguarding of these irreplaceable materials, especially in light of troubles faced by other local nonprofits within Sacramento’s communities, such as the Lambda Community Center and its Rountree Library. In a September 2000 article in *Mom Guess What*, founder Gail Lang emphasized LLACE’s commitment to preserving diverse records of queer communities and protecting the collections so people would not have to worry about “their prized possessions.”⁷¹ Lang promised that the donations received by LLACE would be cherished and would “be there for everyone!”⁷² To allay donors’ concerns, LLACE’s articles of incorporation provide for the donation of its collections to another queer community archives, such as the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco, should LLACE be forced to close.⁷³ This was a farsighted move by LLACE to ensure the safekeeping of communities’ materials.

The volunteers’ enthusiasm for collecting and preserving records of the queer communities was unflagging, so it was no surprise that LLACE’s collections grew quickly, proof of active donating by the community.⁷⁴ After only a year at its original location on B Street, LLACE had outgrown its space and was looking for a new place to house its collections. LLACE members found appropriate space in midtown Sacramento, their present location on 21st Street, which has allowed the organization to continue to expand.

Because LLACE functions as more than a traditional library or archives, with both circulating and noncirculating collections, its collection policy covers both aspects. The policy clearly defines the collecting scope to include “book and

non-book material” pertaining to queer communities.⁷⁵ Interestingly, LLACE’s policy makes it explicit that “non-gay authors writing fiction and nonfiction” about queer communities are “very acceptable to add to the collection.”⁷⁶ In this way, LLACE demonstrates its openness to nonqueer groups. LLACE’s collection policy also notes that its geographical focus is the “Sacramento area gay and lesbian community” and indicates that the archives collects the “papers and materials of ordinary LGBT people.” LLACE’s board justifies this policy, explaining that ordinary people “have stories to tell. Lavender Library is dedicated to preserving these important records.”⁷⁷ This inclusivity allows LLACE to document the richness of queer communities in Sacramento and not limit the collection to only the communities’ most notable or elite members and organizations.

KEY ISSUE 4: DESCRIPTION AND ACCESS

In one of its early brochures, LLACE provided details about its catalog and how it used a thesaurus created by Dee Michel specifically for queer libraries and archives to classify and catalog its materials.⁷⁸ As the brochure explained, this specialized “classification system” enabled members to catalog the collections in a way that eased “access to our uniqueness and diversity.”⁷⁹ In contrast to the Library of Congress Subject Headings, which has issues with antiquated and/or discriminatory language, the thesaurus by Michel is easy to use and expand in response to local needs.⁸⁰

Although community members have donated historical materials to LLACE since its founding in 1998, not until 2005 was any processing of them completed. Before a trained archivist began volunteering, Haughton admitted, the archival collections “had lain dormant because none of us had the archival background to make it real.”⁸¹ Currently, Ron Grantz is LLACE’s archivist responsible for collection development, along with the physical processing and description of the collections. Like everyone at LLACE, he is a volunteer. Prior to joining LLACE in 2005, Grantz spent over twenty-seven years as librarian at the Detroit Public Library and nine years as librarian/archivist chief of department of the National Automotive History Collection.⁸² After retiring in 1994, Grantz and his partner moved to Sacramento the following year and founded The Open Book.⁸³ Interestingly, even though Grantz did not become involved in LLACE until 2005, he knew Gail Lang for many years, as she was an employee at his bookstore. This is another example of how personal connections within queer communities support and sustain organizations like LLACE.

LLACE does not participate in the Online Archive of California (OAC), the major union catalog of archival repositories in California. This gives LLACE the freedom to catalog and describe its collections using alternative standards. Instead of using the OAC template, Grantz and the volunteers he supervises

model their finding aids on those from his alma mater, Wayne State University.⁸⁴ Though they are not in Encoded Archival Description (EAD), the finding aids are familiar in format to anyone who has done any research in archives.

Because LLACE is not part of the OAC, its archival finding aids do not rely solely on the OAC's preferred descriptive standard, the Library of Congress Subject Headings. Instead, LLACE also employs the classification system created by Dee Michel for describing queer materials. LLACE volunteers find Michel's thesaurus easy to use; it also can be expanded with additional local headings as needed. As Haughton succinctly put it, "Why not make it as usable as possible?"⁸⁵ Interestingly, while LLACE's circulating library catalogs books solely using Michel's thesaurus, its archival finding aids list subject headings from Michel's thesaurus first followed by the LCSH terms. This will be of great value in the future if LLACE decides to become part of the OAC. It also demonstrates the ubiquitous nature of LCSH, despite past criticisms of its omissions and biases.

Space is a pressing issue because of the archives' financial constraints. Because storage space is quite limited at LLACE, none of the archival collections are maintained at its 21st Street location.⁸⁶ This means that researchers must make an advance appointment to use the archival collections so that the volunteers have time to retrieve them from off-site storage. However book, journal, and video collections are available on site for browsing and borrowing.

Even with space and financial issues, LLACE has always offered its facility for other groups to use. Haughton mentioned in his interview that Eclectic? Trash? (a book group), Sacramento Valley Veterans (an LGBT veterans group), and a transgender group all meet at the library on a monthly basis. The library also hosts occasional book signings and readings. Moreover, according to Haughton, public use of LLACE is "not limited to sexual orientation. Anybody could come in here and ask us for space. And all it takes is approval from the board."⁸⁷

KEY ISSUE 5: SUSTAINABILITY

Partnerships enable the archives' staff and volunteers to be more connected to the wider communities. Interestingly, LLACE and the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco have been connected to each other from LLACE's founding when the historical society lent materials to LLACE for an exhibit titled *Celebrating California: Admission Day 2000*.⁸⁸ LLACE and the GLBT Historical Society are also connected via the papers of former state lobbyist George Raya. Although according to Grantz the bulk of Raya's papers are in Sacramento, "A little bit is in San Francisco, a little bit is in San Diego."⁸⁹ The GLBT Historical Society currently displays its "little bit" at the new GLBT History Museum in San Francisco's Castro District.⁹⁰ These partnerships take time and funding to nourish and are an ongoing aspect of LLACE's work. LLACE also collaborates

with other institutions in documenting queer history. For example, archivist Ron Grantz noted that LLACE is “a contact organization” for IMPACTSTORIES, a statewide oral history project with gay and lesbian Californians politically active from the 1960s to the 1980s.⁹¹

In addition to creating more partnerships, LLACE is working to increase its visibility within the greater Sacramento area to remain a viable organization. Reflecting on its lack of a public presence, Haughton admitted, “I don’t know how word gets out. The local library schools, San José State, and Drexel know about us. And maybe people come in that way.”⁹² He mentioned that the library and archives get “calls or emails from all over,” even as far away as Zambia and Uruguay.⁹³ However, Haughton explained, “We cannot afford publicity so unless we get free publicity, we don’t get publicity.”⁹⁴ According to Haughton, lack of visibility translates into a lack of funding: “. . . if we want to get on the radar and start attracting funding, we really need to work on publicity as well as fundraising—both of them. The two go together. . . .”⁹⁵ LLACE’s supporters hope that the five-year plan will help in this regard. As Grantz indicated, once LLACE’s mission and goals have been articulated, “then we have to do outreach to the different groups in Sacramento” to raise funds.⁹⁶

In addition to developing a strategic plan, LLACE is designing multiple new programs and projects to increase visibility. For instance, on October 1, 2011, LLACE was one of the participating archives in the Archives Crawl 2011. During this event, four large institutions (Center for Sacramento History, Sacramento Public Library, California State Archives, and California State Library) hosted smaller archives for the day, and these archives were able to promote their collections to the wider communities in Sacramento.⁹⁷ Community members received a “passport” that was stamped at each of the host institutions they visited during the event. In the near future, the library is planning to offer “Lavender Tours.” As Grantz explained, these will be tours of LLACE during which volunteers will talk about the circulating and archival collections, ending with coffee and doughnuts. These tours are based on the Habitat for Humanity tours that similarly aim to raise funds. Grantz has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, where he got the idea.⁹⁸ These are just two of the ways that LLACE is reaching out to the communities to increase visibility.

Another significant factor in the archives’ sustainability is continuing community support.⁹⁹ Haughton worries about the younger generation’s lack of interest in the archives and the communities’ histories. “The majority of the people who come through the door,” he observed, “are older people,” not young adults who should be the next generation of volunteers and staff.¹⁰⁰ With higher visibility through programming and special events and an increased online presence, LLACE hopes to attract the interest of the next generation.

Implications

This discussion of LLACE has implications for both community archives and wider archival practice. The history and development of Sacramento's queer archives reveal why marginalized communities, as late as 1998, still felt the need to create a separate archives space, which was lacking at the time in Sacramento, and raise important issues concerning collection development, access, and description. The study of LLACE also shows some of the challenges faced not only by community archives, but by most archives, in terms of funding and relevancy to communities they serve. This section discusses how the archives profession can apply the information gained from the study of LLACE to further archival practice.

As LLACE shows, even in the late 1990s people still felt the need to create a space of their own to collect, preserve, and provide access to records of queer communities. While community archives provide a safe space for people to come together to learn about their pasts and share in creating their futures, this should not happen because people feel excluded from institutional archives in academic, public, and government organizations. To quote Brenda Marston, institutional archivists must strive to overcome the "elite, exclusionary image of archives in general"¹⁰¹ and develop ways to connect with traditionally marginalized members of their communities. Likewise, as scholars such as K. J. Rawson advocate, archivists must do more to become inclusive.¹⁰² Archivists can achieve such inclusivity by working in the areas highlighted throughout this article, most notably by partnering with community members to ensure fair representation and by continuing to advocate for appropriate descriptors for community collections.

INCLUSIVITY THROUGH WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

Communities, and their collections, are at the heart of community archives; one of the greatest areas of potential for improving archival practice is determining how all archives can increase community involvement. Community archives, like LLACE, survive through the intense dedication of their members and volunteers. Because community members are invested in the success of the archives, these archives reflect the communities' passions, interests, and needs. Archivists have much to learn from community archives about making their repositories an integral part of their own communities. This may mean extending the collecting scope of an archives and/or partnering with community archives to share resources, showcase joint exhibits, or exchange information. As Stevens, Flinn, and Shepherd¹⁰³ have shown, there are many ways for archivists to work with community archives to ensure inclusivity in archival collections and create stronger partnerships among multiple types of archives.

INCLUSIVITY THROUGH ADVOCATING FOR APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTION

As noted in the discussion of LLACE's description of collections, community archivists often use both LCSH and a specialized thesaurus to create their finding aids. Description is a very powerful controller of how communities and individuals are represented in the archives; community archives are mindful and deliberate in their descriptions of records from community members and organizations. Working with community members and community archivists can help ensure that descriptions and descriptive standards are created and used in ways that respectfully represent the communities' records.¹⁰⁴ Collaboration can also put more pressure on archival bodies to continually update entrenched descriptive standards like LCSH so the terminology reflects the language used by the communities they represent.¹⁰⁵

Future Directions for Research

The subject of community archives is a promising area of study with numerous avenues for future research. One exciting approach is to undertake comparative studies of archives across communities and countries. These comparative studies may enable us to understand the similarities and differences among archives and suggest best practices not only for community archives but for the profession in general. Comparative research would also extend the work of Stevens, Flinn, and Shepherd¹⁰⁶ and suggest how and why some community archives thrive while others struggle and sometimes are forced to close.

Another potential area of scholarly and professional study concerns the continued analysis of archival description. Description is a very powerful controller of how communities and individuals are represented in the archives, and past descriptive standards, like LCSH, did not empower minorities, women, or members of queer communities.¹⁰⁷ More research is needed to document changes in language usage and ensure that descriptive standards change to reflect current and appropriate language when describing collections.

As noted in the literature review and shown through the collections of LLACE, community archives are more than traditional archival spaces and collections, often serving as libraries, archives, and museums under the same roof. As such, community archives already embody the concept of GLAM by combining elements of all four types of information and cultural organizations. However, even though researchers report that we are starting to see collaborations and overlap in areas such as online collections, we have yet to see overlap in other areas such as curriculum for teaching new professionals in this re-integrated landscape.¹⁰⁸ Much research still is needed in this re-emerging field of study,¹⁰⁹ especially into how community archives can contribute to GLAM

integration in collection development and physical and digital spaces. As more researchers and organizations become interested in how intersections among GLAM organizations may help revitalize and expand practice,¹⁰ understanding work already completed by community archives will become even more important. Community archives may be seen as part of the vanguard of this renewed interest in GLAM and provide models for integrated professional practice.

Conclusion

Community archives like LLACE demonstrate the importance of creating and maintaining spaces in communities for people to come together to collect, preserve, share, and learn from their histories. Dedicated individuals make possible the continued viability of community archives; their willingness to share time and knowledge with researchers makes possible the continued addition to our archival literature of information on these important archives. By understanding and appreciating the community archives movement, all archivists can make professional theory and practice more inclusive and collaborative so that their institutions better represent the diversity of their communities.

NOTES

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