Lesbian Herstory Archives
Newsletter 16 — December 1996

Finally...

A Home of Our Own
Lesbian Herstory Archives Principles

The Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation is a grass roots, community-based, not-for-profit institution housing the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the largest and longest-lived collection of lesbian material in the world. Since our founding in 1974, we have been an all-volunteer organization, collectively run, with self-appointed coordinators making collective policy decisions for the organization. We distinguish ourselves from other archives by adhering to these principles:

1. All lesbian women must have access to the Archives. No academic, political, or sexual credentials are required to use the collection; race and class must be no barrier for use of or inclusion in the Archives collection.

2. The Archives is housed within the lesbian community, curated and maintained by lesbians. The collection, or parts of it, will not be sold to a public or private institution that is by definition closed to many women. The Archives is funded by individual lesbians and radical funding sources rather than government or mainstream financial institutions. LHEF, Inc. is involved in and committed to the political struggles of lesbian peoples.

3. All lesbian lives are important and welcome at the Archives. Every woman who has had the courage to touch or desire another woman deserves to be remembered here, as do lesbians from all places, from every century, and from any and all political or sexual backgrounds. The Archives aims to collect the full range of lesbian experiences, not just the lives of the famous or the published.

4. The Archives is dedicated to intergenerational and community connections through reciprocal education and through building respect. Archival skills will be taught, one generation of lesbians to another, breaking the elitism of traditional archives.

Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter #16, December, 1996

Lesbian Herstory Archives Educational Foundation, Inc.

LHEF, Inc. P.O. Box 1258 New York, NY 10116


Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter Production: Margaret L. Suarez

The Lesbian Herstory Archives exists to gather and preserve Lesbian lines and activities, to make history of the numerous women who were ready to give their time, their money, and their support to this effort. The result is a treasure trove of history available for all. The Lesbian Herstory Archives is a project of the Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation, Inc.

Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation, Inc.

Dear Friends of the Archives,

In the newsletter that accompanies this letter you will read the great news about how we paid off our mortgage and now own the Brooklyn building that houses the Archives! This spectacular achievement was possible because of your continued generosity and support of our efforts to secure a physical structure and home. We've paid off the mortgage! The Archives now enters a new stage in its organizational life. Even though we still have some private loans remaining to pay in the next few years, our primary financial concerns shift to day-to-day operations. Beyond that, we enter a new phase of work, strategizing to promote the Archives' future growth and continued community service.

The Archives can now attend to the immediate, pressing needs of the collection. There are essential expenses that support our ongoing work that must be met. We need your help to continue to host our "At Home" events (we had a record number this year), catalog our growing collections, send our traveling exhibits to all parts of the country, supply the Archives with the acid-free archival supplies needed to preserve the collection, take the Archives slide show on tour (we made it to over 35 cities this year!), install new shelves, preserve original video and film stock, and, yes, pay the monthly bills.

As always, the Archives needs your help and support. We are very proud of our funding legacy— one that has been built on small contributions from many lesbians over the years. We depend on this once-a-year plea for financial support from the community. So, please fill out the form below, and make any donation you can afford to give. No gift is too small or too large.

Your generosity today will help to preserve the precious heirlooms of lesbian culture that you have entrusted to us at the Archives. We couldn't have done it without you all these years!

With kind regards and many thanks,

The Coordinators of the Archives

P.O. BOX 1258 NEW YORK NY 10116 Tel: (718) 768-DYKE Fax: (718) 768-4663

Yes! Support the Lesbian Herstory Archives

NAME ________________________

ADDRESS ________________________

CITY ___________________________ STATE ______ ZIP

Amount I can donate: $ __________

This contribution is made in Memory of ____________________________

LHEF is sometimes asked to exchange names on our mailing list for fund raising purposes. We will do so only with your expressed permission. May LHEF share your name/address with other organizations? Yes________ No________

All contributions are tax deductible. Checks may be made out to The Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation, Inc. or LHEF, Inc. and mailed to us at: LHEF, Inc., P.O. Box 1258, New York, NY 10116.
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T he coordinators of the Lesbian Herstory Archives decided to take a little time out from the usual bustle in the late heat of August to organize a group photo for the newsletter in honor of paying off the mortgage on our building. Of course not everyone could make the shoot, but this group of happy lesbians wanted to stand before you and say “thank you” — to you and a thousand other lesbians and supporters who responded to our annual pleas for money, who sponsored house parties and fund-raisers in your communities.

We did in five years what many never thought possible. After securing a mortgage loan for a non-profit organization with no reliable source of regular income, we paid it off in under five years. Our mortgage lender is in shock, and we all can breathe a sigh of relief. Now our fund raising is focused on daily operations and maintenance of the collection. As an all-volunteer organization, we have had to divide our time between the difficult and arduous task of raising funds and the daily running of the Archives — staffing, processing collections, responding to requests from researchers, and answering calls for action from our community. But the bulk of our energies has had to be dedicated to securing this building, our home, for generations of lesbians who will come after us all. Now that the business of paying off the mortgage is behind us, we can turn our attention to the work that attracted all to the Archives in the first place — collecting, preserving, and sharing the materials of the lesbian community.

This issue celebrates our work as a community, as well as the collections of the Archives, focusing on our unpublished papers, organizational files, and special collections. We want to document for the record our working coordinating committee and share our joy with you. Again, your contributions and unwavering belief in our ability as a community to buy this home have made it all possible.

Here are the names of the Archivettes who made it to the photo shoot for the newsletter cover: (left to right, up the stairs) Morgan Gwennwald, Suzanne Bernard, Ira Rimpau, Nancy Robertson, Robin Riback, Paula Grant, Joan Nestle, Maxine Wolfe, Skele Schaffer; (and down the stairs) Polly Thistlethwaite, Judith Schwartz, Deborah Edel, Nancy Froehlich, and Lucinda Zoe. (Absent are the smiling faces of Amy Beth, Constantia Constantionou, Alexis Danzig, Caitlin Featherstone, Lenti Goodman, Beth Haskell, Linda McKinney, Barbie Painter, Janet Frolman, Joy Rich, Annette Spilliaio, and Desiree Yael Vester — watch for them in future issues.)

We did it! The Archives building is ours.

But how much did it actually cost?

In January 1996, four years and one month after purchasing the Archives home, arrangements were made with Community Capital Bank, our mortgage lender, to pay off the balance due on the mortgage. On April 3, 1996, all the paperwork was signed and the mortgage was paid in full. In addition to the purchase price of the "villa," the "builing of the mortage" was recorded in the Brooklyn municipal record. It certainly was an exciting time for us.

Recently I sat down to calculate the actual cost of the building and came up with the following: the actual cost of the building at the time of the closing including all closing costs, title fees, and other assorted fees was $315,368.19. The additional costs total approximately $107,000. This included such costs as $35,000 for the construction cost of the building, which includes $4,147 to expenses to run our paper as the price was manually typed, and the remaining $2,541 to the work is more visible. In addition, the building includes a bathroom, a bower, a boiter, some space for the caretaker, bookcases, door frames, and other changes; $1,738 for steel doors, gates, and gates; $1,660 for moving; $485 for a key; $2,017 for engineering, plumbing, asbestos, appraisal, and termites inspections; $510 for tree pruning and garden work; $777 for the new tiles and the building; $10,000 for the wood flooring, and replacing the stairs runners; and approximately $3,000 more for lumber, nails, paint, and incidentals. The interest on the mortgage totalled approximately $26,800.


In addition to the official mortgage we borrowed $48,000 from within the community. To date we have paid back the first $25,000 loan, the additional interest which was returned to us as a donation. We have $35,500 due in November of 1996 and then $17,000 due in 2001, covering both interest and principal on these loans. We deeply appreciate all the contributions we received during our building fund campaign. Whether you were able to contribute a small amount, or whether you were able to share a larger amount, whether you were an individual or a group or a granting source, each contribution helped move us all closer to realizing the goal of paying off the mortgage in under five years. We thank you. The building is now all ours.

— A report from Deborah Edel, Archives Treasurer
my introductory chat about all 18 of My Sis- ter Archivettes, and a couple in wedding drag try to slide quietly into two seats in the front row. Everything stops. All eyes on the femme (huge flowing white gown, bouquet, veil, everything!), and but, but! New white short brand new hair, a bit in a face). Dead silence. “We just got committed,” the bride said in a tiny voice, by way of explanation. Roses and cheers from the assembled crowd. Don’t think I’ve ever done the bride show to just-marrieds. Tough act to follow, but I did it my best. This Atlanta crowd loved the slide show and now loves the Archavess and someone should warn Paula a great group from here that I’ll be there about keeping “Keepin’ On” south. I’ve been hooking up with all sorts of wonderful people on route, so far it’s been a very, very won- derful trip. I hope this message reaches all of you in good spirits and health —

Alexis

P.S. Congrats to Morgan and Barb on their great hot photo work and interviews in the new lesbian bedside book Nothing But the Girl!

Date: Fri, 21 Jun 1996
So here’s what’s been happening. Austin was great: a standing room only crowd of the bookstore, Book Woman, which sponsored the slide show. Women said it was the biggest crowd ever — and they get some big crowds for events at the bookstore. I was forced to schedule a second, im- pronto, next-day-slide show for some gals who missed the first event: a buncha seri- ous folks, local lesbian artists are putting together an archival project chronicling the heady days of dye activism in the 70s in Austin. They had great questions and we chatted about grass roots activism for quite a long time — expect to hear about these gals and this project!

Early that morning I left Austin; I woke up on time in the house of Meg, my host in Austin. At 4:00 am — right riding beats the mid- day southwestern heat — got to watch the sunrise in my rear view mirrors. I watched the beautiful landscape of west Texas change as I went further west, shade trees disappearing and desert plants popping up.

I stopped during the heat of the day in a sloppy motel which turned out to be very nice, quiet and comfortable, and the weather channel was fun (and important) to watch. Thunderstorms up north and back East. 110 degree weather in Phoenix — eeuuu. This jaunt turned out to be the only stretch of the trip (so far) during which my little red gas containers were necessary. There are great stretches of Texas highway where not every gas station is open at 11:00 pm. Made it to El Paso early that morning — 3:45 am — where I booked into a room in a Motel 6, slept through the midday sun, and then was off to Albuquerque, NM, that afternoon. I decided that it’s time to get up to Santa Fe all in one day as I’d planned was just too much, a hard decision since everyone who’s been has told me how lovely Santa Fe is. However, the day after the Albuquerque slide show — which took place on the State of New Mexico Albuquerque campus in a beau- tiful round auditorium — my hosts Sunny Buech and Deb Jackson, both former Albu-querque Archavess, took me up for a day trip to Santa Fe. There we saw lovely adobe homes and a GREAT museum exhibit on re- cycled art and artifacts. Sunny showed me a great archival video about the origins of the Albuquerque Archavess which (hopefully) will be added to the LHA video collection as soon as she can make a dub.

Leaving New Mexico on route for Phoe- nix, AZ. I stayed over Friday night in Flag- staff, Arizona, which was cool — tempera- ture-wise, for a change — and quite beau- tiful. Very piney. Nice old hotel. Sadie (my bike) was a little grumpy getting started the next morning which scared the bejesus out of me. I stopped in at the local Yamaha dealer to have the mechanic check her out; just the spark plugs needing to the lack of oxygen. While the guys at the bike shop advised me to take the scenic route to Phoe- nix, Highway 89A which winds through Sedona and Jerome down to Phoenix.

Surprise route, eh? It was BREATHTAK- ING. 89A is truly THE most beautiful wind- ing stretch of road I’ve ever been on, and I was on it just about the most beautiful day to see it. I was practically in tears with the sights and smells of the pine forest with sunlight coming through the branches, a bright blue sky and amazing red, red rocks of the Arizona mountains. It took me several hours more than expected to get through the mountains just ‘cause the road was glo- riously twisty (30 mph was too fast for many of those switchbacks) and I was pulling over so often to look and wonder and shake my head in headazzment.

Then, coming into Phoenix it became amazingly hot. Hard to breathe–kinds hot. The air felt like it was going to combust spontane- neously any moment. The slide show went off without a hitch as rescheduled on Sun- day and was well-received. I didn’t sleep at all that night, and ended up leaving town before the alarm went off and was on the bike by 5:30 am. It was great to watch the sun rise in my rear view mirrors as I came across the desert, all pink and blue. By 8:00 am I was in the California desert, really, real- ly tired. Sadie indicated to me she’d rather not end up in the sand by the side of the road with me as a statistic, so I found a seedy motel in El Centro, CA, and slept for hours in air-conditioned bliss before riding into San Diego very slowly through the last bit of desert. Coming into San Diego was amazing, the changes in temperature and vegeta- tion soothing and refreshing.

Alexis xxxxxx

Date: Thu, 28 Mar 1996
Dear Back Homers:
I’m in Hickory, NC, currently at the home of very dear friends of my family for the week- end. Slide show in progress, everyone loving it, hope Deb’s been receiving my little packets of checks folks have been donating, much to my delight & amazement! The last show was in the military town of Fayetteville, at a gay bar frequented by gis. The slide show happened between sets of pool games and was followed by a round of bistro (joke- telling too off-color to repeat here...). OK, Later.

Got the scoop on military dyke life: bu- reaucracy, bureaucracy, and more bureauc- racy... a scary existence, many women just waiting for the right moment to get out, some are moms! Several tales of betrayal at the hands of military docs and in the VA hos- pitals...

I’ve packed properly so that I keep warm even on the day in the bike in the spring breeze. Next port of call is Asheville, NC, where I’ll be presenting on Warren Wilson College’s campus. Asheville’s supposed to be beauti- ful, but I’m only there overnight before I’m off to Lexington and Lexington before hitting Atlanta just before Mom’s Day. Best, wishes to you(s)

Alexis xxxxx

Report from the Field by Alexis Danoz

Diaries of a Biker Chick

Lesbian History Archives Newsletter #16 — December 1996

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On Being an Intern

The Lesbian Herstory Archives has internships available throughout the year.

Internship Activities and Responsibilities

- Part museum, part research facility, part resource center and library, and part community gathering place, the Archives is an entirely volunteer-run, not-for-profit foundation with no membership required. A group of Archives contributors, who have made a commitment to the Archives over time, operate by a consensus process.

- We believe that internships should be mutually beneficial. The Archives structure/process combines individual autonomy with group goals and a serious decision making. We expect interns to adhere to this structure/process.

- We need interns to match with their interests based, on a wide variety of options. However, volunteers (including coordinators) staff the Archives, answer and return phone calls, and do the general work of keeping the Archives functioning on a day-to-day basis, and interns do the same. Other ongoing work includes:
  - Identifying and acquiring items to project special collections.
  - Book collective maintenance and development.
  - Special collections maintenance.
  - Giving tours of the collection.
  - Cataloging and video and audio tapes.
  - Organizing exhibitions.

- In addition to the above, interns sometimes initiate their own projects. Examples of intern-generated projects have included:
  - Creation of an exhibit of a woman's life story and images of LHGA and in Greenwich Village.
  - Cataloging and indexing of the Lesbian History edition of Frontrun.
  - Preparation of the graphic novel about the Archives and the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community.

- Time Commitment

Although there is no limit to how long a woman may intern, we ask for a commitment of at least 10 hours per week for no less than eight weeks (or more hours per week for fewer weeks). In addition, interns are expected to attend Coordinator Meetings (two hours every third week). Days and hours of intern activity are arranged in accord with the need of both the intern and LHGA. LHGA reserves the right to close except on weeknights and during the order of the summer, and to end the internship at any time.

- Skills

Interns should have a personal interest in and commitment to the Archives' mission. Ease in working with a diverse public is an asset. No specific or academic background is required. An interest in Lesbian Studies, Women's Studies, and/or Lesbian/Gay issues is a strength, as is exposure to women's communities and experience working in a group environment with consensus.

Remuneration and Housing

The Archives is an all-volunteer-run organization and can neither pay interns nor house them. When possible, LHGA volunteers may assist in finding shorter-term housing options for interns.

Supervision/Advisory Committee

Coordinators include professors, librarians, teachers, writers, community cultural workers, social workers, filmmakers, graduate students, artists, craftspeople, journalists, translators. An appropriate match between a coordinator and an intern will be established. We will provide both orientation and ongoing supervision. Interns have direct and open contact with Archives coordinators and volunteers. Beyond this, interns are expected to be comfortable working independently. LHGA can provide only limited financial support, including a mailing list for a little over a week, taking a lunch break around 3 or 4 and leaving the Archives sometime between 6 and 10, depending on who else is at the Archives to take over or whether or not there was a coordinators' meeting.

Interns are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to meet everyone connected with the Archives on an active basis and to understand more fully the decision-making process. The meetings occur every three weeks, begin at 7 pm, and last until all issues brought to the table are resolved. Finances, expenditures, and policy issues are discussed, as are the plans of the collection. Almost every coordinator is on a committee that is in charge of organizing and maintaining some aspect of the collection, such as the newsletter, the magazines, or the books.

Some women work for the Archives is a volunteer, and has limited time and resources to devote to new projects, so they have to be careful chosen. In addition, different women have different ideas about what kinds of things they would like to see the Archives involve in. These divergent energies are what contribute to the evolution and growth of the Archives. At the same time, what makes coordination worthwhile is that it works. The coordinator's are women who have spent anywhere from two to twenty-two years of their lives intimately connected with the Archives, and they feel, as do I after only having spent a month there, that the work we are doing is vital to the celebration, accessibility, and survival of lesbian culture. As a result, the coordinators have very deep, personal feelings about how they think the Archives should be run. All decisions are made by consensus.

After I completed my update mailing list, I loaded the book collection. About three-fifths of the non-fiction collection had been inserted in the computer. After I completed my work on the book collection, I was told that what I had completed in two weeks was scheduled to take six months, and that I had made a worthy contribution to a workable book database. Although my overall contribution was small, I was proud that I had been able to help out the book committee.

The third project I worked on was my own thesis. I was in an ideal setting for absorbing all I could about lesbian culture, and I had valuable, unique resources at my disposal. In addition to the Archives collection, however, I had something even more valuable: a community. I was living in Park Slope, a neighborhood with a dense lesbian population as San Francisco or the Village, and I was working with women who had had years of experience as women, as lesbians, as members of a community, as activists, and as mothers. Although I made simple use of the information available to me at the Archives, the friend I made and the experience I had working there far exceeded anything I recorded on paper. At the Archives, I have learned a lot about activism and commitment, and a lot about myself. I admire and respect every woman that I met this past summer; they have dedicated their lives to causes they believe in. In many ways, lesbian culture is not something that I will be able to understand and participate in at the same time, I have had to find it within me. It is not reproduced in a family unit. As a result, the way an individual is a resource; its social roles and regulations are not found in a book; it is not even something that is experienced consistently among people who participate in it. Lesbian culture, for me, is something that I learn, as I talk to the women who have come before me and have laid the foundation for the road to freedom, and as I listen to their stories and tell them mine. It is even something that I find within myself. I am proud and I am proud to, and as I follow my heart into uncharted territory in my own life, I come to know the making of my own culture. The Lesbian Herstory Archives is a place that every person should visit at least once in their lives. I feel as if I have made my first pilgrimage to a place that I believe in (I will become), and I have been lucky enough to have been a part of it. The collection itself, and the hope and inspiration that went into its development, its what gives me hope that my reality has a place, a sacred place, where it can be ignored and where others can locate themselves in a herstory that speaks their language.

— Rebecca Goldberg

— Maxine Wolf & Amy Beth

An Internship in Culture

I am a student in my fourth year of a five-year program which combines degrees from Tufts University and from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. I chose to do an internship as part of my American Studies degree at Tufts University.

I knew that I wanted to go to the Lesbian Herstory Archives ever since I read about it on the back of a Restricted book. The Archives has a lot of material and summer, and I applied for funding through the Ted Shapiro Memorial Award. I received enough funding to spend a month in Brooklyn interning at the Archives and do research for my thesis.

I was asked what kind of skills and interests I could bring to the Archives. During my relatively short stay (the month of July) in its active group. The books, I told, were in the process of being automated. The newspaper clippings were in need of copying, and the mailing list was in need of being updated on the database. I agreed to begin my internship by helping with the mailing list. Since I did not have to work during the day like the other volunteers, I could put in many hours a week towards a single project. I could keep the Archives open during the day for researchers and women coming to look at the collection.

Every Monday, Monday through Friday. I worked the half-hour to the Archives building and opened it somewhere else. In the morning, I worked on the mailing list for a little over a week, taking a lunch break around 3 or 4 and leaving the Archives sometime between 6 and 10, depending on who else was at the Archives to take over or whether or not there was a coordinators' meeting.

I met many interesting people as an opportunity to meet everyone connected with the Archives on an active basis and to understand more fully the decision-making process. The meetings occur every three weeks, begin at 7 pm, and last until all issues brought to the table are resolved. Finances, expenditures, and policy issues are discussed, as are the plans of the collection. Almost every coordinator is on a committee that is in charge of organizing and maintaining some aspect of the collection, such as the newsletter, the magazines, or the books.

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Before I came to New York this summer to intern at the Lesbian Heritage Archives, I had joked that I was going to New York City to fall in love. At the end of the summer, the same friends asked me what I’d done — how was New York? “I’m in love,” I’d answer them. “I fell in love three times this summer: once with the city, once with the Archives, and once with myself as a femme.” I laughed when I said it and friends commiserated with me about not missing the woman of my dreams. (Although I’m willing my senior thesis at Smith College about the archives, so I suppose I’m constantly articulating truths about the archives, the statement about falling in love remains my favorite way of describing the place and my experience there.)

When dykes that I met in bars or around the city (at the Archives, for that matter) found out that I was interning at the Lesbian Heritage Archives, they would ask all sorts of questions. The first one, inevitable (asked by Archivists as well as others) was what was it like, exactly, that I was doing at the Archives? “Well,” I’d tell them, “so far, I’ve cleaned a bathroom, selected visuals for an exhibit on lesbian fashion, written the copy for that exhibit, loaded four book pick-up trucks with those fabulous old books, and held a fabulous banner at the New City Pride March.” “As the summer went on, I added things to my calendar — took minutes for a coordinators’ meeting, filmed, archived Mabel Hampton’s collection (or part of it), felt, took phone messages from famoues and not-so-famous lesbians.

I arrived in New York and at the Archives in the beginning of June (Pride Month). I did not have any awkward moments of wondering how I should make myself useful or what I should do. I spent June obediently following instructions, mostly provided by Lucinda Zoe. My efforts were spent, then, helping to make the Archives presenetable (or the bathroom and the exhibit) to all those lesbians who would come through in June, wondering what their Archives was all about.

When June ended, and people stopped telling me what to do, I was, at first, puzzled. How should I know, in this vast store of stuff, what I could possibly do or should possibly be doing? At this point, Archivists suggested I do whatever I was interested in. I was amazed that this organization, run only by volunteers, could survive letting people like me do whatever they wanted. Someone suggested that there were special collections that needed organizing, so I took on the challenge.

I spent most of the Saturdays in July in the digitally air-conditioned Archives, weeping over Mabel Hampton’s collection. Mabel Hampton, an African-American lesbian who was out her whole life and died in her eighties, was a strong force behind the Archives for many years. Mabel’s collection is one of the miraculous things at the Archives. Without visiting the Archives, it’s hard to imagine how an archive could provide a sense of a woman who didn’t write down her story, but Mabel, in addition to being in the very air of the building, is present in all the now-ordered papers in her boxes. There are Joan Nestle’s writings about her — tributes, in themselves, to two visionary and loving women — letters from seven decades of friends, carbon copies of the outraged letter that she sent to City Hall about her apartment, and (this is where I wept) folders of Valentine’s cards between Mabel and Lillian, her lover of forty years. The cards, which I found strewn throughout the collection, between flyers and speeches and among bills — were signed with love (Big Bear) (Mabel) and (Little Bear) (Lillian). Organizing Mabel’s collection so that other women can have access to it, write about her, draw strength from her love and her life and her zest, is one of the things that I think I will continue to be proud of doing for a long time. This fall, I brought an Archivette and the slide show to Smith College. There are slides of Mabel in the show and we told a little bit about her life and her life and her lover Lillian. After the show, a friend of mine looked at her lover. “Forty years,” she said, “do you think we could do that?” She said she never sees that — women together for that kind of a life. The Archives, for me, is that possibility. It is the sense of intergenerational community and a sense of the possibilities for making art a life connected to women’s lives.

The last day this summer that I was in the Archives there was no one else there. The gas company had left a little worksheet for “Saving money. Read your meter.” I thought of one Saturday at the beginning of the summer when I couldn’t get the computer to do what I wanted, couldn’t find the hammer and had no idea that it was that I was trying for me to do to find those things. I had felt like a guest in someone’s house — welcome, but uncomfortable and always afraid that I would get it wrong. That last day I called someone back about the hours we were open, are the rest of the bags I’d left in the fridge, found the meter, and read it and called on the challenge.

― Caitlin Featherstone

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**Love and Air Conditioning**

*Story of an Archives Intern*

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**Spotlight on Unpublished Papers**

The Unpublished Papers Collection at the Archives is one of our most unique and valuable collections. This extraordinary collection of papers includes close to 1,000 boxes, college papers, speeches, dissertations, short stories, and other works written by lesbians over the past thirty years. A significant portion of this material, which was found in college, in the libraries, you struggled to develop with little resources, and all of those brilliant insights, theories, ideas and fantasies that you and young and old lesbian minds have conjured up over the years. Residing on the second floor of the Archives in two filing cabinets, the papers are arranged alphabetically by the author's last name and are open to any reader.

Until recently, the only access to the collection was by manually browsing through the titles, file by file, drawer by drawer with the hope that the author you are researching would be searching. We recently automated the database that can be searched by subject, author or title (when this information is available). Many papers were donated without an author or date. We can print out a title or holdings and publish it for the first time in this newsletter! These papers have been collected through the years, donated by many people. In almost every drawer by the latest person who came before us to the Archives, we wanted it to be preserved, read and saved as a part of our history. If you have any such papers, please send them to the Archives. Be sure each paper submitted includes your name, the date, geographic location, and any relevant institutional affiliation (university, organization, company, etc.) as a service to the many modern, undergraduate, graduate and researchers who are looking for work on specific topics and need to know what's in our collection. We are publishing this current select bibliography of our Unpublished Papers Collection in this issue.

While the listing below is select, it represents the bol of this collection. Papers that came in with special collections may not have been moved into this collection, and some papers with incomplete data have not been included.

**Compiled by Dominican Sister Felicia & Lucinda Zoe**
Welcome to the LHA “Org” Files

As a dyke involved in political organizing for many years, when I started volunteering at the Archives I was drawn, immediately, to the Queer Index Files — affectionately called the “Org Files.” At first I did more reading than filing, being amazed at the many ways we have created supportive spaces, political texts, and a way which provides non. Gradually I did start filing the continual streams of papers and other ma-
terials, filing under headings like newspaper articles, photographs and so on — that kept flowing into the Archives week after week.

After some time I asked Joan Neale whether a particular kind of organization should be put in that file. In the meantime that the Archives operates, she said: “That’s up to you. You decide what should be there.” Though taken aback by the responsibility being placed on my shoulders, I thought about it for a couple of weeks, spoke to other volunteers, and finally decided: The Org Files at the Archives are for keeping materials from related to volunteers and activities with Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Women’s/Feminist Organizations which (with known Lesbian and Women’s organizations that collaboration also contributed to the eventual coordinator for the Org Files — a responsibility I still enjoy. The organizations represented range from small groups, like the Black Les-
bian Student Group (NY), The Butch Female Support Group (NY), to Dyke Action Machine and New York Lesbian/Gay Community Center on some of the most prominent issues. Quite a few also have a large number of New York groups, we have files for groups from all over the country and from other coun-
tries as well. Some of the files have only one sheet of paper; others are lengthy and detailed. For exam-
ple, we have a lot of information about NON, Lesbian Feminist Liberation, at the New York Lesbian and Gay Community Ser-
vices Center and SAGE, because we were on their mailing lists. Other large collec-
tions are from groups/organizations which sent their materials to us, like the Lesbian Center (Madison, WI) and the New York Committee to Free Sharon Kanofsky. And as both ACT UP and Lesbian Avengers NY have large collections because I have been a member of both since their inception and bring every piece of paper I get to the Archives.

When we moved to our new building one of our goals was to create a computer file for each part of our collections. As of August 1994 all of the or-
ganizations have been entered into a computer file. Doing this not only reminds us of the vast range of types of groups but we realize that we are 1,019 organizations represented — where the computer program allows us to search by keywords in their names and by location. Now we are planning to give each a category description (e.g. university-based, athletic, health, and so on) so we can search browsers based on this as well.

As with all of the Archives collections, this is continually growing. If you were part of a group which no longer exists and you have material about it, we’d love to have it. However, since we are an all-volunteer organization, and especially if it is a large amount of material, we would appreciate you calling and talking to an Archivist. She can help you figure out how to organize the material and what to send. If you are a member of a group, we welcome your comment on your list if we aren’t already. Getting your material (from the past or present) to the Archives will ensure that future dykes will know you existed and what you did.

— Maxine Wolfe

PS. If you publish a newsletter, we’d love to be on the mailing list. Too, it goes into our Newsletter file
In Memory of Ellen

On Saturday, December 3, 1994, a little before 2:00 pm, our lesbian community lost one of its strongest fighters. Ellen Sarossy finally gave into her struggle to survive and took her life by stepping in front of a BART train.

I’ll never forget the day I met Ellen. I recently had returned from a bike trip from San Diego to San Francisco. Trying to reconnect with women from here. I put an ad in the Alternative Community News asking if anyone wanted to start a bike club, and immediately the first call was from Ellen. A few weeks later, in March of ’95, we had our first meeting with about five other women — Different Spokes was born. Little did I know then that Ellen still would be my friend 10 years later and would be the driving force behind the club for all those years. The last time I saw Ellen, a week before her death, we were joking how it would soon be our 10-year anniversary.

Ellen struggled long and hard with the demons inside her. At times she was exasperating, but I always remember how thoughtful she was to her friends. She truly cared about the lesbian community and thought it was important to be OUT everywhere. Different Spokes and biking was Ellen’s life and main joy. She held the club together when no one else was there to do it. She meticulously tracked every mile we rode, and every Christmas the club would buy big mugs or T-shirts for the riders for that past year. Ellen cared so much about the club — I never thought she could live without it. Now I wonder if we will survive without her.

Ellen always said that having appointments gave her a reason to live, so we made a pact that if I brought her a daily planner and she wrote down each day she wouldn’t kill herself — because she had an appointment with Life. When I went to her apartment the night she died and looked at that calendar, I realized even having appointments was no longer enough to keep her alive. The last paragraph of Ellen’s instructions about her death epitomized how important it was to all of us: “Last but not least, my funeral or service or whatever is decided upon damn well better be very welcoming to Lesbians. Thank you. I can rest in peace now.”

I hope Ellen finally has found her peace.

Carol Vilell

The Archives is a place to commemorate lost lovers and friends. As a people, we have been deprived of the ritual of communal sorrow. Many lesbians have experienced the pain of silent mourning. Often in newspaper obituaries, a euphemism for the death of a lesbian is “There are no known survivors.” This is not true.

We are each other’s survivors. We hope that you will remember lesbians in your community, your sisters, your friends, through memorial letters and letters to the Lesbian Herstory Archives, so that we may all honor their lives. Their voices and lives must not be lost or made invisible when we ourselves are no longer here to tell their stories.

Keri Duran 1964 — 1995
Terri L. Jewell 1964 — November 1995
Barbara Jordan 1967
Nan C. Dubois April 1996
Donna J. Johnson 1994
Virginia (Ginny) Moore 1916 — 1994
Constance (Connie) Murray 1928 — 1995
Alma Roitman 1925 — 1996
Ingrid Reuben 1947 — 1996
Nancy Walker 1935 — 1996

In Memory of Alma Roitman

Alma Roitman, 1924 — 1996

Alma Roitman, author of Patience and Sarah, was born in Brooklyn on January 24, 1924. She attended Barnard College, where she edited the college newspaper. Roitman was a founding member of the Women’s Rights Movement and an advocate for women’s rights. She was a strong supporter of the feminist movement and was known for her activism and advocacy work.

Alma Roitman passed away on December 5, 1996, in New York City. She is survived by her daughter, Sarah, and her partner, Linda. Roitman’s legacy lives on through her work and the impact she had on the lives of many women. She is remembered as a tireless advocate for women’s rights and a Trailblazer in the feminist movement.
Exhibit Update

Exhibits of lesbian history and treasures have continued to travel out of the Archives and into the walls of community organizations across mainland USA. As of this writing both "Keepin' On: Images of African American Lesbians" (Newsletter #12) and "Queer Covers" (Newsletter #15) had their inaugural moments at Center Stage of the Gay and Lesbian Visitors Center in Atlanta, Georgia. "Keepin' On" has made local appearances in Brooklyn, NY under the sponsorship of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press; at the Bronx Museum of The Arts in the Bronx thanks to BLUES (Bronx Lesbians United in Sisterhood); in West Hempstead, NY at the Women's Alternative Community Center; and at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. Our exhibits also visited Chicago thanks to the Gerber-Hart Gay and Lesbian Library and Archives and were seen by all at the National Women's Music Festival in Bloomington, Indiana. "Keepin' On: Images of African American Lesbians" and "Queer Covers" and the "Audre Lorde" exhibits are presently available — with more to come. If you are interested in bringing an Archives traveling exhibit to your community please contact the Archives at our PO Box, Attention: Exhibits Coordinator.

Makeda Silvera, author and poet. Reaching from Her Head a Village, Remembering G and other stories along with selections from other works.


Ann Meredith, photographer; Kate Wilson and Harriet Hirsrom, video makers from DYKE TV. Lesbians in March in Beijing. The 1995 International Conference on Women, a slide show, video presentation, and discussion of lesbian participation in the conference. Joni Cronk, Irish lesbian activist. The Founder of Ireland's Lesbian Front discussed the lesbian movement in Ireland and her experience as the first lesbian to come out publicly on Irish national television.

Flavia Rando, Michelle Griffin, Fran Winsom (former members of the Radicals Lesbians) and Charlotte Punch and Nancy Myers (from the Future). A historical remembrance and discussion of Lesbian Feminist activism, organizing and the need for lesbian self-documentation.

Susan Bright, artist and "sexpert" and co-founder of On Our Backs magazine. Reading and roundtable discussion of her latest work, Susan Bright's Sexsual: America's Favorite X-rated Intellectual Does Don Quixote, et al.

Amber Hollabaugh, Coordinator of the GMHC Lesbian AIDS Project, "Lesbians Get AIDS?" Presentation and discussion of the myth of Lesbian immunity and the importance of having good and accurate information regarding transmission issues, safer sex, and education.


June Chen of Asian Lesbians of the East Coast. Discussion and wonderfully herstoric slide show presentation chronicling the organization's inception and development.

Sue Schaffter and Carrier Moyer of Dyke Action Machine (DAM). A slide show presentation and discussion with these two fabulous activists/dykes about their individual work and what's new with DAM.


— Desiree Yael Vester

The Archives Photo Collection

A Little History

The photographic collection at the Lesbian Herstory Archives reflects the growth of the Archives since 1974. When we were originally envisione

Why Not?

Much of what was given to us came from women who simply wanted their images saved, their lives remembered. They neither offered permission for publication, nor did we request it. The first goal of the Archives is preservation and collection of materials that are an area we have excelled in. Perhaps our second major goal is the cataloguing of materials, preservation of bibliographies and creation of exhibits based on the collection. This area is a slow uphill battle, and can only move on at the speed that the Archives can attract and train volunteers for these tasks. One of the areas where we are slowly working on is the creation of a photo file of images that are immediately usable, with Archives permission, for publication. We have a few images that fall into this category now, however, they are not separated out from the collection, and you will need assistance in locating them.

How Can I Use What Is Here?

You are welcome to browse and enjoy the images in the photography collection. Most of the collection is contained in the three lateral cabinets marked "Photo Collection" in the audi-visual room. The files are arranged by subject, photographers name or subject's name. There are also several binders set up on a shelf against the far wall. Some of these binders are collections by specific photographers. There is also some photo books photographs of particular people. Important Note: Do not mount your photos in the albums available at dimstores, that have a plastic sheet holding photos against a tacky grid, the material destroys photos very rapidly. Please wash your hands before using the collection (no, it's not silly) and try not to handle the photos except by the edges. If they are mounted in pages do not attempt to remove them without checking with a archives staffer. Do not photocopy the photographs: the light speeds up their deterioration.

If you are working on a project where you want to get permission to use a particular photograph you will have to talk to a coordinator who is familiar with the photo collection. It will probably take a week or two to find out if the photo is one that can be used with Archives permission. If it isn't, then the next possibility is that we can put you in touch with the photographer or person who donated the image. (We will probably have to contact them for you, and pass your number and question along to them as a few photographers have made their phone numbers generally available.) The other possibility (and the most likely) is that we don't have the information on the donor/photographer and you will not be able to use the image.

We are sorry that the collection is so inaccessible to public use. As explained above, it came out of a different time and focus. Over the next few years we will be developing a photo file for public use, and we will be working on both collecting new images and getting releases on images we already possess.

If you are thinking of donating photographs to the Archives, please give the question of release rights some thought. If you are able to donate an image along with its copyright to the Archives, then it has the chance of going out into the world in publications and other media. But even if you don't want to give that permission (or can't due to people included in the photo) please be assured we will still treasure it, protect and preserve it for the viewing of future visitors to the Archives.

— Morgan Gwendal

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Nikki Nichols, Daughters of Bilitis member, circa 1960s.

Some of the found images in the Archives collection.

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The Lesbian Feminist Vision

The Liza Cowan and the Maxine Feldman Collections

Dates Covered: 1970’s — 1980’s

Maxine Feldman, another pioneer in Lesbian music, sent us seven boxes in which lie the history of a vision and a love. Dedicated to promoting women’s music, an early and major presence at the Michigan Women’s Music Festival, one of the first troubadours of gay rights, founder of the Oasis Awards, composer and entertainer, Maxine Feldman has given the women’s movement a powerful sense of how lesbians created their own culture, content, and music in the seventies and eighties. Her collection includes correspondence starting from the early seventies, scores, lyrics, newspaper coverage of her performances, photographs, booking schedules, tour notes, performance clothes, T-shirts, buttons, musical instruments. As I sat on my chair, unfolding letters, looking at photographs, I was moved beyond words once again at the power of the visions, the stories of these women, the vision of the archives, at the risks we took when no one else would. For any one interested in the history of lesbian feminism in this country, particularly as it expressed itself in women’s music, these are two invaluable sources.

— Joan Nestle

Maxine Feldman performing her song “Amazon” in the 80’s on Long Island

Photographs by Robert Giard 94-13: Phoans of lesbian writers from Robert Giard’s ten-year archival project of lesbian and gay writers. Acquired through a special grant to the archives.

Women’s Building 95-2: The Women’s Building in Los Angeles, CA donated images, calendar, and journals. This is contained in one box.

Francis Doughty 95-7: Span 1970’s — 1990’s. Frances Doughty, founding member of National Gay Task force was involved in many lesbian political groups. Four cartoon contain her donations of flyers, newsletters, posters, photos, zines, T-shirts from earlier movements and political activities. This is a wonderful slice of lesbian activism.

Jacqueline Woodson 95-9: Her collection of children’s literature, lesbian literatures, articles and reviews of Jackie’s work, articles and writings and correspondences and photos. This is contained in one box.

Scrapbook from the Kinsey Institute 95-10: This collection contains clippings from as far back as the 1920’s of women in the music. Many references to “passing women” and “odd women” as noted by the tabloids. One box.


Glass — Gay and Lesbian Association of Students, Southern Illinois University 96-2: This is a Midwest regional collection containing flyers, brochures, and announcements from GLASS as well as neighboring Lesbian organizations, memorabilia such as buttons and flags included.

Compiled by Robin Riback

Lebanese Heritages Newsletter #16 — December 1996

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MARY R. MINUCCI/DODGE (organizing the collection was now in progress) 1970’s through 1980’s Greenwich Village Tyker Union “Head Led.” A look at lesbians in the military includes a design vest with handmade notes from fellow army members, army uniform, double woman symbol stamp, dog tags, stripes, pins and good conduct medals.

The following collections are currently being processed and will be assigned an accession number shortly.

MAXINE FELDMAN: Years covered: 1970 — 1990. This collection gives us a view of women’s music and covers the following topics; music, musicians, record producer, Michigan Women’s Music Festival, Lyrics, the Oasis Awards. This collection also includes a Martin Guitar, picks and straps, T-shirts, buttons, photos of performers and concerts and performance at the Michigan recording hot bed with wings and roller stage!

LIZA COWAN: Years covered: 1970’s — 1990’s. An extensive collection with a wealth of information about lesbians, cultural and political. Subject files include info about GALLAS (Great American Lesbian Art Show, 1976), “Eclat Re-voiced” (for WBAI radio show), feminist concerts, dye portrayals in movies, lesbian undergroud songs, Lesbian Undergroud, Lesbians in the military, Feminist cleaners, feminist coffee house, feminist poetry, lesbian third world, lesbian festivals and dances, women only, dye lesbian, Jewish lesbians... and so much more!

ELLEN SABREY: Years covered: 1980’s — 1990’s. Ellen bequeathed her entire career to the Lesbian History archives. Her two boxes of collectibles include her personal diaries, scrapbooks, personal papers and political papers. The recent death has saddened our community and we will miss her very much.

NY WOMEN’S CENTER: Years covered: 1980’s — 1990’s. This collection contains in it more than 35 boxes sometime last year brought these to our eyes as we began to open the boxes. This includes the original papers, figures, etc. from the radical publication, NKT, that was taken over by lesbians during the late 80’s, early 90’s. Includes the original papers from the Lesbian Feminist Librarians and the Women’s Center in New York City, that had, apparently, inherited the organized papers. Includes correspondence, photos, flyers, minutes, notes, graphics, action plans, etc.

In our first few years, a good part of our money came from a tithing by the Lesbian Herstory Archives founders, as they could give. Over the years, the balance has shifted; ongoing expenses are now being met by donations from the community. 1998 marked the first year that our incoming donations topped $25,000, and we had to file our first formal 990 with the IRS and the New York State charitable agencies.

How Do We Meet Our Ongoing Expenses and Get Our Work Done?

All labor at the Archives is done by volunteers. It is a labor of love involving many hours of work by dedicated women. Our vision and knowledge of what needs to be done is great, but our decisions about expenditures are based on the actual income that we have in hand.

In the past, we didn’t have to fund raise to pay rent, since the collection was housed in the apartment Joan and Lee share. Now, however, we have to meet the expenses of the mortgage and the upkeep of the house.

We are given generous donations of books and materials from the Lesbian community. We receive donations from individual women who visit the Archives, read our newsletter, hear us speak, or meet us at conferences and believe in the vision of the Archives. Money is put in the donation can at LHA and at conferences where women give us dollars and change anonymously. Donations are made for the photocopying we do in response to information requested by mail or in person at LHA. We receive honoraria for presenting the slide show and for speaking engagements we do about the work of LHA. We do not charge a set fee but ask that university and community groups with access to funding respect our needs. We often show the slide show to the Lesbian community and then pass the hat. All honoraria and donations we receive for speaking go into the Archives account after we are reimbursed for personal travel expenses.

We also receive money from donations for our poster, T-shirts, buttons, and postcards. Monies come from grants from within the Lesbian community and alternative funding sources. Monies come from other sources, such as memorial funds, workplace donations, cultural events, donations from other organizations, and donations earmarked for special needs.

How Can You Help

- Organize a fund raiser or house party in your own community.
- Undertake a fixed expense as your personal project. Let us know that you want to pay for part or all of one of our expenses.
- Send us basic supplies, such as pencils, paper, blank mailing envelopes of all sizes, etc.
- Talk to your local publisher, organization, and Lesbian, gay, or women’s bookstore, and arrange for us to get free samples and review copies of books and journals.

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Prepared January 20, 1996
Deborah Edel, Treasurer

Explanation of categories in charts: Postage includes not only the cost of all individual and bulk mailings but also return postage on bulk mail. Books/Journals/Materials includes books, pamphlets, posters, and resource materials. The more authors and publishers donate their work to us, the lower our costs. Printing/Photocopying refers to outside photocopying and the printing of flyers, announcements, and newsletters. Stationery/Archival Supplies includes preservation materials, basic office supplies, photocopy paper, and toner. Other Household Expenses refers to regular monthly expenses, including gas, electricity, telephone, and exterminator bills. Miscellaneous Household Expenses includes such costs during our first year as carpeting, paint, track lighting bulbs, electric light bulbs, toilet paper, cleaning supplies, curtains, curtain rods, keys, hardware supplies, and other household start-up items.