

Critical Archives and Records Reading Group: Queerness and Recordkeeping Session

Table 1:

- Validity
- Construction of archives (what is a record?)
- Contrasts between romantic visions of precarity and economic realities/potential to close down at any point
- Radical queer practice can act as another form of gatekeeping - need to know how to navigate language

Queer archival practice:

- Outside the institution?
 - Fabulous
 - Feelings
 - Trauma
 - Inclusive of older generations
 - Different types of objects
 - What's significant in queer lives?
 - Absences
 - Reading against state records
 - Is this only one mode of queer archival practice?
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- The archival threshold/crossing politics - food as part of object/not allowed to researchers

Different approaches to collection

- Total archives approach (community investment?)
- Or supporting other community-based archives?

Polarised view of institutional/domestic archival contexts

Sexually explicit materials

- Whole collections or unexpected?
- Advisory notes
- Public/private - access complications
- Donor relations
- How to respond
- Privacy
- How to catalogue

Table 2:

- "Old fashioned visions of archives"
 - "Us" and "them" - antagonisms between traditional and community-led practice
 - Recognised archival practice vs community archives vs community history-making
 - Instability and stability - the cultural, social conditioning of the profession resists? can this be accommodated within archival practice?
 - Community practices may move away from own objectives by rejection archival traditions? e.g. requiring a gatekeeper.
 - Marcel Barriault piece - trying really hard to confer "traditional"/heteronormative paradigms of value (Schellenberg)
 - Resist research paradigm - e.g. Lesbian Herstory Archives no opening hours
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- Queer visibility vs safe spaces - is creating a space of your own queerness othering? or productive in connecting to queer histories?

- Threshold for autonomy and self-determination is high and the archives that the literature focuses on a small amount of examples, Herstory, CLGA
- Legislative contexts - GDPR and sexuality as a form of sensitive data.
- Queer approach doesn't value forever in the same way - preservation is not necessary - the drive for forever is heteronormative, the limited and the temporary to be fixed
- Value needn't be forever
- Deliberate instability
- Deferred into the future - better to use it up or reproduce and reuse it

Table 3:

- Time/space: tension between domestic queer space and sanitised institutional space
- Managing access - trusting institutions to do it sensitively
- Ephemera - compliment history of censorship
- Track change over time
- Incompleteness
- Emphasis on gay sexual lives as opposed to a more holistic stories of their lives
- Queer is **sex**
- Data protection - ethics of the institution/living subjects
- Emotion in finding aids - meta-analysis of how people connect with the archive
- Not all queer materials in archives declare themselves as such
- Domesticity/private sphere

"Queer"

- Applicable?
- Can we label people queer?
- New term
- Is it representative of all experiences?
- Loaded term
- Ambiguous?

Presence/absence

- How do we analyse absence?
- Power of absence
- Recognising/future archival collecting practice?

Explicit content

- How archival is it?
- Ethics - subject of the porn
- Record - age - consent
- Exploitation
- Research ethics/research gaze
- Who accesses it in public repositories?