

Looking for LGBTQ+ History on Your Campus or Other Small Archives

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"Gloria & Charmaine, Baltimore, MD." Joan E Biren, 1979

About the Project and Author:

In 2016, the United States National Park Service started a project called “LGBTQ America” in which they looked towards ways to represent LGBTQ+ history and heritage in their registers of places nationwide. Connected to this initiative, a crowdsourced map was started at HistoryPin, a website which allows grassroots identification of historical sites.

Preservation Maryland is a statewide historic preservation non-profit organization. The organization is working to identify a comprehensive list of sites and properties that could be included both on that map and in the various frameworks used by government agencies to recognize and protect historically significant places. Preservation Maryland is pleased to invite Maryland's colleges, universities, and small archives to participate in this project.

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Student promoting homophile club

by Larry Blonder
Gay is good.
So reads the purple button on the
sleeve of Dirk J. Bakker, a senior zo-
ology major at the University.
Bakker is also the organizer for the
club on campus," Bakker explained.
The idea for the association goes
back to last January, he noted. An
article last year in the University's
feature magazine, *Argus*, also moti-
vated Bakker to organize the club in a
humane, civilized manner," he added.
Besides providing a social context
for students, he is also attempting to
encourage campus dialogue on issues
related to the homophile situation.
"We want to sponsor lecturers, for-
um discussions, and they are faced with en-
dangering their plans for the future,"
Bakker warned.
"We are trying to get across the
idea that the students should be proud
they are gay. It is simply that gay is
not a bad thing, it is just a different
events either," he stressed.
"Straights are welcome to participate
just as homosexual guys and girls."
"We want to bring the discrimina-
tion against gay students out into the
open, so we can break down all the

*First known attempt to organize open LGBTQ+ student group in Maryland,
The Diamondback (University of Maryland), 7 Oct, 1970. p 1*

Introduction: The Value of LGBTQ+ Community History and Heritage

More than many topics, those in the field of LGBTQ+ history have stressed the need for grassroots, community support in order to document our lives and the lives of our predecessors. There's a number of reasons for this, but it is mostly due to necessity—socially conservative institutions, fear of retaliation, stigma, violence, and more have created a situation where much of the lives of LGBTQ+ people have not been recorded in traditional collections and archives to the same extent as those who are heterosexual and cisgender.

It is my opinion both as an Information professional and a queer person that this does concrete harm to newer members of our communities. Unlike many communities, our history is not passed down through traditional family ties, which can lead those who are grappling with sexual and gender identity to feel even further isolated and without a sense of how others like us have lived, struggled, and survived. This is especially true of LGBTQ+ people of color, who are often excluded from media depictions of LGBTQ+ communities and history.

With all of this in mind, this guide is written to offer LGBTQ+ students some tools with which you can start looking for the history of LGBTQ+ people and organizations at your college or university.



*ACT UP! FDA protest, Rockville, MD, 11 Oct, 1988
photo by Chuck Stallard, ONE Archives at USC*

The Research Process

The following is not the only way to conduct research, just the one I think is easiest to use in this case. This process can take anything from an hour to weeks, depending on how in-depth you want to be. It is as follows:

1. Write down what you know
2. Identify potential sources of information
3. Choose what to search for
4. Record your findings
5. Share your findings



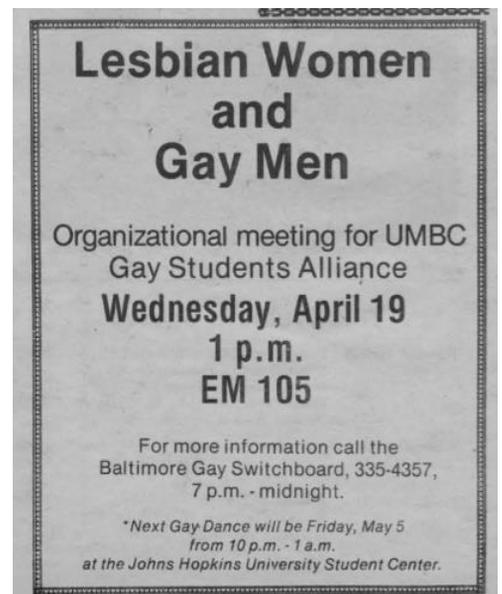
Morning Herald, Hagerstown, MD, 11 July, 1977, p. 1

1. Write Down What You Know

This part is relatively easy. If you have anything relevant that you've heard, write it down, so that you can look for it later. This could be something like:

- ◉ *"I heard the LGBTQ student group I'm part of was originally started in the 70s."*
- ◉ *"A professor once told me that there was a lot of controversy around the creation of the Women's Studies program."*
- ◉ *"The medical school here was one of the first places trans people could undergo surgery to medically transition"*

For most folks, this is a pretty short, or nonexistent step. It's just a reminder that if you have heard about these things, it can be worth looking into. Even if you can't find anything more than something like these statements, it's worth noting.



First notice of UMBC LGBTQ student group, UMBC Retriever, 17 April, 1978, p 11

2. Identify Sources

After noting anything you've heard in Step 1, or if there was nothing to note, we have to recognize what kinds of resources we have at our disposal. Most of these will be found at the campus library or archives.

Campus Archivists: Nearly every college has some manner of institutional archive, and the person or people who staff that archive may have great insights into what material may be found there. Emailing, calling, or visiting them is generally a good first step, as they can point you in the right direction if they know of anything.

Campus Newspapers: Many schools have digitized past copies of student newspapers in *full text*, meaning you can search the actual content of the paper. This is the easiest resource to use, as you can do some pretty useful searches of a lot of material the same way you would use a search engine like Google. Others may have image captures of the newspapers, but not the text, meaning you would have to browse through page by page. That's a pretty daunting task, so search for a specific date or person.

Ephemera and Photo collections: Some campus archives have collections of photos, flyers, and other items related to student groups—known as “ephemera.” These are usually not searchable, and would require permission and assistance from an archivist or librarian to access and use. That said, it may have really important information and interesting artifacts.

Alumni Groups: If your campus has an LGBTQ alumni organization, they may be a good resource to understand things like early gay rights student groups, interactions or conflicts with college administrators, or other relevant info.

3. Knowing What to Look For

Prior to the Stonewall Rebellion in June, 1969, in New York City, it was very rare to find groups or individuals willing to openly advocate for LGBTQ+ people. While there were a few, such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitus, they were small and didn't often organize on college campuses. Because of this, with a few notable exceptions, it's generally much more difficult to find information on LGBTQ+ people and organizations prior to the early 70s, and even more so prior to the mid 1950s. With that in mind, **here's a quick timeline of recent LGBTQ+ organizing and history, along with what kind of terms to search a school newspaper for, and what kinds of stories one is most likely to find.** If your campus does not have searchable newspapers, this still could help guide any research.

Each section in this timeline has a broad description of what was happening, examples of the kinds of articles you might find in a college newspaper from the era, and a list of some terms you might want to search for.

LGBTQ+ history timeline:

1950s-early 1970s: "The Lavender Scare"

During the 50s and 60s, reactions to emerging gay and lesbian communities were harsh. During this time, nearly every institution attached to the federal or state governments did what they can to root out LGBTQ people, most often gay men, and promptly fire them. Meanwhile, gay and lesbian bars were regularly raided and everyone inside arrested. While early LGBTQ+ activist groups, then called "homophile associations" started operating, they were very small.

SEARCH TERMS: "Homosexual", "Homosexuality", "Homophile".

TYPES OF ARTICLES YOU MIGHT FIND IN A COLLEGE NEWSPAPER:

'Professor fired for homosexuality';
'Student expelled for homosexuality'

1970-1981, The Gay Liberation/Lesbian Feminist Era

This is the time period where most campus LGBTQ+ organizing starts happening. Groups with names like Gay Student Union, Gay Union, Lesbian Sisterhood, and others started cropping up, and often had to fight school administrations in order to be allowed to exist. Especially in the early 1970s, these groups often interfaced with broader social movements, such as the Black Power movement, anti-war movement, and especially for lesbian groups, the feminist movement.

SEARCH TERMS: "Lesbian", "Gay", "Homosexual", "Gay Students", "Gay Liberation", "Womanist" (This term is not exclusively used by lesbians, but some black lesbian activists used it)

TYPES OF ARTICLES YOU MIGHT FIND IN A COLLEGE NEWSPAPER:

"Gay student group protests military",
"Lesbian event causes concern",
"Homosexual students demand funding"

3. What to Look For, continued

1982-1996: The AIDS Crisis

What was, by every account, the darkest point for the LGBTQ+ community since Stonewall also led to some of the most strident activism and resistance to the indifference of the US government and straight society to those affected and dying of AIDS. While much of the activity of LGBTQ+ student groups remained the same as earlier—hosting dances, discussion groups, advocating for rights—students also participated in vast protests in Washington, DC and elsewhere against the government bodies which were refusing to act on the crisis. Others held fundraisers to help support AIDS research as well as activism. The introduction of effective antiviral drugs in 1995 changed the dynamic significantly, as struggles morphed towards decreasing the costs of treatment and the AIDS mortality rate dropped significantly.

SEARCH TERMS: “AIDS”, “HIV”, “Gay”, “Lesbian”, “Bisexual”, “ACT UP!”, “AIDS Awareness”

TYPES OF ARTICLES YOU MIGHT FIND IN A COLLEGE NEWSPAPER:
“Students raise funds for AIDS awareness”,
“Medical School participates in HIV research”, “Students join AIDS protest at National Institute of Health”

1996-now:

In some ways, the struggles for LGBTQ+ students have changed greatly since the end of the worst days of the AIDS crisis, but in others, the framework we have lived in has remained fairly stable over the past two decades. This is when we start to see people identifying as queer, demands for increased visibility and support for trans folks, celebrations of our identities, and more. Student groups advocate for trans-affirming policies in student housing and elsewhere on their campuses, participate in political causes affecting LGBTQ+ people nationwide as well as in LGBTQ+ Pride events, work to establish campus offices to support LGBTQ+ people, and so on.

SEARCH TERMS: “Queer”, “Gay,” “Lesbian”, “Bisexual,” “Transgender”, “Trans”, “intersex”, “Genderqueer”, “Sexuality”, “Non-Binary”, “GLBT”, “LGBT”, “LGBTQ”

TYPES OF ARTICLES YOU MIGHT FIND IN A COLLEGE NEWSPAPER:
“LGBT Students advocate for gender-neutral housing,” “College opens Gender and Sexuality Center”, “Students participate in national march for gay rights”

4. Record Your Findings

When you find something that you think is important, it's important that someone else would be able to know how to find it again.

The simplified version of this information is a citation. There are a number of websites where one can go to learn more about citations and easily create them. I suggest <http://www.citationmachine.net>

Once again, there's a lot of ways to do this, the important part is that you are able to record information in a way that someone can pick up where you left off. Towards that end, we've designed a template to help you. It can be found on Preservation Maryland's website. Here's what that looks like:

LGBTQ+ History Reference Sheet

Your Name:

Today's Date:

Author's Last Name: Author's First Name:

Article Title: Publication Name:

School Name: Date Published:

Page(s):

Description:

Citation:

Attach Image:



5. Share Your Findings!

There are a whole bunch of ways you can share what you've found. Here's a few ideas.

First, it's important to share with the people around you:

- ◉ Email whatever group or office you work with or are a part of.
- ◉ If you received assistance from your school archivist, be sure to share what you found with them.

For Preservation Maryland's LGBTQ+ Heritage project, we recommend the following ways you can engage:

- ◉ Use our google form to let us know to add it to our list. We put it at http://bit.ly/LGBTQ_MD
- ◉ Add content to the LGBTQ America HistoryPin map directly: <https://www.historypin.org/en/lgbtq-america/>
- ◉ Email us your finds at info@presmd.org

There are numerous ways to engage with LGBTQ+ history. Here's some of them:

- ◉ Rainbow Heritage Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/439557382858786/>
- ◉ Rainbow History Project (Washington, DC): <http://www.rainbowhistory.org/>
- ◉ The Maryland Historical Society has been expanding its collections related to local and state-wide LGBTQ+ history. They can be reached at specialcollections@mdhs.org

Author's Note: Finally, I'll note that I've been involved in LGBTQ+ history for a long while, and have no plans on losing interest in the subject. You're more than welcome to email me personally at ben.egerman@gmail.com.



Sappho's Bar, pictured in UMBC Retriever, April 18, 1977, p 6

Additional Resources

For those who are interested in learning more about LGBTQ+ history, there's no shortage of resources. I highly recommend:

- ◉ ONE Archives at USC (West Hollywood, CA): <https://one.usc.edu>
- ◉ LGBT Community Center National History Archive at the Center (NYC): <https://gaycenter.org/archives/>
- ◉ GLBT Historical Society & Museum (San Francisco, CA): <https://www.glbthistory.org/>
- ◉ Lesbian Herstory Archives (NYC): <http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/>
- ◉ <http://www.outhistory.org/> (online)

For books, I highly recommend the works of Jonathan Ned Katz, Lillian Faderman, Estelle Freedman, John D'Emilio, Martin Duberman, and Michael Kimmel, among others.

More on Preservation Maryland's LGBTQ+ Heritage work:

<http://presmd.org/lgbtq>



University of Maryland Gay Student Alliance

Lalos, H. (Ed.). (1972). *Us Yearbook*, College Park, MD: University of Maryland, pp. 103