

*Making Invisible  
Histories Visible*



June L. Mazer (left) and Bunny MacCulloch

The  
June L. Mazer  
Lesbian Archives

*Making Invisible  
Histories Visible*

A RESOURCE GUIDE  
TO THE COLLECTIONS

*Edited by*

Kathleen A. McHugh,  
Brenda Johnson-Grau,  
and Ben Raphael Sher

UCLA Center for the Study of Women  
Los Angeles, 2014

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COVER PHOTOS: *Top left*: Diane Germain, circa 1958-59, Diane Germain Papers; *center*: March against Briggs Initiative, 1978, Lesbian Schoolworker Records; *top right*: Motorcyclist at Gay Pride Parade, San Francisco, circa 1980s, photo by Francesca Roccaforte, Francesca Roccaforte Papers; *bottom left*: Rita Charette, 1958, Bunny McCulloch Papers; *bottom right*: Margaret A. Porter and friend, 1935, Margaret A. Porter Papers

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and Sharon E. Farb*

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Mack Mistress performing at Sarafemme 2008: Queer Women of Color Music Festival, West Hollywood Park. *Photo by Angela Brinskele.*  
*Angela Brinskele Papers*



# Preface

The founders of what became the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives went looking for lesbian history in the early 1980s and could not find it in either the archive or the historical record. So they resolved to gather personal and collective materials themselves in order to make a place for that history. At around the same time, feminist scholars at UCLA founded the Center for the Study of Women (CSW) to make a place for transformative, interdisciplinary research on women as an integral part of the university's mission. In 2007, some two decades later, our missions converged in the partnership we formed for CSW Access Mazer Project. Joined by the UCLA Library, our collaboration flourished and in 2011 the National Endowment for the Humanities provided generous completion funds. Along the way, many people and partners have come together to help realize the vision behind this archival project. This resource book testifies to the important mission of preserving lesbian, feminist history and to the value of community partnership and ongoing collaboration.

– *Kathleen A. McHugh*

Director, Center for the Study of Women,  
University of California, Los Angeles

No matter how carefully considered in advance, there is no way to really know how a new strategic partnership will work out. What a gift the Mazer-UCLA partnership has turned out to be to the Archives, and our grassroots Lesbian community. Almost all our personal collections, plus our video and audio materials, are processed, preserved, and safely stored. While my generation was not as closeted as the generations before, I am old enough to remember the police noting our license plate numbers when we entered the gay center and the librarian going to the locked stacks to get my requested book on “homosexuality.” Forty years later it took courage for the Board to decide to trust a large government institution. That courage has been rewarded with mutual understanding and respect, excitement as we discovered the riches in our boxes, and friendship. As I read the graduate student essays I felt their excitement of discovery. What thrilled me most is they were discovering the cares, struggles, successes and joys of everyday, just-trying-to-get-by Lesbians. This is what the Mazer has always been about. This partnership ensures our grassroots Lesbian community will live forever.

– *Ann Giagni*

President of the Board, June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives

Since being launched in 2009, the outreach and collection-building partnership between the UCLA Library and the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives has made thousands of documents, photographs, and ephemeral items more broadly accessible, benefiting scholars of social and cultural history around the world. Growing out of a project initiated by the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, this innovative collaboration draws on the strengths of both organizations to support UCLA's mission of teaching, research, and public service. The partnership supports the Library's broader efforts to gather, preserve, interpret, and make accessible collections documenting the remarkable multiplicity of cultures and at-risk hidden histories of the Los Angeles region. We invite scholars to consult the Mazer materials in person or online, and we look forward to our continuing collaboration with both the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives and the UCLA Center for the Study of Women to continue to expand the pool of primary materials available to researchers.

– *Virginia Steel*

University Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles

– *Sharon E. Farb*

Associate University Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles

**March**  
**1959**  
**50¢**

*The Ladder*



# Preserving the Legacy of Lesbian Feminist Activism and Writing in Los Angeles

KATHLEEN A. McHUGH

*Director, UCLA Center for the Study of Women*

## WHEN A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION MEETS A STATE INSTITUTION

THE JUNE L. MAZER LESBIAN ARCHIVES, located in West Hollywood, California, has collected the papers, images, and ephemera of everyday lesbians since 1981. Originally titled the West Coast Lesbian Collections and founded by Cherie Cox, Lynn Fonfa, and Claire Potter in Oakland, CA, their acquisition policy included “anything a lesbian ever touched.” In 1986, June Mazer, her partner, Bunny MacCulloch, and others arranged for the struggling archive to be brought to Los Angeles. “Grassroots” well describes their efforts and the archives that bear June Mazer’s name, as the word indicates the groundwork, basis or foundation of something originating in or emerging from people removed or isolated from a major political center.<sup>1</sup> Grassroots archives, to paraphrase Jackie Goldsby, allow us to imagine the histories of people and populations otherwise ignored or left undocumented by the political center.<sup>2</sup> In the Mazer’s boxes and materials lie past traces and future imaginings of lesbian and feminist ways of seeing, living, writing, protesting, and, most importantly, desiring and loving. This resource book provides a guide to the Mazer’s vital collections while also telling the story of how they came to be housed at UCLA, a large state institution and major research university. Grassroots organizations and state institutions’ interests are, by definition, distinct and incommensurate, and the path to this outcome was by no means easy or certain. But it was as necessary as it was groundbreaking.

This book introduces the outcome in two parts. In the first part, short essays from participants in the project address topics that range from the project’s history to its legal articulation to the distinct pleasures, insights, and challenges that arise from working with the individual collections. Each essayist has engaged in one or more of the tasks this project entailed: grants writing, fundraising, administering, negotiating, managing, collecting, processing, describing, preserving, digitizing, and housing these collections. The essays in part I convey an archival or institutional materialism; they render the multiple entry points, perspectives, challenges, and solutions that arose within a dynamic collaboration among three separate entities and their respective personnel: the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW), and the UCLA Library. These essays introduce the voices of diverse project collaborators whose distinct skills and labors resulted in these collections now being available to scholars and other interested parties around the world, while they maintain their identity and origins in the Mazer Archives.

< *The Ladder*, March, 1959. The first national distributed lesbian magazine in the U.S., it was published by the Daughters of Bilitis until 1970 when the organization disbanded. It was taken over by Barbara Grier, who published it until 1972. *Daughters of Bilitis Records*

Part II presents abstracts of all 83 collections, together with images and representative documents curated by project personnel. Here, readers can sample the range and depth of the collections themselves. The abstracts gesture to the individual lives, the political and social groups and issues, the myriad types of documents and memorabilia, the literature, images, and social documentation produced by lesbians and feminists whose collections are included in this project. This section registers the material value of and the life in these collections, the scholarly opportunities and resources they afford, and the excitement, pleasure, and insight we have all experienced engaging with these materials and bringing this project to fruition. It makes clear why archives—and lesbian archives in particular—matter.

### **A BIT OF HISTORY: FROM “ACCESS MAZER” TO “MAKING INVISIBLE HISTORIES VISIBLE”**

**I**N 2007, CSW commenced what became a substantial and productive relationship with the Mazer archives through a two-year UCLA community partnership grant. Titled “The ‘Access Mazer’ Project: Organizing and Digitizing the Lesbian Feminist Archive in Los Angeles,” the grant provided funds for CSW to process, describe, create finding aids for and digitize five large L.A.-based Mazer collections. Since I became its director in 2005, CSW had implemented a community-based research focus on sexuality, gender, and women in Los Angeles. In 2006, Candace Moore, a CSW Graduate Student Researcher (GSR), now an Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan, suggested the Mazer Archives, where she had conducted dissertation research, as a possible community partner. I did a site visit, met Mazer Board Chair Ann Giagni and board member Angela Brinskele, among others, who agreed to work with us. The Community Partnership Grant we received the following year covered five major collections: the Connexus/Centro de Mujeres; Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW); the Lillian Faderman collection; the Margaret Cruikshank collection; and the Southern California Women for Understanding (SCWU). From this collaboration, the Mazer benefited in having these materials processed and CSW and the UCLA library benefited by having these materials digitally available for scholars worldwide through the California Digital Library.

Though the community partnerships grant included only CSW and the Mazer Archives, the UCLA Library supported us from the start. The grant costs covered digitization equipment and the highly skilled GSRs we employed—James Hixon, T-Kay Sangwand, Janine Liebert, and Adrienne Posner—to process, create finding aids for, and digitize the collections. We divided up the grant’s two years by processing the material collections the first year and digitizing them the second. I remember well a conversation I had with Stephen Davison, the head of the UCLA Digital Library Program, as we planned the digitizing process of the five collections. He said, “It is a little irregular for us to digitize collections that the UCLA Library doesn’t own.” This irregularity—that involved questions of stewardship for the Mazer and concerns about costs and investment for UCLA library—led to negotiations that resulted in a longtime formal partnership between the UCLA Library and the Mazer Archives, negotiations facilitated by CSW.



Martha Foster.  
*Martha Foster  
Papers*



Couple attending Sarafemme 2008: Queer Women  
of Color Music Festival, West Hollywood Park.  
*Photo by Angela Brinskele. Angela Brinskele Papers*



"Support Gay Teachers and Gay Schoolworkers" flyer was distributed in opposition to Proposition 6, known as the Briggs Initiative, which would have banned lesbians and gays, as well as those who supported the rights of lesbians and gays, from working in California schools. It was defeated on November 7, 1978. *Lesbian Schoolworkers Records*

The expanse and state-of-the-art archive facilities at UCLA interested the Mazer, whose collecting activities had been slowed by lack of physical space at their archive; the UCLA Library saw the Mazer as crucial to their "Collecting Los Angeles" initiative and their interest in LGBT Archives and materials. However, the interests of each diverged on crucial points. While the Mazer sought, primarily, to preserve lesbian history for lesbians, with access an important but secondary goal, the UCLA library wanted to enhance their overall collections profile through access. Articulating a successful partnership between the Mazer, a small grassroots organization and UCLA, a large state institution, depended on resolving significant issues concerning collection ownership and stewardship. The Mazer did not want to cede ownership of the collections to an institution that, though currently benevolent, might change their priorities and values in ways detrimental to lesbian history and its preservation. For the library, ownership was a crucial element of investment and public mission. How could they justify an investment of space and resources to these collections if their stewardship rested with parties outside the university who could then remove them from the UCLA library at any time they chose?

Both the Mazer and UCLA needed to be creative to establish a framework for what had not been done before, to change existing policies and procedures and then contractually to modify the existing documents that defined the relationship between the two entities. Though such a partnership had not been legally executed and engaged in before, it was worth the effort for both. The partnership ultimately effected by the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives and the UCLA Library has to do with the way in which sexuality as well as other differences such as race, ethnicity, and gender, have been structured out of our major social institutions and the work it takes to create a

framework that can allow for this work to be included. The essayists in this resource book did the work it took to create this legal framework and to implement the productive collaboration and partnership that followed from it.

The success of our collaboration then led to the NEH awarding us a three-year Humanities Collections and Reference Resources (HCRR) Grant to process, describe, create finding aids for and digitize 83 Mazer collections and a substantial portion of their AV materials. Essays from Ann Giagni, the head of the Mazer Board, and Sharon Farb, UCLA Associate Librarian, recount the details—the problems and the legal resolutions—that initially thwarted and then enabled this partnership. We are also delighted to have an essay from our former NEH program officer, Elizabeth Joffrion, on collaborations between mainstream and community archives that engages multiple perspectives, including lesbian archivist theorists and the NEH program guidelines. These initial essays provide an overarching context for those written by other project participants, from managers to archivists to processors. We began the project in May 2011 and completed it in June 2014.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: MANY HANDS

THE EXTENT AND AMBITION of the “Making Invisible Histories Visible” project required numerous and diverse participants, many of who write of their project experience in the essays below. Dr. Julie K. Childers, former CSW Assistant Director, helped write the NEH grant and managed the project for its first two years before relocating to Philadelphia. She served as the point person for all the different units working on the grant. Since her departure, Dr. Pamela Crespin, current CSW Assistant Director, has ably taken up the project manager position. Financial manager Van Do-Nguyen has overseen all the project finances. CSW Publications Manager Brenda Johnson-Grau has, in addition to helping with the grant proposal and doing all the publicity for the NEH project, worked with Ben Raphael Sher and me on editing this resource publication.

She curated the images and produced a magnificent layout to illustrate the essays and collection descriptions.

Angela Brinskele, our liaison at the Mazer, served as project consultant and rights permissions manager, tracking down donors, necessary deeds and permissions, planning workshops, doing oral histories, and curating images for this publication. Lizette Guerra, Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC) librarian and archivist, served as the project archivist; she trained and supervised the many GSRs who processed the collections under her direction. Both she and CSRC Project Archivist Michael Stone, who oversaw all of the Mazer’s audiovisual digitizing, previously had worked on their center’s LGBT initiative. UCLA Librarian Gary Strong and Library Director of Special Collections Tom Hyry regularly consulted on the project while associate librarians Kelly Wolfe Bachli and Jillian Cuellar have assisted us in organizing the collection acquisition and cataloging.

They trained the GSRs and directed all the processing done through the Center for Primary Research Training (CFPRT). Jain Fletcher, rare books cataloger, created bibliographic MARC records for all of the collections. Senior analyst and library liaison Leslie McMichael assisted Sharon Farb and everyone else, facilitating project meetings. Stephen Davison, mentioned above, has continued to guide the project’s



MP Rita Charette enforces the no-men policy, 1958.  
*Bunny McCulloch Papers*

digitization and access component. Siobhan Hagan helped to establish the protocols for digitization and preservation. And, librarian Diana King served as a steadfast ally and consultant.

The “grassroots” of the project—the hands that have sorted, foldered and scanned documents, drafted finding aids, done interviews, written blogs, and engaged and presented on the collections—are the GSRs we have hired from the Departments of English, Film, Television and Digital Media (FTVDM), History, Information Studies (IS), Moving Image Archive Studies (MIAS), Sociology, and World Arts and Cultures (WAC). Trained by CSW, UCLA Library, and CSRC personnel, the graduate students we selected brought passionate scholarly and personal investments to the project. Kimberlee Granholm (MIAS), who, over the course of the project, completed her master's degree and became a staff member at CSW, worked closely with Angela Brinskele on permissions, processed collections, and is now part of the core team overseeing everything in the grant's final year. Stacy Wood (IS) coordinated with the Mazer, processed and described collections, trained other GSRs and conducted a group oral history with the Mazer Board members. Jonathan Cohn (FTVDM) and Sadie Menchen (MIAS) took up residence at the Mazer as we prepared for digitization, drawing up a detailed list of collections and audiovisual material we proposed to process. Jonathan then digitized audiovisual materials. Ben Raphael Sher (FTVDM) wrote blog posts on the project, processed and digitized a number of collections, and serves as co-editor of this resource book. Daniel Williford (English) worked with Kimberlee Granholm on media digitization. Marika Cifor (IS) has processed collections at CFPRT and has completed an oral history with Ann Giagni as well as other Mazer donor and board members. Angel Diaz (IS), who has

particular interests in Mexican American community archives, processed and scanned several collections as did Molly Jacobs (Sociology) whose dissertation has drawn from research she did on the materials for this project.

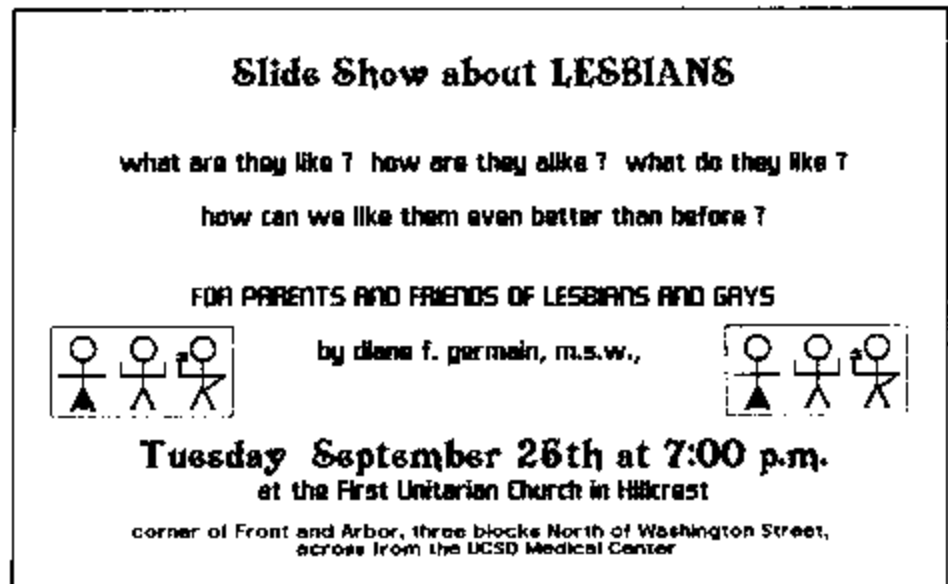
A number of graduate students worked on Mazer collections through the CFPRT: Sandra Brasda (History) processed the Broomstick Magazine records; Gloria Gonzalez (IS) the Margaret A. Porter Papers; Courtney Dean (IS) the Diana Press Records and the Barbara Griener Periodical Collection; and Pallavi Sriram (WAC) the Pat Nordell Papers and others. Last but not least, Jorge B. Lopez helped with processing, Archna

Director/Producer J.D. Disalvatore (left) with friend at Outfest.  
Photo by Angela Brinskele. Angela Brinskele Papers





Flyer for a presentation by  
Diane Germain about lesbian  
life for family and friends  
of lesbians and gays. Diane  
Germain Papers



Patel worked tirelessly on digitizing collections and doing an overall materials audit, and Sally Marquez and Hannah Caps have helped to create the metadata and descriptive material for the project's oral history collections. All of these efforts help ensure maximum accuracy and access to the processed collections.

We worked closely with a terrific NEH Project Advisory Board: Susan Anderson, Eric Avila, Marie Cartier, Ann Cvetkovich, Lillian Faderman, Ann Giagni, Joseph R. Hawkins, and R. Bradley Sears. Ann Cvetkovich's brilliant writings on the lesbian archive have been an inspiration as has been Mazer donor and historian Lillian Faderman's work, especially *Gay L.A.*, which was invaluable as we conceived and moved forward on "Making Invisible Histories Visible."<sup>3</sup> Thanks to Joseph Hawkins for sharing the ONE Archive's NEH grant proposal that provided a model for ours and to Brad Sears and Eric Avila, colleagues and friends, for their scholarship and activism on LGBT and Los Angeles issues. We are thrilled to have an oral history from Mazer donor Marie Cartier and thank Susan Anderson for all her assistance through the UCLA library.

This resource book provides a summary of all the collections of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives that are now available through the UCLA Library. It also makes visible the voices, negotiations, labor, and personnel behind what was an extraordinarily successful, indeed joyful, collaboration among a large and diverse number of people. Thanks to Chon Noriega for suggesting the idea of a resource book. I am deeply grateful to Ann Giagni for her trust and commitment to our longstanding partnership and to Sharon Farb, who brought to it passion, wit, and the legal wisdom necessary to write the contract on which our collaboration depended. Last but not least, my heartfelt thanks to the CSW staff and the wonderful graduate students on whose work the project outcomes ultimately relied. In helping to preserve and provide access to the history contained in the Mazer Archives, we all have, in some small way, become a part of that history.

#### NOTES

1. *American Heritage Dictionary*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1973: 574-5.
2. Jackie Goldsby, "The Art of Being Difficult: The Turn to Abstraction in African American Poetry and Painting During the 1940s and '50s." UCLA, Public Talk, February 13, 2014.
3. See Cvetkovich's "Queer Archival Futures: Case Study Los Angeles," in a special issue of *E-MISFERICA*, On the Subject of the Archives, ed. Marianne Hirsch and Diana Taylor, 9.1-9.2, and Faderman and Stuart Timmons' *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians*, New York: Basic Books, 2006.



Wall of History at June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives. Angela Brinskele Papers

# a safe place for everyday, just-trying-to-get-by Lesbians

ANN GIAGNI

*President of the Board, June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives*

BEGUN AS A COLLECTIVE THIRTY YEARS AGO, the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives is a grassroots nonprofit organization. Up until 2007, all work—seeking and acquiring materials; processing and providing access; organizing dances, readings, panel discussions, and exhibits; producing concerts; designing and maintaining the website; and writing grants and managing office and administrative responsibilities—was done by volunteers. Although now one Board member has a 20-hour-per-week contract, the essential grassroots volunteer character of the group has not changed.

Like the collections of other such archives, our materials were scattered. Some were in our public space in West Hollywood. The rest filled two garages and newly arrived materials had spilled into a third garage. We kept urging lesbians to donate materials and they did, but we were out of space. Lack of space and environmental controls forced us to not pursue several important donors. The Board recognized that to grow and thrive we needed to find a different way of doing business.

Out of the blue, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW) invited the Mazer to be a community partner in a project proposal. We accepted, and the getting-acquainted process began. About a year later, I told CSW Director Kathleen McHugh that I would like to explore a deposit relationship with the UCLA Library, modeled after the relationship the Library had with Outfest. Materials would be stored and preserved by UCLA but the Mazer Archives would retain ownership.

Kathleen arranged a meeting, which included myself, two other board members, Kathleen, then-University Librarian Gary Strong, Associate University Librarian Sharon



In the collections of the Mazer Archives are materials that document everyday lesbian life.

Farb, and other library and CSW staff members, to discuss the possibilities. Gary indicated that the library could no longer agree to a deposit relationship for several reasons. Because of its mission as a research library (as well as an unpleasant experience with heirs who reclaimed a large collection on deposit and sold it on eBay), materials needed to remain available for researchers at UCLA and public dollars could only be spent on processing and preserving materials owned by the Library. In retrospect, we all agreed that each left that first meeting thinking that it would never fly. It did fly—so what happened?

The Mazer Archives wanted the relationship with UCLA for clear reasons: space in our existing facility could be freed up and materials could be processed, stored in a protective environment, and made available for public access. However, we recoiled at

# DON'T AGONIZE: ORGANIZE!



JOIN **WAVAW** WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

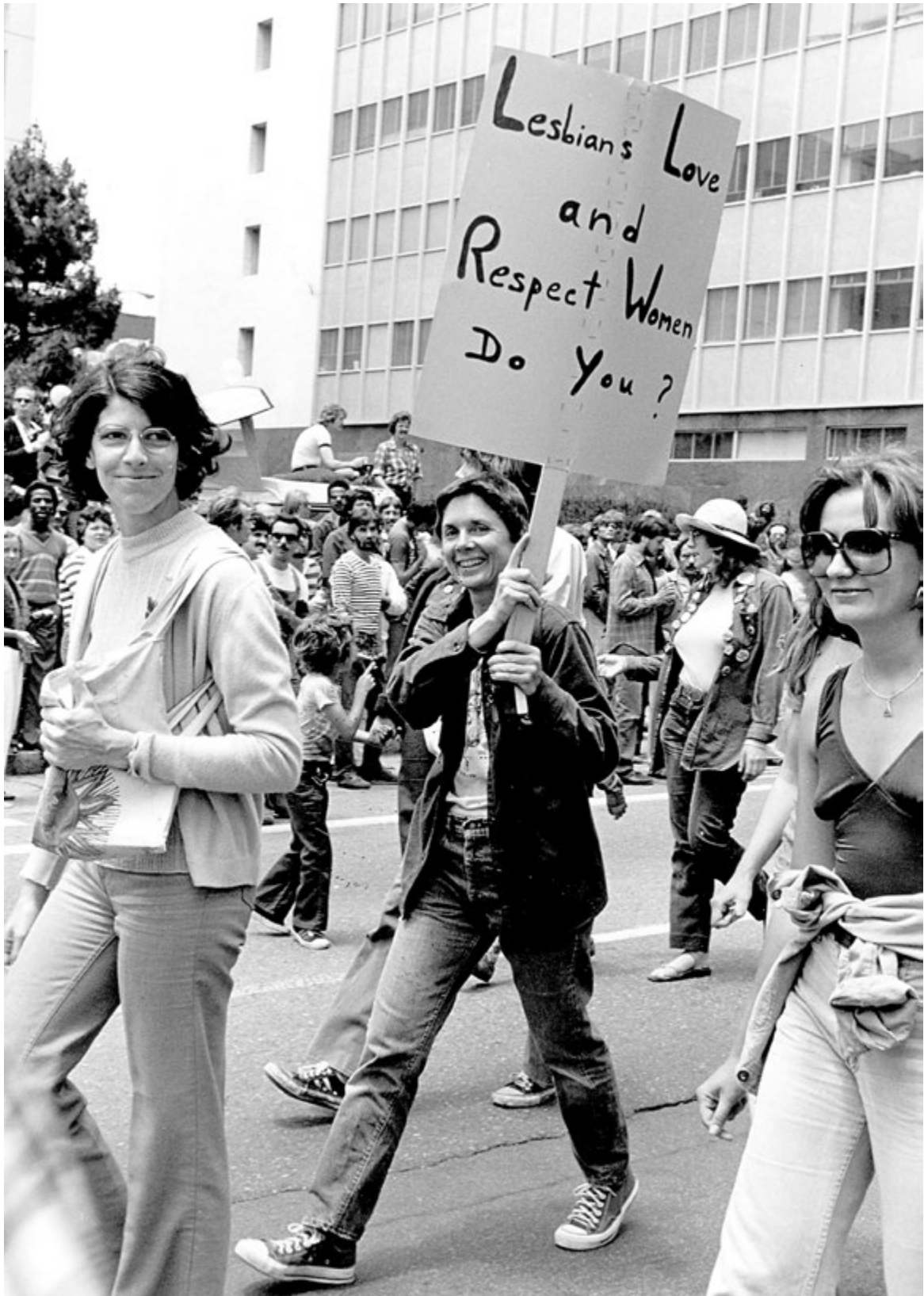
the idea of giving ownership of Mazer materials to UCLA. We feared that the materials would disappear, be removed from the Los Angeles area (because the Regents can place materials on any campus in the UC system), or left unprocessed and unavailable. Remarkably, once we outlined the reasons for not giving Mazer materials to UCLA, a possible solution presented itself. I called it an “almost irrevocable trust.” As we developed a new proposal, the Mazer had an organizational identity crisis. If we give our materials to UCLA, why should anyone give them to us first? Why not go right to UCLA? And if we are not working with the materials donated to us, what will we do?

After much angst, we realized that our great strength is that the Mazer is a grassroots organization with a long history in the community. We routinely collect material from everyday, just-trying-to-get-by, lesbians. We are committed to reaching out to other lesbians who are engaged with grassroots communities and showing them that their lives have historical importance. Many are surprised to hear our message. We believe that if we don’t preserve our collective grassroots history, the only information available in a hundred or more years will be newspaper articles, books on celebrity lesbians, and other published material. The rest of us will have vanished. UCLA cannot do this work. They can bring in existing private collections, but they do not have the contacts or the ability to develop contacts within the lesbian community that we do. We now have a clear vision of the role of the Mazer Archives in providing a safe interface between lesbian materials from the grassroots community and UCLA.

In addition, we realized that when a lesbian donates to us and we in turn donate to UCLA, we have the ability to reclaim ownership if the Regents do not abide by the agreement—which provides a reason for donating to the Archives and not directly to UCLA. The Board regularly checks to make sure materials are processed within a reasonable time and kept available in Los Angeles. If they are not, we have the legal right to take them back. Once the Board of the Mazer Archives could see what we could become, we structured a proposal that eventually became the Deed of Gift between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives and UCLA.

Our relationship with UCLA has been exciting. We have received a number of major donations because of it. We now feel confident asking for more material because we know there is a safe place for it. An unexpected benefit was CSW’s NEH grant to process many of all our holdings. Together with UCLA we are exploring other ways to ensure future historians will have a rich body of love letters, home videos, journals, and organizational papers of small local groups to capture and communicate the lesbian life of those of us who are not rich and famous.

“Don’t Agonize,  
Organize” flyer.  
Women Against  
Violence Against  
Women Collection.



March against Briggs Initiative. *Lesbian Schoolworkers Records*

**TAKE  
PRIDE  
LESBIAN  
VISIBILITY**

Flyer from Lesbian Visibility Week.  
*Lesbian Visibility Week Records*

# Putting the "L" in Collecting Los Angeles

SHARON E. FARB

*Associate University Librarian, UCLA*

*but I give you  
a legacy of doers  
of people who take risks  
to chisel the crack wider.  
Take strength that you may  
wage a long battle.  
Take pride that you can never  
stand small.  
Take the range that you can  
Never settle for less.*

– Pat Parker,  
*Legacy. Jonestown  
and Madness*, 1985

THE UCLA LIBRARY has fostered an innovative project that gathers, preserves, interprets, and makes accessible collections documenting at-risk and hidden collections of personal histories and cultural artifacts of the Los Angeles region. Thanks to a generous gift from the Arcadia Fund, “Collecting Los Angeles” enables the Library to support civic engagement and to make discoverable previously hidden voices, communities, and cultures that reflect the rich diversity of Los Angeles. The collection encompasses a broad range of material, which includes the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, Garry South Campaign Papers, June Wayne Papers, Aldous Huxley, Paul Monett, Anais Nin, Walter Gordon, Jr./William C. Beverly, Miriam Matthews, A. Quincy Jones, and now the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives to name a few.

The epigraph by Pat Parker, lesbian, activist, and poet, accurately describes the tireless commitment of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives to preserve and document the previously inaccessible voices of everyday and not-so-everyday lesbians, in order to make them accessible for present and future generations. The collaboration between UCLA and the Mazer supports the mission of higher education, furthering new areas of teaching, research, and public service. This collaboration is also integral to the Library’s mission of organizing, preserving, and making knowledge accessible in support of the academic endeavor.

In 2009, the UCLA Library, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, and the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives formalized a collection-building and preservation partnership that significantly expands access to collections held by the Mazer Archives and enriches the library’s holdings in the important areas of lesbian and feminist social and cultural history. Working closely with the Mazer, a long-term Los Angeles-based grassroots lesbian organization, helped the Library develop a model set of agreements, which we continue to use today. These include a collaboration agreement, a model deed of gift and set of mission-critical principles that frame and guide our work together. In this essay, I will describe the importance of the model agreements and highlight several terms and clauses that ensure the sustainability and future of the Mazer Archives.

## MISSION-CRITICAL REQUIREMENTS

AFTER a series of meetings between the UCLA Library and members of the Board of the Mazer, organized by Kathleen McHugh, Director of the UCLA Center for Study of Women, we came to an historic agreement to collaborate on the



preservation and accessibility of lesbian feminist history. The Library addressed five essential conditions as put forth by the Board of the Mazer. These requirements assured that the Mazer would continue as a leader in the documentation and preservation of lesbian history and culture. This partnership with the UCLA Library provides the Mazer with safe spaces for collections to grow, an opportunity to organize and preserve these collections in a sustainable way, and to keep the collections open and accessible in Los Angeles. Below is a brief discussion of the five requirements reflected in the clauses included in the Deed of Gift we developed.

#### SAFE SPACE FOR COLLECTIONS TO GROW

IT WAS IMPERATIVE that the Mazer continue to steward and grow their lesbian feminist collections. The Mazer had outgrown the space that had been generously provided by the City of West Hollywood. Moreover, that space lacked proper archival climate control and was not properly equipped for fire suppression. The UCLA Library maintains some of the most prestigious manuscript, book, and ephemera collections in the world. The Library has built state-of-the-art secure, climate-controlled environments for these collections, and employs professionally trained archivists, metadata specialists, and digital developers. The partnership between the Mazer and the Library would make sure that the Mazer collection could grow, be made fully accessible, and be preserved for current and future generations. The mission alignment between the Mazer and UCLA Library on this requirement was accomplished by this clause, which describes the UCLA Library's commitment to providing safe spaces for the Mazer collections to grow and flourish:

The Materials will be physically stabilized and preserved by the UCLA Library including, as appropriate, placing the materials in non-damaging containers and storing in facilities that provide appropriate temperature and humidity control and security. (Paragraph 11: Deed of Gift)



## MATERIALS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR RESEARCHERS

THE JUNE L. MAZER LESBIAN ARCHIVES is a grassroots, community-based collection that relies on volunteer staff to provide access to materials. The UCLA Library's special collections are accessible to the public six days per week. Housing the Mazer Collection at the Library would significantly increase accessibility of the material. The following clause was developed to reflect the Mazer's commitment to accessibility for research:

The Materials will be available to researchers after they have been arranged and described for use. The Library will create a persistent link to the finding aid and The Materials from the collection that are digitized and will share the link(s) with the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives so that the Mazer may use on their website or in other venues to advertise the existence of the collection. (Paragraph 12: Deed of Gift)

## COLLECTIONS STAY TOGETHER

*from left to right,  
Mona Kindig, Pat Nordell,  
and Mary Briggs, Mission  
Ranch. Photo by John  
Williams. Pat Nordell Papers*

THE UCLA LIBRARY worked closely with the Mazer from the outset to ensure that we were keeping the best interests of both organizations in mind. One of the five requirements of the partnership addresses the Board's concern regarding the integrity and preservation of the collections, both individually and collectively. The Mazer

Board wanted formal assurance that no items in the collections at UCLA would ever be deaccessioned without UCLA providing notice and the right of first refusal.

## RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL

THE RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL was of critical importance to the Mazer and its Board, as it would ensure the integrity of their collections while housed at UCLA. This clause, as added to the agreement, requires that the Library provide appropriate notice regarding any proposed deaccessioning of material to a donor designee of the Mazer. This excerpt details the right of first refusal clause as included in the Deed of Gift:

In the event that The REGENTS desires to sell, transfer, or assign The Materials, The REGENTS shall send to the DONOR notice in writing of its desire or intention to sell, transfer or assign The Materials. (Paragraph 10: Deed of Gift)

## OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND LOCATED IN LOS ANGELES

ANOTHER of the five objectives of our collaborative agreement guarantees that the Mazer collections will always be accessible to the public, specifically in the city of Los Angeles. UCLA is a large, public university, one of ten campuses of the University of California. The Library remains open six to seven days per week when classes are in session.





In addition, UCLA is a registered not-for-profit educational institution. The following clause was developed under consultation with UCLA Campus Counsel, and received special Regental approval. This language completely assures that the collection would be returned to the donor if UCLA fails to provide unfettered access to researchers regardless of their affiliation:

Books about lesbianism, sexuality, feminism, and activism in chains.  
*Photo by Francesca Roccaforte.*  
*Francesca Roccaforte Papers*

The Parties agree that if The Materials do not remain accessible to the public at the Los Angeles Campus such inaccessibility (following notice and opportunity to cure) would result in rendering the purpose of the gift “impossible” and shall constitute grounds for return of the entire gift pursuant to applicable Regental policy and standing order 100.4 (v), and pursuant to the standard procedures, including consultation with the General Counsel in accordance with Regents Standing Order 100.4, the gift shall be returned to the donor upon donor’s request. (Paragraph 14: Deed of Gift)

In addition to the five requirements addressed in the UCLA Library-June L. Mazer Deed of Gift discussed above, UCLA and the Mazer also developed and agreed to a Collaboration Agreement that helped frame how we would work together. Three key terms in this agreement include the provision that both parties seek collaborative opportunities for grant funding (which we have successfully done), conduct periodic meetings (which we continue to do) and use the “June L. Mazer Archives” to provide appropriate provenance and attribution to the materials entrusted to UCLA. This is an excerpt from the agreement:

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Library and the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive are linked by common interests and seek to develop collaborations in fields of shared interest and expertise. The activities undertaken pursuant to this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) are based on a spirit of cooperation and reciprocity that is intended to be of mutual benefit to both parties. (UCLA Library/June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive MOU)

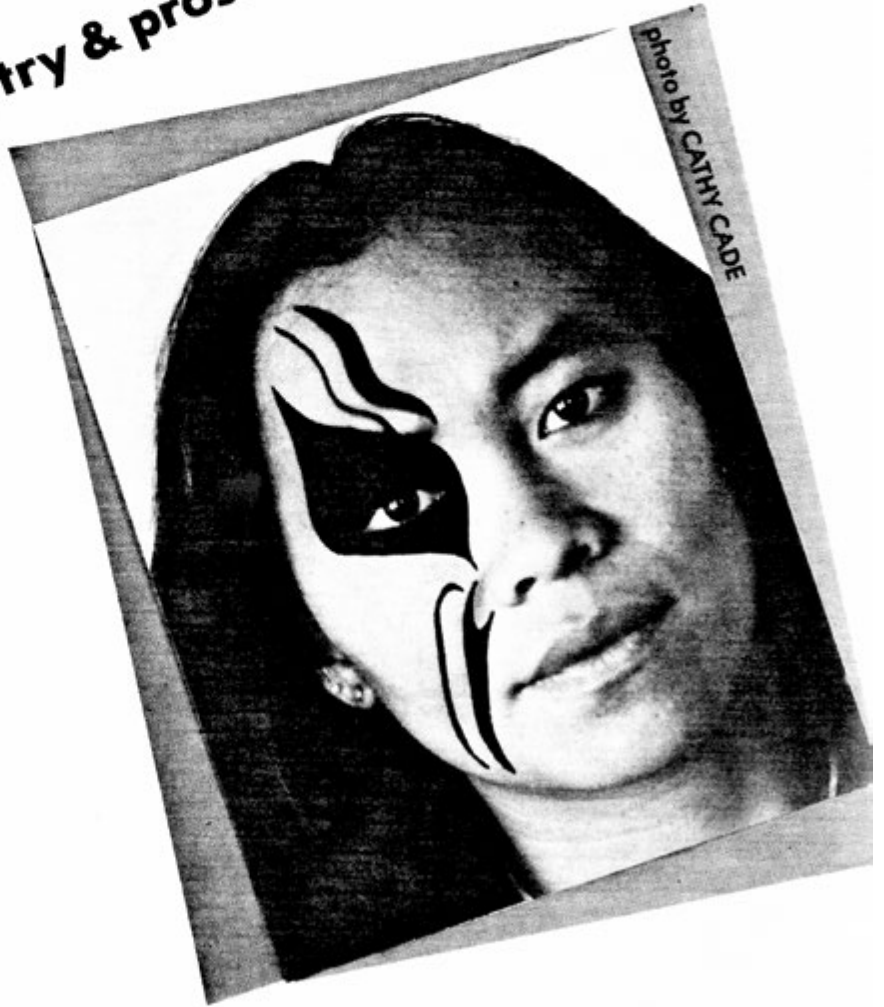
The set of discussions leading up to the creation of the Collaboration Agreement and Deed of Gift helped frame and enable what constitutes a highly successful partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives and the UCLA Library. In addition, these documents have been used successfully as templates for similar agreements between grassroots, community-based archives and larger institutions. To discover and explore the collections at UCLA, see <http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/mazer/>.

# Celebrate!

The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire

## KITTY TSUI

poetry & prose



MARCH 31, 7:30 **OLD WIVES TALES** 1009 VALENCIA, SAN FRANCISCO  
APRIL 19, 7:00 **A WOMAN'S PLACE** 4015 BROADWAY, OAKLAND  
APRIL 27, 8:00 **NETWORK COFFEEHOUSE**, 1329 7th AVE, S.F.  
with Aaron Shurin, author of **THE GRACES**

Flyer for *The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire*.  
Photo of Kitty Tsui by Cathy Cade. Kitty Tsui Papers



# The Will to Collaborate

ELIZABETH JOFFRION

*Director of Heritage Resources, Western Washington University*

MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES have political interest in the creation, preservation, and curation of documentary material. For many activist organizations, the stewardship of these cultural resources provides verification of a shared history of repression and struggle for civil rights and equal protection. Community archives, such as the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, emerge from a collective awareness that limited or biased documentation is an impediment to political activism and that by ensuring an accurate archival record the group can better establish its meaning for members and society at large. This documentation, defined and collected by a community, serves to shape and promote a shared identity that counterbalances their marginalized social status.

Stevens, Flinn, and Shepard (2010) defined community archives “as collections of material gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, community archives are typically administered by dedicated volunteer activist archivists who recognize the significance of the collections in their care, as well as the importance of a secure community venue for research, discussion, and education. As the collections expand, these untrained volunteers often become overwhelmed by increased research interest and user expectations for reasonable access to underdocumented historical records. To meet these demands, organizations must commit the resources and skills necessary for appropriate access and preservation, including the development of appropriate facilities for archival research and storage. However, the cost of implementing archival best practices and investing in professional development can critically strain already limited internal resources. More importantly, securing the funding required to sustain community archives can conflict with the broader goals and objectives of the organization administering the archive.

It is at this point in their institutional development that many nonprofit community archives first contact a funding agency or mainstream institution to seek advice and assistance. Organizations at this juncture are typically struggling with vital questions related to their vision and strategic priorities. A commitment to long-term professional archival administration essentially expands the organizational mission beyond political activism and social justice to one of service and scholarship. Rather than taking this step, an organization may choose to establish collaborative relationships with outside entities to process or digitize collections, or even to arrange for the transfer of their collections to an established archival repository. This transition can be difficult for many organizations which recognize that mainstream archives have, in some instances, misrepresented,

< Lesbian Midwives and the Gay Nurses Alliance supported Lesbian Schoolworkers in opposing Proposition 6.  
*Lesbian Schoolworkers Records*

neglected, or completely omitted their past from the historical record. And, for many community archives considering these options, there is a fundamental tension between a desire for sustainability and deeply held values of autonomy, independence and self-sufficiency associated with participation in social movements.

Joan Nestle expresses this tension in her work, “The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York.”<sup>2</sup>

In order to survive in America as an archives we have had to call ourselves a not-for-profit information resource centre because the New York State Board of Regents maintains control over educational institutions and could therefore confiscate the collection for ‘just cause’. We take no money from the government, believing that such an action would be an exercise in neocolonialism, believing that the society that ruled us out of history should never be relied upon to make it possible for us to exist. All the technology the archives has—the computer, the xeroxing machine—comes from lesbian, gay, feminist and radical funding sources.

Researcher expectations have changed dramatically since Nestle penned these words in 1990. Increasingly, users of archival collections expect access to digitized content, a reality that has only strained the delicate balance between organizational sustainability and mission. Although the availability of online access to collections may reduce staff service obligations, the reality is that developing and maintaining the necessary digital infrastructure is very often beyond the means of most community archives. Many turn to outside organizations for assistance with basic areas of archival practice, including custody, collection development, access, education, and training.

Public funding agencies such as National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museums Libraries Services, and others, recognize that strategic collaborative partnerships can leverage crucial gains in shared technical infrastructure, staffing and expertise, and provide for more sustainable project outcomes. In fact, most funding agencies now require that applicants address sustainability in their project plans as evidenced in NEH’s guidelines for its grant program, Humanities Collections and Reference Resources:

NEH’s Division of Preservation and Access expects that any collections or resources produced in digital form as a result of its awards will be maintained so as to ensure their long-term availability. Discuss plans for meeting this expectation. In addition to pertinent technical specifications requested in the previous section, provide details on digital preservation infrastructure and policies, such as repository system capabilities, storage requirements and capacity, migration or emulation strategies, and collaborative or third-party arrangements, if any.

With NEH support, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, and the UCLA Library entered into a strategic outreach and collection development partnership. Leveraging their shared expertise, staff at these organizations arranged, described, and digitized historically significant papers of lesbian writers and activists; the records of cultural, political, and professional organizations; and oral histories chronicling the lives and personal stories of West Coast lesbian feminist activists. The collections are now permanently housed in the UCLA Library, accessible through their Special Collections and online through the California Digital Library.



Margaret A. Porter (left) and fellow members of the Women's Army Corps. *Margaret A. Porter Papers*



Jennie Meyer and Pat Larson.  
Photo by Angela Brinskele. *Angela Brinskele Papers*

Moreover, the relationship with UCLA has inspired the confidence of potential donors and enhanced the collecting efforts of these documentary resources by the Mazer Archives.

The partnership between UCLA and the Mazer Archives was influenced by an earlier NEH award to the ONE Institute's National Gay and Lesbian Archives. Founded in 1952, the ONE Institute houses the largest research library dedicated to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender history in the U.S.,

including over 250 archival collections and 2 million items. ONE originated as the earliest national gay publication and evolved into a learning institute that conferred the first academic certificates in gay studies. The ONE Archive, an independent nonprofit organization deposited its collections with the University of Southern California, and now, in return, USC supports a research facility on the campus for the Archive, including building services. In addition, the ONE Archive sponsors campus related events, specialized student research and internships.

These two successful projects provide clear evidence that collaboration between community archives and mainstream institutions has many advantages. Partnerships between two or more organizations can strengthen competitiveness for outside funding, offer a means for shared expertise and perspective, and leverage resources to support sustainable infrastructure. And, as noted on the Mazer website, the partnership with UCLA, "makes it possible to ensure that our Lesbian history will be accessible to world."

#### NOTES

1. Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archives Sector: From Handing Over to Handing On," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16 (2010): 59
2. Joan Nestle, "The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York," *Feminist Review* 34 (1990): 92





Marriage Equality booth at Long Beach Pride 2008.  
Photo by Angela Brinskele. Angela Brinskele Papers



# This is *How We Do it*:

## LESBIAN AND FEMINIST ORGANIZING/ORGANIZATIONS

JULIE K. CHILDERS

*Project Manager, 2011–2013*

THE JUNE L. MAZER LESBIAN ARCHIVES is now well known for preserving the historical record of lesbian lives on the West Coast. Through photographs, journals, letters, oral histories, t-shirts, buttons, and much more, the Mazer Archives aims to assure twenty-first-century lesbians that we are not alone. The “Making Invisible Histories Visible” project makes sure that this legacy is well-maintained and accessible through the unique preservation partnership with the UCLA Center for the Study of Women and the UCLA Library.

While this project spotlights the lives of both remarkable and everyday lesbians, the Mazer is also valuable for the preservation of the record of organized activism found in the papers of local and national lesbian, feminist, and lesbian/feminist organizations. The first collections to be preserved and digitized at UCLA included Southern California Women for Understanding (SCWU), the largest lesbian organization in the U.S. at the time; Connexus/Centro de Mujeres, which provided services to lesbians in Los Angeles; and Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), which protested violent pornographic media, such as the film *Snuff*. The wave of organizing during the 1970s and 1980s gave rise to many smaller local organizations, as well, both to nurture lesbian community (Los Angeles Women’s Community Chorus) and to advocate for the end of discrimination in the workplace (Lesbian Nurses of Los Angeles and Lesbian Schoolworkers)

Feminist and lesbian organizing is beautifully preserved in the organizational records of these groups. Not only do they show the methods and strategies used to pursue change or offer services, but they also reveal, in meeting minutes and correspondence, the internal commitments and debates that shaped the organizations. In a one-line note in the minutes, for example, we learn that the Los Angeles Women’s Community Chorus made childcare available at meetings and practices. This community for lesbians was based on common interest (in music and singing), but it maintained commitment to the feminist ideal of access. Because these collections are now available broadly, we can expect a deeper and more complete examination of lesbian and feminist activism during this time.

Given that many of the organizations of the second wave of lesbian and feminist organizing are no longer active, it is important to note that the Mazer Archives is one of the only lesbian organizations still in existence in Los Angeles. Begun in 1981 in Oakland, CA, as the West Coast Lesbian Collections, the Mazer Archives moved to Los Angeles and was renamed after a beloved leader, June Mazer. Likewise, the Center for the Study of Women, which officially opened in 1984, was born of second-wave

# August 15, 1978 - Medi-Cal Abortions Cut-Off! PROTEST MARCH & RALLY

Tuesday, August 15 - Meet at the State Building  
107 S. Broadway at 11:30 a.m.  
March to the Hall of Administration - 500 W. Temple  
for a rally at noon. Protect abortion rights for all women



15 de agosto 1978  
¡Fondos de Medi-Cal para  
abortos han sido anulados!  
DEMONSTRACIÓN y MARCHA para protestar

Martes, 15 de agosto - Reunión en Edificio Estatal ("State Building")  
107 S. Broadway a 11:30 a.m.  
Marcha a "Hall of Administration" - 500 W. Temple por una  
demonstración a mediodía para proteger el derecho al aborto  
de todas las mujeres.

Por favor distele con ropa negra. ~ Wear black. ←  
Organizada por/sponsored by Reproductive Rights Organizing Committee: 450-2191

# STOP BRIGGS ON NOZ

Sanita Salazar Coalition for Human Rights  
P.O. Box 770 Galea, CA 93017

Yes, I want to help save Women's Programs at Cal State University Long Beach.

✓ I am enclosing \$  \$10  \$25  \$50  other

Main check payable to: ACLU Foundation Women's Studies Address Project

Long Beach Legal Defense Fund (LELDF) - For info on women's

I would like to volunteer to help. Contact me by letter.

Name  Address

City  State  Zip

Telephone  ( )

Occupation

Other

Return to: Long Beach Legal Defense Fund - Women's Studies Program

P.O. Box 1000 Long Beach, CA 90801



# Woman Power

Many of the collections in the Mazer Archives include materials related to activist activities: “Woman Power” flyer, *National Lesbian Feminist Organization Records*; “Medical Abortions Cut-off!” flyer, *Joan Robins Papers*; “No on 6” flyer, *Margriet Kiers and Kenna Hicks Papers*; “Yes, I want to save the Women’s Program” form, *California State, University Long Beach Records*; Nuclear Disarmament Rally, Central Park, NY, June 12, 1982. *Photo by Elaine Mikels. Elaine Mikels Papers*

feminist organizing at UCLA in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The importance of understanding women’s lives is at the core of both of these organizations.

In the last thirty years, the political notion that women’s and lesbian histories are worthy of documentation has become much less radical. Indeed, that the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded this prestigious grant is a mark of the mainstreaming of feminism and lesbian life in U.S culture. In fact, it marks a particularly mainstream victory. This achievement stands in contrast to what Ann Giagni, President of the Board, identifies as a big political victory for SCWU in its early years: being the first gay or lesbian organization recognized by the IRS as a nonprofit, tax-exempt group with 501(c)(3) status.

As the project manager for this project from May of 2011 to June of 2013 and as a scholar of social movements, I find issues of organization vitally important. I am proud to have been part of this partnership. In the early years of second-wave organizing, the connections between academic feminist groups and community feminist groups were close, the boundaries porous. As the number of activist and community groups declined through the 1990s and as university departments and research centers focused on women’s and gender studies became more specialized, these connections frayed. This partnership is a twenty-first-century example of feminist collaboration, an important example of lesbian and feminist organizing in its own right. As we celebrate the work—the preservation and digitization of collections of individual lesbian feminist writers, poets, musicians, soldiers, and activists, as well as the many service and activist organizations they created—made possible by this project, I suggest that we also celebrate this contemporary partnership, which reminds us of the power of building and maintaining organizational alliances.



Margaret A. Porter (left) and friend set out to seek their fortunes in California, 1935. *Margaret A. Porter Papers*

# Tracking Down the Deeds

ANGELA BRINSKELE

*Member of the Board, June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives*

LOOKING UP THE DONORS of each collection and asking them to sign the revised deed agreement was one of my responsibilities on the project. Often, this meant that I had to contact people who had donated materials ten, twenty, or even thirty years ago. It was not an easy task and it changed me. I became more organized, learned so much more about the June L. Mazer Archives' collections, and turned into a detective on a mission. Instead of mingling or taking photos, I would stop almost any lesbian at a party and flash them the collection list of names on my phone, asking, "Did you know any of these women?"

So many of the collections now processed contain rich content and great primary source material. For example, the Margaret A. Porter Papers contains about sixty years of personal journals as well as the extensive research that she did on the expatriate women in Paris at the turn of the century. Her thoroughness meant that she contacted libraries in France and family members to get more information and artifacts. For that reason, among the many treasures of her collection are notecards handwritten by Renée Vivian and a book signed by Natalie Barney from around 1910. The collection of Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer is of great interest. Col. Cammermeyer is the highest ranking officer to be discharged under the U.S. military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Her collection is particularly important because Judge Thomas Zilly of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington ruled that her discharge and the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military were unconstitutional. Her collection includes her uniform with all her medals placed perfectly. When the uniform was donated, Col. Cammermeyer's wife instructed us, "Don't move anything. It's all measured." Another fascinating and important collection is that of Pat Nordell, a Physical Education teacher and coach at Westchester High School who fought for equal pay for women coaches in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Her collection also contains wonderful photographs including ones of Pat playing on different college and amateur sports teams and a scrapbook featuring her Coach of the Year Award. Other collections feature intriguing materials. The Los Angeles Women's Community Chorus Records, for example, contains some music pages in Braille because at least one member was blind.

All of us at the Mazer are so grateful that these collections have been processed through the hard work of the graduate student researchers at UCLA and the help of Kathleen McHugh, Sharon Farb, and Lizette Guerra. We all hope that this important partnership between the Mazer Archives, CSW, and the UCLA Library will continue to be sustainable so that more materials about the history of lesbians in Los Angeles can be preserved and made available for research.



Yolanda Retter-Vargas (left) with Barbara Gittings, UCLA, 2006.  
*Photo by Angela Brinskele. Angela Brinskele Papers*

# Collective Imaginaries

LIZETTE GUERRA

*Project Archivist*

YOLANDA RETTER-VARGAS, my mentor and predecessor at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, taught me that even within my own perceived community there were many communities: Latinas, Chicanas, Lesbianas, feminists, and others. She drilled into my work ethic the notion that I could not truly be at the service of my community, or any community for that matter, if I did not make a true concerted effort to represent everyone, women, men, lesbian, gay, rich and poor, of all cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Yet, historically, this belief has not been central to our profession. Archivists have been privileged with the power to decide what is deemed historical and what is not. What do we preserve for future generations and what do we leave out of our collective imaginaries?

Despite the reality that Los Angeles is one of the most diverse cities in the world, people of color and the LGBT community in particular continue to be underrepresented and in effect invisible within archival collections, the public record, and historical research. The partnership between the UCLA Library, CSW, and the Mazer Archives reflects an increasing awareness amongst archivists and librarians about the importance of collecting more ethnic studies and LGBT materials. In recent years, our profession has been moving away from exclusionary collecting practices and progressing toward more community-oriented approaches that include donors and patrons in the archival process. The collections in the Mazer Archives project not only reflect this nation's rich history, but also, more importantly, provide communities who have long been under-served and under-documented within the historical record with a resource that respectfully reflects their experiences and contributions to U.S. history. Each step of the way, we have made it our priority to include the Mazer Archives' staff and affiliates in the archival process. We have chosen to do so because each of the stories contained within the collections represents a community's memories. The presence of such materials within an institution such as UCLA contributes to a community's visibility, legitimization, and continuity.

"If we don't collect these things," Yolanda always said, "no one else will." The partnership between UCLA and the Mazer Archives is a perfect example of the type of innovative project that Yolanda would have supported. This partnership has allowed us to document and provide wide access to documentation of early lesbian activist and literary history in Los Angeles since the 1930s—stories that might otherwise have been lost or forgotten. As Yolanda wrote in her dissertation, *On the Side of Angels: Lesbian Activism in Los Angeles, 1970-1990* (University of New Mexico, 1999), "Amid the criticisms, let it be remembered that once there was a vibrant movement that put women first. In a world that was (is still) bent on undermining women, that kind of prioritizing and commitment deserves respect and study. Regardless of what terms are used to describe (or disparage) the lesbian activist movement, its spirit persists within the generational cohort that created it during a 'social moment' in U.S. history. It persists as a vision, an ideology, a submerged network and as a significant contribution to the tradition of resistant consciousness and pro-woman advocacy. Blessed Be."

# **BROOMSTICK**

*By, For, and About Women Over Forty*

Estab. 1978

WINTER (#1) 1991

Price: \$5.00



*Broomstick* was a feminist magazine published between 1978 and 1993 that confronted ageism, stereotypes of the disabled, and gender conventions. *Broomstick Magazine Records*



# Processing Papers

*Collection Notes by* SANDRA BRASDA, COURTNEY DEAN,  
MOLLY S. JACOBS, ARCHNA PATEL, BEN RAPHAEL SHER,  
AND STACY WOOD

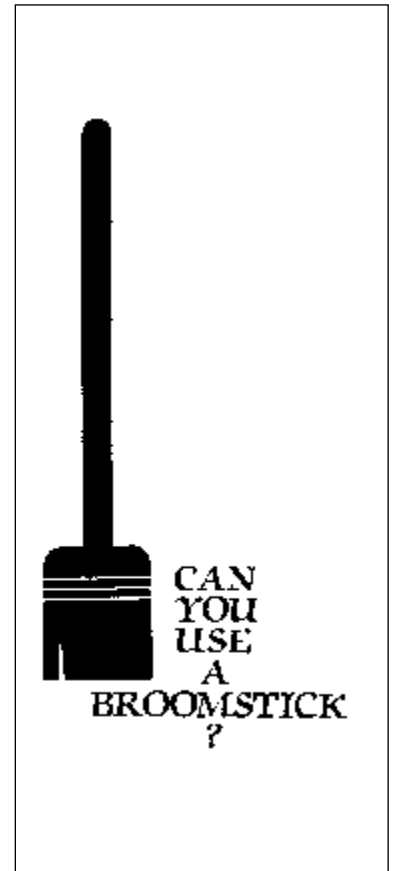
## BROOMSTICK MAGAZINE RECORDS

by *Sandra Brasda*

EXTREMELY REWARDING and instrumental to my academic career, my time processing the collection of *Broomstick Magazine* offered a valuable glimpse into the complex world of library science, archival theory, practice, application, and future problems and possibilities that libraries face. Working on the collection also opened up new areas of inquiry for my own research. And, the knowledge I gained collaborating with other graduate student researchers who were processing materials from the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives allowed me to discover a rich trove of unmined material perfect for my dissertation research. The materials from the Mazer Archives have become a substantial source base for my dissertation.

An independent, self-published, radical feminist magazine dedicated to supporting and promoting women and lesbian activism and art for an audience of women over forty, Broomstick was founded in 1978 by Maxine Spencer and Polly Taylor in the San Francisco Bay area and ceased publication in 1993. The collection documents the growth of radical feminism in the late 1970s and 1980s and includes materials related to radical feminist politics, lesbian culture and art, spirituality, women and aging, and feminist coalitions and communities. It also contains Spencer's personal papers, documenting her own experiences with radical feminism, lesbianism, disability, sexism, and age discrimination.

The magazine's main goals focused on confronting ageism, stereotypes of the disabled, and gender conventions in publishing. Its specific focus on disabled, lesbian women over 40 adds to the magazine's unique research value: ageism and disability had not been covered extensively at that point in the feminist literature. Because *Broomstick* was specifically focused on women over 40, it is an important resource for those interested in the generation gap between second-wave feminists during the 1970s and 1980s. The records also





## Uppity Women Unite!

"Uppity Women Unite!" flyer. *Broomstick Magazine Records*

provide evidence of the alternative spiritual lifestyle movement active in *Broomstick's* underground feminist network. The magazine helped establish a spiritual community centered on the venerated image of and faith in the Crone. In addition, the magazine was at the forefront of exploring fat phobia and body consciousness issues.

*Broomstick's* policy of participatory journalism—its readers provided most of the content—made it stand out from other magazines published during the same period. The magazine's editors actively solicited letters, poems, short stories, and articles. These participatory records—"author files"—make up the majority of the collection. *Broomstick* provided a unique venue for older women to publish their art, poetry, and creative and feminist writing, while building and supporting feminist coalitions and communities. Though it was a small, do-it-yourself publication, it often reached a national and international audience.

History's greatest gift is knowledge, which must be preserved and made accessible for all. As an historian, I found it thrilling to have been able to participate in the operations that go into processing and making available such a significant archive.

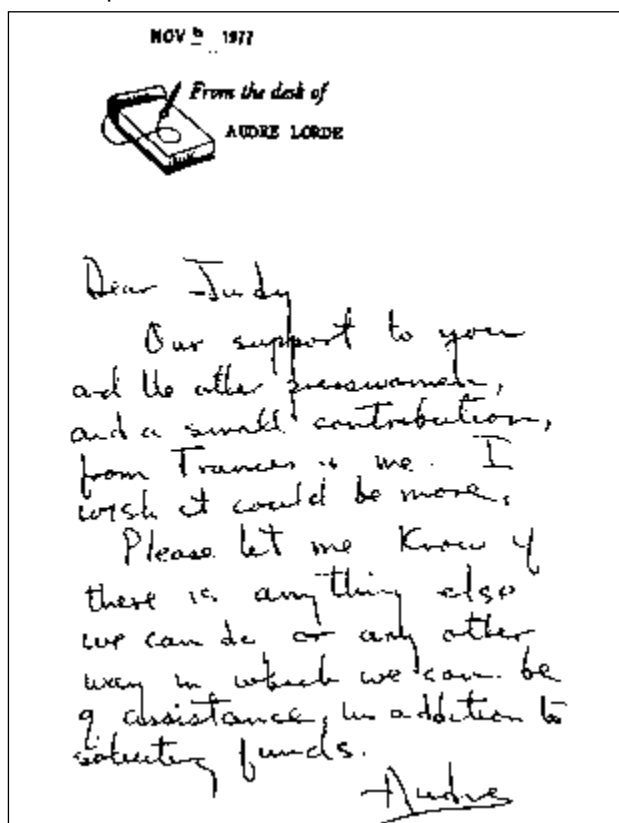
### PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF LESBIAN/FEMINIST PERIODICALS, PUBLICATIONS, AND PUBLISHERS

by Courtney Dean

ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS containing primary source materials from traditionally silenced or ignored communities are especially compelling to me. Working with materials from the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives has allowed me to contribute to making previously invisible lesbian/feminist activist and literary histories part of the official archival record.

I had the opportunity to process two separate collections, the first of which was the Barbara Grier Periodical Collection. A lesbian/feminist activist, writer, and publisher, Barbara Grier (1933-2011) is perhaps best known for her work with *The Ladder*, the monthly magazine published by the Daughters of Bilitis, the first national lesbian organization in the U.S. Writing under the pseudonyms Gene Damon, Vern Niven, and Lennox Strong, Grier began contributing copy to *The Ladder* in 1957; she became editor in 1968 and publisher in 1970. In 1973, she co-founded Naiad Books, later Naiad Press, the preeminent lesbian book publisher that opened up lesbian writing to the world. The materials in this collection make up a rich assemblage of feminist and lesbian newspapers, magazines, journals, and small press publications. The bulk of the

A highlight of the Diana Press Records is the assemblage of letters of support from the feminist community following a serious vandalism incident in 1977, including letters such as this one from poet Audre Lorde. *Diana Press Records*



# The Ladder

OCTOBER, 1957



material is from the 1980s and features periodicals from major U.S. metropolitan areas as well as small towns, providing snapshots of local communities and individual lives. A particular strength of the collection is its range of formats, including weekly LGBT newspapers such as Pittsburgh's *Out*, newsletters from organizations like Seattle's Lesbian Resource Center, bibliographic resources like the University of Wisconsin's *Feminist Periodicals*, and personal publications such as Dorothy Feola's *Women's Network*.

Following the Grier collection, I processed the Diana Press Records. Diana Press was a lesbian/feminist printing and publishing house started by Coletta Reid and Casey Czarnik in Baltimore, MD, in 1972, which then relocated to Oakland, CA, in 1977. Most notably, Diana Press published titles by writers such as Rita Mae Brown and Judy Grahn, and reprinted Jeannette Foster's pioneering *Sex Variant Women in Literature*. However, the press was also plagued by a series of major misfortunes, including a fire in 1975 and a crippling incident of vandalism in 1977, which destroyed thousands of copies of books and damaged essential printing equipment. Economic setbacks, disagreements amongst leadership, and the dissolution of Coletta and Casey's long-term relationship, led the press to cease publication in the late 1970s.

The records document its storied history through a wealth of administrative materials, author and project files, press and publicity materials, poetry and manuscripts, and a sizeable amount of correspondence. Also included in the materials are assorted newspaper clippings, catalogs and periodicals, and distribution materials and ephemera from community events and organizations. The breadth of correspondence is especially rich, containing both letters to and from the press and documenting everything from requests for catalogs to significant disagreements with authors. A particular highlight of the collection is the assemblage of letters of support from the feminist community following the vandalism incident in 1977, including letters from such feminist luminaries as Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde. Also notable are the manuscripts that went unpublished for lack of funds. Judy Chicago's *Revelations of the Goddess* appears in the collection in draft and typeset versions.

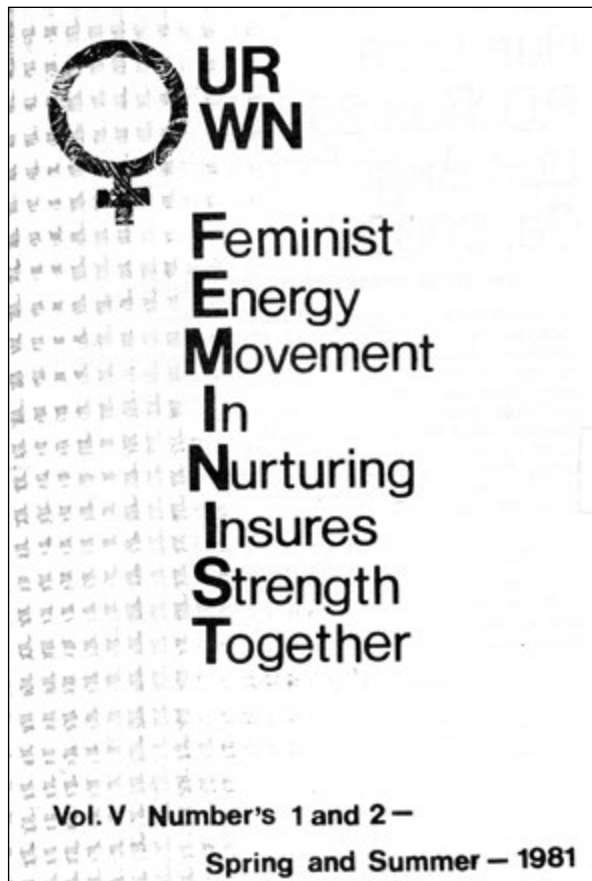
Both the Barbara Grier Periodical Collection and the Diana Press Records are representative of the diverse, inspiring, complex, passionate, and sometimes messy histories of lesbian and feminist communities. I hope that the collections inspire not only new scholarship but an increased awareness and understanding of the significance of these publishing activities by current and future lesbian/feminist communities.

### HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW?

by Molly S. Jacobs

I STARTED my work as a graduate student researcher on this project by cataloging two small collections: Joan Robins and the Jewish Feminist Conference. My primary interest, however, was in the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) Records, because I examine this organization in my dissertation. When I took a precursory glance at the boxes of this collection, I was relieved to see that most of the documents were in file folders with straightforward labels (SF chapter, National Chapter, letters). As I started going through these folders, I soon realized there was much overlap (copies of documents were occasionally filed in

Spring/Summer 1981  
issue of *Our Own*,  
Elaine Mikels Papers



several different folders), and some items had been clearly misfiled. I would need to examine each document and set up a new filing system.

The project was overwhelming, and yet it helped me realize two things that are significant for any researcher (or person invested in the preservation of historic documents). First, I was constantly reminded of the process of building knowledge. When discussing methods with my students, I always ask them, “How do we know what we know?” Although I designed the question to get them to think critically about research (and stop referring to sociology as the study of common sense), it became a revelation in terms of how I think about archives. As researchers, we approach an archival collection through its finding aid. Typically, it is organized chronologically and, when it comes to organizations, may be separated by major individuals, chapters, and types of documents. Working on this collection made me ask, “How do I know what I know?” Who decides how these archives are organized? With the DOB, for example, what makes one document a product of the San Francisco Chapter and another the National Chapter? Since both were housed in the same office for some time, how do we know what goes where and how these choices would affect a researcher’s understanding of the documents, the collection, and the organization?

The second realization related to the degree to which researchers become involved with the human side of the archives. As a burgeoning comparative-historical sociologist, I sometimes joke that I do historical research so that I don’t have to deal with people. Here in these archives, however, the people are so real. As I worked on cataloging, I should have been able to move more quickly through each mixed-up folder. Instead, as I debated where each document belonged, I became engrossed in the lives of these (mostly) women, presenting themselves through documents from fifty, sixty, even seventy years ago. I tried to spend no more than a few seconds on each document, but doing so was often difficult in terms of understanding where a document fit, or because I wanted to read everything. There was no way for me to give the collection its due without thinking about the people that created it.

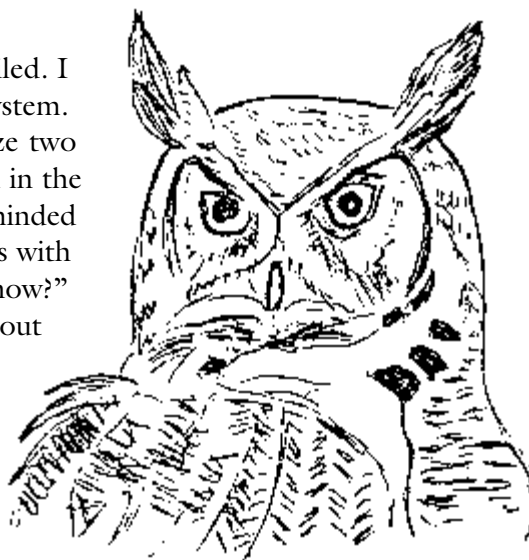
These two realizations have continued to resonate for me. I have to think critically about the way that archives are organized and how that affects the way I, and others, use them. Even if an archive box is delivered with files and documents that are labeled and organized down to the smallest minutiae, they were not created that way. Additionally, as we become further removed from the early years of this organization, it becomes more essential to tell their story in a way that retains their humanness, their realness. These women paved the way for great things in this country: for women to organize, to come out, and to see that they weren’t alone. By processing all of these collections, the Mazer Archives are preserving the voices of women who wouldn’t be silenced in their day and will not be silenced today.

## SCANNING

by *Archana Patel*

SCANNING. That’s what I do. I take a document from a large folder out of an even larger box. I enter its identifying data in an spreadsheet. I push a button, and after a slightly blinding light, voila! It’s done! No. It isn’t. This process continues for hours, with more folders and more boxes. Doesn’t this sound exciting? Well, actually, yes, it is.

Processing and scanning materials for this project has given me the opportunity to



Old Lesbians Organizing for Change used images of owls such as this one as a symbol of the wisdom that comes with experience. *Old Lesbians Organizing for Change Records.*

think more deeply about the nature of an archive and its value. As an undergraduate, my contact with archives has been quite limited. Yet, the concept of an archive has emerged in several class lectures. One common thread has been the characterization of the archive as a device of control. The archive, the literature says, is a constructed source of knowledge, power, and authority. Rather than being an unfiltered supply of primary material, the archive is an entity that fixes meaning.

One day, I came across a note about the recording of a conversation between two women, Michelle Johnston and Kathi Beall. On the title page was this peculiar sentence: “These women are not famous, they are just two ordinary dykes!!!” “What?” I thought. Not only do the documents record the conversations of these seemingly ordinary lesbian women but the conversations themselves are quite ordinary: What type of music do you like? What did you eat for dinner today? Did you watch *Star Trek* last night? These extraordinary ordinary conversations made me realize that although archives were used and are still used to create so-called official histories of people, places, and periods, they can also become spaces of intervention for people who would otherwise be omitted from the grand narratives of history.

This unexpected sentence made me realize that this was, in fact, the purpose (or at least one of them) of the Mazer Archives: to hold the records, narratives, and experiences of these incredible women whose histories might have otherwise been suppressed or left out of the official history of the late twentieth century. By reading through these

seemingly infinite documents, I learned of this wonderfully recent history—the struggle for representation, the struggle against discrimination—and the lives of lesbian women and the organizations they created. Oh, the organizations! Scanning the papers of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change and others, I realized these documents serve as a testament to the agency of these women and their active participation in their environments.

I also came across memos between the Task Force and the City of West Hollywood discussing the formation of the Mazer Archives. Included was a letter from a constituent who wrote, “The Archives should continue to serve as a living, growing source of positive identity for the community it documents.” The Mazer Archives not only preserve the past but constitute a dynamic resource that continues to provoke questions and thereby unfix meaning. I feel fortunate to have played a small role in making this unique resource accessible to more people. Although at times tedious, I know that people from different backgrounds and different places will be able to explore the wealth of knowledge in these scanned documents.

## STORIES

by Ben Raphael Sher

I AM ADDICTED to people’s stories, and I believe that one of the great gifts that academics possess is our ability to shine light on the lives, work, and experiences

Martha Foster.  
*Martha Foster Papers*



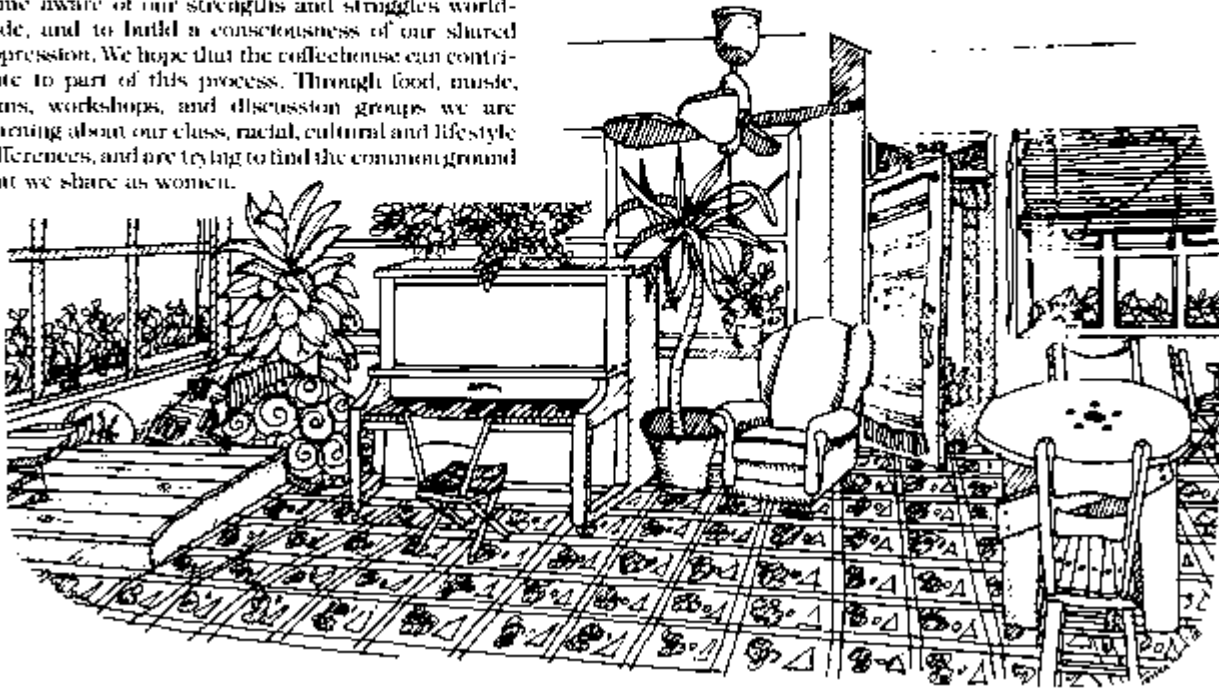
## About Us

Las Hermanas Women's Cultural Center and Coffeehouse is a women's space, organized and run collectively by community women to provide a space for all women to share, learn, and enjoy ourselves together. We, the Las Hermanas workers, are women of mixed racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds. We are workers, students, mothers, mostly (though not exclusively) lesbians and feminists. We believe that women need to organize and work together to become aware of our strengths and struggles worldwide, and to build a consciousness of our shared oppression. We hope that the coffeehouse can contribute to part of this process. Through food, music, films, workshops, and discussion groups we are learning about our class, racial, cultural and lifestyle differences, and are trying to find the common ground that we share as women.

## Las Hermanas Women's Coffeehouse & Cultural Center

4083 Wabash Avenue San Diego 92104-2800-7510

Fridays 5-11 Saturdays 5-11 Sundays 10-2



of a diversity of people. Because of this, I've felt so lucky to have the opportunity to explore the rich materials in the June L. Mazer Archives from such a variety of angles. I have worked on and off at CSW during the last seven years, and it might be my favorite of the Center's many great research projects. As a graduate student researcher, I have digitized issues of the *Lesbian Catholics Together* newsletter, conducted interviews with Ann Giagni and Angela Brinskele about their life and work, and written blog entries on different collections. The collections I've written about include the papers of the Daughters of Bilitis, and the personal archives of Diane F. Germain, Martha Foster, and Tyger-Womon.

I've been especially struck by the mysterious and even magical qualities that the Mazer Archives take on in their sometimes unpredictable preservation of times, people, and places. For example, Angela Brinskele told me about looking through photos that she'd taken of LGBT events in Los Angeles a decade ago and spotting a person in the background who had been a total stranger, and was now a close friend. Stacy Wood and I tried to solve the mystery of the beautiful and glamorous Martha Foster, who left behind a collection of spectacular photos of herself dressed like a movie star in what appears to be the 1930s and 1940s, with barely any descriptive information.

It felt almost unfair that I got paid to spend several hours drinking coffee with Ann Giagni and hearing about her fascinating life, which intertwined with most of the social contexts and events that affected LGBTQ life in the uniquely dynamic period after World War II. She has seen many not-for-profit organizations come and go

Las Hermanas began as a seven-room collective house for women who were seeking refuge from abusive spouses, and eventually expanded in order to create a safe cultural space for any interested women. The Women's Coffeehouse & Cultural Center opened its doors in 1974 and closed in 1980. *Diane Germain Papers*



# About Lesbian Catholics Together\* . . . . .

11/88

## Who We Are:

L. C. T. is a group of Lesbian Catholic women who celebrate home liturgies and paraliturgies together once a month. Most of us have Catholic backgrounds, but some do not. We come together to support each other in whatever ways we can, both spiritually and emotionally. We are attempting to remain committed to the faith in which most of us were raised, rather than depart to other, perhaps more accepting, religions. By doing so, we hope to be a part of that mechanism which will cause change in the Roman Catholic church attitudes and positions on both women and homosexuals, particularly those which suggest that we are psychologically or spiritually diminished.

## A Brief History:

The group began informally in the summer of 1986. A small number of longtime women Dignity members, concerned that Dignity was having little success in attracting equal numbers of women to their services, decided to experiment with holding women-only home liturgies. At that time it was felt the overall goal was to introduce women to Dignity. After the first year and after talking with women we had met, we abandoned the goal of direct association with Dignity and decided to continue on our own, resolving as has Dignity, that we were not a substitute for a women's regular place of worship. At present, after over two years in existence, we typically find twenty or more women at each liturgy. Many warm friendships have begun, and they continue to develop and grow. We view L.C.T. as still in formation, with the specific purpose of providing a safe and accepting atmosphere in which to socialize, worship and share spiritual journeys. Our activities are open to all women, and we are self supporting through optional member contributions.

## Recent L. C. T. News:

In 1989 we will begin a celebration of MONTHLY liturgies. Six of these will be home liturgies celebrated with a priest. The remaining six will be para liturgies which will be planned by all of us. We are especially excited about the proposed para liturgies which we hope will provide each of us with

an opportunity to share each of our special and unique ideas on worship.

We have been fairly actively involved with the L. A. Gay and Lesbian Religious Coalition this past year. Among their plans for 1989 are an inter-faith service and an inter-faith dance. We will keep you posted on exact dates. In addition, we would like to remind you that Dignity Long Beach has a women's outreach mass once a month and the phone number for more information can be found on the schedule enclosed.

## **ATTENTION BISHOP CONARY GRADUATES**

*Any of you who might have graduated from Bishop Conary High School in Los Angeles will be interested to know that three studies on the school's future have now been completed --- one on the reconstruction and renovation, one on projected enrollment and one on potential funding for the building expenses. The Archbishop will make the final decision in December after a series of committee meetings, but it now looks like Catholic Education for central and inner city high school girls will continue in Los Angeles. If you would like more information or would like to be involved call (818) 506-8177 and leave a message.*

## Mailing List Reminder:

This is, really (!), the last mailing you will receive from L.C.T. unless you let us know that you wish to remain on the mailing list. If you have already done so, don't worry, we know who you are! Please take a moment and fill in the small form below and return it to us. And, while you're doing it, tell us what activities you would like in the future. Thanks!

**Yes, I wish to continue to receive  
Notices from L.C.T.** \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Anita Y.  
1828 S. Mansfield Av. L.A. 90019**

\*Member, Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Religious Coalition

In 1986, Lesbian Catholics Together emerged as an independent entity from the group Dignity USA, an organization founded in 1969 to support and unite gay Catholics, in response to the lack of women at Dignity's services. *Lesbian Catholic Together Records*

throughout her career, and her insights into the elements that have contributed to the organization's longevity would be invaluable to any LGBTQ person hoping to follow in the footsteps of the past and present board members and start a community organization.

In our interview, Ann Giagni said that the Mazer Archives' responsibility is to historicize and preserve documentation of the lives of ordinary lesbians. As a scholar and queer person, I most value this philosophy. The celebration of the lives and work of ordinary lesbians reveals their extraordinariness. If a more normative archive might preserve the papers of a mainstream filmmaker or film studio, the Mazer Archives preserve the papers of a grassroots organization that protested mainstream media representations of women and lesbians and actually forced the entertainment industry to change. If more normative archives preserve the papers of famous published authors, the Mazer Archives also celebrate the work of unpublished poets whose output deserves to be read.

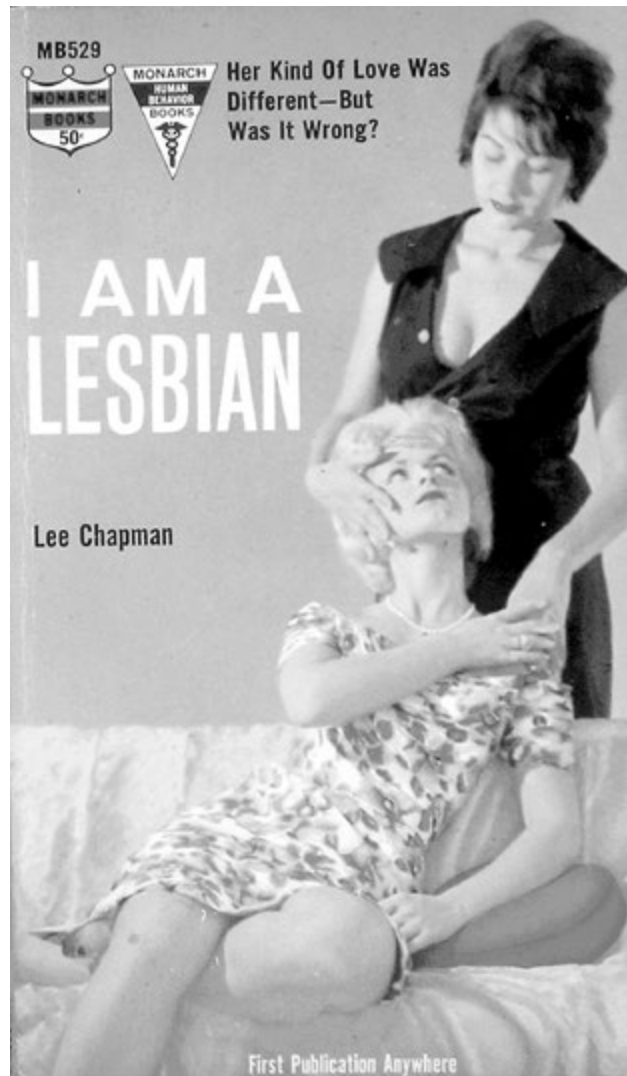
The Mazer Archives comprehensively document the important public work that lesbians have done as activists. However, I think that I love them most for also documenting the private. In these collections, we see records of real lesbians and feminists grappling with childhood traumas, falling in love with people and pets, serving in the military during the reign of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," living in women's communities, and collecting potentially offensive lesbian pulp novels which they love nonetheless. The Mazer Archives, as a whole, ever-expanding unit, is among the closest things that we have to a work that represents, with true comprehensiveness, the day-to-day lives of lesbians and feminists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They are so rich and so vast in their documentation of lives and communities that many would still like to see made invisible, that it almost seems as though some extra-human miracle brought them to us. Yet those of us who have watched the development of this project know that the miracles that have made these materials accessible were wrought by the dedicated and hardworking people who gathered, maintained, and processed them. Their work, represented in this book, constitutes another series of inspiring stories that the Mazer Archives tell.

## COLLECTIVE INTIMACIES

by Stacy Wood

OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS I have been fortunate enough to process many individual collections from the Mazer Archives, each taking on its unique contours, representing both an historical moment as well as generously contributing to the collective intimacies of the lesbian archival record. Over time, one begins to recognize that almost every collection contains evidence of community involvement and organizational activities, professional commitments as well as deeply personal materials, evidence of the impossibility of separating or compartmentalizing lesbian lives.

The collection policy of the Mazer Archives has always been generous—"anything a lesbian touches"; its local focus and grassroots history are clear. These collections are



*I am a Lesbian*, a novel written by Marion Zimmer Bradley under the pseudonym Lee Chapman, was published in 1962. It is one of many pulp novels in the collections of the Mazer Archives.



"Celebrating the Women in My Life, 1915-200?"  
(detail), collage on screen  
created by Ester Bentley.  
Ester Bentley Papers.  
Photo by Angela Brinskele.

tionally thought of as archival, the Mazer Archives attempts to express and reconstruct everyday life instead of focusing just on the exceptional. T-shirts are alongside financial documents, crafts next to birth certificates.

Many of the collections were deposited informally, friends dropping off boxes, women donating materials for their friends and lovers. As a result, we often may not know much about the donor, able only to use the contents to fill in the gaps. After months of research, reaching out to the community and even making a pilgrimage out to an address contained in a collection, I recognized a mystery donor in the artifact of another. Still housed at the Mazer Archives is a standing screen constructed by Ester Bentley. A collage of photographs, drawings, decorations, and aphorisms, it is titled "Celebrating the Women in My Life, 1915-200?" (Bentley died in 2004). Although I knew from speaking with those active in the Mazer Archives, as well as through my processing work, that the collections represented a networked collective in various states of organization throughout its history, the screen provided a visual understanding of those connections through a single individual's life experiences. This screen captures not only the many connections that were so difficult to find through a paper trail alone but also the impetus behind the Archives. "Each picture will be to the last a fleeting moment rescued from the past" is written on the screen, highlighting the immense amount of love, care, and work that has gone into and will continue to go into these archives.

vital snapshots of the history of Los Angeles, bringing social movements into relief in formal and informal manifestations. It is here where we see the indispensability of community archival practices, self-documentation, in telling history on one's own terms, capturing not just the facts of the past but the messiness of their construction.

It is inevitable that while working so closely with materials, you begin to become attached to certain collections, certain relationships, and certain senses of humor that you can glean from personal correspondence. At times, collections seem to be in communication with one another, filling in gaps, serving as connective tissue between seemingly disparate women. Some collections serve as hubs in a wheel, fanning outward to capture not just the movement of a community but the movements of individuals within that community. By collecting materials not tradi-



Part of the Mazer Archives' extensive video collection.  
Photo by Angela Brinskele. Mazer Collection of Video Materials

# Processing Audiovisual Materials

*Collection Notes by* JONATHAN COHN, MARIA ANGEL DIAZ,  
KIMBERLEE GRANHOLM, MIKE STONE, AND DANIEL WILLIFORD

## THE DYKE OLYMPICS AND OTHER LESBIAN PASTIMES

*by Jonathan Cohn*

THE AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS in the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives include an assortment of home movies and recordings of speeches, conferences, dances, parades, concerts, fundraisers, socials, retreats, news stories, comedy routines, television episodes, movies, and documentaries. In addition, there are also thousands of prints, slides, and art depicting everything from the making of documentaries to events like gay pride parades, meetings, classes, camps, protests, parties, retreats, and the Dyke Olympics. As a graduate student researcher on the project, I cataloged and began the process of digitizing these materials.

The audiovisual collections of the Mazer Archives offer amazing insights into a wide variety of lesbian and/or feminist communities throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Home videos, photos, and audio recordings illustrate both the everyday lives and influential activism that took place within these communities. While digitizing the audio collection, I listened not only to speeches, lectures, and performances, but also to dozens of social functions ranging from dances to raffles. At these events, anonymous attendees largely discussed their

support for one another and pride in their communities. These conversations—along with scrapbooks filled with images of families, celebrations, and travels—illustrate an ethos of compassion, care, and hope often obscured in popular representations of lesbians, gays, and feminists from this period, which tended to focus on AIDS, discrimination, or scandal. While mainstream media represents lesbians always in relation to heterosexuals, the Mazer Archives represent these communities on their own terms.

At the same time, the many recordings of academic and activist conferences depict the complexity

Dyke Olympics, Chapel Hill, NC, 1983. Photo by Elaine Mikels. *Elaine Mikels Papers*



and variety of lesbian identity and feminist praxis. The topics ranged from the history of lesbianism to ecofeminism and the latest in breast cancer research. These conferences demonstrate not only the impact of lesbian and feminist communities on many current global issues, but also the many debates and arguments during the period concerning definitions of feminist theory and how this theory could best be practiced. I became captivated by an administrative meeting at a conference for Jewish lesbians, which quickly turned into an impassioned debate over whether or not male children should be allowed to attend panels or the conference's childcare program. In order to make the conference a safe and open space for lesbians, the organizers only wanted lesbians to attend. Some in the audience feared that allowing lesbians to bring their sons would make other audience members feel uncomfortable and less inclined to discuss personal and/or controversial topics. Others feared that by not allowing sons to attend, those parents who could not afford childcare would be unable to attend. While grappling with a seemingly small issue, this debate exemplifies the complicated and always negotiated nature of feminist praxis at every level of life. These small and enduring moments are also what make the Mazer Archives such an important collection, very much worth preserving and making available to a larger public.

## WITNESSING HISTORY

by *Maria Angel Diaz*

THE AUDIO COLLECTIONS from the Mazer Archives contain recordings of conferences, workshops, meetings, performances, radio broadcasts, interviews, and oral histories. These materials concern topics such as homosexuality, lesbian issues, feminism, racism, discrimination, literature, music, and history from the 1970s through the 1990s. The bulk of the materials are audiocassette tapes, which were processed and digitized. Since the digitizing takes place in real-time, it felt like I had almost become a witness to the events they depicted. As I watched them take place, I developed a deep understanding of the women, their words and work, their personalities, and the time and place in which they lived.

A highlight of the materials is a set of interviews from June L. Mazer and Bunny MacCulloch concerning the Southern California Women for Understanding (SCWU), Mazer Archives, Mazer's death, and lesbian culture in the San Francisco Bay Area. Recordings provide great insight into the life and work of both women. The two interviewed scholars and other experts on lesbian culture and history and were themselves interviewed. The materials also include a recording of the memorial service that honored the life and work of Mazer after her death in 1987. As an information professional, I particularly enjoyed hearing MacCulloch's description of the organization of the Mazer Archives, with its details about the collections and the donors, as well as her nontraditional scheme for organization.

The digitized collections present a range of topics with a variety of hosts and speakers. From music recordings to scholarly talks to medical information sessions, the audio materials capture the culture, diversity, politics, scholarship, and activism that feminist and lesbian communities have produced and engaged with in the U.S. over the last fifty years. One recording, titled, "Rape City Mall," includes materials from a project that took place over three weeks in 1977 to raise awareness among Los Angeles inhabitants of the frequency of assaults against women across their city. The event included speeches, interviews, self-defense demonstrations, and an art piece by Suzanne Lacy. The recording includes Lacy explaining her intentions in producing the piece and interviews with the public as they passed by, reacted to, and watched her as she cited the number of reported rapes that had occurred in three weeks in May of 1977.





Weightlifter at Dyke Olympics, Chapel Hill, NC, 1983.  
*Photo by Elaine Mikels. Elaine Mikels Papers*

The Reading Performances Series (1980–1983) features reading performances by a variety of lesbian and feminist writers, including Eloise Klein Healy, Judy Grahn, Margaret (Peg) Cruikshank, Judy Freespirit, Kent Hyde, and Terri de la Peña. A number of recordings from radio shows include a KPFA presentation about the Stonewall Riots, and the KPFA show *Women's Magazine*, which featured Del Martin discussing domestic violence within heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Many of the locations where the performances were held no longer exist, making the recordings integral to marking the cultural and historical significance of the sites.

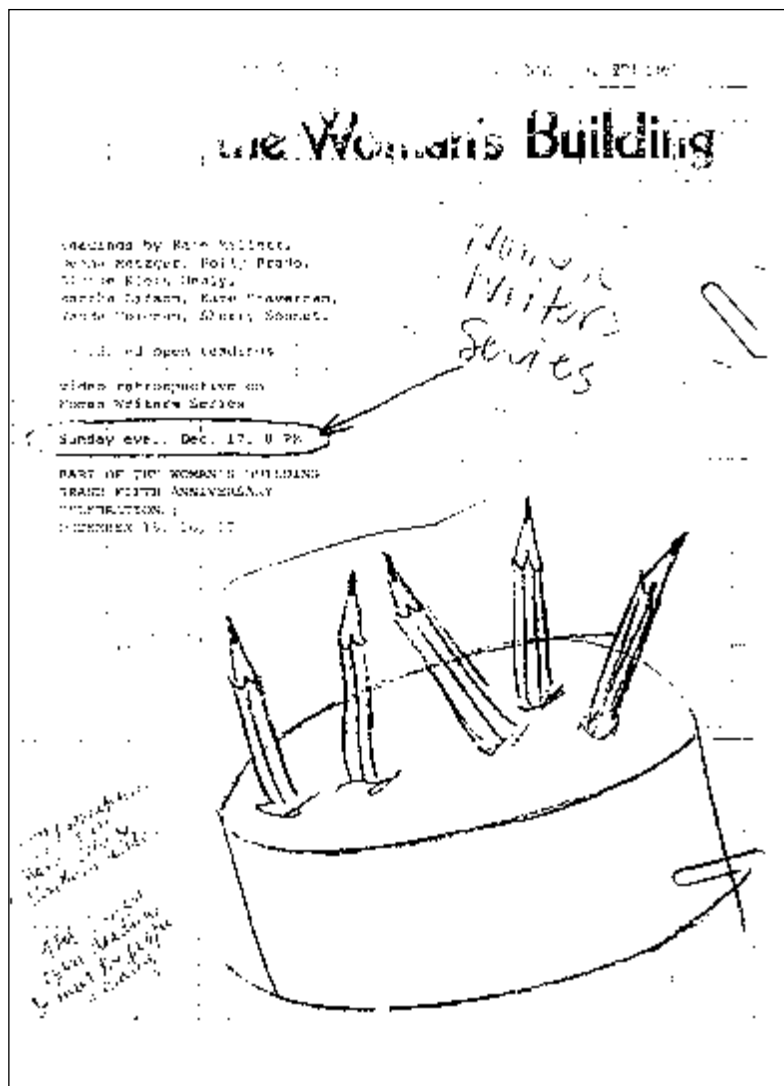
Some were recorded at the Woman's Building, a nonprofit arts and education center founded in 1973 by Judy Chicago, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville, and Arlene Raven. Originally located in MacArthur Park and then on Spring Street, it was a safe space for women to create art, write, collaborate, meet, and develop their senses of identity and community. Although the Woman's Building closed its doors in 1991, it left its mark as a vital base for the feminist movement in Los Angeles. A set of recordings documents the *Women Writers series* held at the venue. The events in this series were mostly organized by Eloise Klein Healy, a Los Angeles–based poet who published five books of poetry, founded Arktoi Books, taught at the Woman's Building, and served on its board of directors. She was named Los Angeles Poet Laureate in 2012.

Listening to and describing the ample audio materials of the Mazer Archives has provided me the opportunity to observe quite closely the lives and work of diverse groups of women over the span of several decades. My observations often felt intimate, because many recordings feature small group meetings of women, and sometimes men, sharing personal experiences. As such, they offer a profounder understanding of the atmosphere and sentiment of the time. Before working on this project, I was not well-versed in lesbian and feminist history. I have gained so much from hearing these voices. I not only have learned about the development of lesbian and feminist activism, but I also was fortunate to have helped make available an integral piece of the story of Los Angeles and of California.

## TO PROTECT

by *Kimberlee Granholm*

AS A GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCHER, my assignment involved evaluating and prioritizing the video media for preservation by taking into account each item's uniqueness and relevance to the project's goals; performing repairs; completing digital transfers for preservation and access; rehousing tapes to achieve adequate archival



Flyer for "Women Writers Series," which featured Eloise Klein Healy, Wanda Coleman, Holly Prado, and others. Some of the readings are available in the Mazer Collection of Audio Materials. *Woman's Building Records*



standards; establishing standards for cataloging; and creating descriptions for individual records by researching ideas, events, or persons pictured or referenced within the record.

Often shot using hand-held cameras, most of these tapes were recorded on VHS in the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Since VHS is a fragile medium that begins deterioration after ten years, even when stored in temperature- and humidity-controlled environments (which these were not), these recordings—such significant cultural histories—were in serious danger of extinction, especially since the majority of these tapes were sole existing documents. Given this, I felt that above all, my job was to protect.

The video collection represents an integral aspect of the Mazer Archives: community. While the paper collections mostly focus on individuals, many of the recordings embody a collective identity, albeit one with significantly different opinions. Repeatedly, we see in these videos of group workshops and conference discussions an expressed emphasis on the importance of creating a safe space to disagree. This emphasis was significant: solidarity within the lesbian feminist community was established not by a single opinion but by the collection of individual voices. These groups sought to form a cohesive expression of determined existence, and an identity formed by individuality within the collective. This same ideal is also expressed through the entity of the Mazer Archives.

Watching each tape, I learned to be a better feminist and humanitarian, as well as to be a stronger ally in supporting the Mazer Archives' struggle to keep this history alive. My task was not only to conserve it but also to keep it active and available. Consequently, my selections for priority in digitization and description revolved around assuring an ardent presentation, and thus preservation, of a lesbian feminist heritage within an institutional university, where lesbians can continue to—as the Mazer motto goes—viably “live forever.”

### **A CURSE AS BLESSING**

by *Mike Stone*

AS A MEMBER of the audiovisual processing team, it was my job to oversee the processing of thousands of hours of audiocassettes, videotapes, and Super 8 films. The technology required that the analog materials be digitized in real time. In terms of time management, it may have seemed like a curse but, for an archival project like this, it was actually a blessing. Digitizing in real time is slow and time consuming, but it gave the student staff—all of whom had been chosen because of their special interest in the collections or in related fields of study—the time to listen and to watch, thereby putting their knowledge and skills to work. They could identify materials of historical interest that a casual worker might not have been able to spot. This information could then be added to the metadata, and the finding aid. This collection of descriptive information, more than any special technical innovation inherent in the digitization, is what is most important for a project such as this. It is precisely these notes that add tremendous value and viability for researchers, and will do so for many years to come.

### **WHERE LESBIANS LIVE FOREVER: VIDEO AND THE HISTORICAL SUBJECTS OF LESBIAN EXISTENCE**

by *Daniel Williford*

THE MOTTO of the Mazer Archives, “Where Lesbians Live Forever,” emphatically opposes the effacement of lesbian existence. To build and maintain an archive of lesbian existence was and remains an urgent political act. As I worked on digitizing videotapes for this project, I was struck in particular by the amateur aesthetics, which indicate

that home video camera and consumer-grade VHS and Betamax® tapes were used. Set up at a social gathering and left to run for hours, the camera inhabits the sidelines and is often overlooked but what it can record from such a vantage point can be all the more authentic and illuminating.

Following my summer appointment digitizing parts of the video collection, I taught a class at Occidental College's Department of Critical Theory and Social Justice, where I asked undergraduate students to discuss essays by influential lesbian feminists concerning the critical moment in U.S. history when the lived experience of lesbians was articulated as a form of resistance to abusive and oppressive male power. During this discussion, I described my work in archiving some of the video



materials from the Mazer, which gave an element of currency to the decades-old texts. We discussed Adrienne Rich's statement about how male power works to "deny women [our own] sexuality," which cites as an example "the closing of archives and destruction of documents relating to lesbian existence."<sup>1</sup> She describes how male power has worked to withhold from women "large areas of the society's knowledge and cultural attainments," including "the 'Great Silence' regarding women and particularly lesbian existence in history and culture."<sup>2</sup> Compulsory heterosexuality, according to Rich and Monique Wittig, works in part by making the history of lesbian existence invisible through denial; by describing women's erotic connections as either for reproduction or else as a pathology; and by effacing female traditions. In talking about this project, I was able to show students that such theories were the basis for ongoing efforts to fight back against invisibility, to make sure that lesbians not only "live forever" but have always presented a challenge to the foundational biases of modern society.

Videos capture speakers during meetings and gatherings; others feature candid conversations among attendees of these gatherings. Women discuss their own history and the history of gay and lesbian politics and so capture this oral history, but they also document how community events can facilitate a transfer of knowledge. When lesbians gather together to discuss politics, history, sex, and contemporary lesbian life, the telling of stories and the sharing of experiences not only educates but also insists: lesbians exist and lesbians have always existed. At the Southern California Women for Understanding "Camp Herstory" convention in 1990, for example, panelists—including Ivy Bottini, Robin Tyler, and Donna Smith—were asked "to share with us what in their life has brought them to this point and to show us the history of where the gay and lesbian movement has been in the early part of this century." Smith talks about being young and visiting gay clubs in Hollywood in 1939, including the Lakeshore, where she met her lover. When she says that she and her lover were together for forty years until her death in 1979, the audience applauds and cheers, while Tyler visibly checks her emotion. The audience applauds the existence of a lesbian relationship that lasted through some of the harshest decades in the twentieth century for out lesbians and celebrates the possibility of love in a culture of homophobia.

In a video of the second conference for Old Lesbians in San Francisco on August 5, 1989, Pat Bond does a comedy routine as one of more than a dozen performances recorded. Informally titled "Conversations With Pat Bond," she talks about being a "queer kid" from Davenport, IA, her life in the military, and her experience of gay

Woman wears "Psychey Dykey" t-shirt. Photo by Francesca Roccaforte. Francesca Roccaforte Papers

and lesbian nightlife and activism. Bond tells the story of how she became so infatuated with a professor at San Francisco State College that she took her class over and over until the registrar barred her from enrolling again. During the final exam, Bond says, “I handed in my final blue book with tears in my eyes. And she handed me her phone number.” They had an extended, loving romantic affair only because Bond was no longer her student. Bond’s story reminds us of the sensual and erotic element of sharing knowledge about lesbian existence and the cathartic effect of shared laughter.

Capturing conversations amongst lesbians who are less well known, the tapes provide glimpses of a broad community of lesbian women. A video of a talent show held at the Los Angeles-based Califia community in 1983 includes a pre-show conversation in which several women discuss aging and motherhood. Discussing how she felt when her children began to have grandchildren, a woman says, “By the time they had kids, something started going to my head, there’s something interesting going on here. There are two generations of human beings that have started out in my body.” The women speaking with her talk about the need to affirm the success they feel at surviving rather than the fear and regret of losing their youth. Much of the tape documents the talent show, which includes many children, and shows how community education happens through inclusion. In one bit, a woman points the camera at another woman who wears a rainbow “mustache” painted on her upper lip and who giggles with



Video materials include recordings of poetry readings, conference panels, comedy presentations, gay pride parades, meetings, classes, camps, protests, parties, and retreats. Mazer Collection of Video Materials

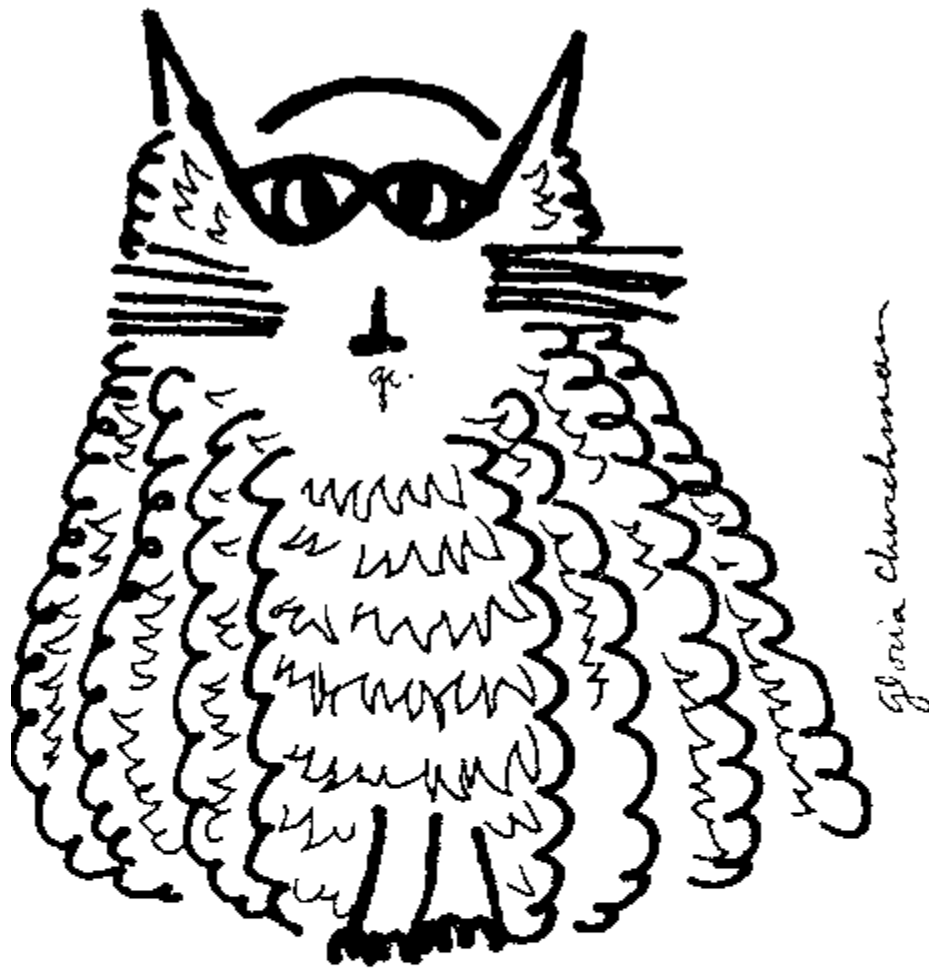
embarrassment at being filmed. “I think if you had a camera pointed at you,” she retorts, “you’d find out how embarrassing it is.” The point is taken, and the camera is handed over. Blurred treetops and sideways images reveal the transfer while instructions for use are given: “This bottom button goes all the way in, and once you get all the way in, you focus.” While the mustached woman figures out how to use the camera, the women she films wave and giggle. She asks one to tell her a story, which descends into gossip about who is sleeping with whom, and for that matter who is a lesbian. “Why wonder when you can ask?” she giggles from behind the lens.

The camcorder is passed around and captures a social world in the early 1980s. The materials in the Mazer Archives document not only formal presentations by activists and artists but also lesbian feminist praxis in moments like this one which are all the more poignant for being so mundane.

Against the unchanging forgetfulness of the world, the Mazer Archives insist that we not forget our indebtedness to the lives of lesbians, and that community memory works against the violence of erasure and against the pain of alienation.

#### NOTES

1. Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5: 4 (1980), p. 638.
2. Rich, p. 640.



OWL  
Old Wise Lady

OWL (Old Wise Lady). Drawing by Gloria Churchwoman. Elaine Mikels Papers

# Oral Histories

AS A COMPANION PROJECT TO the processing of the collections, CSW conducted a set of oral histories to preserve the voices of some of the women who have shaped the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives past and present. The oral histories also add another dimension to archival collections associated with the interviewees. Each of the interviews documents the life of one woman, including childhood; education and employment; activism and politics; family, identity, relationships, and community; and involvement in the Mazer Archives and collaboration with the Center for the Study of Women and the UCLA Library.



Angela Brinskele, who is Director of Communications at the Mazer Archives as well as a member of the Board, conducted several of the oral histories and participated in the group history.

Each oral history, which will be available through the UCLA Center for Oral History Research, was conducted over three to five audiorecorded sessions of up to two hours each, which allowed for great depth and breadth. Marika Cifor conducted interviews with Ann Giagni and Marilee France. Angela Brinskele conducted interviews with Marsha Epstein, Jinx Beers, and Judith Saunders. Additionally, the members of the Board of Directors of the Mazer Archives—Ann Giagni, Jeri Deitrick, Marcia Schwemer, Marilee France, Pat Williams, Margaret Smith, Jamey Fitzpatrick, and Angela Brinskele—gathered together in November of 2013 to hold a video group oral history. Filmed by Yvette Soleto and facilitated by Stacy Wood, this oral history documented many aspects of the Mazer Archives' history and activities.

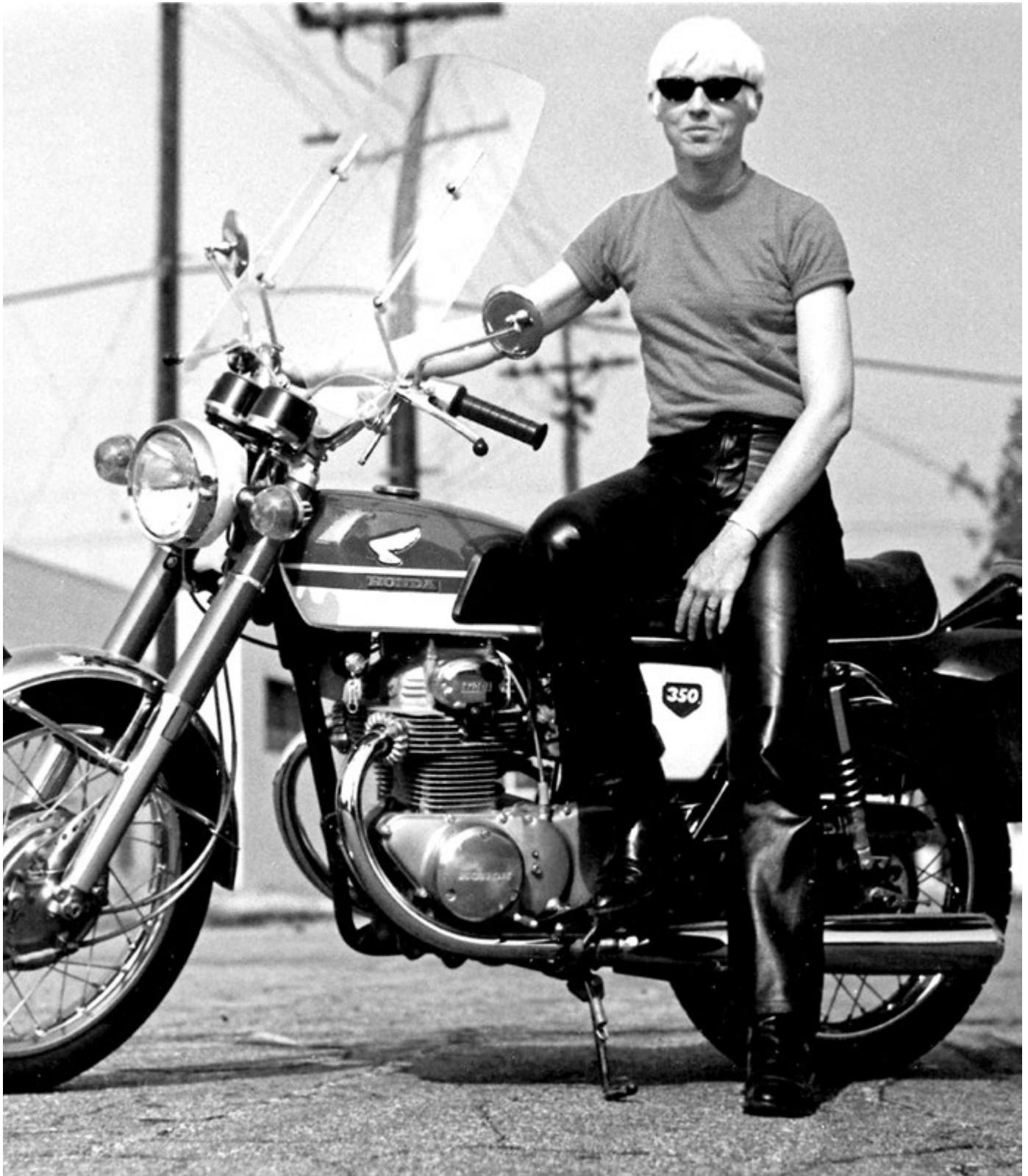
Each of these women offer candid, moving, and original insights in their own powerful words. Together, the oral histories provide a nuanced, diverse, and affecting story of American lesbian and feminist histories and experiences.

## HOME

by *Marika Cifor*

// KINDA come clambering up the steps and I walk into the room and it's wall-to-wall lesbians and they're loud, they're raucous, they're laughing, and the room is very, very crowded and I just felt I'd come home. I'd just found where I belonged. It was just this remarkable experience...I think if you have always [had] a place [where] you belong, you don't know what it's like not to have a place where you belong...when you've grown up with this sense of I don't belong here... and then you walk into a room and you think this is it, I knew I was right. I didn't have a place before but now I do."

In the second session of my oral history interview with Ann Giagni, President of the Board of Directors of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, she shared this experi-



Jinx Beers, 1970. Photo by Wendy Averill. Jinx Beers Papers

Wendy Averill (left) and  
Marilee France and friends.  
*Photo by Angela Brinskele.*  
*Angela Brinskele Papers*



ence, of leaving behind her isolation and loneliness and being welcomed home into the lesbian community for the first time. Ann's insight points to precisely why collecting, preserving, and making accessible lesbian and feminist history is so important. It is so meaningful to do work on this project, because it ensures that no woman who accesses the Mazer Archives will ever feel the same pain of thinking that she is alone.

I have had the opportunity to work on the CSW/Mazer Archives project, and to take the oral histories of two women, Ann Giagni and Marilee France. In their activism with and beyond the Mazer Archives, these women have played profoundly important roles in the making and preserving of lesbian and feminist history. It has been a tremendous and moving experience to hear their stories.

My experiences doing oral histories for this project have revealed the value of lesbian archives as both intellectual and affective experiences. Because doing oral history well requires a great deal of preparatory research, I had the opportunity to delve into the Mazer Archives and gather material from secondary sources on lesbian life, lesbian and feminist activism, and organizations. In spite of all of my preparation, nothing could have prepared me for the actual experience of sitting down to have conversations with these women. Truly collaborative dialogues, each of these oral histories was a self-conscious and disciplined conversation between the narrator and myself. Each allowed me to capture some of the stories, feelings, and meanings and how they were and are still significant to her. Each oral history ultimately illuminates how their individual experiences connect with larger histories.

Ann and Marilee continually provided detailed and fascinating insights into the lived experiences of individual lesbians, their communities, and lesbian and feminist activism in Los Angeles from the 1960s to the present day. Each spoke of experiences ranging from growing up as LGBTQ people, to consciousness raising, to changes they have lived through in the lesbian community. As a scholar of lesbian history and archives, I was surprised at the extent to which their voices brought lesbian and feminist histories to life for me in new ways and moved me deeply. Oral history has a profoundly important role to play in capturing histories that would otherwise be silenced in the archival record. It was a privilege to be part of creating, preserving, and making accessible these lesbian histories.



March opposing Proposition 6 (called the Briggs Initiative after the California legislator who proposed it), which was one of the first attempts to restrict lesbian and gay rights through a ballot measure. It was resoundingly defeated when a coalition—including organizations in the lesbian and gay community, public officials, and conservative, moderate, and liberal groups—mobilized to oppose it. *Lesbian Schoolworker Records*