

Hidden from Historians: Preserving Lesbian Oral History in Canada*



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RÉSUMÉ L'histoire lesbienne est une partie importante du passé canadien, mais certains documents de recherche les plus utiles sont en danger de disparition. Au cours des vingt dernières années, les activistes canadiens et les chercheurs ont mené des interviews d'histoire orale avec des lesbiennes au Canada. Cependant, seulement quelques-uns ont fait don de leur recherche à un centre d'archives. À partir des résultats obtenus dans un sondage auprès des spécialistes en histoire orale, cet article montre qu'un manque de formation, une pénurie de ressources financières et une incapacité de mettre en place un plan pour faire don des documents de recherche à un centre d'archives sont trois obstacles importants qui empêchent la préservation de l'histoire orale lesbienne. L'article décrit aussi les Archive of Lesbian Oral History, des archives numériques internationales fondées par l'auteure.

ABSTRACT Lesbian history is an important part of Canada's past but some of the most valuable research material we have is in danger of disappearing. Over the past twenty years Canadian activists and researchers have conducted many oral history interviews with lesbians in Canada, yet only a handful have donated their research material to an archive. Drawing on the findings of a research questionnaire distributed to oral historians, this article shows that a lack of training, an absence of financial resources, and a failure to put in place a plan to donate research material to an archive are three of the most important barriers to preserving lesbian oral history in Canada. The article also describes the Archive of Lesbian Oral History, an international digital archive founded by the author.

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In their 1989 essay collection, editors Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey point out that the twenty-nine essays gathered in their book represent the “first phase of historical reclamation” of the lesbian and gay past.¹ At that time, the history of sexuality was still a curious new field. Its practitioners had to go hunting for publishers, and their chance of landing a job in an academic institution was slim to none. Since then, the field of lesbian, gay, and queer studies has come to enjoy mainstream respectability in some quarters, and a small but significant number of faculty and graduate students are being rewarded for pursuing research in this once controversial field.² Today, lesbian, gay, and queer history is far from hidden.

Yet much of the research undertaken by Canadian historians of the lesbian past remains out of public view and is at risk of being lost to future researchers. The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a surge of research activity undertaken by grassroots organizations such as Lesbians Making History, by filmmakers Aerlyn Weissman and Lynne Fernie, and by historians such as Becki Ross and Cameron Duder. These researchers undertook extensive oral history interviews with lesbian and gay women who came of age in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, yet only some have donated their material to an archive. Moreover, those interviews were recorded on analogue cassettes that degrade over time. To date only one set of these interviews has been digitized; most of this valuable research material remains in the possession of the interviewers who have little time and few material resources that would allow them to take the necessary steps toward preservation. Hours and hours of research material about a relatively hidden area of Canadian historical experience is at risk of being lost forever, and because many of the narrators have died, there is little possibility of reclaiming these stories a second time.

In the postwar period most lesbians and gay men worked hard to hide, not preserve, their private lives. Much of what we know about this era results from the efforts of lesbians and gays who in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s initiated and sustained local oral history projects and built community archives to hold their records. In Canada, however, no single institution or archive actively supports and promotes the production and preservation of oral histories of lesbians, gays, or members of any other sexual minority group. Though existing archives are today often delighted to receive such material, none is taking steps to encourage its production, or to adequately preserve the material they already possess. My findings suggest that one of the main reasons why Canadian lesbian oral history collections are in danger of disappearing is due

- 1 Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, eds., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York, 1989), p. 2.
- 2 Marc Stein, “Committee on Lesbian and Gay History Survey on LGBTQ History Careers,” *Perspectives*, vol. 39, no. 5 (2001), pp. 29–31.

to the absence of an active archival collection and preservation program. The other reason is an absence of training in oral history methods that would teach both community and academic researchers to think beyond the completion of their own research, book, and/or film project and to develop a preservation plan.

This article reports on the fate of lesbian oral history interview material collected in Canada since the mid-1980s. The first section provides a brief introduction to lesbian and gay oral history, including the critical role early community researchers and archivists played in collecting stories, and how this movement was deeply influenced by new left aspirations to write history from the ground up. Next, some of the key research projects undertaken in Canada since the late 1980s are summarized and findings from a questionnaire distributed to researchers for the purpose of this article are presented. Contrary to what many historians might suspect, homophobia is not a significant barrier against the archival preservation of lesbian oral history. Instead, a lack of training in oral history methodology and the absence of a dedicated grassroots movement to collect and preserve a lesbian (or gay) "people's history" are the main reasons why very few lesbian oral histories have been archived. This article also describes the Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony (A LOT). Currently in the collection and digitization stage, it will eventually store and make accessible the tremendously rich resource material about lesbian experience produced by researchers in Canada and around the world. Finally, some recommendations are offered that will help to address some of the main problems that exist in the collection, preservation, and future use of oral history.

The findings presented here are based on thirteen responses to a questionnaire that I sent to sixteen academics, public historians, and community activists about their lesbian oral history projects. Most of the respondents I know personally and contacted directly. I also posted a query to the Canadian Committee for Women's History and the Canadian Committee on the History of Sexuality discussion lists. This generated two additional responses. I corresponded with three archivists: one from the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archive (CLGA) in Toronto, one who operates a gay and lesbian archive out of his home in Vancouver, British Columbia, and another from the University of Ottawa's Canadian Women's Movement Archive, which holds a large lesbian oral history collection. I also gathered information from the past project leader of the Vancouver-based Queer History Project.

The thirteen questionnaire respondents collected oral testimonies from women who lived most of their lives in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and/or Quebec. Two respondents undertook their research as public or community historians; the other eleven were either graduate students or held a tenure-track position at a university at the time they conducted their interviews (see Appendix 1). Consequently, this article summarizes the work of

one community-based lesbian history group (Lesbians Making History), one public historian (Michael Riordan), and eleven university-based scholars. It is not an exhaustive account of lesbian oral history projects in Canada, but the findings presented here shed light on key collection and preservation issues plaguing lesbian oral history in Canada.

While there have been a number of oral history research projects about gay men, and transsexual and transgendered people in Canada,³ this discussion is limited to research projects that either focused exclusively on lesbians or that included lesbians or gay women.⁴ The reasons are partly pragmatic. My interest in this topic evolves from my own work in the field of lesbian history, but it also reflects the current state of affairs in the lesbian and gay research and collections community. In the second half of the twentieth century – the temporal focus of these oral testimonies – the lives of gay men and women often overlapped and could even be complementary. Lesbians, gay men, and transpeople faced similar sets of life challenges. As “queers” living during a time of tremendous pressure to conform to heteronormative imperatives, they were all subject to various forms of oppression, exclusion, and trauma. They responded by forming private social networks and socializing in half-hidden spaces that they often shared. Indeed, gay men, lesbians, and transpeople sometimes went to the same bars, beaches, and house parties. They occasionally joined forces to fight assailants on the streets and at other times provided “heterosexual cover” for each other by attending work and family functions together as “normal” couples. But their lives were also quite distinct. Men who remained closeted at work could usually support themselves comfortably on a male wage whereas women, whose wages were generally much lower, had to make do with much less. For transpeople, finding any kind of job at all could prove impossible. Moreover, lesbians, gay men, and transpeople did not always consider themselves natural allies. For example, the gay male community could be extremely sexist toward lesbians. Toronto’s St. Charles Tavern, a popular 1960s and 1970s gay male bar, effectively barred butch (masculine) women by imposing a skirts- and dresses-only policy for women. Men were not required to gender conform in their style of dress. This complex past part-

- 3 See, for example, Project Foolscap at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives; Paul Jackson, *One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the Military during World War II* (Montreal and Kingston, 2004); Viviane Namaste, *C’était du spectacle! L’histoire des artistes transsexuelles à Montréal, 1955–1985* (Montreal, 2005).
- 4 Many women who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s identified as a gay woman, not as a lesbian. This creates an interesting dilemma for historians, archivists, and others who want to respect the language women use to describe themselves, but who are writing and working at a time when the public and scholars alike assume “gay” has a male referent. For an illuminating discussion of this issue, see Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Who is the subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2008), pp. 177–89.

ly explains why few oral testimony-based studies include lesbians and men in equal measure, and even fewer include gay men, lesbians, *and* transpeople.⁵

For non-aboriginal North Americans, the practice of oral history can be traced back to the early twentieth century. For those interested in the history of the queer past, however, the practice of oral history collection is rooted in a more recent era when history was regarded as a tool for the liberation of the oppressed. The 1960s rise of the “new left,” the wave of liberation movements, including the women’s movement, and E.P. Thompson’s groundbreaking monograph *The Making of the English Working Class*, all had a hand in democratizing history.⁶ Insisting on the historical significance of the lives of everyday people was the first step taken. Next was finding creative ways to document the lives of those people whose experiences were not recorded in official records, at least not from their perspectives. Oral history was an ideal method to uncover the richness of the life experiences of everyday people.

As a methodology, oral history evolved to incorporate the values and ideals of its practitioners. Starting with the premise that everyday people live under conditions of oppression, both the method and the practice of oral history were intended as tools for liberation. This generation of activist oral historians rejected the traditional hierarchical relationship between researcher and subject. They critiqued folklorists’ and anthropologists’ construction of informants as “objects” of study. Indeed, though class differences sometimes existed, researchers did not regard their subjects as the “other”; instead, they often strongly identified with them.

The commitment of oral historians to dismantling traditional relations of power led them to seek out ways to share authority with their narrators. They hoped to enable their informants to tell their own stories, they gave informants more control over the product of the interview, and they invited them to challenge their interpretations of their testimony. Collecting and telling history was about much more than expanding the historical record to include the

5 An excellent example of the tendency to treat gay male and lesbian histories separately is the 1989 Hall Carpenter Archives’ oral history anthologies; Hall Carpenter Archives/Lesbian Oral History Group, eds., *Inventing Ourselves: Lesbian Life Stories* (London, 1989) and Hall Carpenter Archives, Gay Men’s Oral History Group, eds., *Walking After Midnight: Gay Men’s Life Stories* (London, 1989). Examples of those that include both women and men in Canada are Michael Riordan, *Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country* (Toronto, 1996), and Patrizia Gentile and Gary Kinsman, *The War on Queers: National Sexuality as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver, forthcoming). For the United States, see Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945–1972* (Chicago, 2000) and Esther Newton, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America’s First Gay and Lesbian Town* (Boston, 1993).

6 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963). On the popularization of oral history in the 1960s and 1970s see Paul Thompson, “The Voice of the Past,” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York, 1998), pp. 21–28.

experiences of those who were “hidden” from traditional historical narratives; it was a means to empower whole communities of people who were perceived to have a common set of interests. These projects were typically community, not university based. As an early advocate explained, oral history was a means to “[break] through the barriers between the chroniclers and their audience; between the educational institution and the outside world.”⁷ Working-class, women’s, immigrant, aboriginal, and, especially in the United States, African-American history, and the communities from which narrators came were greatly enriched by this project.

Lesbian and gay community activists and historians were equally turned on to oral history as a liberating practice. It was a way to write gay and lesbian experience into existence, to challenge heterosexism and traditional history, and to engender pride within a community long forced to live on the social, economic, and political margins of society. According to Will Roscoe, lesbian and gay community history “builds lives and identities, and provides both knowledge of the world and knowledge of the self. It is work that makes lesbian and gay living possible.”⁸ The connection between history, telling stories, and life make clear the passion of these early oral historians’ commitment to an ambitious political project.

Educator and archivist Joan Nestle shared Roscoe’s vision for better living through history. Determined to show that the lesbian past mattered, she founded the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) in 1973 in her home in Brooklyn, New York. That she called it the “Herstory” Archives marks the way feminist theory and activism was part of the foundation upon which lesbian history was built. Nestle was rescuing lesbian *and* women’s history. For a variety of reasons, including the fact that men held leadership positions in most early gay organizations, lesbian and gay archives are typically dominated by material related to, and produced by, men. Only by making lesbian material a priority, and by having lesbians on staff to build relationships with members of the lesbian community, does a meaningful repository of women’s material emerge.⁹ Gay male sexism and lesbian separatism were two determinants in establishing an archive dedicated exclusively to the lesbian experience. “But the strongest reason,” Nestle explains, “was to end the silence of patriarchal history about us – women who loved women.”¹⁰ Women elsewhere have

7 Thompson, “The Voice of the Past,” p. 26.

8 Will Roscoe, “History’s Future: Reflections on Lesbian and Gay History in the Community,” in *Gay and Lesbian Studies*, ed. Henry L. Minton, (New York, 1991), p. 176.

9 Karen Martin, “Lesbian Biography and Oral History in the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa,” *South Africa Archives Journal* 40 (1998), pp. 33–36.

10 Joan Nestle, “The Will to Remember: The Lesbian Herstory Archives of New York,” *Feminist Review* 34 (Spring 1990), p. 87.

followed suit.¹¹

History and politics are mutually reinforcing practices aimed at building and strengthening community. Like other activist historians, Nestle viewed the archive as an “answer [to] the challenge of exclusion.” And since lesbians are excluded as women *and* as homosexuals, it is little wonder she considered the LHA “the work of a lifetime.”¹² She also shared with Jonathan Ned Katz, Esther Newton, Cherrie Moraga, and others a belief that it was essential to bring history to the public rather than expect the public to come to them.¹³ Furthermore, she understood that women needed extra encouragement to see that the ephemeral from their lives was worthy of its own file folder in an archives’ cabinet.¹⁴ She traveled to large and small communities to tell women about their lesbian past, and to encourage them to contribute “to record their experiences in order to formulate our living Herstory.” LHA was not a hallowed institution meant solely for academics; it was “for everyone, for surviving, a place to create a family album.”¹⁵

Nestle’s path-breaking work inspired others to start historical reclamation projects of their own. The most important of these was the Buffalo Women’s Oral History Project, founded in 1978 by Madeline Davis and Elizabeth Kennedy. Davis and Kennedy were among the first history collectives of this kind, and the model they established – to produce a written history of an urban lesbian community, to create an archive of oral history materials, and to give the history back to the community from which it came – was reproduced in cities across the United States and elsewhere.

By the time Davis and Kennedy fulfilled their first objective in 1993, oral history was firmly established as an important method and source for historians of modern and marginalized sexualities. Both John D’Emilio and Alan Berube used oral history to document the ways people experienced, resisted, and organized against the oppression of the cold war era.¹⁶ The second wave of scholarship worked from this foundation to pose different questions, cover new social and geographic terrains, and to take us in new conceptual and theoretical directions. George Chauncey showed that the pre-World War II era

11 Other examples include the Archives lesbiennes de Montréal – Traces in Montreal, Quebec; the June Mazer Lesbian Archive in California; the Ohio Lesbian Archives; the Pacific Northwest Lesbian Archives in Seattle, Washington; and Glasgow Women’s Library’s Lesbian Archive.

12 Cited in Roscoe, “History’s Future,” p. 176.

13 For a fuller list of early historians and community lecturers, see *ibid.*, p. 163.

14 See Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds. *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (London, 1990).

15 Nestle, “The Will to Remember,” pp. 87–88.

16 John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: 1983); Alan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York, 1990).

was still within reach for oral historians; Marc Stein demonstrated that it was possible to study both women and men, and argued that it was necessary to do so; John Howard revealed that second-hand stories can be used to document the histories of those whose experiences are not readily captured by “gay” history; and Nan Alamilla Boyd established how, when combined with traditional archival sources, oral testimony can be used to further elaborate, and complicate, what we already know about the cities, social movements, and the queer past.¹⁷

The work of Nestle, and Davis and Kennedy has had a global impact in the field of lesbian history, and was the inspiration for the first lesbian oral history project in Canada. The Lesbians Making History (LMH) collective was a Toronto-based, lesbian group of feminist women who set out to collect local stories from women who had been “out” in the public lesbian community in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The collective existed for only a short period, but in that time they collected extraordinary testimonies, some of which formed part of the background research for Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman’s documentary film *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives*.¹⁸

University-based scholars have also benefited from the LMH interviews. Though initially committed to keeping this grassroots project out of the hands of academics (even though some of the group’s members were academics themselves), by the early 1990s LMH changed its position and shared the transcripts with graduate students, and later scholars with university positions. I was the first beneficiary of this policy change. The LMH interviews formed the bulk of the oral history material I used for my Master’s thesis. Cameron Duder also used the collection in his Ph.D. research. Most recently, some of the interview material was included in Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile’s forthcoming book *The Canadian War on Queers*.¹⁹

One might think that the natural place for this important collection would

17 George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York, 1994); Mark Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves; John Howard, Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago, 1999); Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003).

18 *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives*. For different reasons, this award-winning film is also in the process of becoming “hidden.” The National Film Board purchased the music rights for ten years. The film has not been available for purchase since these rights expired in 2004. Since the film was never released on DVD, only those VHS tapes currently in circulation at university and public libraries, and in private collections, are available to us. Those, however, will soon lose colour, image, and sound. Unless the NFB issues a re-release, *Forbidden Love* will also become “hidden from history.” Lynne Fernie, personal correspondence, December 2008.

19 Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (forthcoming November 2009).

be the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA). Founded in Toronto in 1973 as the Canadian Gay Liberation Movement Archives and later renamed the Canadian Gay Archives, the collection was a community-based effort that grew out of the records of *The Body Politic* (TBP), the most important gay liberation magazine in the English-speaking world. Though the TBP collective included feminists, male volunteers dominated the archive. As Nestle intuited in 1973, largely gay, male-run, volunteer organizations make little effort to collect or promote material relating to women. According to Ron Dutton, a Vancouver-based archivist of western Canada's gay and lesbian past, lesbian separatism was also a factor. When he began building his collection in the mid-1970s, lesbians seemed uninterested in working collaboratively with men, and the separatist environment made him feel uncomfortable about approaching them to request items such as meeting minutes.²⁰ Indeed, in 1986 separatism inspired lesbians to establish the Archives lesbiennes de Montréal – Traces, an archive independent of the Archives gaies du Québec and “*accessibles à toutes les lesbiennes et aux femmes intéressées.*”²¹

Perhaps it is for these reasons that the CLGA does not have a strong profile in the lesbian community. Long dominated by male volunteers, in 1993 the Board signaled a desire to become more inclusive by changing its name from the Canadian Gay Archives to the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives. More recently Mary MacDonald, a lesbian, historian, and heritage expert, served a successful term as its President, and led the archives through half a decade of tremendous growth. However, none of these advances has translated into substantive increase in lesbian content, nor have there been significant efforts to reach out to the lesbian or queer women's community.²² The CLGA is greatly limited by a lack of stable funding and remains dependent upon the efforts and interests of its mostly male volunteers. Nevertheless, it has not played a leadership role in the collection or preservation of Canada's lesbian past.

20 Ron Dutton, personal correspondence, March 2009.

21 “Archives lesbiennes de Montréal – Traces (Montreal): répertoire sommaire, correspondance et autres documents, 1986–1990,” X10-1 Serie 1: Main files, box 3, Canadian Women's Movement Archives, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa Library.

22 The CLGA collection does include oral testimonies. Project Foolscap, an oral history collection that documents the experiences of gay men, is housed there. Other material includes *The Body Politic* (TBP) journalists' interviews, more than one thousand hours of taped shows on a Vancouver gay community radio program, tapes from the gay program on Toronto radio station CUIT, and research material donated by Brian Pronger from his research for *The Arena of Masculinity: Sports, Homosexuality, and the Meaning of Sex* (Toronto, 1990). David Churchill and Harold Averill, personal correspondence, March 2009.

Lesbian Oral History Research in Canada

Over the last three decades, Canadians have been actively collecting lesbian oral testimony for a variety of purposes (see Appendix 2). To find out more about the fate of the research material these scholars and activists generated, I sent questionnaires to sixteen people who undertook oral history research with lesbians and gay women. I received thirteen responses. Two respondents were leaders of community projects; eight were graduate students at the time they undertook their projects (four of those either have published or intend to publish the results of their research); three began their projects as tenure-track or tenured professors and are working toward monographs.

Despite the fact that trained historians dominate the field of lesbian oral history in Canada, Canadians are in danger of losing the source material researchers have worked so hard to collect. Among these thirteen respondents, only one has taken steps to preserve his interview material in an accessible archive. Cameron Duder donated his analogue tapes to the University of Victoria Archives where he completed his Ph.D.²³ Valerie Korinek is in the process of gathering oral history research material for her study of the prairies, and has made arrangements to donate her interviews to the Saskatchewan Archives Board once her manuscript is published. Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile plan to donate their tapes to the CLGA when their project is complete.²⁴ Despite their intention to do so, four others – including Michael Riordan whose book *The Unauthorized Biography of the World* contains an entire chapter on the importance of preservation²⁵ – have never actually pulled their material together to place in an archive. Other scholars and grassroots activists have been more successful: Becki Ross, the author of a major study of the Lesbian Organization of Toronto, donated many of her tapes to the Women's Movement Archives, and Tom Warner, author of a comprehensive study of queer activism in Canada, donated his to the CLGA.²⁶

One might wonder if archives themselves pose a barrier to preserva-

23 Karen Duder, "The Spreading Depths: Lesbian and Bisexual Women in English Canada, 1910-1965." (Ph.D. diss., University of Victoria, 2001).

24 Patrizia Gentile, personal correspondence, April 2009.

25 Michael Riordan, *The Unauthorized Biography of the World: Oral History on the Front Lines* (Toronto, 2002). When contacted about this study, Riordan pointed out his failure to take his own advice.

26 See Becki Ross, *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto, 1995). Tom Warner, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto, 2002), p. ix. Ross was not able to respond to the research questionnaire; information about the status of her interview material was gathered from the Canadian Women's Movement Archive's on-line finding aid and in personal correspondence with Lucie Desjardins. See <http://www.biblio.uottawa.ca/content-page.php?g=en&s=archives&c=src-fondscoll#cwma> (accessed on 2 October 2009).

tion. First, audiotapes are not easy to store and Canadian archives are often ill-equipped to handle them. Second, not everyone is convinced that queer experience has historical value.²⁷ However, none of the researchers reported any difficulty piquing the interest of archivists and those who have not yet donated their collections do not anticipate that an archive would reject their research material. While I have not undertaken a study of the collection policies or practices of mainstream archives, the evidence suggests this material is of interest to some of the major Canadian archives. Indeed, in 1975 the Archives of Ontario offered to house *The Body Politic's* Gay Liberation Archive collection. Today major collections of lesbian and gay material can be found in city, provincial, and university archives.²⁸

There is one noteworthy exception. The most spectacular scandal in lesbian and gay oral history in Canada is the 1997 debate that occurred in and out of the Alberta legislature over a \$10,000 grant given to the Red Deer Museum to fund a local oral history project. When Stockwell Day, then-Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), learned of the grant, he stood in the Legislature and demanded that the Minister of Community Development rescind it, and that the Museum return what money it had already received. Day claimed that the project "offends the city's traditional values," that a museum "was not the appropriate place to champion the cause of gay rights," and that the grant "legitimizes a lifestyle choice that doesn't deserve this kind of attention."²⁹ As Gloria Filax shows in her analysis of homophobia in Alberta, Day's reaction was in keeping with the socially conservative views of many members of the Legislative Assembly, views that were reinforced by the right-wing publication *Alberta Report*, which applauded his actions. Alberta Premier Ralph Klein shut down the debate and declared that the Alberta government was "not in the business of censorship," but the debacle nevertheless contributed to Alberta's status as a province dominated by homophobic social conservatives. Outside of the province, Day's call to rescind the grant was widely reported, and ridiculed. Homophobia is not unique to Alberta, of course,³⁰ but

27 For a very useful discussion of oral history in Canada in general, see Alexander Freund, "Oral History in Canada: A Paradox," in *Canada in Grainau/Le Canada à Grainau: A Multidisciplinary Survey of Canadian Studies after 30 Years/Tour d'horizon multidisciplinaire d'Études canadiennes, 30 ans après*, eds. Klaus-Dieter Ertler and Hartmut Lutz (New York, 2009), pp. 305–35; on the preservation of oral history materials in Canada see Riordan, *An Unauthorized Biography of the World*, pp. 136–49. On homophobia, see Roscoe, "History's Future," p. 176.

28 See, for example, the Martin Crane Collection in the Vancouver City Archives.

29 Gloria Filax, "Producing Homophobia in Alberta, Canada in the 1990s," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 17, no. 1 (March 2004), p. 110.

30 See the history of Customs Canada blocking the importation of books to Vancouver's lesbian and gay bookstore, Little Sister's in Janine Fuller, Stuart Blackley, and Nancy Pollack, eds., *Restricted Entry: Censorship on Trial* (Vancouver, 1995). These events were

with respect to supporting lesbian and gay culture, the Alberta Legislature's outspoken opposition to all things queer appears to be the exception, not the rule.

In general then, archives themselves are not barriers to the preservation of lesbian oral testimonies. Funding, however, is. Becki Ross, for example, donated her analogue tapes to the Women's Movement Archives but insufficient staffing means that preservation of her tapes consists of playing them once a year.³¹ There are government funds available for such projects. Currently the University of Victoria Archives holds a grant from Library and Archives Canada's National Archival Development Program, Heritage Canada, to digitize Cameron Duder's analogue tapes. Applying for grant money, however, is a time-consuming process that requires skilled staff dedicated to the task. Though part of the University of Ottawa, the Canadian Women's Movement Archives employs only one archivist. Without more staff, preservation efforts will be minimal at best.

Another significant barrier against preservation is an increasing fear of legal action by narrators. Consent forms, which lay out the conditions of use for interview material, rarely provide the necessary permission that would allow other researchers to use the material. Even though Ross's tapes are archived, permission to use the material was only granted to Ross herself, thus raising the question: Who else can ever listen to these interviews? Unfortunately, most researchers, myself included, failed to think beyond their own research projects and did not acquire each narrator's consent to allow others to use the interview material at the time they conducted the interview. This is true even for the Lesbians Making History collective whose project was to collect oral histories for the benefit of the community. Because their process was often informal, and because they did not explicitly ask narrators to permit others to listen to the tapes, it is not clear what legal constraints there may be concerning their future use.

Sometimes interviewing a vulnerable population creates its own unique set of problems in regards to formal consent. Line Chamberland's narrators were uneasy about signing any forms related to a project on lesbian experience because the mere act of putting their name to paper risked unwanted exposure that could negatively impact their personal and professional lives. Chamberland borrowed a technique she learned from lesbian researcher Didi Khayatt.³² She gave narrators a form outlining how she would protect their identity in her research reports. It was she who signed the form, not the narra-

also the subject of a documentary by Aerlyn Weissman, dir., *Little Sister's vs. Big Brother* (Vancouver, 2002).

31 Lucie Desjardins, archivist, Archives and Special Collections, University of Ottawa, personal communication, April 2009.

32 Madiha Didi Khayatt, *Lesbian Teachers: An Invisible Presence* (Albany, 1992).

tors. This way, narrators were provided with a legal document outlining how the interview data would be used, stored, and protected, without having to put their name to paper at all. At that time, universities did not require the kind of elaborate consent forms that they do today; consequently, such arrangements were easy to make and adequately met everyone's needs. Such arrangements, however, create problems with respect to preservation and future usage. How can we protect the interests of the narrators and still preserve this valuable material for the future?

When writer and community activist Michael Riordan began his research on lesbian and gay life in Canada, he did not acquire signed permission forms from his narrators at all and now fears that without them, the tapes will be virtually useless to an archive. Like Lesbians Making History, his projects are community-based endeavours that imagined giving history back to the people that gave it to him. Neither he nor the LMH collective imagined a world in which a research ethics regime would make "telling our stories" risky business. The regulation of oral history projects by university ethics boards is a complex and vexing issue that cannot be fully explored here. Suffice it to say that forms composed just ten years ago do not provide sufficiently clear consent for the continued use of those interviews because they fail to meet the increasingly elaborate and legalistic requirements of archivists, and even of publishers.³³

"Trained" academics have not fared any better on this count. It never occurred to me to include permission to donate the interviews to an archive in my own consent forms, and it appears not to have occurred to others, either. Those researchers who did (Duder, Gentile and Kinsman, Llewellyn) found that some of their narrators were hesitant to allow others access to their interviews. Interviews about sexuality and sexual identity typically include at least some discussion of private sexual matters, and can also include discussion of painful and embarrassing memories. Moreover, as Valerie Koriek found in her research, women are much more reluctant than men to consent to granting others access to their interviews. Interviews about lesbian life typically explore some of the most physically and emotionally intimate aspects of narrators' life experiences. Understandably, these narrators have heightened concerns over privacy, and often feel the need to protect their own reputation as well as their family's. In some cases, narrators have reason to be concerned that if placed in the wrong hands, their testimony could compromise their personal safety and security in the present day.

33 Publishers such as University of British Columbia Press now require that living narrators give their consent to the *publication* of any findings related to their testimony. If permission to publish interview testimony was not obtained at time of the interview, researchers must go back to the narrators who, after the passage of time, are not always willing to allow their testimony to appear in book form.

A lack of training in oral history methodology is also a major problem. Better training could eliminate issues such as insufficient consent forms, and could teach researchers to think beyond the project at hand. Remarkably, not one of the thirteen questionnaire respondents had any training in the practice of oral history. Some reported that they read a few articles about the subject, but nothing more. With better access to scholars or community organizers who are actively working with oral history methods, we can better prepare future researchers on how to organize their projects in such a way that other researchers and the people they interview might benefit from their work as well.

That some of us have not thought beyond our own project confirms the suspicions of early oral history activists. They predicted that the institutionalization of lesbian and gay history would only benefit scholars, not the communities they studied. Since oral history was a practice meant to be by the community and for the community, people such as those who formed the LMH collective refused to share their work with academics. Although the LMH later changed their policy, these early suspicions seem to have some merit. Questionnaire respondents confirmed that once projects are completed, most academics move on to other things, leaving the interview material untouched and unused.

Failing to preserve research material may be a generational issue as well. Those who had a history of involvement in gay, lesbian, and women's activism intended to make their tapes available, even if they never got around to it. The two master's students who undertook their research in the last decade had not given any thought to the fate of their interviews, and had no plan to donate them. This suggests that with the professionalization of the history of sexuality and the waning of the gay liberation movement, young scholars may not feel that their projects are important for community building, and perhaps as a consequence, do not recognize the full value of their own work. We need to make sure that they do.

Vancouver's Queer History Project

The gay liberation movement that inspired lesbian and gay oral history projects has been eclipsed by the emergence of queer politics, theory, and cultures, but popular interest in oral history is as alive as ever. In Canada, one of the most recent developments on this front is *Out on Screen's Queer History Project (QHP)*. An initiative of the Vancouver queer film festival, QHP began as a film-commissioning project and has grown to become an innovative, on-line space where queer Vancouverites are invited to contribute

stories, and to read about and listen to the stories of others.³⁴ Similar to early gay liberation projects, it seeks to document “our history beyond the medium of film, and to give other people the chance to join the conversation.” Now in the building stage, the QHP runs workshops to entice people to come out and record their histories. Their long-term goal is to create a permanent, on-line repository of Vancouver’s queer history.

The project is run by a student of archival studies, and while she is keen to have academics act as advisors, “we don’t want the tone of the site to be too academic in its content and presentation; it’s meant to be more informal and accessible.”³⁵ With funding from the Canadian Council for the Arts, the City of Vancouver, and Imperial Tobacco, among others, the project has resources to build a visually pleasing website, hire staff to run the workshops, advertise to the community, and equip interviewers with needed technological support. It is a perfect example of how projects get done, and preserved, when grass-roots passion is supported by a stable source of funding.³⁶

That the QHP has grown out of the film community may seem odd, but film has been the most successful medium for meeting the objectives laid out by early oral historians. Canadian filmmakers Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman created the award-winning documentary *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives*, an outstanding exploration of butch/fem culture and lesbian experience in post-war Canada. They conducted extensive oral history research before selecting the nine narrators who appear in the final version. Unlike scholarly books and articles, which are not always read outside the academic community, *Forbidden Love* has been seen by hundreds of thousands of people, and has had just the kind of effect that Nestle hoped the Lesbian Herstory Archive would: it helped women survive.³⁷ Fernie and Weissman went on to make a documentary about Jane Rule, a well-known lesbian author, activist, and early contributor to *The Body Politic*. Nancy Nichol, another Toronto-based filmmaker, has also produced a number of documentaries on the gay liberation and rights movements in Canada.³⁸ All of

34 Nicole Maunsell, Queer History Project (QHP) Co-ordinator, personal correspondence, April 2009.

35 Ibid.

36 While gay liberationists traditionally eschewed corporate and sometimes even state funding, corporate and state funding has now become the norm for all kinds of lesbian, gay and queer organizations. By way of example, see the extensive list of private and public donors who sustain the Lesbian and Gay Archives of Northern California; www.glbthistory.org/about/index.html (accessed on 2 October 2009).

37 One woman I interviewed explained to me how she finally understood who she was after watching the film. She was in her late seventies, and at that point began actively looking for a female partner. Interview by author, Helen Carscallen, 1996.

38 Nancy Nichol, *Proud Lives: Chris Bearchell* (Intervention Video, 2007); *Pride and Resistance* (Intervention Video, 2007); *Politics of the Heart / La politique du cœur* (V

these films rely on narrators' first-person accounts to reveal the rich textures of Canada's queer past.

Activists and academic scholars have recently launched new oral history projects that aim to sidestep the limitations of traditional identity categories such as "lesbian" and "gay." Day Wong's Hong Kong-based oral history group uses "7-Eleven®" as a metaphor for women who have sex with women, as in "there must be one near you."³⁹ Vancouver's QHP strives to escape some of the homogenizing tendencies of "identity" as an organizing principle and strategy of recognition by framing its project as the history of a community. This strategy is also being used successfully by another on-line archive, the ACTUP Oral History Project.⁴⁰ These projects illustrate how even though the political commitments and conceptual tools used by lesbian and gay activists and scholars have changed since the 1970s, and many North American lesbian, gay, and queer people live in very different social and political times, oral history remains as popular and useful as ever.

QHP and the ACTUP Oral History Project were initiated in the digital age. Their testimonies are preserved in sustainable formats and made accessible on websites. But what of all those analogue tapes still languishing in basements across Canada?

Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimonies (A LOT)

While undertaking research for this article it became obvious that a permanent digital archive was necessary if lesbian oral history was ever to be preserved for future use. With a secure institutional position in hand, and the support of Simon Fraser University's Special Collections' archivist, I find myself in a good position to take steps toward preserving existing lesbian oral history collections yet to be archived. My long-standing friendship with Maureen Fitzgerald, who currently has the Lesbians Making History collection in her custody, and with Lynne Fernie, who has kept the research tapes she and co-director Aerlyn Weissman produced in their research for *Forbidden Love*, made it easier to convince them to donate their material to this project. I have added my own interviews to the collection, and recently received a donation of VHS tapes of a lesbian and gay community television program that was produced in Alberta. Historian Cameron Duder has joined me as a co-organizer. We are currently working to gather interviews and other oral material produced by scholars, community activists, public histor-

Tape, 2005); *Stand Together* (V Tape, 2002). Though not a work of history, see also Laurie Colbert and Dominique Cardona, *Thank God I'm a Lesbian* (Toronto, 1992).

39 Day Wong, "Beyond Identity Politics: The Making of an Oral History of Hong Kong Women Who Love Women," *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, vol. 10, nos. 3/4 (2006), p. 42.

40 See <http://www.actuporalhistory.org> (accessed on 2 October 2009).

ians, and lesbians themselves, across Canada. The next phase is to extend the archival reach beyond Canada and to build an international collection.

A LOT will exist as a digital archive housed on the Simon Fraser University server and managed by the Library's Special Collections unit. This may be too removed from the community to whom these testimonies belong, but some narrators' concerns about the protection of their privacy make administrative oversight necessary. Special Collections has a staff able to manage requests to access the material through a password-protected site. Narrators who request limits be placed on access can be assured that their instructions will be carefully followed.

By naming this collection an Archive of Lesbian Oral Testimony, I am not ignoring the fact that "lesbian" is a problematic identifier. Oral history has played a major role in advancing lesbian identity politics, politics that many people now reject. As historians Day Wong and Nan Amillia Boyd have explained, poststructuralist critiques of identity show that the term lesbian homogenizes populations and emphasizes sameness over difference.⁴¹ Moreover, as scholar Judith Halberstam argues, many of the women that lesbian historians identify as "butch," might better be understood as transgender.⁴² The term "lesbian" has never worked well in my own historical work. Most of the women I interviewed came out in the 1950s and 1960s, and uniformly loathed the word "lesbian." To them it signifies mental illness, not the happy pursuit of same-sex desire. They called themselves "gay." I have always been uneasy about using "lesbian" to describe them, but since contemporary audiences generally assume the word "gay" refers to a male subject, and do not equate "lesbian" with mental disease, I have made it my practice to use "lesbian" in titles of papers and articles, and provide explanations in the text. At A LOT we hope to collect testimonies from women who experienced same-sex desire, regardless of what, if any, word they used to identify themselves. People can avoid labels, but alas, archival collections cannot. Since at this historical moment at least, the word "lesbian" has a clear meaning that researchers and an interested general audience will understand, it seems the most suitable name to use.

This collection, however, is not just about the narrators. It is also about the researchers and their projects. A LOT not only houses lesbian oral history, it will also be an archive of the late-twentieth-century movement to reclaim lesbian history itself. Thus, by ascribing the name "lesbian" to this collection, we do not mean to close off the possibility of rethinking the lesbian subject.

41 Day Wong, "Beyond Identity Politics," pp. 29–48; Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Who is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 17, no. 2 (May 2008), pp. 177–89.

42 Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, 1998).

My intention is to capture the rich body of material produced by those research projects that set out to record and examine what was called “lesbian existence” or “experience.”⁴³ Consequently, A LOT is also an archive of the emergence of lesbian history as tool for social change, and oral history as a method and practice. How this archival material will be taken up by current and future scholars I cannot predict, but there is no doubt in my mind that it needs to be preserved.

Recommendations in Oral History Collection, Preservation, and Use

Early lesbian and gay historians argued that we are all members of communities, and only through the help of communities do we accomplish great things. In Canada, oral history is currently undergoing a period of revival. The Canadian Oral History Association (COHA) is in the process of rebuilding itself into a professional organization for the promotion of oral history, and there are at least two Canada Research Chairs, Mary Ellen Kelm and Steven High, whose area of expertise is oral history. Steven High has built an extraordinary oral history laboratory and training program at Concordia University, and five oral historians at Simon Fraser University are poised to launch their own oral history training program in the 2009–2010 academic year. This is all good news for the future of oral history in Canada.

There are some concrete steps that must be taken, however, to ensure the future of the queer (and not-so-queer) past. Based on my research findings, I offer the following recommendations.

1. There is need for more training for community and scholarly oral history in Canada. Though they occupy privileged positions, academics are increasingly consumed with teaching, writing, and administrative duties. It would be a major step forward if academics provided training for their students and for local communities by offering courses in oral history in their departments, through continuing education, or by volunteering their time and expertise in the wider community.
2. Researchers need to make themselves aware of consent issues beyond research ethics boards at their own institutions, and to consult with archives and publishers when composing consent forms to ensure that they will be of value to future scholars, and to researchers themselves should they decide to publish their results.
3. COHA should act as a clearinghouse for providing up-to-date information concerning legal issues of consent as they are defined, and as they evolve, in universities, archives, and the publishing industry.

43 Roscoe, “History’s Future,” p. 177.

4. Archives should make scholars, artists, activists, and other researchers aware of the need to preserve their research material once their projects are completed, and should aid them in making plans for their preservation.
5. Greater availability of federal and provincial funding for the digitization of research material must be provided to ensure that existing analogue tapes do not deteriorate to the point that the testimony recorded on them can no longer be heard. Moreover, once digitized, these recordings can be made more accessible to other researchers, and the public, by being made available on-line.
6. When applying for grants, researchers should include requests for funds to aid in the preparation of research material for archival donation where possible.
7. Community research groups should be encouraged to apply for funding to enable them to consider preservation of their material.
8. COHA should consider actively courting the lesbian, gay, and queer communities to collaborate in developing oral history projects.
9. The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives should be encouraged to play a more active role in collecting and preserving lesbian material, and promoting and preserving lesbian, gay, and queer oral history.

Canada's lesbian past is richer than most of us can imagine. It has been the subject of outstanding scholarly books and wildly popular films, and still we have only skimmed its surface. Lesbian history challenges assumptions about what "counts" as proper history, and complicates what we think we know about the past. It has been a source of fascination for those who would otherwise take no interest in Canada's past at all. More profoundly, as Will Roscoe and Joan Nestle proclaimed, history saves lives by validating lesbian, gay, and queer peoples' right to live a full and rich life free from oppression and censure. The oral history collections I have described took tremendous effort to build. They are an essential part of our heritage, and must be preserved. Governments, granting agencies, and universities need to provide the necessary funding; archives need to play a more activist role in promoting and preserving the collection of this material; researchers must plan for the future; and teachers must show them how to do it. Only in this way will the history of our marginal communities not be marginalized once again.

Appendix 1: Bibliography of Canadian Research Projects Based on Oral Histories with Substantial Lesbian Content

Theses

- Anderson, Carolyn Ann, "The Voices of Older Lesbian Women: An Oral History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Calgary, 2001).
- Cosco, Vanessa, "'Obviously Then I'm Not Homosexual': Lesbian Identities, Discretion and Communities in Vancouver, 1945–1969" (Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1997).
- McDiarmid, Marney, "From Mouth to Mouth: An Oral History of Lesbians and Gays in Kingston from World War II to 1980" (Masters's thesis, Queen's University, 1999).
- Pitre, Corina, "Overlapping Selves: The Intersection of Lesbian Identity and Professional Identity Among Public Elementary Teachers Working in Northern Ontario" (Master's thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2005).
- Schneider, Claire, "Lesbian Aging: An Exploratory Study" (Master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 1998).
- Torrie, Rachel, "Making Space for Rural Lesbians: Homosexuality and Rurality in British Columbia, 1950–1970s" (Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2007).
- Walters, Lisa Maude, "'No Experience Required': Coming Out and Identity Formation of Middle Age Lesbians in the Atlantic Provinces" (Master's thesis, Mount Saint Vincent University, 1999).

Books and Articles

- Chamberland, Line, "Classe sociale et insertion dans la sous-culture lesbienne," in *Women Change the Academy/Les femmes changeant l'academie: The Proceedings of the 1990 CWSA Conference*, eds. S. Kirby, D. Daniels, K. McKenna, and M. Pujol (Winnipeg, 1991), pp. 75–87.
- Chamberland, Line, "Remembering Lesbian Bars: Montreal, 1955–1975," *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1993), pp. 231–69; reprinted in Wendy Mitchinson, Paula Bourne, Alison Prentice, Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Beth Light and Naomi Black, eds., *Canadian Women. A Reader* (Toronto, 1996), pp. 352–79; reprinted in R. Mendès-Leite and P.-O. de Busscher, eds., *Gay Studies from the French Cultures: Voices from France, Belgium, Brazil, Canada and The Netherlands* (New York, 1993), pp. 231–69.
- Chamberland, Line, *Mémoires lesbiennes: Le lesbianisme à Montréal entre 1950 et 1972* (Montréal, 1996).
- Chamberland, Line, "La conquête d'un espace public: les bars fréquentés par les lesbiennes," in *Sortir de l'ombre*, eds. I. Demczuk and F. Remiggi (Montréal, 1998), pp. 129–64.

- Chenier, Elise, "Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: Living 'the Gay Life' in Toronto, 1955–1965," *Left History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2004), pp. 85–118; reprinted in Veronica Strong-Boag, Mona Gleason, and Adele Perry, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, 5th ed. (Don Mills, Ontario, 2006).
- Duder, Cameron, *Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in English Canada, 1900–1965* (Vancouver, forthcoming).
- Duder, Karen, "That Repulsive Abnormal Creature I heard About in That Book: Lesbians and Families in Ontario, 1920–65," in *Ontario After Confederation: A Reader*, eds. E. Montigny and L. Chambers (Toronto, 2000), pp. 260–82.
- Duder, Karen, "Public Acts and Private Languages: Bisexuality and the Multiple Discourses of Constance Grey Swartz," *BC Studies* 136 (2002), pp. 3–24.
- Khayatt, Madiha Didi, *Lesbian Teachers: An Invisible Presence* (Albany, 1992).
- Kinsman, Gary and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Sexuality as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver, forthcoming).
- Korinek, Valerie, *Prairie Fairies*, forthcoming.
- Lesbians Making History Collective, "People Think This Didn't Happen in Canada," *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly* 28 (1989), pp. 81–86.
- Riordan, Michael, *The First Stone: Homosexuality & the United Church of Canada* (Toronto, 1990).
- Riordan, Michael, *Out Our Way: Gay & Lesbian Life in the Country* (Toronto, 1996).
- Riordan, Michael, *Eating Fire: Family Life, on the Queer Side* (Toronto, 2001).
- Ross, Becki, *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto, 1995).
- Warner, Tom, *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada* (Toronto, 2002).

Films

- Colbert, Laurie, and Dominique Cardona, *Thank God I'm a Lesbian* (Toronto, 1992).
- Fernie, Lynne, and Aerlyn Weissman, dirs., *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Story of Lesbian Lives* (Montreal, 1992).
- Fernie, Lynne, and Aerlyn Weissman, dirs., *Jane Rule Fiction and Other Truths: A Film About Jane Rule* (Montreal, 1994).
- Nichol, Nancy, *Stand Together* (Toronto, 2002).
- Nichol, Nancy, *Politics of the Heart* (Toronto, 2005).
- Nichol, Nancy, *Pride and Resistance* (Toronto, 2007).
- Nichol, Nancy, *Proud Lives: Chris Bearchell* (Toronto, 2007).

Appendix 2: Summary of Responses to Questionnaire Regarding Present Location of Oral Testimony Tapes

Name of Researcher(s)	Number of Interviews	Current Location of Interviews and Format	Project Name
Carolyn Anderson	15	Housed with researcher; analogue	Doctoral dissertation, University of Calgary, 2001, "The Voices of Older Lesbian Women: An Oral History"
Elise Chenier	6	Housed with researcher; analogue	Originally Master's research project, currently being used for manuscript <i>Inside the Continental</i>
Line Chamberland	18	Housed with researcher; analogue	Doctoral dissertation, University of Montreal, 1996, published as <i>Mémoires lesbiennes. Le lesbianisme à Montréal entre 1950 et 1972</i> , Montréal, Éditions du Remue-ménage, 1996
Vanessa Cosco	10	Housed with researcher; analogue	Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1997, "Obviously Then I'm Not Homosexual": Lesbian Identities, Discretion and Communities in Vancouver, 1945–1969"
Cameron Duder	26	Donated to, and digitized by, the University of Victoria Archives	Doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria, 2001, forthcoming as <i>Awfully Devoted Women</i> (UBC Press, 2010)
Barb Freeman	"A few interviews with lesbians"	Intends to donate to the Canadian Women's Movement Archive; has no definite plan in place; digital and analogue	Manuscript project: women's issues and journalism

Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile	Approximately 50, primarily men, some women	Housed with researcher; analogue; some lost, plan to donate to CLGA	Manuscript: <i>The Canadian War on Queers: National Sexuality as Sexual Regulation</i> (UBC Press, 2010)
Valerie Korinek	Approximately 40 with men and women	Intends to donate to the Saskatchewan Archives Board Office in Saskatoon upon completion of the project; analogue	Manuscript: <i>Prairie Fairies</i>
Lesbians Making History Collective	11	Housed with collective member; analogue	Community history project
Kristina Llewellyn	1	Housed with researcher; analogue	Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2006: "In the Name of Democracy: The Work of Women Teachers in Toronto and Vancouver, 1945–1960"
Michael Riordan	Approximately 700 with women and men	Interviews for United Church project with the United Church Archives; all others housed with researcher; analogue	Three books, see Appendix 1
Claire Schneider	6	Destroyed in accordance with her University's research ethics policy for all oral history projects	Master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 1998: "Lesbian Aging: An Exploratory Study"
Rachel Torrie	9	Housed with researcher; digital	Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2007: "Making Space for Rural Lesbians: Homosexuality and Rurality in British Columbia, 1950–1970s"