

# COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

## RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Institutional archives have historically excluded and marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities and GLBT/queer communities, some going so far as to deem them “problem communities” (Grabowski, 1985, p. 310) if they refused to give records to the institutional archives once the archives decided to focus on collecting records of these communities.

In response to historic marginalization, community groups created their own archives to collect and preserve their records without the intervention of institutional archivists in institutional archives (Barriault, 2009; Flinn & Stevens, 2009; Fullwood, 2009). These groups reacted against their stories and histories being left out of the archives by creating alternative narratives that were controlled by the community and not outsiders.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

How have community archives evolved in California from the 1950s to present day?

## LITERATURE & GAPS

The literature base for this study shows that while there is growing realization of the existence of community archives, the social construction of archival representation, and the importance of collective memory, there is still a significant gap in the study of community archives histories. This study will be the first focused on the community archives from a historical and archival perspective with the conscious goal of contributing to community archives historiography and open the discussion on what the archival profession may learn from the community archivists and community archives.

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

There are two preliminary findings with possible implications for archival practice that can be discussed in brief from the results of the pilot study; more substantive discussion will be possible at the completion of this research project. The two preliminary implications for the archival profession are the perception of institutional archives by community archives and the understanding of the importance of ownership over community archives.

The loyalty, sense of place and ownership, and outreach via exhibits and public programming make the GLBT Historical Society much different than most institutional archives. The Historical Society is more integrated and integral to the community and it engenders loyalty from the volunteers and archivists who work there. The archival profession could learn much from the community archives about ways for truly connecting with their community and users.

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