



Who Gets to Tell History?

Lisa Vecoli

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Who Gets to Tell History?

LISA VECOLI

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“My journals are just for me.”

“Who would care about my old photos?”

“I should just throw this stuff away.”

It has often been said that history belongs to the victor. Or to those who write it down. I would add that ***history belongs to those that archive it.***

As historians and scholars write history, they will turn to the archives for material. They will seek lesbian voices and experiences. But if they cannot find them, they will turn to the mainstream press for information. And if they do that, they will get it wrong. Even the gay press, in the days before gay *and lesbian*, often missed the lesbian part of the story. And all of these sources lack the voices of lesbians of color, disabled lesbians, rural lesbians, working class lesbians, and many other diverse lesbian realities.

You may think no one would want your old photo album, but to a young student researching the lesbian community, your images would be a wonderful resource. Perhaps you don't know what to do with the folder of meeting minutes from the local lesbian task force or committee but those would be a gold mine of information to someone studying the area. Material that tells the story of what it was like to live as a lesbian, or not being able to, in the 1970s and before is especially lacking. Whether you “came out” before Stonewall in '69 or after you turned 69, your story adds to the diverse record of joy, fear, loss, hope, and love that make up the lesbian experience.

Please think about what is in your basement, your attic, or your closet. Do you have letters, journals, photo albums, or lesbian publications? These are items that help tell the story of what it was like to live as a lesbian in the twentieth century. And there are archives that would be happy to help preserve this experience and tell the story.

Address correspondence to Lisa Vecoli, Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, 111 Elmer L. Andersen Library, Minneapolis, MN 55455. E-mail: lvecoli@umn.edu

Your help in telling the real story of the lesbian experience will make a permanent difference in what the generations to come understand about our lives. Here are a few archives you may want to contact:

Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies

Minnesota (612) 624-7526
www.lib.umn.edu/scr/bm/tretter

June Mazer Lesbian Archives

California (310) 659-2478
www.mazerlesbianarchives.org

Lesbian Herstory Archive

New York (718) 768-3953
www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org

Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project

Texas
www.olohp.org

CONTRIBUTOR

Lisa Vecoli is the Curator of the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies at the University of Minnesota. Her goals are to preserve GLBT history, diversify the voices in the archive, and add to her personal collection of Lesbian Pulp novels.