Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Collection

Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine

University of Southern Maine Libraries Special Collections

Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people have contributed to Maine's history long before the "birth of the gay rights movement" in the late 1960s. In the nineteenth century, for example, people who might today be identified as lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender—"lgbt" to use a common abbreviation—worked in Maine's factories, farms, forest and maritime industries. Some of the twentieth century's most notable artists and writers were lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people who lived and worked in Maine. Since the 1960s and 1970s, and especially with the beginning of statewide human rights campaigns in the 1980s, organizations serving the political, cultural, and social concerns of LGBT people have proliferated. Diverse LGBT communities have become major elements in Maine's cultural and political life. No longer can the histories of individual lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people, and their communities, be ignored, misrepresented, or silenced.

The University of Southern Maine Libraries has established and is developing a broad-based collection including manuscripts, printed works, visual material, and artifacts representing the historical and cultural record of the experience of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people in Maine, and its connections with the experience of LGBT people regionally and nationally. It is especially interested in the materials of groups and organizations involved in political, social, and cultural issues, as well as the materials of individuals who have played significant roles in the political, social, and cultural lives of LGBT people and their communities in Maine.

In 1997, as an outgrowth of its commitment to diversity, the University of Southern Maine established the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine. The Center is a unit of the University Libraries Special Collections: one of the Center's goals is to collect and preserve primary and secondary historical materials on the experience of diverse groups in Maine. The Gay and Lesbian Archives became one of the three major collections of the new Center. The Sampson Center will sponsor educational programs and exhibitions within and beyond the University of Southern Maine about Maine's LGBT communities and history; generate scholarship; and work with other institutions in reaching the above goals.

The mission of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Collection is to provide a repository for the collection and preservation of a variety of records documenting Maine's lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people; to emphasize the importance of such material; arrange and describe this material making it available to scholars, teachers, students of all ages, and the general public.

The meetings which led to the creation of what was first named the Gay and Lesbian Archives took place in the spring of 1997, under the leadership of Mark Lapoint, then provost of the University of Southern Maine. Individuals from the University and the general community worked closely together on the early planning and development, with faculty, staff, and students taking major responsibilities. Among the first donations, in 1998, were the records of ACT UP/Maine and ACT UP/Portland, and the papers of William D. Barry and Frances W. Peabody. Other collections soon followed.

A scholar in residence was appointed in 2001 to interpret the collection and encourage research based on its holdings. In 2003, the Gay and Lesbian Archives was renamed the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Collection of Maine, more accurately reflecting its breadth and focus.
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From left to right:


Frannie Peabody, Southern Maine Pride Celebration, 1996

Annette Dragon Papers.
The Collection contains a variety of print, manuscript, and three-dimensional materials. The majority of the Collection is paper-based, including manuscripts, books, magazines, posters, and photographs; there are also popular culture materials, including political buttons and tee shirts, for example. Much of the Collection is geographically linked to Maine, but there are items that are regional and national in scope.

Inquiries regarding donations to the Collection can be made by contacting the Head of Special Collections Susie R. Bock, 314 Forest Ave., PO Box 9301, Portland, Maine, 04104-9301. 207-780-4269, bocks@usm.maine.edu.

Using the Collection
The Collection is housed and administered by Special Collections in the Albert Brenner Glickman Family Library, at the University of Southern Maine’s Portland campus. For directions to the University and campus maps, please check the Web site: www.usm.maine.edu/generalinfo.html

The Collection is open to the public and may be used by registering with a photo ID, such as a University ID or driver’s license.

For hours, please contact Special Collections at (207) 780-4275 or consult the Web site: http://library.usm.maine.edu/speccoll/index.html

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