

Wanderground: Archiving Lesbian Legacies, Words, Creativity in Rhode Island

Research Summary – Installment #7

Blog Post – March 18, 2022

Collaborations & Information Sharing

Working together with other LGBTQ collections – in RI and beyond...

Wanderground (as a physical space) has been brewing in my imagination for nearly 10 years – and even longer if I include many iterations over decades. I have finally found time and mindful space to think strategically and work diligently to make Wanderground a reality.

In my experience, successful Lesbian ventures of any sort rely on vision and passion, creativity and courage, hard work, determination, flexibility, – and collaborations/cooperation. While pursuing this research project over the past year, several types of potential collaborations have emerged. For the success of Wanderground, it’s essential to understand how we can work with those collaborations as well as find our unique niche among them. In this installment, I will explore some possibilities for working alongside other local and national ventures.

Coincidentally, the receipt of this grant and my efforts for determining the viability of a Lesbian archive located in Rhode Island dovetailed with the emergence of the [RI LGBTQ Community Archive](#) hosted by the Providence Public Library (PPL). As I started asking about Lesbian interest in Wanderground, I received several comments such as... “just as long as it doesn’t compete with PPL.” In fact, I had already been in contact with Kate Wells and Jordin Goffin at the collection. We actually do work in support of each other and their collection has been useful as I’ve moved forward with gathering information about Lesbian community publications and efforts in Rhode Island. My research has informed them as well. Over time, I expect these bonds will strengthen.



For the purposes of Wanderground research, the PPL collection currently includes:

- Options – all past and current issues
- The Kim Deacon Collection – Lesbian bar owner of Kings and Queens in Woonsocket (photo albums and other papers)
- Queering Oral histories gathered by Virginia Thomas

Our differences (discovering the Wanderground niche):

PPL	Wanderground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses <i>only</i> on <u>Rhode Island</u> • “Collecting, preserving & providing access to publications, archival materials, oral histories & ephemera that document <u>Rhode Island LGBTQ+ history</u>” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on Lesbians • Includes a broader collection of national and international items with a focus on New England, including Rhode Island

- Items not out for view – held in stacks and individuals must ask to see specific items

- Items will eventually be accessible for open, visible, casual browsing

The John Hay Library at Brown University includes many special collections, including LGBTQ Collections. Their selection offers five main areas relevant to LGBTQ: Global Lavender, Pembroke Collection, Japanese Queer Magazines, Gay Pulp (mostly men), and Intersex Studies. The curators at the Hay (with special thanks to Heather Cole) are very much interested in collaboration with Wanderground in some way. For the purposes of Wanderground research, the Hay collection currently includes the papers of several Lesbians. I specifically looked at:



- Jodi Glass Collection, 1978-2002
- Anne Fausto-Sterling papers, 1961-2020
- Malana Krongelb Zine Collection, 1974-2018

Our differences (discovering the Wanderground niche):

Hay Library	Wanderground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBTQ from around the world with a desire to obtain more Lesbian materials • Focused for researchers / includes many academic materials • While open to a general community, it can be difficult for those not connected to Brown or academic institutions to gain access to the collection • Items not out for view – held in stacks and individuals must ask to see specific items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on Lesbians • Includes a broader collection of popular materials (fiction, creative writing, etc.) with some scholarly materials • Open to communities with for activities and space • Items will eventually be accessible for open, visible, casual browsing

In addition to these primary resources for Lesbian archive herstory in Rhode Island, there are other collections that contain materials worth investigating.

- **Sarah Doyle Center Library @ Brown Univ.** They are not generally open to the public and their extensive Women's Studies library is not catalogued in the Brown Library.
<https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/sarah-doyle-center/library-sarah-doyle>
- **Pembroke Center Archives @ Brown Univ.**
http://www.pembrokecenter.org/farnham_archives/collections.php
- **Rhode Island State Archives**
<https://www.sos.ri.gov/divisions/state-archives>

- **Univ. of Rhode Island** reportedly has an archive of LGBTQ legislative work in RI as well as five issues of Morning Glory from the 1970s

And, of course, as I mentioned in the last blog, there exists a number of community-based Lesbian archives in the U.S. and around the world. Additionally, there are some LGBTQ community archives. Many universities also maintain specialty feminist/women's archives that include Lesbian resources. Unfortunately, many of the university-based collections are focused towards academic researchers and not easily accessible to Lesbian communities or those casually interested in seeing our herstories. These resources exist in many places and one can only find them through digging and hearsay, as in the statement, "Have you heard about (*xxx fill in the blank*) collection located in (*xxx fill in the blank*) location?"

As I was digging into the websites of several collections, it occurred to me that it would be wonderful to have something that does not currently exist – namely, a cohesive database on "where to find the Lesbians." Our collected papers and memorabilia are scattered all around and difficult to locate. Where do we find the papers of well-known Lesbians such as Alix Dobkin, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Kay Gardener, Julia Penelope, Elana Dykewomon, Barbara Smith, Kitty Tsui, and so on and on. Where are the collections of materials from our Lesbian organizations, such as Naiad Press, the Ladder, Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant, RIWA, Olivia Records, New England Women's Music Festival and other festivals, and so on and on. And how do we learn about those everyday Lesbians such as you and me who also have much to offer to our collective Lesbian her-stories? As you might suspect, another project on my "to-do" list is to look into the possibility of creating such a comprehensive resource.

Ah, the possibilities....

Next Week

Be sure to come back next week for **Installment #8: Wanderground – Bigger Visions for Space & Collections.**