



*All the documents we amass,  
all the copies of early gay journals we find,  
and all the t-shirts and buttons we save  
are giving us the opportunity to rethink, question, and analyze  
the journey of our own consciousness.*

- Joan Nestle, co-founder, Lesbian Herstory Archives

## THE JOHN J. WILCOX JR. GLBT ARCHIVES OF PHILADELPHIA

A program of the  
William Way Community Center

# Philadelphia; queer was here.



## A HISTORY OF THE ARCHIVES

The Center's Library & Archives were originally a single project, founded in 1976 at 326 Kater St., the first home of the Gay Community Center in Philadelphia. We're proud to build on the strong foundation laid by Rusel Silkey, the Library's coordinator through the 70s, whose large collection of

LGBT material formed the basis of the present archives.

In December 1981, the Community Center moved to 222 S Camac St. When that location closed in 1984, it spent four years without a physical home, operating as "Penguin Place; the Community

Center without Walls.

In 1989 the Center re-opened at 211 S Quince St., across from the Bike Stop, and a year later moved to 201 S Camac St. There, the library had a large home on the ground floor, and for the first time, a separate room for the Archives, with enough space to begin inventorying the archival materials. This was fortunate, as the Library soon acquired the complete holdings of Philly's old Gay/Lesbian Archives, when its founder, Tommi Avicolti-Mecca moved to California.

Finally, in 1997, the Center bought a building; the present William Way Center at 1315 Spruce. A few years ago the Archives and Library became separate entities. The GLBT Archives now occupies a space on the third floor of the William Way Center, where volunteers are working at preserving and cataloging the vast amount of materials that document the amazingly rich and complex story of GLBT life across the U.S. and right here in the Delaware Valley.

[archives@waygay.org](mailto:archives@waygay.org)

215 - 732 0770

**Contact us.** The Archives are open to visitors and researchers every wednesday evening 6 to 9, or other times by appointment. (Call or email first, using the information at the left.)

# Our COLLECTIONS

The Archives contain about 30 different **Special Collections**, donated by local individuals or organizations. The largest Special Collection, for instance, documents the 30 year history of our Gay Community Center, through board minutes, personal correspondence, brochures, posters, newsletters and photos. Our job is not only to preserve the materials, but to arrange and describe them, so that anyone using them will know who created them, why they were created and what they document. Each collection then becomes a useful tool and a unique addition to our knowledge

and understanding of GLBT life in the Philadelphia area.

On our shelves we also have thousands of **periodicals**; magazines, newspapers and journals from the 1950s through the present. The **audio-visual** collection consists of hundreds tapes, CD's and DVD's of local radio talk shows, TV series, erotica and interviews. In our large **book** collection you'll find everything from 50 years of GLBT travel guides, to rare books documenting our history and culture to the fascinating pulp novels of the 50s, 60s and 70s.

Finally we have a huge collection of t-shirts,

hats, newspaper clippings, awards, scrapbooks, pins, catalogs, organizational files, letters, pamphlets, playbills, matchbooks, posters and photographs. These **ephemera**, (items created for one particular use), give amazing detail to the history of our lives.

Through the support of the William Way Center and the efforts of dozens of volunteers we work to preserve this legacy and to make it available through catalogs to researchers and the general public.

Contact us about visiting the Archives or about having an archivist speak to your group or organization. Our history belongs to us all.



**How can you help?** We always welcome material donations to fill out our collections, as well as any personal memorabilia. And of course you can support the GLBT Archives by your tax-deductible donation to the William Way Center.



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