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Coming Out in the Archives: the Hall-Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics.

The archive and journal collections of the Hall-Carpenter Archives (HCA) have been housed at the LSE since 1988. Founded in 1982 to document the development of gay activism in the UK since the publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1958 the archive is now a rich resource of archives, ephemera and printed materials documenting the development of gay activism and community in the United Kingdom since the 1950s. Archivist Sue Donnelly explains the background.

The origins of the Hall-Carpenter Archive (HCA) are in the campaigning work of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) during the 1970s and early 1980s. During the 1960s and 1970s there had been a developing interest in the study of the lesbian and gay movement and the British Sociology Association's Sex and Gender Group and Gay Research Group had called for the establishment of a national gay archive in the mid 1970s. The BSA Groups stressed that the impetus for the formation of a gay archive should be driven by the gay community, but suggested that a university library might be an appropriate location for housing the archive.

In fact in its earliest years HCA was an entirely community based and focussed organisation, reliant on volunteers and housed within the community. In 1980 CHE established the Gay Monitoring and Archive Project as part of its Discrimination Commission set up in 1978 under the chairmanship of Barry Jackson, to monitor cases of discrimination against homosexuals in all areas of life. In order to gather evidence of discrimination and police arrests a media monitoring services was established, including a

subscription to a press cuttings service. In addition many CHE members began send press cuttings and related materials on discrimination. Ultimately CHE found itself inheriting and storing the records of other gay organisations.

In 1982 the Gay Monitoring and Archive Project split from CHE and one of its founders, Julian Meldrum transferred the contents of the archive into his flat. At the same time a limited company was formed, the Hall-Carpenter Memorial Archives and the organisation gained charitable status in 1983. Soon after this HCA received its first major donation, the papers of the Albany Trust/Homosexual Law Reform Society, two organisations which played a key role between 1958 and 1967 in the campaign for the decriminalization of male homosexuality. The self professed aim of the archive was to maintain a 'storehouse of our past'. Its name was intended to celebrate two early twentieth century gay pioneers, Radclyffe Hall and Edward Carpenter. Radclyffe Hall (1880-1943) was a writer whose novel *The Well of Loneliness* was banned in Britain and the subject of a famous court case in 1928. Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), was a campaigner for homosexual equality and a socialist writer, in 1894-5 Carpenter wrote four pamphlets on sexuality and freedom including *Homogenic Love and Its Place in a Free Society* later re-published as *Love's Coming of Age* in 1896. *The Intermediate Sex* was published in 1908 and had a wide readership. Sadly the Hall-Carpenter Archives have no original material from either writer.

The first accommodation for the archive was in 1984 at Mount Pleasant in Camden and in 1985 it moved to the London Lesbian and Gay Centre in Cowcross Street, Farringdon, which remained its home until 1989. Funding, foreseen as a particular problem for a gay archive by the British Sociological Association, came from a variety of sources. In 1982

grants were received from the Manpower Services Commission, NCCL and Lyndhurst Settlement. In 1984 the Greater London Council provided the largest grant of £32,000. The grant allowed HCA to employ some staff part time to develop a number of projects. The Media Monitoring service employed two people to work on several publishing projects including- *The Gay News Index* (1982); '*Declaring an Interest*' - a projected catalogue of gay images on television in Britain, (1982-83); and *AIDS. through the Media* (1984). At the same time an oral history project, led by Margot Farnham co-ordinating a team of 10 volunteers, began to gather oral histories from the community. The results were published in two books *Inventing Ourselves: Lesbian Life Stories* and *Walking After Midnight: Gay Men's Life Stories* both published by Routledge. Cowcross Street was the scene of much activity with individuals and teams of volunteers working on cataloguing and indexing the archives, journals and press cuttings and the records of gay groups being added to the collections.

However HCA was unable to find a permanent source of regular funding and the withdrawal of GLC funding in 1986 was a major block to continuing work on the collection. The archive employed a fundraiser in 1987-1988 to investigate possible sources of funding but when none were forthcoming and the archive was faced with the imminent closure of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre another solution had to be found. The Management Committee began to look for alternative ways to secure the future of the archive and the collections were split into three: archives and magazines, press cuttings and oral histories. The archives and collections of ephemeral material along with the runs of gay journals and magazines were transferred to the Archives Division of the London School of Economics, and the oral history recordings and transcripts were added to the collections of the

National Sound Archive (now the British Library Sound Archive). Sadly it took some time to find a home for the large collection of press cuttings but they were eventually housed at the Cat Hill Campus of Middlesex University and the Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive was formed to support this resource.¹

On the arrival of the archives and journals in the Archives at LSE the first priority was to produce a catalogue using the Archives Division database. Cataloguing is the foundation of all our work on archive collections as without it users are unable to accurately identify items which could be of interest to their research and can spend a lot of wasted time going through irrelevant materials. This was a major undertaking - the current HCA finding aid contains almost 7,000 records and there are more to follow. The first stage of cataloguing was completed by the mid-1990s when most of the major archive collections and journals were entered on the database and printed catalogues were produced for use by researchers in the Archive Reading Room. A further step forward was taken in 2005 with the launch of the Archives Division's online Archives Catalogue (archives.lse.ac.uk), providing access to the HCA catalogue 24/7. Further catalogues were published on line as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded project, *1967 and All That*, and were also added to the A2A system hosted by the National Archives containing the finding aids from 418 archive repositories.

Any description of the archive risks missing out on many interesting and significant items but the major holdings include:

- Albany Trust (including the Homosexual Law Reform Society), 1958-1991

- Campaign for Homosexual Equality, 1964-1996
- Gay Liberation Front, 1970-1979
- Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, 1969-1998
- Peter Tatchell (1952-), gay rights campaigner
- Simon Watney, art historian and gay rights campaigner
- Gay News, 1972-1985
- Capital Gay, 1981-1995.

So what are the highlights of the collection? The papers of the Albany Trust and the Homosexual Law Reform Society record the attempts to decriminalize male homosexuality throughout the 1960s, following the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report, including correspondence with the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins and with Lord Arran and MP, Leo Abse, who steered bills through the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The arrival of GLF in 1970 marked a new phase in gay activism, with a radical commitment to promoting gay liberation and a vivid use of street theatre. GLF rejected the traditional organizational structures of committees, minutes and membership lists but has left a trail of leaflets, photographs and manifestos recording demonstrations and protests including the infiltration of the Nationwide Festival of Light in 1972. Complete runs of Gay News and Capital Gay follow the story of Mary Whitehouse's prosecution of Gay News for printing James Kirkup's poem *The Love that Dares to Speak Its Name* and the ensuing court case, withdrawal of Gay News from W.H.Smith's and the picketing of the shops. Relations between the churches and the gay community are traced in the archives of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. In recent years the archive has collected material relating to

AIDS and the gay community, debates and demonstrations about Clause 28 of the Local Government Act and the campaigns of Peter Tatchell and Outrage! against Robert Mugabe and homophobia in the music industry. The series of ephemera documents many aspects of the LGBT community from arts and film festivals, to clubs and through to local and national campaigns. The archive also has material from a wide range of smaller national and regional organizations eg. GEMMA, a national self-help group for disabled and non-disabled lesbian and bi-sexual women, the Gay Humanist group and the Metropolitan Community Church. Both the ephemera and the magazines include material from outside the UK including Europe, North America and Australia.

The LSE Archives have continued to develop the archive collections in recent years and new acquisitions have included the papers of KENRIC, the long running lesbian social network, initially founded in 1965, the Pink Singers, the gay community choir, campaigning materials from Outrage!, the Lesbian Information Service and material relating to gay communities in South London. Although the main focus of the archive is on the gay community a small amount of material relates to bi and transsexuality along with transvestism.

The archive is widely used by researchers throughout the UK and from overseas and is one of the Archives Division's most popular collections. Recent research projects making use of the archive have focused on the development of homosexual law reform, AIDS and safe sex campaigning, a comparative study of the gay communities in the UK and Brazil and an investigation into early manifestations of the gay economy. Recent years have also seen a growing general interest in LGBT history. The HLF funded *1967 and All That*

Project², a collaboration with the Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive, has produced a successful touring exhibition visiting libraries and other venues throughout London and had a capacity audience for an afternoon event of films, lectures and first hand accounts of LGBT life in the 50s, 60s and 70s. Developing an interested and committed audience for the archives is a high priority and events such as Lesbian and Gay History Month and the highly successful annual LGBT history day at London Metropolitan Archives indicate a growing interest and awareness of both the history and the resources.

This growth in interest has been reflected in a growing number of projects funded to expand the range of resources available and to engage the interest of wider audiences. In 2007 HLF alongside the *1967 and All That* project, funded a joint project between the Manchester based Queer Up North arts festival and Manchester Archives and Local Studies Centre. The project included the cataloguing and repackaging of the archive, along with its transfer to Manchester Archives and Local Studies Centre. The Museum in Docklands recently presented *Outside Edge: a journey through black British lesbian and gay history* an exhibition curated by Ajamu, co-founder of the rukus! Federation, which supports the work of black LGBT artists and other cultural producers in the UK and abroad. Rukus! Federation is also developing an archive of material relating to the black LGBT community in the UK.

The Hall-Carpenter Archives have now passed their 25th anniversary and keeping the collections alive during that time has been challenging but the result is a growing and developing archive available to researchers from across the globe.

You can find out more about the Hall-Carpenter Archives by visiting the LSE Archives website at www.lse.ac.uk/library/archive/.

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¹ See www.lagna.org.uk.

² For further information about *1967 and All That* see <http://hallcarpenter.tripod.com/lagna/theproject.htm>.