



# NEWSLETTER

Lesbian and Australian Gay Archives Inc  
PO Box 124, Parkville, Vic 3052  
Newsletter No 7, October 1991  
ISSN 1037-3756

**T**he volume of new material received at the Archives over the last few years far exceeds anything in the past. While we are delighted that the depth and breadth of the collection is expanding so rapidly, the sheer quantity of new material coming in is causing us to confront a problem which has existed for some time, that is the small number of people actually working on the collection and our apparent inability to attract and hold on to new volunteers.

Our volunteers are the life-blood of the Archives. The fact is we have rarely had more than six or seven regulars at any one time in the past, and have been down to four regulars now for about three years. The effect of this is that most of our time now is taken up just sorting and filling material to make it accessible, and assisting users of the Archives to find material they want. The main reason it has been so long since our last newsletter was published (April, 1987) is that we have found it too difficult to find the time to work on a newsletter and do all the other things. Other projects, such as improving and expanding our retrieval systems, deserve a high priority but are continually being put off because we do not have the personnel to undertake them.

Now it is important to keep all this in perspective. The Archives is in no danger of folding and despite our small number of volunteers, the collection is reasonably well-organised.

Since the time when the Archives went into temporary storage, the volume of donations and the utilisation of the collection by researchers, including several from Intersate, have greatly increased. Our efforts at telling the gay and lesbian communities that the Archives is back in business were clearly successful. Moreover, the task of incorporating all this new material into the collection has been completed.

However we have to face the fact that the fewer people there are actively involved in working on the collection, the less we can achieve. It's a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation really - the best way to attract more volunteers is to lift the profile of the Archives by doing things like writing articles promoting what we do, placing ads in lesbian and gay media, mounting displays etc ... But we need people who have the time to do these things.

The point has been reached now where we feel we must devote time to developing strategies to encourage new people to become actively involved

*In the Archives. If you have any suggestions as to how we might best achieve this aim, we would be glad to hear from you.*

## BEATS IN MELBOURNE: 1930s - 1950s

Graham Carbery has written an article on early Melbourne 'beats' for a book of essays on gay history and culture. The book is being edited by Garry Wotherspoon and Robert Aldrich, members of the Australian Gay History Group.

The article relies heavily on the experiences of gay men whose stories have been recorded on tape as part of the Archives' Oral History Project. The idea for the article arose out of a conversation on oral history between Graham and Garry when Garry visited the Archives late last year.

The subject of beats has not been written about much before, particularly from an historical perspective, so we believe this article represents an important contribution to the record of gay male history.

The book is due to go to the publisher in a couple of weeks and is expected to be published in early 1992.

## EXHIBITION ON GAY AND LESBIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

In November last year, the ALSO Foundation wrote to the Museum of Victoria asking if they would be interested in hosting an exhibition on 'The History and Lifestyle Development of Gay and Lesbian People in Australia'.

A favourable reply was received from the Museum in January and since then a number of public meetings have been inviting community involvement in the exhibition. A steering committee has been formed with responsibility for putting the exhibition together and raising the money necessary to fund the exhibition.

At a public meeting on 12 February 1991 attended by our president, Mark Riley, and secretary, Graham Carbery, the Archives was invited to nominate someone to be a member of the steering committee. This invitation was declined and resulted in some criticism of the Archives. Mark and Graham explained that the Archives was operating at present with a small number of volunteers who meet once a week. It was also pointed out that our volunteers do not have the time available to involve themselves in working on the Archives collection as well as contributing to the organising of the Museum exhibition.

The meeting was assured that the Archives supports the idea of the exhibition. We have offered to

make the resources of the Archives available to the exhibition organisers.

The steering committee lodged funding applications with Government departments some months ago, however we have not heard whether these have been successful.

## ENCYCLOPEDIA OF HOMOSEXUALITY

In late 1990 the Archives received a special present from one of its hardest working volunteers, Ken Atkins. Ken presented us with a copy of the two-volume *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, edited by Wayne R Dynes, which had just been published.

This handsome, but expensive, American publication is an invaluable addition to lesbian/gay literature. It contains more than 770 articles and attempts to cover the entire field of homosexuality. As one would expect, some areas are covered in more detail than others due to the availability of material.

There are two contributions by Australians Paul Knobel and Gary Simes. Gary Simes' article is on the origins of homosexual slang.

The editors have this to say about how the encyclopedia is constructed:

*"While the articles in this encyclopedia have not been forced into a rigid straitjacket of typology, the vast majority of them are either thematic, topical, or biographical. Thematic entries may be at a very general level (such as SOCIOLOGY) or more differentiated (such as LABELING; ROLE; SUB-CULTURE); they often cross-reference and present different intellectual perspectives. Topical entries deal with particular times and places, such as ROME; ANCIENT; SPAIN; and CHICAGO, or phenomena like BARS and ORAL SEX, where themes mix and cross; they tend to be more descriptive and less theoretical. Representative biographies emphasise the interface between the homosexual activity or orientation and the creative achievement of the subject. In this way the life history treats homosexuality not as something external and negative, but as an integral and meaningful part of the personality."*

The number of biographical entries could be multiplied several times. A complete roster of even historically notable gay men and lesbians is probably unattainable. The editor's concern, however, is to present figures from all walks of life. For reasons of space, the editors decided not to include biographies of living people.

## NEW ACQUISITIONS

Many groups and individuals have made significant donations of material to the Archives over the past couple of years.

Last year we received all the records of *The Galah* newspaper (Adelaide/Melbourne) which ceased publication in June 1990. More recently, we received the records of the Cruisers Motorcycle Club Inc, which folded in July 1991. As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, we have received the library collection from the now defunct Gayline Support Services Inc. The International Lesbian and Gay Archives in Los Angeles, through its curator, Jim Kepner, donated 95 issues of a famous early US homophile publication, *ONE Magazine* which was published monthly in Los Angeles from 1952 to 1967.

*OutRage* magazine continues to be a valuable source of material to us. Most of our newspaper clippings and many of our overseas periodicals are received from *OutRage*. The Victorian AIDS Council Resource Centre now deposits its non-current material with us.

Alison Thorne deposited all her records from her Equal Opportunity Board action against the Victorian Ministry of Education.

Phil Carswell donated his personal files relating to his early years as a gay activist.

Not long before his death, David Tosh sent us the complete transcript of his 1978 unfair dismissal action against the Bathurst Hospital which was heard before a NSW Conciliation Commissioner.

Other individuals who have made significant donations in recent years include Sheril Berkovitch, Peter de Waal, Helen Pausacker, Ian Goller, Gary Jaynes, Bruce Belcher and Ken Sinclair.

To the abovementioned donors, and the many others who have not been specifically acknowledged, we say thank you and reiterate our assure that your material will be carefully looked after.

## CONFIDENTIALITY ASSURED

*We would like to take this opportunity of reminding people that donors of material to the Archives are encouraged to consider how accessible they would like their material to be. Any restrictions on access will be strictly adhered to.*



"THE SUN" 5-2-79

## \$1000 GRANT TO ARCHIVES

In March this year the Archives made an application to The Parkestone Association in Adelaide for a grant of funds. We learnt about the Association from prominent gay historian and author, Garry Wotherspoon. Garry wrote a letter to the Association in support of our application. The Parkestone Association is a trust which promotes public education and awareness of issues related to homosexuality.

Our submission contained two options:

1. Funds to assist in the purchase of a computer to enable us to develop efficient information storage and retrieval systems, or
2. Funds to assist in the construction of fixed wooden, floor to ceiling shelving along the full length of one wall (8 metres x 2.5 metres).

In late June we received a cheque for \$1,000 from the trustees of The Parkestone Association. The final paragraph of the letter accompanying the cheque said: 'Please feel free to use the grant towards the purchase of shelving, the Datamini computer, or whatever else you may need to assist you in your work.'

This grant is one of the largest single donations yet received by the Archives and we are very grateful to The Parkestone Association for their support.

### Grant Used To Build Shelving

The \$1,000 received from The Parkestone Association was used to help pay for the construction of additional shelving. An acute shortage of adequate storage facilities had arisen because of the increase in the amount of new material coming to the Archives.

Quotes were quickly obtained and work began in early July. The job was finished by the middle of July at a final cost of \$1,350. The shelving consists of eight individual units made of pine wood, fitted flush against the wall and screwed together. Each unit has five adjustable shelves. If the collection needs to be relocated in the future, the units can be separated and moved with no difficulty at all.

## ARCHIVES LIBRARY OF BOOKS

Over the years we have not actively sought donations of books. The main reason for this has been limited storage space. However, over time, we have acquired books including two large donations (from Liz Ross and the now defunct Gayline Support Services Inc library, formerly Society Five). Our library now has in excess of 300 titles.

The task of organising the library has been taken on by Ken Atkins. Ken is presently engaged in the slow and tedious process of preparing a card index.

The library easily divides into seven sections: Reference, Gay Fiction, Lesbian fiction, Autobiographies, Biographies, Poetry and scripts of Gay Plays.

## LESBIAN HISTORY GROUP FORMS

About the middle of 1990, a lesbian history group, *History Inverted*, was established in Melbourne. In October 1990, seven women from the group visited the Archives to inspect the collection and find out how we operate. The women were particularly interested to learn about our oral history project, as they see collecting oral histories as being one of their main tasks.

We will maintain contact with History Inverted and offer whatever assistance we can.

## BADGES

Our badge collection continues to be one of the most popular aspects of the Archives collection. Whenever we have a display at a lesbian and gay event, such as Mid-Summa, we get a terrific response from people. Badges often bring back long-forgotten memories. It's great fun to listen to people telling friends about the significance to them of particular badges. In most cases we only have one copy of each badge but there are a few that we've got lots of and we have been able to sell some of them.

There are far fewer badges produced these days but our collection is still growing. Most of our new acquisitions were produced in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Of the new badges, most seem to come from groups like ACT-UP and others campaigning in the AIDS area.

Even though our collection of badges is now substantial, we are sure it only represents a small proportion of the various lesbian and gay-related badges that have been produced over the years. So if you, or anyone you know, have any badges, we would be happy to add them to our collection.

## DARWIN - ORAL HISTORY

Dino Hodge is a Darwin man who is undertaking a fascinating project tracing the history of the development of the Darwin gay male community. Dino has asked us to publish the following notice:

**DARWIN - ORAL HISTORY:** Men who have lived in Darwin, particularly from World War II through to 1970, are invited to participate in an oral history project tracing the development of the Darwin gay male community. Material recorded will form a permanent historical record to be lodged with the Northern Territory Archives Service, and will also hopefully be the basis for a book on the community. Interstate interviews will be held in Jan/Feb 1992. For further information please contact Dino Hodge, PO Box 42435, Casuarina, NT 0811, or telephone (089) 27 8716 AH.

It is great that there are people like Dino around who are prepared to commit not only lots of their time, but also their money, to produce something of lasting benefit to the homosexual community. We support Dino's project and hope that one or more of our members will be able to assist him.

## ARCHIVES SEEKS TAX DEDUCTIBILITY FOR DONATIONS

Under new guidelines announced earlier this year by the Commonwealth Government, people making donations to registered 'cultural organisations' will be entitled to claim them as a tax deduction.

We will shortly be making an application to have the Archives added to the Register of Cultural Organisations. The register is administered by the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories.

There are several criteria which must be met before an organisation will be added to the register. The most important one is that the organisation

*'Be established for any one or more of the following principal purposes: the production, presentation, publication, preservation or housing of, or training in any one or more of the following: literature, music, performing arts, visual arts, crafts, design, film, video, television, radio, community arts, Aboriginal arts or moveable cultural heritage.'*

We are confident that the activities of the Archives satisfy this criterion and are hopeful that our application will be successful. Tax deductible status for donations made to the Archives should make it easier for us to raise much needed funds.

### POSITIONS VACANT

Energetic historically-minded lesbians and gay men sought by the ALGA for various duties - copywriting ads for gay and lesbian media, presentation work for exhibitions, computerisation of card files, fundraising, promotion, filing, researching, interviewing, supervising librarianship students, data entry. We've got the task to fit your skills and availability. Flexible hours, egalitarian working conditions (no one gets paid anything), experience desirable but motivation is even better. Phone after hours: Graham on 499 6334 or Mark on 481 5304.



..... AND FURTHERMORE, IF YOU DON'T SWEAR RIGHT NOW TO BRING ME A BRIDE DOLL FOR CHRISTMAS, I'LL TELL MY MUMMY THAT YOU'VE GOT YOUR FINGER UP MY EAR! -

CAMP INK VOL 2 N°12 1972

## ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY OF ARCHIVES CONDUCTED

Last summer we were asked by Carolyn McLennan, a second year student at the University of Canberra, for permission to conduct an environmental survey of the Archives' collection. Carolyn is undertaking an Applied Science degree in the Conservation of Cultural Materials, and this survey was part of a unit on "Preventive Conservation".

The aim of the project was to survey a historical/museum collection: to determine the condition of the building, the collection, the storage and display facilities - then advise on preventive conservation measures.

Carolyn has given us a copy of her 30 page report from which the principal recommendations are as follows:

### Short term (six months to a year)

Reassess current storage layout of the archive and move plan cabinet [to avoid exposure to potential damp - Ed.]

Coat or replace chipboard shelves

Implement Integrated Pest Management system

Purchase fire extinguishers

Remove all metal staples, replace with plastic

Secure door with deadlock and add screen

### Long Term (one to five years)

Installation of dehumidifier

Photocopy newspaper articles onto archive text

Use 'Ektachrome' film for poster duplication

Replacement of all storage boxes with archival quality material

Installation of flood detecting system

Installation of secondary door

Wash and store clothing [t-shirts, banners etc - Ed.]

Some of Carolyn's recommendations have already been implemented. Following the construction of the new shelving, the layout has changed significantly and the plan cabinet has been moved to a more suitable site.

Although the survey showed that pest infestation is not a problem at present, it is something that requires ongoing attention. Any new material should be sorted outside of the Archives to prevent infestation being brought in. A different substance for silver-fish control is now in use.

A fire extinguisher has been purchased and is in place. Other recommendations are under consideration, and will be progressively implemented as money becomes available and time permits.

If any Archives supporters would like to fund particular recommendations, we invite them to contact the Treasurer, Rob Thurling, on (03) 497 3519.

We are grateful to Carolyn for having conducted this survey. We always recognised that the storage facilities and maintenance practices were less than perfect. Carolyn's survey has highlighted specific deficiencies and provided a program to remedy these.