

## CASE STUDY:

# GALE'S ARCHIVES OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER



Catherine Kelly



Noah Littel



Dr. Emily Cousens

Read how three scholars are using Gale's archives to challenge and expand scholarship in queer history.

Time can flatten history and reduce a time period or a movement to a single idea. However, these three academics explain how they are taking deep dives into specific facets of queer history with the help of Gale's archives to uncover hidden or forgotten voices.

## LEARNING AND GROWING FROM EACH OTHER

Conferences provide an opportunity to learn, grow, and share ideas. During the second Queer History Conference in San Francisco (June 12-15, 2022), historians and activists discussed and debated the importance of LGBTQ history. Panels and workshops showcased the newest directions and developments in the histories of same-sex sexuality, trans identity, and gender nonconformity. In the panel *Marginalized Voices and Hidden Histories; Preserving and Unlocking the Past with Gale's Archives of Sexuality and Gender and Beyond*, hosted by Phil Virta, senior acquisitions editor at Gale, three scholars discussed how they use Gale's archives to inform their projects.

Panelists included:

- Catherine Kelly, Ph.D., student at King's College, London
- Noah Littel, Ph.D. candidate at Maastricht University in The Netherlands
- Dr. Emily Cousens, teaching fellow at the London School of Economics and visiting lecturer in gender and sexuality studies at the University of Oxford

Each of these scholars was able to use the vast resources found in Gale's *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* collections to support their unique research.



Catherine Kelly



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**Catherine Kelly,**  
Ph.D., student at  
King’s College, London

## PROJECT 1: LESBIAN FEMINIST WRITING

Catherine Kelly’s research concerns lesbian feminist literary networks in the United States between the 1950s and the 1980s. The research topic she spoke about, *Living in Their Pockets: Lesbian Feminism in the Archive*, focuses on marginal figures within this queer feminist literary ecosystem: the novelist, editor, and theorist Bertha Harris; the poet, typesetter, and publisher Martha Shelley; and the novelist, librarian, and bibliographer Ann Allen Shockley. For this work, Kelly traces these figures across overlapping literary communities through extensive archival material, including letters, oral histories, and unpublished fiction.

From the 1960s onward, there was an explosion of feminist and queer print materials in what is sometimes called the Women in Print movement. Kelly uses these materials to trace the development and sometimes dissolution of lesbian feminist literary networks and communities.

One of her primary materials is *The Ladder*, the first lesbian magazine with a mailing list. *The Ladder* was the literary magazine of the Daughters of Bilitis, the first lesbian civil rights organization. *The Ladder* is included in Gale’s *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*.

Kelly’s work shows the informal ways in which lesbian households and communities developed, and how this merging of literary work with personal-living decisions affected some people in the movement. The title of her work, *Living in Their Pockets*, comes from a letter Bertha Harris sent to the feminist writer Joanna Russ.

Harris was once an influential author, probably best known for her 1976 novel *Lover*. This book was published by Daughters, a New York-based press founded by June Arnold and her partner Parke Bowman. Harris also worked as an editor for Daughters, and she lived in an apartment owned by Arnold. It’s this close financial relationship that led her to use the phrase “living in their pockets.”





*The Ladder*, vol. 16, no. 3-4,  
December-January, 1971-1972



*The Ladder*, vol. 13, no. 9-10,  
June-July, 1969

Early one morning, Harris was evicted by Arnold with no warning. In a later letter, Harris wonders whether she was kicked out because she brought another woman into the house, or because Arnold believed that the woman worked for the FBI. Either way, the eviction not only pushed Harris out of her residence, but it also ended her affiliation with Daughters and played a part in her work being overlooked today, Kelly argued.

“Understanding how living arrangements mixed with literary achievements puts some of this period’s material into better context,” Kelly said. “Much of the work to show this overlapping of personal and professional came from poring over love letters contained in Gale’s archives. This is where Gale’s archives have been really important to my own research,” she added.

To prove the connection between the personal lives and public happenings of lesbian feminists from the 1950s to the 1980s, Catherine Kelly dove deeply into Gale’s *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*. Studying several prominent authors of the time, she matched these writers’ articles and books with their personal letters, many of which are available in Gale’s archives. This work allowed her to pull back the curtain on previously unknown connections, showing that top authors were dependent on publishing houses not only for their professional work but often for housing. She used the little-known archives of the Oakland Women’s Press Collective to trace how authors’ fortunes rose and fell depending on their personal relationships in this period.





Noah Littel



“It’s important for archives to plainly state the policies and the day-to-day actions that govern what materials are included. These choices . . . influence whose history is included in our physical and digitized archives and whose is not,”

**Noah Littel,**  
Ph.D. candidate at Maastricht University in The Netherlands

## PROJECT 2: CHALLENGING EXCLUSIONARY POLITICS IN TRADITIONAL ARCHIVES

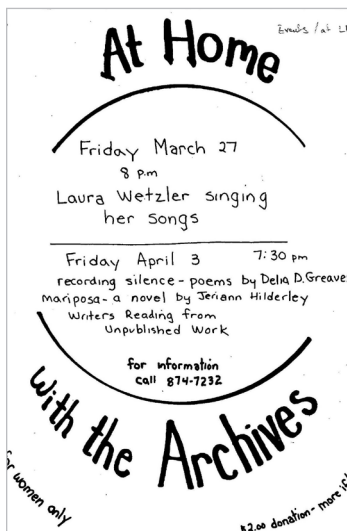
Noah Littel’s research focuses on the history of LGBTQ archives in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and West Germany, from the 1970s onward. The research topic Littel addressed was *Archives of Passion: Archival Ideologies and Practices in Dutch Lesbian and Gay Archives*.

“Most scholarly attention to community archiving practices has a North American focus, leaving a rich history of queer archival initiatives in Europe to be explored,” Littel said. Their paper sets out to broaden the field of academic attention to LGBTQ archival efforts. Littel does this by discussing how both transnational knowledge transfer and a particular political and cultural context laid the basis for a dynamic development of Dutch lesbian and gay counter-archival initiatives. Littel’s paper seeks to demonstrate how practical and ideological decisions made by archival staff, based on their own affected positionalities, impacted whose history was represented in lesbian and gay counter archives.

In 1981, lesbian feminist Maaïke Meijer visited the lesbian archives in New York and lamented that there was not a similar effort in the Netherlands. “Nobody is conserving the lesbian culture. Nobody is remembering our traditions,” she wrote. This wasn’t entirely true—a lesbian archive had already existed in the living room of two lesbian women in Leeuwarden since 1976.

But after Meijer’s article, a group of about 70 women decided to create several lesbian archives throughout the Netherlands. While there was debate about how to create an archive and what to keep, the group was heavily influenced by the existing policies of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City, which are collected in Gale’s *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*.





Lesbian Herstory Archives,  
January, 1981-March 17, 1999

Their work investigates how even an archive policy such as one that “collects everything” still is not unbiased. In fact, both the Lesbian Archive Amsterdam and Homodok, a gay documentation center at the University of Amsterdam, were later found to be historically biased toward only including material from white lesbians and gay men. “The Lesbian Archive Amsterdam and Homodok merged to become IHLIA LGBTI Heritage, which now seeks materials from other underrepresented groups,” Littel said.

“It’s important for archives to plainly state the policies and the day-to-day actions that govern what materials are included. These choices . . . influence whose history is included in our physical and digitized archives and whose is not,” Littel added.

Littel’s work on *Archives of Passion: Archival Ideologies and Practices in Dutch Lesbian and Gay Archives* shows the wide reach of Gale’s *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*. Even though the Dutch LGBTQ archives are not included in their entirety within Gale’s archives, they have been able to find numerous Dutch materials within them. The works’ inclusion shows the importance of transnational connections in this field, Littel argued.







Dr. Emily Cousens



“... We’re educating feminists to update the understanding of women’s and gender oppression to include the experience of trans women and to understand the experiences of transvestites and transsexuals more broadly.”

**Dr. Emily Cousens,**  
teaching fellow at the London School of Economics and visiting lecturer in gender and sexuality studies at the University of Oxford

## PROJECT 3: SECOND WAVE FEMINISM

Dr. Emily Cousens is a queer, feminist philosopher whose research is at the intersection of feminism and transgender studies. Cousens is currently finishing her first monograph, *Transfeminist Epistemologies in the US Second Wave*, which will be published with Palgrave Macmillan. The research they spoke about in San Francisco was for their paper *Entering the Archive of Second Wave Trans Feminism*.

The second wave of feminism occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. Many of today’s historians characterize this period as a time when white feminists were dominant within the movement, which excluded trans people and their ideas. But using Gale’s archives, Cousens said she is “exploring the largely unacknowledged role that trans people played in the development of feminism itself.”

This period saw an explosion of feminist works, with more than 560 new U.S. publications listed between 1968 and 1974. Cousens argues that “print culture from the period may offer at least as good if not better expression of second wave feminist sentiments than academically authored texts and it opens up the period to a far more diverse set of contributors.” Such publications include *Dyke*, a quarterly and *Drag*, both of which can be found in the archives.

The role of trans people in this movement has been “largely sidelined in broad-brush dismissals of feminism second wave as essentialist and exclusionary,” Cousens said.

Cousens cites a 1972 article published in *The Second Wave* that speaks to “a distinct trans feminist subjectivity during second wave feminism and a clear sense that the women’s liberation movement could be a place for trans and intersex people. The sense that some trans people felt the pages of feminist print publications were spaces where they could inform and educate their cis gender sisters” can be found in a number of articles that are featured in the archives.

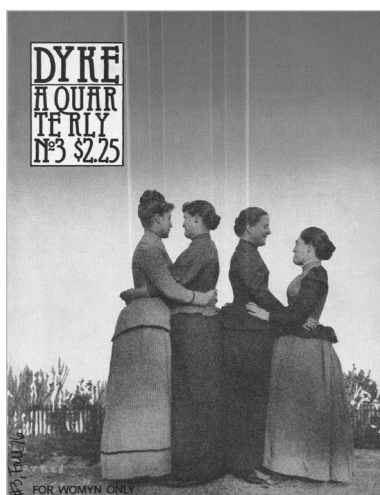




*Drag*, vol. 2, no. 5, 1972

By diving deeply into the archives, “what I hope to offer then is not simply an argument of historical significance—that there were trans feminists in the second wave. Rather, I want to prove that the trans feminists’ epistemologies of the period both influenced the direction of feminism and remain valuable for contemporary scholarship today.”

Using the digitized print materials included in Gale’s archives, Cousens said, “It becomes clear that trans people participated in feminism second wave in large numbers. . . . We’re educating feminists to update the understanding of women’s and gender oppression to include the experience of trans women and to understand the experiences of transvestites and transsexuals more broadly.”



*Dyke*, no. 3, fall 1976

Combing through the vast archives proves that “histories of second wave feminism can’t be told without centering the presence of trans people in the movement and its related knowledge production,” Cousens said.

Dr. Emily Cousens’s work is a great example of how robust archives can help a scholar recast a historical period. They used different parts of Gale’s *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* to rediscover the contributions made by trans people to Second Wave feminism during the 1960s and 1970s, exploring authors’ journals and letters from that period. Having broad access to these works during a time when more than 500 feminist publications were produced was vital to Cousens’s work.



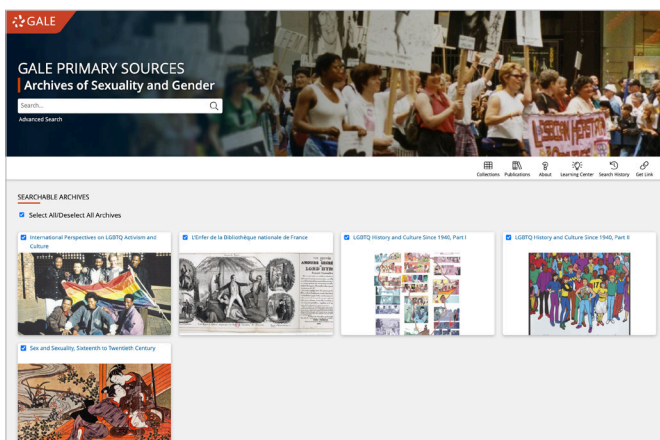
## A TREASURE TROVE OF SOURCES

With *Gale Primary Sources*, researchers can delve into the thoughts, words, and actions of the past and connect them to the present. Gale's *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* program allows scholars like Cousens, Kelly, and Littel to tap into rare sources that support gender and sexuality research.

## FEATURED RESOURCES

Gale's multipart *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* program is the largest digital collection of primary source documents relating to the history and study of sex, sexuality, and gender. The program presents queer history and culture since 1940, sex and sexuality from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries, and activism and culture in Southern Africa and Australia during the twentieth century. Taken together, the archives represent more than 5 million pages of fully searchable text. Primary sources on social, political, health, and legal issues impacting queer and hetero communities around the world are included as well as books on sex and sexuality from the sciences

to the humanities. Source materials are monographs, newsletters, papers, government documents, manuscripts, pamphlets, posters, vertical files, and other types of primary sources, from more than 35 countries and with over 30 languages represented. Gale partnered with some of the leading queer, institutional, and library collections in the world, including community-based institutions, to make this project possible.



To learn more about any of these materials, visit the website for more information, [gale.com/primary-sources/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender](https://gale.com/primary-sources/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender).

This report was completed from a panel transcript. All ideas and suggestions are those of the participants. No one from Gale or the associated universities was consulted to influence these responses. The comments above are solely based on the individual research of each participant.