

# ENHANCING RESEARCH AND AIDING DISCOVERABILITY

*Gale Primary Sources* brings the thoughts, words, and actions of past centuries into the present for a comprehensive research experience. With authoritative content and powerful search technologies, this platform has been thoughtfully designed to help students and researchers examine literary, political, and social culture of the last 500 years and develop a more meaningful understanding of how history continues to impact the world today.

*“Archives of Sexuality & Gender has given me the opportunity to absorb primary source documents that I wouldn’t have been able to see otherwise. It has enriched my understanding of the historiography of LGBTQ people and allowed me to make better, more complicated, nuanced arguments in my own work.”*

**J. Seth Anderson**

## ADVANCING SCHOLARSHIP THROUGH DIGITAL PRIMARY SOURCES

J. Seth Anderson, a Ph.D. student and teaching fellow at Boston University, has access to *Gale Primary Sources* through the university, and was recently able to explore *Archives of Sexuality & Gender* during a trial period. Anderson quickly noticed the value of the content within the archives and was impressed by the quality of information: “I found a ton of information on early homophile activism from the fifties and sixties. Specifically, I found interesting newsletters and magazines as well as letters from Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, two of the founding members of the Daughters of Bilitis which is the first lesbian civil and political rights organization in the United States. Many of the letters were to women from around the country about networking and early activist building. There was lot of information on the Mattachine Society founded by Harry Hay in 1950. I also found some early letters from the Mattachine Society about trying to organize a conference in Phoenix, AZ in the late fifties.”

Not only did Anderson note the level of high-quality content accessible with *Archives of Sexuality & Gender*, he appreciated the ease with which he could search through the archives. Anderson detailed his first research experience: “The ability to search by location is really great



## FACULTY PERSPECTIVE: ARCHIVES OF SEXUALITY & GENDER

and allowed me to find content specific to my areas of interest. Since I study the history of HIV and AIDS in the United States, I searched for relevant content and found a wealth of information, particularly from the eighties to present. I also found unique information on sexuality and medicine, and how they relate to psychiatry and psychoanalysis. While I didn't find specific personal papers, I did come across references to them in personal letters or essays that refuted doctors' work and medical ideas. In other searches, I discovered references to transgender history, including family dynamics and early family organizations that worked with, and supported, parents and their gay and lesbian children. The results that I found from general and focused searches is extremely helpful in my research. I will certainly point my students toward *Archives of Sexuality & Gender*."

Anderson noted how the search functions of *Gale Primary Sources* led him to related content that he wasn't originally looking for while researching with *Archives of Sexuality & Gender*. "Discovering information on the Mattachine meeting that took place in Phoenix in 1959 was a cool find. I also came across a set a letters from a woman in Salt Lake City written in the fifties. She was a lesbian writing to the Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco, saying that she felt like the only lesbian in Salt Lake City and asked where to meet people." Anderson added, "I wasn't looking for that, but it will be helpful for other projects I work on in the future."



**J. Seth Anderson**  
Ph.D. Student and  
Teaching Fellow,  
Boston University

He also remarked, "I was really impressed by *Archives of Sexuality & Gender*. It was very useful, and the design is really smart. The ability to download is awesome. Whether I want to download the page I'm reading, an entire series of pages, or the entire thing, *Gale Primary Sources* gives me that option. Also, the citation feature at the end of each document is excellent. It saves me time by giving me the exact citation and sourcing. It makes things so much easier and certainly keeps me organized. Overall, it is incredibly intuitive and made research easier, which is great!"

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### ENRICHING RESEARCH

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Anderson appreciated that the *Archives of Sexuality & Gender* collections make it possible for scholars of LGBTQ history to discover new connections while conducting research. "There is always so much to read and so much to see in an archive. It can be quite overwhelming. *Archives of Sexuality & Gender* allows researchers to search by keywords and immediately returns with results where the keyword appears in the file. This makes research so much easier. I really like how the site is organized. For instance, it lists the content source, as 'Monographs, Manuscripts, Newspaper and Periodicals,' then shows where your topic appears in each of the listed sources alongside one another. This helped me organize my findings by pulling out what I was looking for in each source. It also helped me make new connections. If a name came up that I didn't know, I could immediately make a connection elsewhere and link it back. Also, the 'timeline' functionality was very useful. I could change the dates to search in a specific decade, and find sources from just the period I needed." He added, "*Archives of Sexuality & Gender* is relevant to what I study and covers a wide range of topics. Because the archive is so dense with information, I'm able to cross reference and find more sources on topics I have previously been working on."



## FACULTY PERSPECTIVE: ARCHIVES OF SEXUALITY & GENDER

When asked if access to digitized primary sources might attract researchers and students to an institution, Anderson commented, "I think the younger generation of students and historians will expect more and more online access from sources and archives they can't otherwise gain access to. What makes digital archives appealing to faculty, is the ease with which professors and teaching assistants can guide students through proper research methods. They can also use these resources to teach students how to organize their work effectively and be more methodical in their research."

A cross-search platform like *Gale Primary Sources* advances the research process by making it easy for researchers to search across all of its archive collections. Researchers can access more information than ever before, and access it quickly. The efficiency and accessibility of *Gale Primary Sources* help to enrich the research experience for students and faculty. For someone like Anderson, who is passionate about his area of study, this is an invaluable benefit.

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### FINDING THE VALUE OF DIGITAL PRIMARY SOURCES

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One of the biggest limitations and challenges researchers face is funding. Anderson remarked, "It always comes down to funding—the cost of getting access to what you need. I enjoy the experience of going to new places, but it's the expense of getting to where you want to go and then time away for being there. I spend a lot of time applying for grants and fellowships which definitely helps, but then there is the time it takes to go through the index of a non-digital archive, which is better than nothing, but can still be limiting. Ultimately, the greatest issue is the funding to get there."

With digitized primary source content, access is far easier and more cost-effective. "At this stage in my career, it's important to have digital primary sources. It saves me both time and money because I don't have to travel. If I have access to digital content, I can research anywhere. Plus, *Gale Primary Sources* is the actual digital file of the primary source content I want. The functionality of *Archives of Sexuality & Gender* adds to how impressive it is," said Anderson.

The financial pressures that researchers face is a real factor. Access to digitized historic materials can impact the way students and other researchers approach research, "Not only do digital primary sources take the financial pressure off researchers, they give students the freedom to discover their own interests. With a digital primary resource like *Archives of Sexuality & Gender*, I can set assignments related to primary source research, and trust that my students know how to find and work with them. This gives students autonomy. It's a much better option than finding primary source materials for them and then asking them to write a paper. I want students to find something they want to write about, make sense of it, make an argument about it, and write a great paper. Their level of investment and sense of engagement would go a lot farther if they had access to digital primary sources."

Anderson believes that *Gale Primary Sources* can advance scholarship in all areas of research as well as a smart financial investment. "*Archives of Sexuality & Gender* has given me the opportunity to absorb primary source documents that I wouldn't have been able to see otherwise. It has enriched my understanding of the historiography of LGBTQ people and allowed me to make better, more complicated, nuanced arguments in my own work," said Anderson.



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## FEATURED RESOURCES

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*Archives of Sexuality & Gender*, divided into three parts with content spanning the sixteenth to twentieth centuries, is the largest digital collection of primary source materials relating to the history and study of sex, sexuality, and gender. This series includes content relating to social, political, health, and legal issues that have impacted—and continue to impact—LGBTQ communities around the world as well as rare and unique books on sex and sexuality, from the sciences to the humanities. Selection of materials for this milestone digital program is guided by an advisory board that consists of leading scholars and librarians in sexuality and gender studies.

Archives include:

- **Archives of Sexuality & Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940, Part I**
- **Archives of Sexuality & Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940, Part II**
- **Archives of Sexuality & Gender: Sex and Sexuality, Sixteenth to Twentieth Centuries, Part III**

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## ABOUT

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J. Seth Anderson is a Ph.D. student, researcher, and teaching fellow at Boston University. He earned a master's degree in history from the University of Utah. He focused on the history of sexuality in the American West, specifically gay and lesbian history in Utah. He researched the history of HIV and AIDS in Utah, and wrote his dissertation on the uses of conversation therapy. Anderson is currently a Ph.D. student at Boston University studying twentieth-century American political history, with an emphasis on the history of sexuality. In addition to Anderson's educational endeavours, he is an active member of the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History.

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