

Impact Report:

Find Out How Gale's Resources Are Helping Researchers Break New Ground

Gale's Digital Humanities Tools Open New Ground to Explore Queer History by Telling the Stories of Lesbian Bars



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Gale-CLGBTH Non-Residential Fellowship

MEET THE SCHOLAR

As one of five scholars awarded a fellowship from Gale and the Committee on LGBT History (CLGBTH) in 2022, Jack Jen Giesecking researches the legacy and impact of the dyke* bar for LGBTQ*S people in U.S. cultural geographies. With their research, Giesecking argues that while the number of remaining lesbian+ bars in the United States has decreased, the cultural significance and legacy of the dyke* bar remains to be fully appreciated. The trans* asterisk allows Giesecking to investigate the dyke bar that remains to be written—to open up the multiple and contingent meanings of what a dyke* bar was, is, and yet could be.

All Gale-CLGBTH Non-Residential Fellowship recipients were granted access to Gale's *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* and *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* (the *Lab*) for a six-month period of research. The *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* is the largest historical collection available in support of gender and sexuality studies, spanning from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The *Lab* is a cloud-based digital humanities tool that helps researchers tell impactful visual stories with data from Gale's archives.

Fellows received training on how to use the text- and data-mining tools available in the *Lab* to explore the *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* and advance their work using digital humanities methods. Read on to see how Giesecking used this powerful cloud-based platform to build a detailed media analysis through access to archival materials from the Lesbian Herstory Archives and Gale's *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* to reveal the complex and contradictory meanings that the main "lesbian" American space holds in the national geographical imagination.

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TURNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS INTO TRIUMPHS OF DISCOVERY

After years of putting their research on hold because of the pandemic, it was an exciting opportunity for Gieseeking to have access to a wealth of searchable texts through Gale's *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*.

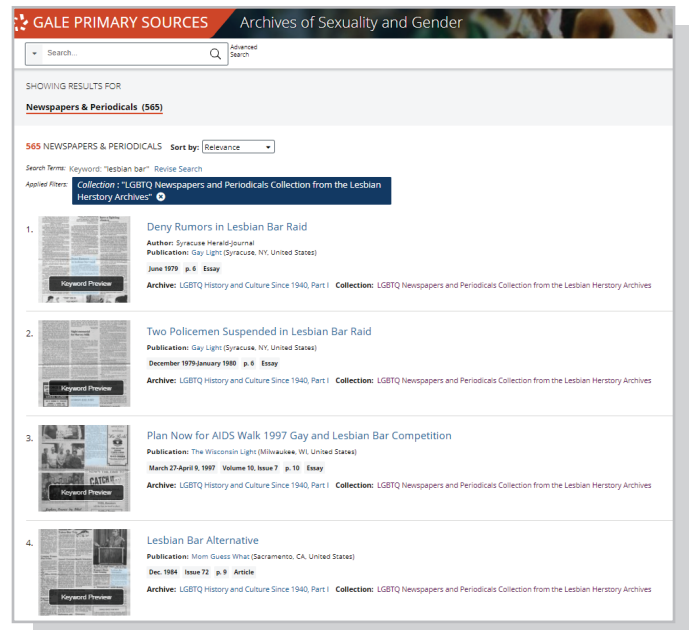
"I looked at well over a thousand records about closing, closed, and/or gone lesbian bars," Gieseeking shares. "It was incredibly useful to see the narrative shift from, 'Is five lesbian bars too many?' in 1986 Milwaukee to their absence in the 1990s. In the popular narrative, this shift happens a decade later, so it shifted my thinking as well."

The *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* also helped Gieseeking to observe adjacent reporting trends, such as the lack of reporting on arsons in lesbian+ bars and the increased focus on sexual assaults in the 1990s.

Gieseeking's archival work helped them to address questions around the dwindling number of remaining lesbian+ bars, both nationally and globally: Why do we care? Why do they remain important in an increasingly digital world? And what of the lesbian and straight, trans and cis obsessions over such spaces?

Gieseeking's research forms part of a larger book project, *Dyke Bars*: Queer-Tran Spaces for the End Times*, building its arguments across and through a 15-year media analysis of lesbian bar mentions; archival materials from the Lesbian Herstory Archives and Gale's *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*; interviews with lesbian, bi, queer, trans, and sapphic women and trans and gender nonconforming people; as well as creative artwork and texts about lesbian bars, queer parties, trans hangouts, and sapphic clubs.

"The ability to search entire periodicals for patterns—let alone to find all the mentions of lesbian bars in the collection—saved me years of work. It felt like a triumph with every use."



Search results from LGBTQ Newspapers and Periodicals Collection from the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

UNCOVERING "OTHER/ED" AND "INVISIBILIZED" SPACES WITH THE ARCHIVES OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER

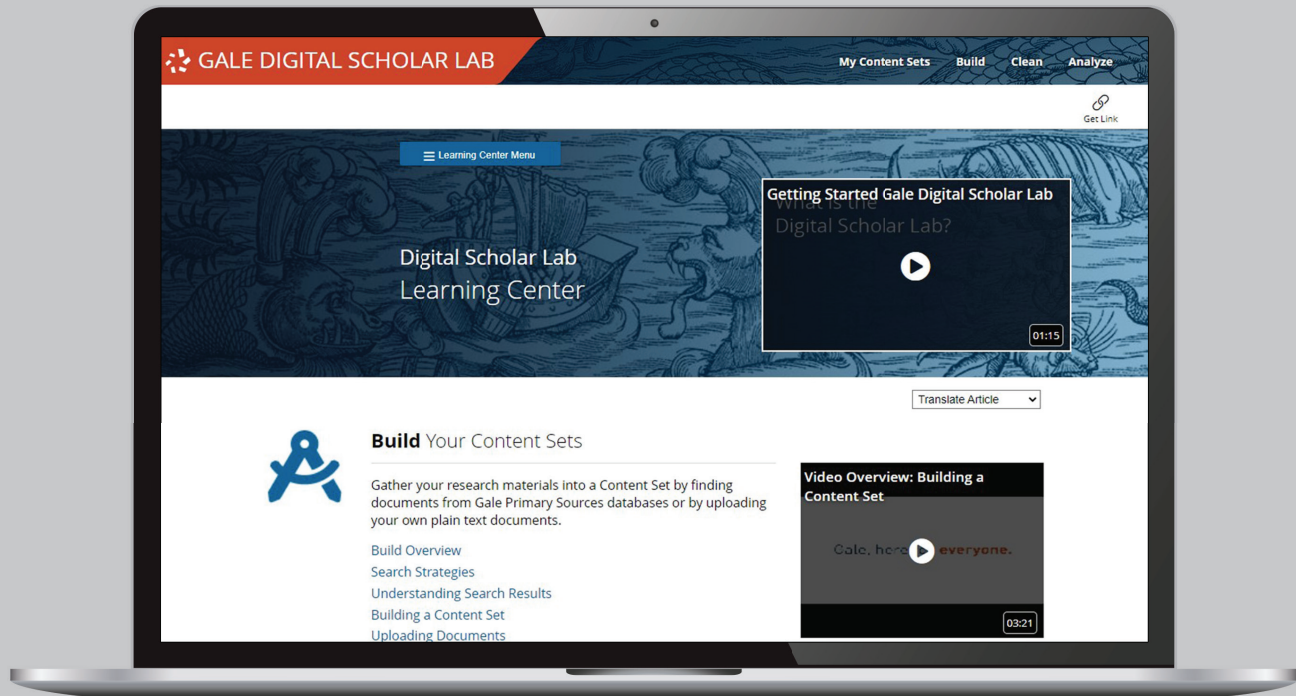
It was surprising for Gieseeking to discover the scope of material available through the *Archives of Sexuality and Gender*.

"Knowing that 'lesbian bar*' or 'dyke bar*' appear in 5,000+ publications is pretty shocking," Gieseeking shares. "That's a massive and wildly rangy amount of discussion about these bars and what they mean."

As Gieseeking works on their book manuscript, these resources helped them analyze their findings to better understand patterns in how lesbian+ bars are discussed in popular narrative, and how the dyke bar* is determined in relation to, as Gieseeking describes it, a range of "other/ed" and "invisibilized" queer spaces.

"It was thrilling to see the work you've put into this software to bring it to other folks."





Break New Ground with Gale's Digital Humanities Tools

Curious to explore the tools Gieseke used to expand their research and develop their digital humanities skill set?

Discover the possibilities of *Gale Digital Scholar Lab* at gale.com/digital-scholar-lab

Find more information about the *Archives of Sexuality and Gender* at gale.com/primary-sources/archives-of-sexuality-and-gender

Interested in learning more about CLGBTH?

Find more details about CLGBTH, including the society's initiatives and events, at clgbthistory.org