

Archival Research at the GLBT Historical Society

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Introduction to archival research

From a researcher’s perspective, the main difference between a library and the archives is that you can physically browse a library, but you can’t browse the archives. Instead, an archivist brings you the materials that you request. This can sometimes make research challenging; fortunately, there are several helpful tools to help you plan your time. One important tool is the reference archivist (contact us at reference@glbthistory.org). Another is the collection catalog, which includes collection descriptions and finding aids.

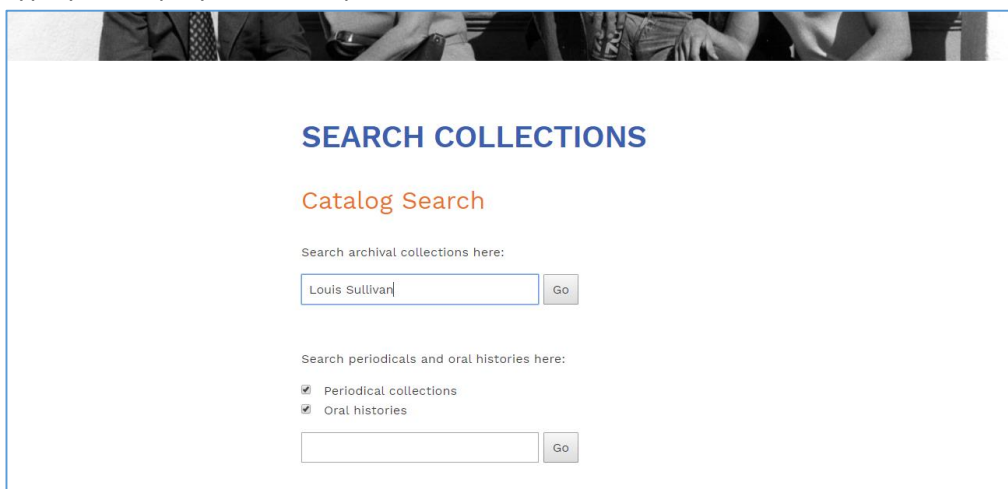
Searching the catalog allows you to do the equivalent of scanning the library shelves for intriguing books. Some catalog records have more extensive descriptions in the form of a finding aid. A finding aid is an inventory of a collection. It’s a document that contains an introduction to each collection, its basic statistics, and what may make it interesting. All of our collections that are open for research have catalog records and many have finding aids.

How to use the catalog

Our catalog is hosted on the Online Archive of California (OAC). The OAC is a listing of archival descriptions from all over the state. To search our collections, go to “Search Collections” on the GLBTHS website:

<https://www.glbthistory.org/catalog-search>

Type your inquiry into the top search box:



SEARCH COLLECTIONS

Catalog Search

Search archival collections here:

Search periodicals and oral histories here:

Periodical collections
 Oral histories

If you hit “go,” you’ll be sent automatically to the OAC:

The screenshot shows the OAC search results for the query "Louis Sullivan". The search is limited to the "GLBT Historical Society" collection. The results list two collections:

- 1. Sullivan (Louis Graydon) Correspondence with David 1980-1990**
 Contributing Institution: GLBT Historical Society
 Collection Number: 2009-02
 Description: Louis Graydon "Lou" Sullivan (1951-1991) was a transgender activist, diarist, and author who often corresponded with other trans men. This small collection comprises eight letters and one photo sent from Sullivan to a trans man named David.
 29 search terms found:
 ... Louis Graydon Sullivan correspondence with David...
 ... Louis Graydon Sullivan correspondence with David...
 ... Sullivan (Louis Graydon) Correspondence with David...
- 2. Sullivan (Louis Graydon) Papers 1755-1991 (bulk 1961-1991)**
 Contributing Institution: GLBT Historical Society
 Collection Number: 1991-07
 Description: Louis Graydon Sullivan (1951-1991) was a gay and transgender activist who was notable as

On the right side, there are filters for "Limit to:" including "Date" (1750s, 1760s, 1770s, 1780s, 1790s) and "Subjects" (AIDS (Disease), California, Civil Rights, Gay men's writings, Legislation).

On this results page, you'll get a listing of any GLBTHS collection description that contains your search term.

You have the option of narrowing down your search results by decade (in the box to the right). So if you are only interested in material from the 1940s, you could search by keyword, then limit by date.

You can also narrow results by subject, which is very useful in a more general search, like this one for "lesbian":

The screenshot shows the OAC search results for the query "lesbian". The search is limited to the "GLBT Historical Society" collection. The results list two collections:

- 1. Libertarians for Gay and Lesbian Concerns Collection 1981-1987**
 Contributing Institution: GLBT Historical Society
 Collection Number: Accession number: 1992-02
 Description: The Libertarians for Gay and Lesbian Concerns Records, .5 linear feet, covers the years 1979 to 1987. The Records document the activities of LGLC especially those of George Meyer, LGLC's National Coordinator from 1983 to 1987. The Records are arranged ... [Read More](#)
 30 search terms found:
 ...Libertarians for Gay and Lesbian Concerns Collection...
 ...Libertarians for Gay and Lesbian Concerns Collection, ...
 ...Guide to the Libertarians for Gay and Lesbian Concerns Collection, 1981-1987...
- 2. Lesbians in the Visual Arts Records circa 1990-2005**
 Contributing Institution: GLBT Historical Society
 Collection Number: 2005-10
 Description: This collection documents the work of Lesbians in the Visual Arts (LVA), also known as Lesbian Visual Artists, a San Francisco-based multicultural advocacy and networking organization that was founded in 1990 by activist and photographer Linda "Happy" Hyder to increase ... [Read More](#)
 18 search terms found:
 ... Lesbians in the Visual Arts records...
 ... Lesbians in the Visual Arts Records...
 ... Lesbians in the Visual Arts records...

On the right side, there are filters for "Limit to:" including "Date" (1750s, 1760s, 1770s, 1780s, 1790s) and "Subjects" (ACT UP (2), ACT UP (Organization) (1), ACT UP San Francisco (Organization) (1), AIDS (15), AIDS (Disease) (18), [View all 332](#)). Red arrows point from the "View all 332" link to the "AIDS (Disease) (18)" subject and from the "View all 332" link to the "AIDS (Disease) (18)" subject.

If you click "view all," as shown above, you'll have the chance to narrow down your search to collections about lesbians that also deal with a broad choice of other topics.

We are working on adding standard subject tags to all of our collections to make the search even more useful. You may want to use some of these as search terms:

- Gay men
- Lesbians
- Bisexual people
- Transgender people
- Intersex people
- People of color
- African Americans
- Latinx people
- American Indians
- Asian Americans
- Jewish people
- Catholic people
- Christians
- Buddhists
- People with disabilities
- Drag
- Kink
- AIDS (disease)
- Art
- Dance
- Erotica
- Homophile movement
- Literature
- Motion pictures
- Music
- Nightlife
- Photography
- Poetry
- Sports
- Theater

How to find a finding aid

A “finding aid” is the term for a more detailed listing of a collection’s contents, like an inventory.

If a collection has a finding aid, it will be linked from the catalog record under “Additional collection guides”. You can see this in the Table of Contents to the right of the Collection Overview as shown below.

Collection Guide https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8v0pg4/

Collection Title: **Louis Graydon Sullivan** papers

Collection Number: 1991-07

Get Items: [Online items available](#)
[Contact GLBT Historical Society](#)

View entire collection guide

PDF (63.79 Kb) HTML **[13 hits]**

Search this collection

louis sullivan

Entire Collection Guide Online Items

Collection Overview **Table of contents**

Description Louis Graydon Sullivan (1951-1991) was a gay and transgender activist who was notable as a community organizer, lay historian, and particularly as a diarist. Sullivan's papers include extensive diaries, short stories, poems, essays, correspondence, and photographs which intimately document his life and transition. The collection also contains his personal subject files and memorabilia.

Background **Louis Graydon Sullivan** (1951-1991) was a gay and transgender activist who was notable as a community organizer, lay historian, and particularly as a diarist. Sullivan's diaries chronicle his social and medical transition – as well as his rich emotional and sexual life – from his teenage years in Milwaukee until his death. Sullivan was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1951, the third of six children born to a close-knit Catholic family. He attended Catholic schools, where he was a good student, and loved to take on male roles in games, which he called "playing boys." As a teenager, his interest in masculinity coalesced into an aesthetic built around a romantic appreciation for rock stars (especially the Beatles) and tough, troubled young men. Sullivan struggled throughout his early life to understand himself and his gender, but his attraction to men was never in doubt; nor was his recognition of himself as queer. After graduating high school and beginning work as a secretary, he often wore men's clothing and became an active member of the Gay People's Union (GPU) of Milwaukee. By 1973, he had begun to identify

13 Search hits [Clear search hits](#)

[Collection Overview](#)
[Collection Details \[13 hits\]](#)
[Descriptive Summary](#)
[Access](#)
[Publication Rights](#)
[Preferred Citation](#)
[Acquisition Information](#)
[Biography/Administrative History](#)
[Scope and Content of Collection](#)
[Indexing Terms](#)
[Additional collection guides](#)

Clicking "Additional collection guides" will send you to the bottom of the catalog listing, where there will be a direct link to download a searchable PDF of the finding aid. As you see below, your original keyword search may return results in the PDF (the OAC searches the PDF finding aids too).

of the major academic and scientific works on these topics through 1990, as well as several rare biographies of female-to-male cross-dressers. A few folders contain correspondence and other materials related to the published work. For a bibliography of published works contained in the Sullivan collection, see Appendix C. Series 3. Miscellaneous Gender-Related Material (1980-1990). Included in this series are flyers and other ephemera, transcripts of television talk shows featuring transgender people, testosterone package inserts, the Benjamin Standards of Care, a subject file pertaining to Les Nichols and Annie Sprinkle, the script for a movie about gender ambiguity for which Sullivan was a reader, and other difficult-to-classify materials. Series 4. Bibliographies and Indexes (1967-1986). Print-outs of exhaustive online bibliographic database subject searches on transgender-related topics through 1986. Sullivan also indexed many of these clippings and articles in his research files. Series 5. Audio Tapes (1988-1990). Recordings of radio programs on transgender identity and cross-dressing, interview with Lou Sullivan about his biography of Jack Garland, recordings of presentations at FTM Get-Togethers and ETVG meetings. For a list of tapes, see Appendix F. Series 6. Video Tapes (1935-1990). Most of the twenty videotapes in this series are recordings of television talk shows that treat the topics of transgender identity and cross-dressing. Some of the videotapes are theatrical motion pictures that treat the same topics, or in which female actors play male roles. For a list of titles, see Appendix G. Record Group 6: Computer-Readable Documents Series 1: Computer-Readable Documents. Currently unusable, due to an inability to locate the software in which they were written. Most of the disks merely contain back-up files for the Jack Bee Garland biography and for transcripts of Sullivan's diaries, but there is some evidence that the computer files also contain correspondence for which no hard copy exists.

Indexing Terms

- Transgender people
- Gay men
- Gay men's writings
- Transgender people's writings
- AIDS (disease)

Additional collection guides

[Guide to the **Louis Graydon Sullivan** papers \[8 hits\]](#)

How to use the finding aid

The first part of the finding aid will tell you basic statistics about the collection: what it's called, how to cite it, how large it is, and an abstract that summarizes its key points:

Finding Aid to the Louis Graydon Sullivan Papers

(#1991-07)

Repository: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

Collection Title: Louis Graydon Sullivan papers

Collection Number: 1991-07

Physical Description: 9 linear feet (7 cartons, two oversized folders)

Creator: Louis Graydon Sullivan

Date (inclusive): 1755-1991 (bulk 1961-1991)

Language of Material: English

Abstract: Louis Graydon Sullivan (1951-1991) was a gay and transgender activist who was notable as a community organizer, lay historian, and particularly as a diarist. Sullivan's papers include extensive diaries, short stories, poems, essays, correspondence, and photographs which intimately document his life and transition. The collection also contains his personal subject files and memorabilia.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of item], Louis Graydon Sullivan papers (1991-07), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Further down, it will have a Biographical Note and a Scope and Content Note that will give you some historical information and a summary of what's in the collection.

For larger collections, the finding aid will often list the materials in them, either by box or by folder. For our very large collections, this will be vital for identifying materials relevant to your research.

Container List

Box 1, Folder 1 1:1 **Louis Sullivan Biographical File**

Folder 2 1:2 **Photographs**

Folder 3 1:3 **Childhood Memorabilia**

Folder 4 1:4 **Journals, 1961-64**

Folder 5 1:4 **Journals, 1965-66**

Folder 6 1:4 **Journals, 1967**

Folder 7 1:4 **Clippings from Journal, 1967**

Folder 8 1:4 **Journals, 1968-69**

Folder 9 1:4 **Journals, 1970-71**

Folder 10 1:4 **Journals, 1972-74**

Folder 11 1:4 **Journals, 1975-79**

Folder 12 1:4 **Journals, 1979-81**

Folder 13 1:4 **Journals, 1981-84**

Folder 14 1:4 **Journals, 1984-87**

Periodicals and oral histories

The GLBTHS archives include very large collections of queer periodicals and oral histories. To search them, use the lower box on the search page:

SEARCH COLLECTIONS

Catalog Search

Search archival collections here:

Search periodicals and oral histories here:

- Periodical collections
- Oral histories

You can give the name of a periodical to the archivist when you make the appointment, and they will pull it for your visit.

Search periodicals and oral histories here:

- Periodical collections
- Oral histories

31 periodicals match —

Title: The Newsletter
Type: Newsletter
Alternate Title: A/PLG Newsletter
Subtitle:
Organization: Asian/**Pacific** Lesbians and Gays, Inc.
Holdings: Vol. 6, #9 (Sep. 1989); Vol 7, #2 (Feb 1990); Vol. 10, #9 (Sep. 1992)

Title: MACCT/Seattle
Type: Newsletter
Alternate Title: Formerly BWMT, The Emerald City Chapter|Formerly **Pacific**
Northwest Drizzle
Subtitle: Men of All Colors & Cultures Together
Organization: Black and White Men Together (Men of All Colors & Cultures Together, MACCT), Seattle

Our oral history collection is extensive. Some oral histories have transcripts, which are available on the site. A few have been digitized. Most of them are only available on cassette tape – you can listen to the tapes here, or have them digitized by our contractor. Please ask us for more details.

Periodical collections
 Oral histories

16 periodicals match +

46 oral histories match -

OHCNumber: 94-38
Interviewee: Allen (Howard Buckley)
Interviewer: Duggins, Jim
Interview Dates: 10/14/1994 - 10/15/1994
Description: Homophile
TRANSCRIPT

OHCNumber: 94-031
Interviewee: Bremerman, Otto
Interviewer: Erlandson, Everett
Interview Dates: 8/12/1994 - 8/17/1994
Description: Themes/processes: early sexual experiences, family, Navy, relationships, SF police and bars, military draft, alcoholism, recovery, domestic partnership, inheritance issues, AIDS, Castro changing, aging,

Digital Collections

GLBTHS has several digitized collections, which you can look at here: <https://www.glbthistory.org/online-collections>

The collection titles and brief descriptions with links are listed. We highly recommend the **Bay Area Reporter (BAR) archive** as a first stop to many research queries. It is a completely digitized and searchable newspaper, and you can use it to learn about many businesses and figures. There is also a separate BAR site for obituaries. Both are linked from the digital collections page above.

Many of the collections consist of photographs. Some, like the papers of Bruce Decker and Beowulf Thorne, consist of manuscripts and papers. Most of the collections listed are not digitized in their entirety.

There are several collections that have been almost entirely digitized by Gale Cengage for their Archives of Sexuality and Gender database. The database can be viewed at some college campuses and public libraries, and also from the GLBTHS reading room. Even though the original materials are also available here, you may find the database to be an extremely powerful search tool. Again, see the Online Collections link above for a complete listing.

Finally, some of our material about transgender people is scanned and available on the Digital Transgender Archive: <https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/inst/b91dbe86-4192-4c77-b1fc-d1c323b21c8b>

Watching video and listening to audio in the archives

In the archives, we have facilities for viewing VHS, DVD, audio cassette tapes, SD cards, and 3 ½-inch floppy disks. There is also a computer for viewing our digitized videos. If you want to view other formats, such as reel-to-reel film or Beta cassettes, you will have to have them digitized at your expense. This is also true of material on VHS or DVD that we haven't digitized yet. Please consult us, and we'll get you a price quote from our contractor so you can make an informed decision.