

Video Title: We're Still Here: Preserving the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive
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Recording Date: Unknown
Release Date: February 13, 2019
Location: June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives in West Hollywood, California
Interview Length: 00:05:10

[caption: WE'RE HERE TO STAY]

[caption: PRESERVING THE JUNE L. MAZER LESBIAN ARCHIVE]

Voiceover: The June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives in West Hollywood collects the materials of everyday queer women from around Los Angeles and beyond. The collections include a wide range of objects with unique preservation needs, such as newspapers, scrapbooks, pulp novels, T-shirts, protest signs, and vinyl records. As an archive that isn't solely focused on famous or "notable" women, the Mazer preserves documentation of women which would not be preserved anywhere else if it weren't here, where their stories eventually will get told.

The building in which the Mazer is located is owned by the city of West Hollywood. In the last couple years, the Mazer's collections have largely been in storage while the building was being renovated. Though an environmental report informed some archivally sound infrastructural changes during renovation, a collection-level analysis was not conducted, and with the move back to the space from storage, new preservation concerns have arisen. We've identified five of the most pressing preservation concerns and some of their solutions.

[caption: PRESERVATION CONCERNS:

1. SUBJECT FILES
2. UNCATALOGED COLLECTIONS
3. SUNLIGHT
4. COLLECTIONS ON FLOOR
5. REHOUSE OBJECTS]

[caption: SUBJECT FILES]

Voiceover: The first issue is that acidic items in the collection's unique subject files are deteriorating. As some of the most rare and ephemeral items in the Mazer, and a top research priority for visiting scholars, these collections are the Mazer's top priority for preservation. Any of these highly acidic items, such as newsprint, are actively degrading, and items that should be

more stable are deteriorating because of their proximity to acidic items. Non-archival hanging files slump in the file cabinets and snag materials.

[caption: DIGITIZE]

[caption: PROVIDE DIGITAL ACCESS]

[caption: CULL]

[caption: REHOUSE]

Because of this, we recommend digitizing all of the subject files; making them available digitally to researchers to decrease handling of them; culling acidic originals; and rehousing other items in buffered archival folders.

[caption: UNCATALOGED COLLECTIONS]

The second issue is that the collections are currently uncataloged and uninventoried. Some collections have been accessioned into UCLA Library Special Collections; new collections have come in; and collections are not in the same places they were before the renovation.

[caption: BOXES WITH PINK TAGS ARE FROM THE SAME COLLECTION]

In addition, boxes of collections are dispersed around the space. Without knowing exactly what's in the space and where the collections live, it's difficult to make sure everything is accounted for and handled properly. Because of this, we recommend taking steps to catalog the collection.

[caption: 4 STEPS TO CATALOG COLLECTIONS]

1. DIAGRAM SPACE
2. INVENTORY IN EXCEL
3. NAME COLLECTIONS
4. GROUP COLLECTIONS]

Voiceover: First, the space should be diagrammed. Next, the entire collection can be inventoried, and an Excel index of collections can be made to keep track of what collections live where. During the inventory process, unlabeled collections can be named, and collections that need to be rehoused can be identified. After inventorying, all boxes within each collection should be placed side by side.

[caption: DIAGRAM SPACE]

[caption: INVENTORY IN EXCEL]

[caption: NAME COLLECTIONS]

[caption: GROUP COLLECTIONS]

[caption: SUNLIGHT]

The third issue is that the collections in the front room are in bright sunlight, which is harmful to materials. However, that room is used as a community room, where events like book clubs and author talks are held, and it looks out onto a popular West Hollywood street. Curtains would make the room less welcoming and less popular with the community that cares about the archive. Instead of covering the windows, the Mazer could place curtains over the materials in the room that could easily be drawn when people are working with the materials.

[caption: COLLECTIONS ON THE FLOOR]

The fourth issue is that collections are currently on the floor. There is not an active cleaning program, so dust and hair gather on the boxes. There's also an environmental risk of flooding, which threatens the collections. We recommend investing in pallets or moveable baker's racks for in-process collections to keep them off the floor while they await a permanent shelf space.

[caption: PALLETS OR MOVEABLE BAKER'S RACKS]

[caption: REHOUSING]

Finally, many items in the collection need to be rehoused. Items are housed in non-archival storage units with non-archival space-fillers, such as bubble wrap and acidic cardboard. Many items are housed in boxes much too large or too small, so they are unsupported or permanently folded. The biggest issue, though, is that the grassroots archive doesn't have money to buy archivally sound storage materials. To address this, the Mazer can first tag all items to be rehoused which are going to be identified during the inventory process. Second, rehousing can be incorporated into the accessioning workflow so fragile items are rehoused immediately. And, with more education to the public and to community stakeholders about why rehousing materials is important for preserving this important history, and to fulfill their mission of being a space where lesbians live forever, the Mazer can actively solicit funds directly dedicated to the purpose of preservation.

[caption: REHOUSE COLLECTIONS TAGGED DURING INVENTORY]

[caption: ADD REHOUSING TO ACCESSIONING WORKFLOW]

[caption: OUTREACH & EDUCATION]

The Mazer is an important physical gathering space for lesbians to see themselves in the historical record. But as the only remaining space dedicated to lesbians in Los Angeles, it faces increasing pressures to preserve the materials that people come to hold and connect with. Investing in preservation of the materials is the most important way that you can contribute to this ongoing story.

[caption: THANK YOU TO ANGELA BRINSKELE
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS]

[caption: TO SUPPORT THE MAZER VISIT: MAZERLESBIANARCHIVES.ORG/DONATE]

[END OF VIDEO]