Building and Researching Queer Community-Driven Archives: Sustaining Cross-Departmental Partnerships and Intersectional Learning Communities

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores approaches to developing and sustaining queer community-driven archives. Authors utilize autoethnography, critical race theory, and critical archival studies, to interrogate institutional power structures and move towards more equitable and reciprocal learning models. They analyze and discuss original research conducted at queer archives throughout western Oregon using structural, relational, and curatorial lenses. The authors outline the founding of the Washington State University Queer Archives through a reflexive process of developing guiding principles that center relationality, community-driven decision making, counter-storytelling, and self-determination for queer communities. Lessons learned from both research and implementation are tied to collaborative approaches of co-creation with communities invested in queer archival collections and memory work.

Keywords: community-driven archives, queer archives, reflexivity, interdisciplinary collaboration, counter-storytelling

Introduction

We know that a river runs through the archive. Rushing over and between ephemera, photographs, letters, and zines, pulling with it rocks, dirt, and unimaginable consequences of the future. The queer archive is a cultural archive, and queer culture is filled with multiplicities. When imagining the role of the archive and the relationships it bridges between the past, present, and future, we think back to the words of José Esteban Muñoz, whose hope in the potentiality of queerness and in ourselves, propels us forward.

The nature of our interdisciplinary partnership to start a queer archive at Washington State University (WSU) has shaped our approach towards community-driven archives as we have worked towards addressing the absence of queer collections in our university's collections through modes of co-creation and counter-storytelling in the WSU Queer Archives (WSUQA). We share our perspectives from student affairs and education (Cohen-Rodríguez, LGBTQ+ Student Life & Community Coordinator) and archives and special collections (Norton-Wisla, Community Outreach Archivist). During the first year of collaboration from 2022-2023, we found footholds to build the WSUQA and began researching other regional university archives seeking to foster queer archives initiatives and communities of support. Our work to create a queer community-driven archive requires guiding principles informed by examples in our region that center relationality, community-driven decision making, counter-storytelling, and self-determination for queer communities. We argue that it is beneficial for institutions developing queer archives initiatives to work across departmental and disciplinary silos to facilitate environments where marginalized queer and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) communities have a stake in decision-making. It is necessary to move beyond involving queer community members in queer archives only in the roles of donors of materials or researchers, but to engage in developing place-based learning communities with opportunities for co-creation and education.

In this article we begin by sharing the path of how we started a queer archives initiative through an interdisciplinary partnership. We explore our guiding values and inspirations informed by review of relevant literature about community-driven archives, education theory, gender studies, and American studies as they relate to archives and queer liberation. Next, we share field research conducted in 2023 to study examples of three queer community-driven archives throughout our region. Finally, we combine what we learned through our research with feedback we have received from our community engagement events to develop guiding principles tailored to our archive, institution, and community.

In the WSUQA, we refer to "community-driven" archival methodologies and practices. In working to repair gaps, silences, and harm from lack of representation and attention to queer history in our institution's archives, we believe that each step must be driven by relationships with community members. We return to the fact that repair, co-creation, and shared decision-making can involve many collaborative projects beyond just collecting, including finding ways to share resources and knowledge. This wording of "community-driven," and the intention behind it, specifically grows from the innovative work of the Community-Driven Archives (CDA) Initiative at Arizona State University by a team who are engaging with communities in transformative ways (Godoy, 2021). Additionally, we drew on the example of the community-based Oregon State University Queer Archives, a collaborative project that is similarly impacting their communities

and the archival field with invaluable work (Fernández & Boovy, 2016). These two articles and initiatives were with us from the beginning, our heavily highlighted copies providing initial roadmaps, and they are works we continue to reflect on. In sharing our work, we are guided by autoethnographic research methods and recognize that our personal histories, cultures, and political and social contexts are connected to and strengthen what we can accomplish together. In many sections we co-write from our shared perspective as project leads. When we relate an individual perspective or experience, we shift to using first-person narratives indicated by our name in bold text.

We begin by sharing our collective and individual positionalities and connections. We co-founded the WSUQA starting in Fall 2022 and continue to navigate co-leadership and co-creation while gathering resources, bringing on student staff, and facilitating community participation and involvement in decision-making. Throughout our collaborations, we have noted how the work would be impossible without each of our contributions, the involvement of LGBTQ+ community stakeholders, and support from colleagues. We both arrived at WSU and Pullman from elsewhere, and over the past several years have lived in Eastern Washington where we are settlers on the traditional homelands of the Nimíipuu (Nez Perce Tribe) and Palus people. WSU is a land grant university system, a predominantly white institution (PWI) founded in 1890 on 90,081 acres of so-called "public" lands provided by the Morrill Act of 1862, obtained through dispossession of Indigenous lands by violence, coercion, and disregard of treaties (Lee et. al. 2020).

Lotus Norton-Wisla (she/her/hers) // I have worked in the archives field for the last decade, witnessing how primary sources can inspire connection to the past and teach us about ourselves and potential futures - made possible the labor and care of memory workers and the intertwined communities who we serve. I have also seen the limitations, harm, and missed opportunities of our galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAM) institutions and professions that privilege white, settler-colonial, cisheterosexual, and male-dominated history, worldviews, formats, processes, leadership, and audiences. My work centers on relationship-building, collections stewardship, and education. I am interested in supporting partnerships at WSU, with Indigenous nations and community-driven archives efforts. I am a queer white cisgender woman originally from a small town in rural northern Wisconsin (where my family are settlers on Anishinaabe traditional homelands) and descended from a German Jewish family and an Irish, Polish, and German family who were refugees and immigrants to the East coast. I started coming out as queer in my late 20s/early 30s. As I continue to understand my identity, I am continuously grateful to find acceptance and support in my circles of friends, family, and coworkers. Our collaborative work in the WSUQA has been significant to me professionally and personally as a queer person who grew up in a rural setting without many models for life beyond heteronormativity. In my career, I have had the privilege to work with Indigenous colleagues as they steward materials and knowledge in their Tribal departments and communities, or work in higher education, or other GLAM settler institutional settings. I continue to learn from many Indigenous teachers, information professionals and scholars, including but by no means limited to: Omar Poler (Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa), Janice Rice (Ho-Chunk Nation), Cassy Leeport (Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe), Jennifer O'Neal (The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde), Sandy Littletree (Diné, Eastern Shoshone), Cheryl Ellenwood (Nez Perce, Navajo), Selena Ortega-Chiolero (Tarahumara), Monique J. Tyndall (Mohican/Munsee-Lenape/Omaha/Muskogee), Raynella Fontenot (Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana), Cordelia Hooee (Zuni), Vina Begay (Diné), Melissa Stoner

(Diné), Jerrid Lee Miller (Cherokee Nation), and other individuals involved with the Convening Culture Keepers, Tribal Digital Stewardship Cohort Program, Plateau Peoples' Web Portal, Northwest Archivists Native American Collections Roundtable, and the Indigenizing Archival Training project. I share this to emphasize how many aspects of my contributions to our queer community-driven archives work are grounded in what I have learned about collaboration, community-centered work, and critiques of archival practice from Indigenous thinkers. These lessons - active listening, respect, relationality, and reciprocity - have been generously and patiently taught to me in classrooms, on visits to Native nations, at conferences, across dinner tables, and over Zoom calls by information professionals and volunteers, community leaders, scholars, and coalitions of allied workers committed to seeking equitable futures. //

Josie Cohen-Rodríguez (she/they/ella) // I turn to archives, looking for intersectional models for navigating capitalist white settler cisheteropatriarchy, looking for tools towards survival and sustainable communities. In this sense, I find it vital to write through story and autoethnography, as it feels disingenuous to separate myself from a reflexive process of critically engaging with historiography and archives. I am indebted to queer communities and my chosen family on the Palouse, who continually teach, challenge, and inspire me as we collectively work towards fostering queer mutual-aid networks in rural spaces and in the spaces we hold for each other. I approach this work as a Trans/Queer Mexican-American Chicana from the southwestern border town of Yuma, Arizona, which is along the Río Colorado, straddling the borders of California, Arizona, and Mexico, the traditional homelands of the Quechan Tribe. I write as a first generation scholar and second generation immigrant. I work in WSU's LGBTQ+ Center, finding space within the intersections of student affairs, policy work, research, and teaching. My previous training focused on teaching social studies through US/transnational histories and English to speakers of other languages in American public schools. Teacher training instilled in me the importance of culturally responsive curriculum, which drove my interests in the interconnections between the racism of settler capitalism and cisheteropatriarcy. I seek to apply the potentiality of critical race theory (CRT) towards queer liberatory education models. Drawing from the scholarship of Kimberly Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Daniel Solorzano, Tara Yosso, and many other CRT scholars, I seek to continue critically reflecting on why counter-storytelling is vital to sustaining histories that create opportunities for a broad range of students and communities to see themselves reflected. Additionally, this opens up our universities, archives, curriculums, and collective histories to be expansive, instead of exclusive. //

Our collective work on the WSUQA is a team effort with two student employees studying history, Drew Gamboa and Hunter Kearns, who joined the project in Fall 2023. Our work would not be possible without their intellectual contributions and labor. We are indebted to the community members who are part of the WSU LGBTQ+ community and allies who take part in the events we have offered so far including students, coworkers, faculty, staff, and other people in our communities. We are fortunate to have received support and encouragement from leadership in our departments. The work is supported financially in part from 2023-2024 by the Washington Digital Heritage Grant, which is supported with funding provided by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services, and initial funding was provided through WSU's 2023 Transformational Change Initiative grant.

Founding a Queer Archives Initiative Across Departments

Interdisciplinary Collaborations

The mission of the WSUQA is to share untold stories of diverse queer rural life and its interconnections between urban spaces while centering joy, community, and intersectional resistance. This project moves beyond representation towards instilling agency and co-creation with WSU LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and with our broader community to resist the erasure of queer narratives and queer lives. Creating opportunities for community-driven archiving positions queer narratives and histories as valuable to Washington State University, providing opportunities to build community and connection at the institution as well as expand materials in our archival collections. We believe queer community-driven archiving processes and results can contribute to the mutual-goals of student services and the LGBTQ+ Center to provide equitable outcomes and improved retention among queer and trans students.

Richard Delgado's (1989, 1993) scholarship in critical race theory and framework of counter-storytelling informs our approach towards stewarding and curating a broad range of modalities in which queer stories and memories are shared or distributed. Delgado's writings on counter-storytelling are first grounded in the context of race and culture but were expanded through collaborative writing with Tara Yosso (2002) in "Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Educational Research." In this essay, Delgado & Yosso (2002) develop an intersectional lens that "foregrounds race and racism" and pushes to challenge "the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these elements intersect to affect students of color" (p. 24) This framework of counter-storytelling and critical race theory challenges claims that institutional archives are inherently objective and without bias. This research is further supported by archival scholarship in community archives, which explore the "archivist as activist," challenging assumptions as archives and archivists as neutral and apolitical towards more justice-oriented practices (Wakimoto, et al., 2013). Through our interdisciplinary approach, we work towards a holistic and intersectional equity-oriented lens of storytelling that integrates considerations of gender, sexuality, race, class, disability, nationality, and Indigenous sovereignty to facilitate spaces for coalitional counter-storytelling and diverse epistemologies to co-exist in archives.

The importance of counter-storytelling in institutional archives is affirmed by Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995) "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Ladson-Billings research acknowledges the coercive relationship between dominant cultural ideologies that are often perpetuated through educational institutions and the importance of creating learning environments that provide access to education that reflects the diverse identities of our students. We turn to archives to interrogate how dominant ideologies are perpetuated and move towards creating opportunities for co-creation within collaborative learning communities to support student belonging and sense of self-determination.

Norton-Wisla // In my career as an archivist, I've been grateful to work with people and learn from teachers who challenge me to seek wider, more holistic, or differing perspectives and worldviews. I worked at the Library of Congress for a summer fellowship in 2014, the same summer that the Society of American Archivists met in Washington, DC and held the conference reception in the Great Hall. That summer, I felt in awe of the ornate mosaics, statues, and displays celebrating books, literacy, and knowledge. I recall the experience of visiting the Library of Congress Great Hall in February 2020 (six years later) with colleagues in the Tribal Digital

Stewardship Cohort Program, listening to archival professionals from Native nations encounter the Great Hall and challenge the ways that white settler knowledge systems and culture are celebrated while Indigenous knowledge systems and culture are ignored, erased, and subjugated. My colleagues pointed out how the space and decoration of the Great Hall (and many repositories) prioritize the written word above oral transmission, reinforce and privilege Western worldviews and ways of understanding, and center white perspectives and depictions of white people. It is notable that a part of these visits in the program were to start researching collections in federal repositories and museums that need to return home, as copies or through repatriation processes, and the enormous burden of labor and emotional effort on Indigenous information professionals to enter these spaces on behalf of their communities, and often visits by Native nations and communities must happen at their own expense (Ellenwood and Foxworth, 2024; Norton-Wisla, 2022). This is a long and rich field of study and critique, which we only touch on in this writing, but so much more knowledge is available for those interested in Indigenous archives, self-determination, reconciliation, and collaboration including articles by some members of the TDSCP cohort of 2019-2020 (Buchanan, George, Gibson, et al. 2021; Begay, 2023). I also acknowledge the workers at this federal repository and others, who are working with Native nations and reckoning with institutional barriers. Experiences and discussions like this 2020 tour example remind me that as much as archives may have missions of providing access and/or being as open and inclusive as possible, there can be a large gap between these ideals and how people feel upon entering the archives. Archival spaces and practices can be alienating to people in a variety of layered ways, especially people belonging to marginalized BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, and Native nations face unique challenges in goals to assert control over their own histories and materials. The understanding that this alienation can cause serious harm compels me to act with empathy and listen to people's concerns around belonging and representation in archives. Within minutes of meeting Cohen-Rodríguez in 2022 and learning that we both worked at the same university, we talked about the archives where I work. My future collaborator spoke of being "intimidated" by the archives, unsure of how to come do research, unsure if she would be welcome or allowed in the space, or if we would even have anything that they would be interested in researching. I am grateful for her trust and willingness to visit the archives, and vulnerability in sharing their honest assessments of how it felt to visit the archives and encounter LGBTQ+-focused collections (and lack of LGBTQ+-focused collections) - our work would never have started without this first step. //

Queer lives and their voices have historically been absent or resisted in our mainstream and institutional archives and histories, especially in the so-called "Inland Northwest" and "Palouse Prairie." When the question of what LGBTQ+ focused collections already existed within the WSU archives and manuscript holdings, the initial answer from Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) colleagues was "we don't have much," followed by reflection of the potential issues of queer invisibility in description and what might be present but hidden. One key effort to document LGBTQ+ history at WSU was started by Brian Stack in 2019. Stack conducted a research project to search through The Daily Evergreen, WSU's student newspaper, to find stories about gay rights, activism, and discrimination at WSU. Stack's (2019) research based in the archives resulted in the Palouse LGBTQ+ History Project, a key resource with generative outcomes and something that future researchers, employees, and students can build upon. Stack also volunteered to select and organize records for the "Washington State University Gender Identity,

Expression and Sexual Orientation Resource Center Records, 2000-2015," which University Archivist Mark O'English processed in 2021 - an example of one of the few local LGBTQ+ centered archival collections in MASC and an example of collaborative archival labor. In his work, Stack encourages a nuanced view of history through the cycles and waves of activism and oppression that spur change. "One thing I want to stress is, gay history is not necessarily a story of linear progress. It's not necessarily 'everything gets better and better.' We often think of history as moving towards a progressive narrative, but not so much with lesbian and gay history" (Tejero, 2021. We each became independently aware of Stack's work and the content of the Palouse LGBTQ+ History Project in the years before the founding of the WSUQA, and witnessing this project provided us a shared starting point and inspiration for next steps.

The WSUQA partnership began less than a month after we met at the Palouse Pride in the Park Festival in August 2022, part of the annual Pride event series in Moscow, Idaho that brings together over 1,500 attendees from Moscow, Pullman, and nearby rural communities in the Palouse region of Eastern Washington and North Idaho. We exchanged information and in September Cohen-Rodríguez visited Norton-Wisla at the WSU Libraries to do a tour of the archival collections and rare books. We discussed the limited records related to LGBTQ+ communities at and surrounding WSU. This conversation sparked the idea of bringing people together through an event in our archives. This first meeting also sparked curiosity about the possibility of partnering to build a queer archive between the LGBTQ+ Center and WSU MASC.

We connect to Steven Fullwood's thoughts of feeling that he was "in the right place and time to do this work" in New York City at the Schomburg Center in 1999, amidst Black queer cultural and social circles, to "start an archival initiative to collect the universe of Black queer materials" (Fullwood, 2009, p. 240-241). Fullwood's career in building queer Black archives, innovation in the field, and personal involvement in community are a testament to the "life-sustaining" potential of continuing to build underrepresented archives, culture, and history. While our small rural Palouse Prairie communities are far from Fullwood's NYC, we felt an immediate connection, a similar feeling to Fullwood's right place and time, and a shared motivation to start building *something* after that first September meeting. We began by planning our first *Queering the Archives* community engagement event for October, which turned into a continuing community engagement event series. The WSUQA continued to take shape in the following months with a commitment to continue collaborating, hosting events, and involving our communities. Key elements in our relationship-building were the exchange of ideas, curiosity about each of our areas of work, and respect and care for each other's time and capacity. We began meeting bi-weekly to discuss future programming and to share bigger ideas of archival theory, queer history, and community-driven projects from our unique viewpoints.

Cohen-Rodríguez shared about her work in the LGBTQ+ Center and class instruction in a first-year success seminar on the topic queer resilience. Cohen-Rodríguez introduced Norton-Wisla to the 1996 Cheryl Dunye film *The Watermelon Woman,* a piece of New Queer Cinema focused on Black lesbian storytelling, which was part of an assignment in the class. In the film, Dunye weaves together the story of a young Black lesbian artist excavating the silences of Blackness and queerness in the history of cinema, while reflecting on her own identity and relationships. At key moments, Dunye encounters barriers within library and archives systems while searching for the identity of an uncredited Black actress from the 1930s. This film explores the inaccessibility

of archives, erasure and absence of Black queer women, and the difficulty of circumventing the control of white-dominated archives spaces and processes. Norton-Wisla shared current trends in archival theory and examples of leading thinkers in LIS critiquing similar issues around barriers to access, gatekeeping, and racial homogeneity of the archival profession. She sought advice from colleagues and looked to projects centering community collaborations. When hearing about our initial ideas for the WSUQA at an oral history workshop at the 2022 Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums conference, Vina Begay (Diné) the Arizona State University (ASU) Labriola Center Assistant Librarian, introduced Norton-Wisla to Jessica Salow (Assistant Archivist of Black Collections at ASU) who generously offered to meet over Zoom and shared about her work rooted in collaboration with Black communities in Arizona and the groundbreaking work she is a part of in the ASU Community-Driven Archives (CDA) Initiative. The CDA Initiative mission is to "reimagine and transform twenty-first-century academic libraries and archives by dismantling racist power structures that erase and traumatize BIPOC and LGBTQ+ individuals and communities" (Lozano, K.M., Salow, J.; Soto, A. & Torrez, 2023). The initial conversation with Salow led us to closely examine the ASU CDA Initiative website and read the recommended article by Nancy Liliana Godoy (2021) "Community-Driven Archives: Conocimiento, Healing, and Justice."

We learned from Godoy's account of her lived experiences as a Queer Latinx archivist, her work in partnership with community members, and her ideas building on the writings of Queer Chicanx writer Gloria Anzaldúa and other BIPOC and queer scholars. The ASU CDA Initiative has been inspirational, and it serves as a reminder that it is a result of years of work and dedication from BIPOC leadership, staff, and allies, national grant funding, and full-time positions. Another instructive text for our project was "Co-Founding a Queer Archives: a collaboration between an archivist and a professor" by Natalia Fernández and Bradley Boovy (2016), which outlines the beginnings of the Oregon State University Queer Archives and offers lessons in collaboration across departments and in community involvement. These texts were invaluable as we had early conversations about what would be possible in the short and long term. It was important for our team at WSU to take our projects one step at a time and take our broader workloads and responsibilities into account while consistently building the WSUQA. We shared passages from articles and discussed applications to our work, asked questions, attended webinars together, and learned from each other in the process. We continue to return to these foundational texts while adding new literature to the conversation. Carving out the space for intellectual and creative exchange within our busy workloads has been difficult, but entirely necessary for our approach.

Towards Critical Reflexivity, Reciprocity, & Liberatory Pedagogies
Concienzación | Interrogating Institutional Power in Place-Based Archives

> At last, there was the possibility of a learning community, a place where difference could be acknowledged, where we would finally all understand, accept, and affirm that our ways of knowing are forged in history and relations of power.
> - bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

Cohen-Rodríguez // In bell hooks' (1994) *Teaching to Transgress* and Paulo Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I am reminded of the importance of critical reflexivity, *concientización*, and critical consciousness. For me as both an educator and researcher, I take this to

mean that I must work towards recognizing institutional power structures at play and move towards more equitable and reciprocal learning models. In community-based archive work, this means recognizing the power held by universities, the potential risks for transactional extraction from institutionally oppressed communities, a bias towards assimilationist representation, and hierarchical decision making.

Hooks calls us to acknowledge how epistemologies and memories are shaped by relations to power. In this way I am reminded of James C. Scott's (1990) monograph, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* which presents a framework of infrapolitics to acknowledge the often invisible acts of subversion and agency expressed by oppressed peoples.. I think of infrapolitics similarly to infrared light, which reveals what is invisible to the naked eye, and also infrastructure in that it underpins systemic societal power structures. Central to Scott's argument are the distinctions between public and hidden transcripts, in this case transcripts representing a diverse range of records tied to cultural memory. Public transcripts represent the "open interactions between subordinates and those who dominate" while hidden transcripts hold more expansive and nuanced possibilities for understanding marginalized epistemologies and memory, acknowledging and centering the often ignored lived experiences of oppressed peoples. Hidden transcripts, in contrast to the public, examines and gives space to the multiple ways in which marginalized communities create their own ways of knowing, independent from the hegemonic ideologies of their oppressors. In archives, these hidden transcripts are often represented in creative writing, art, zines, or other ephemera where truths can be more safely shared and spoken in ways that are often illegible to those in positions of power.

These distinctions allow for more nuanced understandings of how oppressed communities negotiate hegemonic conditions yet can create and maintain distinct epistemologies separate from their oppressors. Justice-oriented archive work requires acknowledging the role of power in shaping our understandings of history. Power mediates relationships and directly impacts how archives are built and maintained. These frameworks of infrapolitics, public transcripts, and hidden transcripts have shaped how I read the ways in which power functions in archives, often obfuscating queer and BIPOC agencies and modes of resistance. As archival practitioners, we must acknowledge that there is inherent risk when oppressed communities share strategies of survival, particularly with institutions. //

We often reflect on our relationship to land and place as we work at a land grant institution. The Pullman campus of Washington State University, where we are based, is located in a wind-blown tract of inland arid prairie, which is both historically and presently tied to the homelands of the Nimíipuu (Nez Perce) and Palus people. WSU is known for their research in wheat, apples, dairy, and cattle, to name just a few of their agricultural enterprises. Our campus is surrounded by expansive horizons filled with monoagriculture. We are surrounded by rolling wheat hills and beautiful seas of yellow canola in bloom during the spring, a reminder of our university's relationship to the landscape around us, rendering what was once a rich biodiverse prairie into homogenous stretches of industrialized monoculture which is directly tied to the dispossession of Indigenous lands. Queer praxis necessitates a collective reckoning with the role of place-based archives in perpetuating what Tuck and Yang (2012) describe as settler moves towards innocence, and reinforcing what Jodi Byrd (2011) describes as the linear narrative of progression that situates Indianness as primitive and a version of American liberal multiculturalism as the salvation of the nation state.

There is a hegemonic legitimacy and legibility that is granted through participating in institutional archives. It is important to recognize that place-based archives in the United States tend to center white heteropatriarchal settler narratives, and as Roderick Ferguson (2003) reminds us in their monograph, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique,* countering or resisting these narratives are often elusive. Institutional archives perpetuate and create a sense of "nativeness" for communities building a sense of permanence and relationship to the land, while often doing little to acknowledge or materially address the ways in which Indigenous communities were forcibly moved, and the continued violation of Native nation's treaty rights. Reckoning with these irreconcilable tensions requires continual questioning and reflexivity for practitioners, scholars, and researchers.

Many archival institutions are increasingly seeking to collect and share collections relevant to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, while workers remain disproportionately white (84%) and heterosexual (69%) according to the A*CENSUS survey conducted in 2021 (Skinner & Hulbert 2022). Mario H. Ramirez references demographic projections of an increasing BIPOC population and states a glaring problem with the homogeneity of the profession "archivists will be hard pressed to claim relevance for the majority of people living in the United States and will be woefully out of step with the historical future. It is not enough to collect with an eye toward diversity without expanding the ranks of those who do the collecting" (2015, p. 352).

There is a competing duality in the tensions of curating and collecting within institutional archives. In locating relationships to land at WSU, we are struck by dominant discourses and narratives that erase Indigenous, Black, Brown, and queer lives in the region. How do we think of a place-based archive that celebrates expansive sexual and gender diversity in a largely settler community in the middle of wheat fields? Pullman straddles a border placed between Washington and Idaho, and yet Black, Brown, and queer communities have lived and thrived here for decades, since before the founding of the state in 1889 (Boag, 2011; Gamboa, 2020; Lee, 2015; Taylor 1999). Western and U.S.-based approaches to archival documentation, not only the records themselves, but the dominant archival theories and practices, organization, and prominent formats represent a worldview that does not represent all people.

As we engage in the work of building the WSUQA at a land-grant settler institution, on Palus and Nimíipuu land, we must work in ways that respect the specific place-based histories, living cultures, and present-day tribal sovereignty of the Native nations, communities, and people who continue to steward and protect the lands where we are located. Cheryl Ellenwood (Nez Perce, Navajo) and Raymond Foxworth (Navajo) (2024) write about Indigenous material culture, philanthropy, and colonial collecting practices tied to the importance of the Indigenous Data Sovereignty movement in "Data Back: Indigenous Material Culture, Philanthropy, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty." They write that as some colonial museums reposition themselves to collaborate with Native communities, "pathways toward trust and cooperation are long, slow, and require intentional action as well as an increased understanding of the needs, values, and perspectives of Native people themselves" (p. 136). Ellenwood and Foxworth reframe Indigenous material culture as *not* something limited to the past – but as Indigenous data which has always been created and transmitted by Indigenous people and must be maintained and stewarded by Indigenous people in the present and future. Similarly in the archives field, Jennifer O'Neal (2019) lays out key steps for non-Indigenous archivists working towards reconciliation in her chapter in *Af-*

terlives of Indigenous Archives, emphasizing the importance of information professionals respecting Indigenous worldviews, writing "in order for information professionals to implement new non-Western ways of managing Indigenous archives, they must first learn and respect our unique Indigenous histories and our traditional practices in order to center them within archival collections" (p. 50). Kim Christen and Jane Anderson's (2019) article "Toward Slow Archives" shares approaches on meaningful collaborative work between Indigenous nations and settler institutions: "Slow archives demand movement out of standard archival spaces and frameworks and into, toward, and alongside networks of kinship that invite relationality and obligations." The concept of "slow archives" is foregrounded in Indigenous land relationships and sovereignty and valuing multiple viewpoints, worldviews, and temporalities. In considering "slow archives" we can draw lessons from the importance of moving gradually and intentionally in building long term relationships of trust with all LGBTQ+ community collaborators including people in our communities who are Indigiqueer, Two-Spirit, and other people with Indigenous queer identities. Importantly, we also need to recognize that our actions must be in solidarity with the Indigenous archives and information community, both locally and at large - these efforts are linked.

Caswell and Cifor (2016) introduced a theoretical framework for a feminist ethics of care in archives work, exploring the "web of relationships" present in archival work through four affective responsibilities, and the positioning the use of "radical empathy" as a possibility for justice in archives while recognizing its limitations and the influence of power differentials. Godoy further interrogates radical empathy by critiquing the archival profession's tendency to approach care with a white-savior mindset, and acknowledging the harm caused by archivists who use empty words without action. Godoy (2021) asserts that approaches prioritizing "radical empathy" must be implemented with a BIPOC and queer lens: "This means all archivists need to move beyond merely feeling empathy to direct action that redistributes the power and resources needed for BIPOC and queer communities to lead archival projects and storytelling" (p. 6). Godoy's application of Gloria Anzaldúa's seven stages of *conocimiento* to community-driven archives work shows a path of healing and change, with community members making decisions about their own stories. Similarly, Wakimoto, Bruce, and Patridge (2013) explore these power relationships and the importance of reflexivity when they cite Cook to stress how "archivists need to be consciously reflective of their assumptions and choices that influence their archival work" (p. 310). Reflexivity functions as a tool and ongoing practice for meaningfully acknowledging the inherent power in institutional archives towards creating justice-oriented and reciprocal practices of collecting, stewardship, and community engagement.

Institutional archives must actively resist and interrogate their extractive tendencies which have caused harm to historically marginalized communities. In "It's a Trap": Complicating Representation in Community-Based Archives," the authors introduce the concept of "representational subversion" defined as "the ways in which historically minoritized communities balance, value, and respect both their representation in and erasure from society and archives, working through the tensions of honor, cultural nuance, individual value, and community protection" (Gabiola, Brilmyer, Caswell, & Zavala, 2022, p. 78). This concept can apply to the varied ways individuals who are part of systemically oppressed communities exercise agency to protect themselves and others in their community. In other words, communities are in the position of individually and collectively navigating the nuanced spectrum of choices present between being represented and

visible in archives and being absent and invisible. It's important to recognize that power is multi-directional and does not only function through top-down approaches. Community archives and community-driven archives demonstrate one of the many forms in which communities exercise agency through the development of a "community of records," a term coined by Bastian and later utilized by Roeschley, and Kim (2003; 2009). A community of records for oppressed communities holds the potential for creating and sustaining subversive epistemologies and ways of knowing through the creation of a "multi-tiered process... that begins with the individual creator but can be fully realized only within the expanse of an entire community of records" (p. 32).

Decentralizing institutional power through community-driven decision making is an approach to mitigate power imbalances for the communities who have systematically been erased through archival silences. When trying to build reciprocal relationships in community-based archives, archivists and researchers have a responsibility to create a sense of agency and co-creation with community members and donors invested in queer histories and memories. It's important to think of these archival spaces as living spaces that hold a multiplicity of dreams, hopes, aspirations, and visions for a future through collective pasts. In a collaborative article cowritten by Caswell, Migoni, Geraci, and Cifor (2013), the authors offer a framework for understanding the ontological, epistemological, and social impacts of community archives. This three-part framework offers ways to understand how communities engage in archival materials and specifically, the impact of representation in community archives towards enacting belonging, co-creation, and agency.

When thinking of queer community-driven archives, it is important to consider how the archive functions as not only a resource, but also as a space for building what hooks (1994) describes as a "learning community" for researchers, educators, students, and our neighbors. Communities must be actively involved in negotiating representation, visibility, and invisibility in ways that resist co-optation and leave room for subversion of power and institutional representations of queerness. Central to these methodological approaches, we stress the importance of Godoy's (2021) framing of radical empathy that acknowledges and moves towards decentering institutional power, requiring critical reflexivity for practitioners and communities invested in modes of counter-storytelling and agency.

Researching Community-Driven Archives in Western Oregon
Structural, Relational, and Curatorial Approaches

In July 2023 we traveled to Oregon for five days of research activities and interviews at queer archives. Our research brought us to Oregon Historical Society's (OHS) collections gathered and supported by the Oregon Queer History Collective (previously GLAPN) in Portland, Oregon; the University of Oregon's Lesbian Land manuscript collections in Eugene, Oregon; and Oregon State University's Queer Archives in Corvallis, Oregon. Before our trip, we developed a list of interview questions and outlined collections that we were interested in researching. As we were only a year into developing the WSUQA, we were interested in exploring pre-existing models of community-based archives. Throughout the archives we visited in Oregon, projects spanned from 10, 20, and 25 years since their founding. Beyond this range of time, each archive that we visited incorporated approaches towards community and place-based archiving that we were eager to engage with.

Our scope for this research was broad and multifaceted. We approached our research with three lenses. The first was a structural lens to see how these archives were both created and sustained. We also utilized a relational lens to learn more about the people who made these projects possible and how each organization integrated community engagement into their work. Finally, a curatorial lens to reflect on the scope, tone, and variety of materials contained within the collections held within an archive. As practitioners, we sought to find models and lessons that would support our work towards expanding interdisciplinary and collaborative partnerships among libraries, faculty, and student affairs staff towards equitable community-based archiving efforts.

Oregon Queer History Collective Materials at Oregon Historical Society

The Oregon Queer History Collective (OQHC) has worked with the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) for over two decades to donate collections assembled by OQHC members and to connect donors directly with OHS. Both organizations serve as partners with Portland State University on oral history coursework. The OQHC formed in 1994 to "discover and publicize the history of sexual minorities in the Pacific Northwest," and continues to meet and hold events today with members across generations who are passionate about LGBTQ history. The OQHC went through a renaming process in 2023 - the organization was formerly known as the Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN). Some of the collections we focused on during our visit were the C.C. Slaughters Records (Mss 2988-6), Gay and Lesbian Organizations Collection (Mss 2988-4), Portland Gay Softball League Records (Mss 2988-29), Gay and Lesbian History Collection (Mss 2988-1), and Multnomah County Wedding Album Project Records (Coll. 62) - all but the last collection were donated through the relationship with OQHC/GLAPN.

In the Gay and Lesbian Organizations Collection, we found the organizing manuals, flyers, notes, and other guiding documents for the group R.A.T.S. (Radical Activist Truth Squad), which outlined their approaches to non-hierarchical decision making towards direct action against the political and social causes of the AIDS crisis: homophobia, sexism, racism, classism (1990-1993). Their manual outlines the social and cultural practices of queer radical activism in a time of systemic queer erasure. When we can view the records that R.A.T.S. members created, we can see these queer creators as active agents in history, reacting to and resisting oppressive forces towards supporting their community, rather than being represented as objects whose history was dictated by dominant oppressive forces. This agency towards change is powerful to see and hold, inspiring us to find ways to preserve histories of social movements.

Norton-Wisla // As researchers we held in our hands legacies of interconnected organizations fighting for gay rights and liberation. We noticed the similarities to current times that feel all at once frustrating and discouraging that parts of our society have not moved on from the *same* homophobia, transphobia, and bigotry from decades past, yet recognition and hope that there are these blueprints and breadcrumbs left by activists for a better future, and evidence that people had vibrant lives, victories, euphoric moments, and fun, all within their work towards equity. As an archivist helping others do research, it is rare that I personally spend time researching primary sources. I felt a distinct role reversal and my perspective widening while carrying out research. At times feeling emotional while sitting beside my colleague finding examples of the work we hope to gather at our home institution, as well as at times feeling recognition of myself, friends, and students I have known in a place far from my home. Over and over again on our research

trip, I was overwhelmed with a feeling of connection between the past and the present, and across distance, feeling the gaps in time dissolving. //

The concept of connections across generations came up in our conversation with Oregon Historical Society Library Director, Shawna Gandy, when discussing oral histories held at the archives created in collaboration with senior capstone classes at Portland State University. Guided by their instructor, small groups of students interview members of the LGBTQ+ community in Portland, individuals to interview are often recommended by GLAPN. Students visit OHS to research collections which can help inform the interviews they conduct, and the final recordings are then included in OHS collections. Gandy shared:

> At the end, we've been invited to come hear their final presentations, where they do a small snippet of the interview and talk about it. And the really wonderful thing about it is that then there are also GLAPN members who are there. So you have students and you have elders from the community who create this dialog. And it's just fabulous. Really fabulous. I think [it's profound] for students to make those connections. First of all, to understand there's a real depth in this history. And there are people who have come before them and have paved the way and what they have encountered. But then to have folks there in the audience appreciating what they're doing and then sharing their experiences and asking them really good questions and giving that perspective is incredibly valuable. (S. Gandy, research interview, July 25, 2023).

Learning about the PSU capstone course maintained through support across institutions and generations was one of the highlights of the visit. It shows an exchange, and the power of communities coming together across generations to learn from each other through their shared histories through counter-storytelling. The experience seemed beneficial for students, community members, and community memory through the collaboration with the archives - centering community-based and place-based learning tied to Portland queer history. Hearing about how the interviews are used in these gatherings affirmed our thoughts about the importance of relationality in bringing audiences together through community engagement workshops and sparked ideas about future collaboration with faculty teaching classes at our university.

Oregon Lesbian Land Manuscript Collections at University of Oregon

We next visited the Special Collections in the Knight Library at the University of Oregon. We had set aside an ambitious number of records to look through in the half-day that we had available. The Knight Library holds a series of collections that document the Oregon Lesbian Land movement in nearly 700 containers curated by Linda Long, Curator of Manuscripts at the Knight Library Special Collections and University Archives, starting in the late 1990s. These collections contain a wellspring of materials and stories of women moving across the country to Southern Oregon, creating intentional lesbian communities, communes, and women-owned and collectivist-oriented businesses outside of dominant cultural frameworks throughout the 1970s-90s. These collections contain a vast range of manuscripts, photos, oral histories, and art that document the stories and voices of the individuals that comprised this radical and bold community. We ended up looking at only a few boxes from a fraction of the Oregon Lesbian Land manuscript collections including the records of SO CLAP! (Southern Oregon Country Lesbian Archival Project)

(Coll 266), the Corinne, Tee A. Papers (Coll 263), and the Ruth Mountaingrove Papers (Coll 309).

The papers of artist Tee A. Corinne captured our focus, showing us not only Corinne's life and work, but the vibrant community around her from the late 1960s to 2000s. Only months before, we were hearing from our students who were hungry for diverse histories on the Palouse, thinking of queer art, fashion, farming, dance parties, snapshots of day-to-day life. Suddenly we were in Eugene, up to our elbows in art, writing, collage, and photography that represented the lesbian communities that Corinne was intimately involved in creating and supporting. In the collections at the UO Special Collections, we also saw parallels and new avenues of questions we've thought about in our own community - why here? In what ways are the drivers (political, economic, climate) for queer diaspora to the pacific northwest similar or different between the Palouse and Eugene? How and why do queer people choose to live on the Palouse? Why don't we know more about queer histories of the Palouse?

After some hours of research and reflection, we had the opportunity to speak with Long, who is responsible for bringing attention to the Oregon Lesbian Land collections when she first started at the Knight Library (Allison-Bunnell, Long, Bond, et al., 2024). This began a sustained effort to reach out to other women in the community to expand collections, while finding resources and support to make the collections available. Our conversation spanned over Long's many duties and rewarding experiences across her career at UO. Long spoke about what she is most proud of in her work:

> If you do this kind of collection development and archival work, you have to be kind of an activist, you know. And so I guess I would say the thing I'm most proud of is saving that history of the lesbian lands—if we didn't have these collections, then I really think that history would have been lost. (L. Long, research interview, July 26, 2023).

Long's steadfast work on these collections counteracted the inattention and inaction that might have rendered the collections under-described, under-used, and without the context of the related collections that were donated. Importantly, the relationships that Long built took time and personal investment. When we hear their stories, we can understand the ways our colleagues have carved out space dedicated to queer archiving and how they actively stand with the communities they are working with as activists, community members, and allies. Long looks back on her career and treasures the professional relationships and friendships she's cultivated. She feels pride in her work as an activist within her organization to save the history of the lesbian land collections, female science fiction writers, and other important histories. Today, the collections are some of the most highly used, with researchers traveling from across the world.

This visit gave us a window to see what can be possible in donor relationships when care is prioritized. Long's work is deeply relational, the depth of collections reflects her connections and trust built in community over time. Seeing efforts within the lesbian land community to document their history and share their practices through archives, art, writing, and performance shows the possibilities in a multiplicity of forms of collective political action and memory. The people in these communities designed and implemented frameworks for living outside of dominant narratives that continue to resonate with queer communities, activists, and scholars today. The range

of ideas, impressions of the artist's world, and profound delight we experienced as researchers while exploring the visual art in the Knight Library collections help us to reaffirm the importance of aesthetic modalities as an essential format to be collected and preserved. When conceptualizing archives of memory, we must move to expand traditional approaches to history that often exclude or seek to limit the significance of queer epistemologies that are realized through art. Long's relational and curatorial work at UO helps us envision the possibilities of an expansive queer archive that holds space for visual art which can often speak to what can't always be spoken.

Oregon State University Queer Archives

The final visit was to the Valley Library at Oregon State University. We researched queer archives collections in the Special Collections and Archives Research Center including records of the Corvallis Lesbian Avengers, the Queer History Research Collection, Ellen and Carolyn Dishman Papers, the Student Club and Organization Records (RG 276), and Pride Center (RG 236). The OSU Queer Archives (OSQA) began in 2014, nearly a decade ago, with a mission "to preserve and share the stories, histories, and experiences of LGBTQ+ people within the OSU and Corvallis communities" (Fernández & Boovy, 2016). The mission statement is followed by three commitments that the work is rooted in: "Fostering intersectional community activism, resisting erasure of queer and trans narratives, and positioning the collection as a space to imagine alternative futures for LGBTQ+ communities and people." We were eager to see collections we had started reading about nearly a year before visiting, and speak with Natalia Fernández, Associate Professor, Curator of the Oregon Multicultural Archives and OSU Queer Archives, and her colleagues from Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and the Pride Center. We felt their interdepartmental collaboration and co-leadership on the OSQA mirrored how we were structuring our work at WSU.

When we think back to our research combing through the OSU Queer Archives, some of the strongest memories are the excitement we felt and expressions of joy we found in the collections. While some records in archives are necessarily serious, dry, and sometimes somber - many of the records we browsed through in OSU's Queer History Research Collection burst out of the folders with artistry, humor, urgency, and glitter. This collection is an "artificial collection," or a collection created by archivists (with the community in this case) that holds a range of assembled items that draw from many topics to create a whole. Examples include event posters, printouts of Facebook events and comments, materials produced during OSQA queer art events using photocopies of archival materials. When a section of the Queer History Research Collection becomes substantial enough to warrant its own collection, for example, records from SOL, the LGBTQ+ Multicultural Support Network student group at OSU, then it can be separated. Browsing this collection brought some of the most vivid impressions of campus life and student views and showed intersectional connections present at the OSU campus.

When we spoke with Natalia Fernández and Cindy Konrad (OSU Pride Center Director) together, we were eager to discuss the tone of their collections from each of their perspectives. Konrad brought up the concept of the collections providing "counter-narratives" to how the history of the university is told (research interview, July 27, 2023). Fernández reflected on the legacy of advocacy and hope that the collections can provide to students:

I think naturally the tone of the collection overall is just one of advocacy…that legacy [of] the groups that have been on campus, the work that they've done, the struggles that they overcame. I think that there's a lot there in terms of the struggle, but I think overall there is also a tone of hope. I hope that's part of what can be so powerful for students - for them to see back of what students their age were doing twenty, thirty years ago, and the impact that they made and to see that progress. And there is still more to do and things are really challenging right now. But for them to know that there is a foundation that they're building upon can be very powerful. (N. Fernández, research interview, July 27, 2023).

These ideas were reminiscent of what our WSU students, staff, and community members at community engagement events brought up when raising the subjects they were most interested in learning about from history, and the questions they would want to ask queer alumni, staff, and faculty. We can look to the work at OSU in progress for the last decade, and see examples of outcomes that we hope to see in the future of our work: students and community members knowing that their stories and lives are valued and necessary for generations to come, feeling pride about the impacts they have had in their community, and recognition of positivity and happiness that the community experiences, creates, and deserves.

Fernández and Konrad (2003) value the partnerships created over the last ten years as a marker of success in their queer archiving efforts - including the strong connection with each other. Fernández is most proud of the relationships, in our interview she reflected:

We've built that network of trust and community, the archives are both the space where people know that they can come and feel welcome and feel seen, but also feel that they are able to critique and say why isn't this here and what's missing?...[The archive] might ebb and flow for different reasons, but there's enough strength there that it's never broken. [The archive is] still there and it will continue.

Konrad (2023) added:

When I have been working with students with the archival materials they have found…I've never heard people say, "You don't have this." I've always heard people say, "We don't have this." It's a thing that feels like it's formed by the community. Like it's not just like [the archivist] doing things. I think it's really powerful that it feels like a thing that's owned and cared for by the community. (p. ##)

A concept we have tried to keep at the front of our work is operating in ways that are community-driven, rather than extractive. As we visited other institutions, we learned about how our colleagues let community priorities guide their actions. Fernández prioritizes clarity and understanding in explaining to donors how interviews and other collections will be made available to researchers, and the reality of anyone being able to access public archives, while making decisions for the safety of the LGBTQ+ community. Fernández described her work supporting Trans Story Circles on campus, originally recording the sessions for the archives - to fill a gap that was notably missing. The organizers felt it was important for the Trans Story Circles to be by and for

the OSU trans community, so Fernández would leave the room for the conversations, only doing the technical steps of completing release statements, ensuring the facilitators knew how to use the equipment, and collecting equipment at the end. In 2020 amid the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the story circle meetings moved to Zoom and the participants felt the recording component should be stopped, and the archives respected this decision. This story shows the power in saying no, and the power in setting up projects and spaces by and for the community sharing the stories and having trust that community voices will be respected and upheld. From listening to this example, we saw that our colleagues in the OSQA value the relationship over anything else, and that they can be flexible to embrace the shifts that come with being in a lasting relationship.

There are traces of community engagement and collective stewardship in OSQA. As we paged through the Queer Historical Research Collection, we found artifacts from events such as *Glitter in the Archives,* where participants utilized copies of archival materials for creative projects (1980-2022). Archival materials were reprinted, collaged, and reused in mixed media formats with glitter, ink, and paint. Zines, art, ephemera, and other artifacts reflected active community engagement from students with archival materials. It is in these materials where we saw some of the most diverse range of voices and perspectives reflected. There were photos and zines that read, "My queerness is not colonized," "Colonization stole our language but it can't steal our identities," an image of two women kissing and calling each other habibi, which translates from Arabic to "my love." There were zines and writings that read affirmations such as, "Brown, Queer, Femme: Your beauty is NOT second to white ideals of beauty," and "My QTPOC (queer trans person of color) Voice." Fernández, Boovy, and Konrad's approaches to collecting, care, and facilitation in the OSQA have informed our approaches at WSU. As we discuss future collection development, we are inspired by the community-driven processes at OSQA which center consent, agency, and self-determination of queer community members towards co-creation and collective ownership in archives.

Embedding Community Engagement as Praxis
Facilitating Co-Creation and Collective Ownership

Cohen-Rodríguez // I think back to Audre Lorde's (1984) statement that "without community, there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression" (p. 112). Lorde argued for the importance of solidarity with others across difference such as race, gender, sexuality, and class when existing outside of the dominant norms of an oppressive society. To sustainably move outside of dominant structures and oppressive understandings of culture, you must not go alone but in community. Lorde identifies the importance of our agency in defining how we choose to engage in society and the cultures we co-create and define with each other. These coalitions create their own cultural institutions and norms that must be navigated and negotiated by the individuals who make up the whole. I reflect on the role that kinship has played in my life as I have worked towards building a chosen family in a new place so far from blood relatives. My community has given me strength and continues to expand my ways of thinking while also holding space for me in times of need. I see similar communities created among my students and colleagues that live in the rural spaces we occupy on the Palouse. I want these communities to be remembered and for traces to be left behind for those who come

after us. Through our continued conversations at WSU with students, faculty, staff, and community members, and through our research at queer archives throughout the pacific northwest, I've found myself reflecting on the potentiality contained in the many histories of liberatory struggle, and the worlds that are possible together. //

We started building our interdisciplinary learning community beginning in October 2022 through our first community engagement workshop, "Queering the Archives: Deconstructing Archival Silences." In this workshop, we collaboratively explored the impact and driving factors of "archival silences" or gaps in historical documentation that lead to this erasure of queer narratives and lives. Central to this first workshop was inviting a broad range of students, faculty, staff, and community members into our archives to see what we could find. Our process was relational, building a team of volunteers interested in learning more about LGBTQ+ histories at our university and in our region. Cohen-Rodríguez and that team of student volunteers conducted a broad audit and pulled all the items that were currently findable in the archives - filling the tables in the archives with documents, photographs, books, underground comics, poems, and letters, yet these materials represented less than .02% of MASC collections.

Even within the materials present, attendees noticed the lack of stories and histories from the perspectives of queer and trans people themselves, only a small amount of records relevant to local history of WSU and the Palouse region, and the overrepresentation of white-centered narratives that did not address intersectional issues. For example, some of the largest collections by page count were hundreds of letters of complaint against measures that would establish protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation (Office of the President: W. Glenn Terrell Records, Board of Regents Letters). We separated these and other items containing homophobic perspectives so attendees would have the choice to engage with them. Many students decided to read through the complaints, the content was at times difficult to read and gave them an important window into past opposition to gay rights at WSU. They also drew parallels to the rhetoric and tactics in attacks on queer and trans rights today. These findings led us to move towards an initiative to build more inclusive and equity-oriented representations of queer narratives, lives, and memories. The first workshop relied on a relational approach to begin sharing about the event, relying mostly on word of mouth to bring people together. It was the beginning of engaging in counter-storytelling through community conversations, by taking stock of what narratives were represented and what might be missing, both in the WSU archives and what individuals had learned about history in a larger sense through the educational systems they were part of.

Our first community engagement event centered an archival logic focused on discovery, a concept which K.J. Rawson (2009) discusses in their article, *Accessing Transgender // Desiring Queer(er?) Archival Logics*. In this piece, Rawson examines a spectrum of archival logics which exist in institutional, professional, and grassroots archives to explore how grassroots archives often subvert traditional ways of providing "satisfaction" - a term which can mean "efficiency and predictability" in navigating and accessing records in institutional and professional settings. On the other hand, grassroots or community archives prioritize a "discovery" where the collections and ways they are organized invite researchers towards non-linear paths of engaging in archival research. This first event, focused on deconstructing archival silences, was structured through organic opportunities for students to sift through a broad range of collections, bringing out *every-*

thing that these student volunteers had found in the archives. While it was less efficient than having archivists, faculty, and staff curating materials, our process of communal discovery fostered a broader sense of collective ownership and agency over what was curated for the event, and later added to our WSU Queer Archives LibGuide (2023).

We are proud of this process of co-creation for this LibGuide as it illustrates community investment in having these collections and materials accessible for the broader community. We aimed to add efficiency for researchers interested in WSU's collections, as well as providing a tool to help staff quickly support researchers in finding materials. It is important that we see the research guide as an unfinished tool, that there will be more to add and discover. In this example, and throughout our collaborative works, we have found it helpful to find a blend or balance of institutional archival logics and grassroots archival logics. This is a continual process of negotiation, with push and pull within interconnected relationships of trust, seeking to center the needs and values of the communities we support.

The process of co-creation with our students and community members reminds us how powerful it is to see your community represented in history and feel connected to a legacy that you can carry on. Caswell (2021) explains in *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work* "it feels good to see one's self and one's community robustly and accurately represented in archives after the experience of being absent, underrepresented, or misrepresented. 'Look, I exist!' is a joyful affirmation" (p. 101). This contrasts with finding only the silence of what is missing in archives or feeling disappointment when materials are few in number or lack depth and nuance.

Our students, faculty and staff, and community members started encountering and wrestling with these concepts while engaging with tangible primary sources in October, which led us into our next community engagement workshop in Spring 2023 "Cultivating Community-Driven Narratives" where the community was invited to take part in a discussion. Small groups responded to prompts: What would they like to learn about queer history in our region? What should be documented now, for future generations? Who should be at the table in community-driven archiving efforts? The group of 30 people was eager to share their thoughts and opinions about subject areas, leadership and community involvement, and issues of privacy, safety and ownership. Groups identified the need to show the joy in their lives, along with struggles.

This event was heavily grounded in the principles of community-driven decision making and of agency, self-determination, & subjectivity - we wanted to hear about peoples' questions and concerns, and how they felt a queer archives project should operate, who should be involved and what history should be included. We collected data from the small group discussions on each of the questions, and while we tracked how many groups came to similar themes and topics within their conversations in Fig. 1, the group came together as a whole to discuss all ideas with equal weight and respect. The feedback from the single event is not exhaustive, and we can also use this feedback to examine what was not immediately at the surface in these conversations and who we might reach out to for future collaboration. We also collected information about considerations and concerns that were raised specific to documenting queer lives and stories in archives.

Topics and Suggestions (Bold subheadings for combined categories of individual group entries.)	Number of Groups
• Indigenous perspectives; pre-colonial Indigenous queer history • Intersectionality and BIPOC queer histories (with additional specificity in Black queer history; Latinx/Chicanx queer history)	4 of 4 Groups
• Joy and positivity • **Art and creative works:** visual art, literature poetry, film, performances • **Records documenting daily life:** journals, candid photos, zines, posters/flyers, letters, documentaries, media • Local queer history, community members	3 of 4 Groups
• Trans stories and history • Rural life • Fashion • Queer farmers, agriculture • **Parts of our community:** students, staff, faculty, community members • Documentation of injustice with the archives	2 of 4 Groups
• **Identities, Audiences, and Collaborators:** Ace/demi; intergenerational, queer elders; Local organizations; Alumni; Businesses • **Topics:** Labor, Health; Policies; Flagging • **Content and formats:** Interviews, VODs • Other attempts like this to archive history	1 of 4 Groups

Fig. 1

A common thread from each of the groups was the idea of seeking out pre-colonial Indigenous histories and prioritizing BIPOC perspectives and project involvement as top interests and priorities in queer community archives work. It was energizing to see so much interest in a diversity of stories and heartening to hear recognition of the importance of shared decision-making especially when telling BIPOC stories. In our setting at a university, it will be important to work in existing relationships while developing new ones, and respect structures like WSU Executive Policy 41,

the Policy on Tribal Engagement, Consultation, and Consent for Joint WSU-Tribal Research Activities and Projects (2021). It is essential to avoid misappropriation of Indigenous stories and data and to avoid repeating mistakes of past archival collecting practices which ignore sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous communities in service of extractive collecting goals. We also can think about reciprocal relationships, and how sometimes the best way we can work together in solidarity is to learn how we can support similar and parallel goals around archives/history/information needs of BIPOC-centered student groups, student centers, and community organizations.

The third community engagement workshop occurred in October 2023: "Queering the Archives: Preserving Memories Through Stories Told and Retold." For this event, we invited our two student employees, Drew Gamboa and Hunter Kearns, to plan and lead the event. We offered assistance and feedback, provided past event schedules and documentation, and supported logistics and food. The students chose archival materials to display in the reading room organized by theme and planned a part of the evening for discussion and feedback to be applied to upcoming oral history interviews. Participants shared ideas for questions they would want to ask queer elders and ideas that came up when browsing through the displayed materials. Many questions or topics became part of our question bank for the interviews that occurred later that semester. This was another opportunity to center the principle of counter-storytelling to show how oral histories can provide a medium for queer people to tell their own stories and relate lived experiences, and a direct way that community-driven decision making informed the implementation of the project. Future events will be shaped by leadership and cooperation of student workers, the student advisory board, and MASC and LGBTQ+ Center staff.

These community engagement events function as opportunities to share not only archival collections with our community, but crucially serve as a space to invite community co-creation, feedback, and collective ownership for the development of the WSUQA. Each event offers opportunities for feedback and input on direction for the project, allowing us to continually check-in and respond to the needs, interests, and concerns of our communities.

Intentionality in Developing Guiding Principles for the WSU Queer Archives
Relationality, Community-Driven Decision Making, Counter-Storytelling, & Agency

As we have worked towards researching queer archives in our region and integrating community feedback into the WSUQA, we realized the importance of developing tailored guiding principles that respond to our collective responsibilities as memory workers. In developing these principles, we researched interdisciplinary community-oriented scholarship and worked towards adapting these principles to our specific community needs. In critical archives scholarship, we considered the applications of the Reciprocity in Researching Records Collaborative which created nine Principles of Mutually Beneficial Relationships between academic researchers and community archivists including: relational consent, mutual benefit, investment, humility, accountability, transparency, equity, reparation, and amplification (Caswell, Douglas, Chow, et al., 2021). Additionally, we considered the interdisciplinary lens of the 6 R's of Indigenous Research, a framework for Indigenous research principles built on work by Kirkness and Barnhardt and others which include: respect, relationship, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility, and representation

(Tsosie et al., 2022). Through engaging with these foundational interdisciplinary community-oriented principles, we have found it helpful to develop our own guiding principles which integrate our community-driven archival praxis to use within the context of big-picture planning, collecting, student employment, and event-development. In our work we apply 1) a Relational Approach, 2) Community-Driven Decision Making, 3) Counter-Storytelling, and 4) Agency, Self-Determination, & Subjectivity. Below we expand on these principles and practical applications:

1) *Relational Approach*
   - Slow process of intentionality and reflexivity.
   - Focused on building relationships and sustainable partnerships between MASC, the LGBTQ+ Center, academic departments, students, and regional archives.
   - Student employees working in both locations: the LGBTQ+ Center and MASC.

2) *Community-Driven Decision Making*
   - "Queering the Archives" Community Engagement Workshop Series.
   - Integrating feedback from each event into our work.
   - Inviting students, faculty, staff, and community members to participate.
   - Creating funding for student positions such as undergraduate/graduate internships, graduate research assistantships, and a student advisory board.

3) *Counter-Storytelling*
   - Expanding narratives of LGBTQ+ communities.
   - Increasing understanding of existing collections and history.
   - Conducting equity oriented oral history interviews.
   - Focusing on agency of queer communities through social movements.

4) *Agency, Self-Determination, & Subjectivity*
   - Centering agency, privacy, and consent in collections.
   - Expanding scope beyond "traditional" archival materials.
   - Holistic collecting approaches including visual arts, literature, videos, zines, ephemera, and other creative works.
   - Composite collections in addition to traditional single-creator collections.

These principles are informed by the scholarship we have engaged in, lessons learned from field research at other regional community-driven archives, and direct feedback from our campus community through our community engagement workshop series. Although these principles are broken up as distinct principles, they often overlap and work in complementary ways. Our relational approaches are grounded in educational theory and the importance of learning communities, in addition to a practice to what Christen and Anderson (2019) describe as a "slow archives" approach. Early in the development of the WSUQA, Cohen-Rodríguez and Norton-Wisla sat

down with a dear colleague and collaborator, assistant professor June T. Sanders, to discuss a dilemma we were facing as we felt pressured to move our project forward quickly and in a direction that felt disingenuous to our core values. Sanders reminded us of the importance of moving slowly and intentionally, challenging us to remain true to our commitments to community-driven decision making and collaborative events. We often think back to this early discussion as an example of moving slowly, building relationships, and the importance of saying no, and how this serves towards building sustainable partnerships.

As we previously discussed, our community engagement events function as spaces to invite community-driven decision making for the direction of the WSUQA. Although early events relied on student volunteers, we have received support through our cross-departmental efforts to provide mixed funding to sustain paid student opportunities to distribute organizational efforts and decision making. Funding sources continue to be in flux in these early stages and this is constantly a challenge we navigate, but initial grant funding helped create opportunities which allowed us to move towards establishing sustainable funding for student positions. Paid student positions are crucial for acknowledging the labor of our students, we are indebted to our students' contributions and are obligated to create meaningful professional development opportunities and avenues for co-creation as we move towards archiving and preserving community memory.

Our students and broader campus communities have been central to challenging archival silences and continually push us to find creative ways to foster opportunities for counter-storytelling in our archives through our community engagement events. Through our field research at the Oregon Historical Society/Oregon Queer History Collective, University of Oregon, and Oregon State University, we found models for counter-storytelling from a diversity of mediums and modalities such as oral history interviews conducted by trained archivists to those done by undergraduate students, collections that contained expansive visual arts, and collections where students and archivists were directly involved in donating and contributing to the archives. The breadth of regional work related to queer history in our region demonstrates that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to memory work, and that a variety of approaches create more meaningful opportunities to tell subversive narratives. Counter-storytelling functions as a way to push beyond singular approaches to archiving and instead challenges us to think of memory work in more expansive ways.

Finally, as we consider agency, self-determination, and subjectivity, we return to Godoy's (2021) call that radical empathy moves towards distributing power, resources, and decision making so that communities may lead projects, foster agency, and co-creation. Reparative work requires the realization of agency for the communities that are impacted, demanding that these communities are not rendered as objects but instead as subjects capable of self-determination. In this way, we must recognize and respect the contributions, concerns, and decisions of the communities we engage with.

We present our processes for developing our guiding principles to share the importance of directly responding to and engaging in collaborative approaches with communities invested in archival collections and memory work. Our approach is multidirectional and interdisciplinary, moving towards integrating a variety of perspectives to foster a learning community invested in stewarding a diverse collective of queer memory in our region.

Linking Pasts to Present, Imagining New Futures, & Building Coalitions
Conclusion

Throughout this article, we have presented and explored a variety of approaches to community-driven archives. Central to our approach has been our cross-departmental partnership between the LGBTQ+ Center in Student Affairs and the Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections in the WSU Libraries. This partnership has sparked creativity and sustainable approaches to embedding community engagement into regular programming, fostering more equitable and reciprocal learning models. We advocate that community-driven archives must work towards collaborative approaches to stewarding collections pertaining to institutionally oppressed communities in order to actively resist extractive and harmful tendencies that have been historically enacted towards erasure.

Our work to create the WSUQA has been shaped and guided by lessons we've learned from engaging in interdisciplinary scholarship across critical archival studies, critical race theory in education, gender studies, and American studies, with each field offering distinct and necessary interventions that address the complex web of intersectionality inherent in our work. Queer memory work is tied to queer liberation, requiring solidarity and coalition building across a broad and diverse range of communities.

Queer archives throughout the Pacific Northwest give us glimpses of lessons learned by communities dreaming of better worlds. The archive can be a vessel for hope and a tool towards the preservation of these traditions, struggles, and joys, so they can continue to be passed onto future generations. These values and reproduction of queer cultures are the heart of a queer archive. The archive can be a tool towards erasure and silencing, but it can also function as a mechanism for preservation and continuity. Our research at queer archives throughout Oregon affirmed and expanded what we thought was possible in developing the WSUQA. We think of the R.A.T.S. organizers in Portland, Oregon, the Lesbian Land Movement in Southern Oregon, and student activists at OSU, as part of a long legacy of resistance and co-creation in queer communities. We found communities throughout the Pacific Northwest invested in cultivating intentional place-based queer archives that held separate, yet interconnected histories of queer stories and experiences. We found a broad range of structural, relational, and curatorial approaches to developing and sustaining queer archives which informed the guiding principles we later developed for the WSUQA.

Community-driven archival practices stand in contrast to extractive approaches in institutional archives and move towards agency and autonomy in the co-creation of counter-narratives which resist binary modes of thinking. In our experience, these practices require reflexive actions that center our guiding principles of relationality, community-driven decision making, counter-storytelling, and self-determination for queer communities. As we've started to build the WSUQA, we value the methods of interdisciplinary collaboration we use to help us draw from multiple viewpoints and traditions in our fields as we replicate some practices while rejecting others.

We plan to continue regular community engagement through our workshop series, Queering the Archives, utilizing the events as opportunities to invite new leadership across students, faculty,

staff, and community members for the WSUQA. Going forward, some next steps in our work are digitization and description projects, oral history interviews, collecting and processing new materials collaboratively through departmental transfer and community donation, and continuing to support student positions including student hourly workers and student advisory board members. We have learned from our colleagues that if we want the WSUQA to continue for decades to come, we need to strategize on how we can embed the work in each of our departments and continue without being tied to grant funding or over relying on specific individual's labor. We have hope in the passion of our broader community for not only the materials and their importance, but also in continued engagement in preserving and rediscovering history, while preserving the histories of their own communities for future generations.

Our project has flourished most when we refuse to imagine our work being individually done in a vacuum and embrace how our work is interconnected with other queer archives. It's clear that we can't do this work in isolation. Queer archiving must be expansive, traditional approaches cannot contain it. We must ask ourselves and our communities, how can queer archives continually be pushed and challenged to be expansive and hold a diverse range of voices and perspectives? How can queer archives subvert borders, boundaries, and limitations? We begin to see pathways emerging when we engage in solidarity and the interconnections of liberatory struggles. Through our community-driven archiving efforts in the WSUQA, we hope to inspire a community archive that provides tools and threads from which wellsprings of co-creation, building, and imagining of more just worlds are possible.

Acknowledgements

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