



June, 2013  
Volume 8 Number 2

# TRETTER LETTER

NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE TRETTER COLLECTION



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

LIBRARIES

Archives and Special Collections

## Meet Tretter's New Curator: Lisa Vecoli



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## FROM THE CHAIR

Along with so many in our community, the members of the Tretter Advisory Committee were thrilled when Minnesota became the 12th state to legalize same-sex marriage. The folks at the archive have been working hard to ensure that this moment is documented and preserved for posterity.

Indeed, the archive's collections on marriage and LGBT law is extensive, and the recent marriage legislation is only the tip of the iceberg.

Recently, the Tretter Advisory Committee recommended the purchase of a doctoral dissertation published in Nuremberg, Germany in 1597 titled *Disputatio de publicis iudiciis*. The 15 page treatise by Thomas Cleuselius is a defense of several codes under Justinian law including those against sodomy and why they should be kept in contemporary society.

In 533, Emperor Justinian extended an ancient law condemning adultery to include acts of sodomy, which would be punishable by death. Justinian blamed such acts on natural disasters like famines, earthquakes and pestilence. In 538, Justinian expanded on this law in *Novella (New Law) 77*:

Since certain men, seized by diabolical incitement, practice among themselves the most disgraceful lusts, and act contrary to nature.... We admonish men to abstain from said unlawful acts, that they may not lose their souls. But if, after this admonition, any are found

persisting in such offenses, first they render themselves unworthy of the mercy of God, and then they are subjected to the punishment enjoined by the law. For we order the most illustrious prefect of the Capital to arrest those who persist in the aforesaid lawless and impious acts after they have been warned by us, and to inflict on them the extreme punishments, so that the city and the state may not come to harm by reason of such wicked deeds.

The Justinian laws were among the first in the world to condemn all sexual acts between people of the same gender, and these laws became the foundation of legal systems across the Western world. Cleuselius' dissertation provides arguments for keeping Justinian's

laws on the books in late-sixteenth century Germany.

The Tretter Collection is one of only five libraries in the world to have this rare manuscript and it is the only known copy in the western hemisphere. The text is in Latin and is already available to visitors of the collection.

Whether the Justinian Code or the Minnesota marriage legislation, this is part of our past - our heritage. And the Tretter Collection continues to be there to capture history in the making. Congratulations, Minnesota - and be sure to visit us at the History Pavilion at Pride!

Eric Colleary  
Tretter Advisory Board Chair



Eric Colleary

### You Can Help!

The Tretter Collection relies on the support of organizations and individuals, like you! Please consider making a charitable donation to the Tretter Collection using the enclosed self-addressed envelope as part of your giving plan. Your support will help to preserve GLBT history now and for future generations.

Thank you.

## TRETTER LETTER

NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF  
THE TRETTER COLLECTION

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## From the field....

What's happening in national & international circles.....

### GLBT Scandinavia

By Greg Gronseth

A close connection has existed between Minnesota and the Scandinavian countries since the founding of the state and this is reflected by the University of Minnesota's position as a center of Scandinavian studies. In keeping with this, the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies has embarked on a project to build up its collection of materials dealing with the GLBT communities in Scandinavia. So far, we have purchased over 70 books in Danish, Swedish, Norwegian (both Bokmål and Nynorsk) and Finnish.

Many of the books are general histories of the GLBT communities in each of the countries as well as in particular localities. There are also accounts of specific events spread over time. A few examples are the history of Gay men who were burnt at the stake in 17th century Finland and the story of two men in Sweden who, after being together for ten years, were arrested in 1897 for "lying together" in the woods. The collection has acquired several biographies, such as one of Sweden's king Gustav V who, in the 1930's, was implicated in a homosexual relationship. There's a biography of Erik Thorsell, who tried to establish the first Swedish Gay rights group in the 1930's and was active in the homophile movement in the 50's and 60's. Another example is a biography of Bernhard Hjort who went from being an anti-Semitic fascist in the 30's, to a resistance fighter during World War II and one of the staunchest defenders of the early homophile movement in Norway after the war. We also have a biography of Allen Hagedorff, a young Danish man who, during the height of World War

II, was working in Nazi Germany while openly living in a Gay relationship and sending care packages to Jews in the concentration camps.

The collection of books includes publications from the 50's and 60's, such as early works of Lesbian fiction, books about homosexuality and the novelized "confession" of a Norwegian Gay man published in 1965. We also have a book by Karl-Erik Kejne, a Swedish pastor who unleashed an anti-gay witch hunt in the 40's and 50's. The historical books continue with accounts of RFSL, the national Swedish Gay rights organizations, both favorable and critical, as well as books dealing with the more radical Gay liberation movement and Lesbian feminists in the 70's and 80's. It continues with books exploring the impact of AIDS in Denmark and Sweden. We have an autobiography of openly Gay, conservative Danish politician, Stig Elling and a biography of Majken Johansson, who's considered one of the most important Swedish poets of the 20th century (both she and her partner were officers in the Salvation Army). One of the more recent historical events related is an incident where foreigners throwing stones at a Gay Pride parade was used as a pretext for an anti-immigrant backlash in Denmark, where it was characterized as an attack on liberal Danish values. Finally, there are books dealing with queer studies in Scandinavia and a book published in honor of the 60th anniversary of RFSL's founding, discussing possible future trends in the GLBT community.

The collection has acquired several books of interviews or autobiographies dealing with a range of communities within the larger GLBT communities in present-day Scandinavia. One is a book interviewing Swedish Transgender people. These include anthologies of coming out stories and books about elderly Gays and Lesbians, Gay youth and Christians, as well as members of immigrant communities or the Sami ethnic minority.

More recently, the Tretter Collection has started reaching out to GLBT organizations in Scandinavia to try to obtain ephemera from GLBT Scandinavia, such as Gay Pride posters and other memorabilia. This is still in its beginning phase, but we've received favorable responses already from

### Thanks to the generous support of our donors.....

*We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals for their support and give thanks to countless others whose generous spirits have made our work possible.*

- Roger Arvid Anderson - CA
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- Dawn West & Pam Colby - Minneapolis & Richfield, MN
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- Peter Wilson - Minneapolis, MN
- Bruce Wolfe - CA

five organizations in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Faroe Islands. As time goes on, we hope to build up relations with these organizations that will help us to preserve a diverse portrait of the lives of Gays and Lesbians in Scandinavia over time as well as across segments of society.

# New Acquisitions

We cannot highlight all that we have added to the collection in the past months, but a few highlights:

- **Frank Ricchiuzzi Papers** – Frank Ricchiuzzi helped found the Log Cabin Republican Club of Los Angeles in 1977 and the Log Cabin Club of Orange County in 1983. The extensive papers, a gift of Mr. Ricchiuzzi, bring tremendous depth to our existing Log Cabin materials. Full finding aids for the Ricchiuzzi papers and the Log Cabin Republican records are available on our website.

- The Tretter Collection has recently acquired the first printing from 1901 of the novel **“Idylle Saphique” by Liane de Pougy**. “Idylle Saphique” is an autobiographical novel based on the relationship between the author and the American poet Natalie Barney. A contemporary French scholar of gender studies has described it in these words: “With Sapphic Idyll, Liane de Pougy gives a visibility to lesbian loves in the framework of a sober and controlled French language.”



- **Vriendschap** – We recently purchased 17 issues of “Vriendschap,” the newsletter published by the Dutch homophile organization COC. Founded in 1946, COC may be the oldest GLBT organization in the world. The newsletters we acquired are from 1958-1962.

- **GLBT Superheroes** – We have added several ground breaking comics to the collection. Marvel Comic’s superhero, Northstar, wed his gay partner last summer in issue #51 of “Astonishing X-Men.” Last year in “Life with Archie #16,” war hero, Kevin Keller, married his boyfriend. In this spring’s issue of “Batgirl #19,” Alysia Yeoh reveals that she is a transgender woman. And, “Batwoman #17” adds the first Lesbian superhero marriage proposal.



- **“People Today”** from 1954 with a cover story exclusive “3rd Sex Comes Out of Hiding” about the founding of ONE. And “Magazine Digest” from 1948 with an article “Doctors Plead for The Homosexual and Lesbian.”

- **Der Eigene** - published from 1896 to 1932 under the editorship of Adolf Brand, Der Eigene is considered to be the first gay journal in the world. We are grateful to Roger Arvid Andersen for the donation of an issue in honor of Jean-Nickolaus Tretter’s retirement.

*New Acquisition Photos courtesy of the Tretter Collection*

# Meet Our Curator - an interview with Lisa Vecoli

By Matthew Antonio Bosch

## **Matthew Antonio (MAB): You have a history with archives, don't you?**

Lisa (LV): I tell people on tours that the building is 14 years old but it has been part of my life for 45 years. When I was 5, my family moved here so my father could lead the Immigration History Research Center. He was the director for 37 years and for much of that time he was trying to get a facility built to provide appropriate archival storage for the collections at the University. I was with him at the ground breaking and the ribbon cutting for the Andersen Library.

As a child, our family had one car and we often picked him up at the end of the day. He was never ready and we usually spent a long time waiting. My brother and I would play hide and seek in the stacks while we waited. So when I say I grew up in the stacks I mean it literally. I wish my father had survived to see me working at the Tretter Collection. Every day I am grateful for the work he did that unexpectedly created a home for a GLBT archive.

## **MAB: What are 3 things (LGBT-related or not) that you know a lot about?**

LV: I spent most of my career in non-profits, politics and community organizing. So I know a lot about Robert's Rules of Order. I love to travel, scuba dive and ride my Harley.

And I know a lot about lesbian literature. When I first came out as a lesbian I turned to books for information and affirmation. That was over 30 years ago and positive messages were hard to find. I worked for a while in lesbian books stores and started collecting lesbian fiction. Then in 1992 I started collecting lesbian pulps from the 1950's and '60's. Today I have over 2,500 contemporary lesbian novels and almost 1,000 pulps. (And a very understanding partner!!)

## **MAB: What have you gained from being a Tretter Board Member?**

LV: Well, most obviously I gained a job. But that was never the intent when I joined the Board in 2001. Jean knew about my book collection and he hoped I would leave it to the collection. I am classic story of donor development – first I got involved, then I agreed to donate my collection and eventually my partner, Marjean, and I put the archive in our wills. The more I learned about the work of the collection, the more I supported the mission and saw the value of



contributing.

The best part of being on the Board has been relationships with amazing people. I got to learn from Jean about the community and the commitment he had to collecting and preserving GLBT history. I made great friends from diverse parts of the community and learned about events and people that came before me. And I found something I am passionate about and now I have a job I love.

## **MAB: Which groups have you been most excited to collaborate/partner with?**

LV: I have enjoyed all of the partnerships we have established over the past year. Working with you and the GLBTA Programs Office has been a lot of fun. I have really enjoyed the relationships we have built with Quatrefoil Library and local authors.

As a lifelong fan, having lesbian literature be part of my "work" is awesome. And I love the feedback I get from scholars and researchers about the strength of the collection and how valuable it is to have a strong, accessible archive.

## **MAB: Why should people utilize the Tretter Collection?**

LV: People should use the archive because popular culture is not a good record of GLBT history. The reality is that for most of western culture, GLBT people have tried to be invisible and hide their existence. Even in a gay archive like the Tretter Collection, researchers often have to be creative to find information about their topic.

## **MAB: How easy is it to use? If I email you with a research idea, is it that easy for you to find stuff on it?**

LV: Using the archive is as easy as I can possibly make it. We are open to everyone, from students and faculty to community members and the press at no charge. Our materials do not circulate and

are for use only on site. I am a one person staff, so it is always a good idea to contact me in advance. If I am out of the office, there may not be anyone who can help you find material.

Any kind of archival research is like a safari – you might not see anything. Or you might have a life changing experience. Jean built the collection over 40 years and learned the history and content of items as he acquired them. His knowledge of the collection is remarkable. But the collection has grown to the point that no one person will ever have that knowledge again. The collection holds tens of thousands of published items and hundreds of thousands of pages of personal papers and organizational records. I am working on computerizing as

# “Lesbian Nuns,” Still

By Nancy Manahan  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

When Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence was published in 1985, I was 38 years old. I had no idea that I was moving into the most intense, exhausting, painful, and exhilarating period of my life.

My co-editor Rosemary Keefe Curb and I anticipated that the only people interested in the book would be other lesbian ex-nuns, our friends and families, and perhaps readers on the Naiad Press mailing list. We were unprepared for being catapulted into the national and international limelight. On our first TV appearance, before the book was even in print, Sally Jessy Raphael held up a dummy copy: the cover was real, but inside, all 430 pages were blank. This historic dummy book is now in the Tretter Collection.

Eventually Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence was published in seven languages in eleven countries. (All the foreign editions are also in the Tretter Collection.) Despite our lack of media savvy, Rosemary and I trusted that by simply being two of the first open lesbians in the media, we were helping to end LGBT silence and invisibility. The hundreds of letters we received in the years right after the book's publication, and the letters we received over the next 25 years, indicate how important and meaningful our appearances and the book were.

However, Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence has been out of print for two decades. It was Rosemary

Keefe Curb's death on May 24, 2012 that prompted Tracy Baim, publisher of Chicago's Windy City Times, to suggest getting the book back into print and making it available electronically. Linda Hill of Bella Books enthusiastically took on the project in the fall of 2012.

Is a book published in 1985 still relevant? The culture has changed dramatically. Not only do many religious orders allow lesbians to enter if they commit to the same vow of celibacy required of their heterosexual sisters, but if Sister Ann and Sister Louise left the



*Photos courtesy of the Tretter Collection*

# Relevant 28 Years Later

convent today, they probably could be open about their relationship with little fear of losing their jobs, their housing, their friends, or their families. Ann and Louise could even get married to each other in many places.

Yet, all over the world, expressions of LGBT identity are still fraught with difficulties and dangers. People indoctrinated by homophobic beliefs struggle to be true to themselves in small towns everywhere, in countries where homosexuality is punishable by death, and in cultures around the globe that condemn same-sex love. In many places, Ann and Louise would live in fear and hiding. The notion of their marrying each other would be ludicrous, unnatural, blasphemous, and illegal.

And so I am thrilled to see Lesbian Nuns; Breaking Silence reaching a new international generation of readers. Anyone with access to eBooks can download these stories embodying resilient sexuality, resistance to a patriarchal religion, love of community, and dedication to a spiritual path. People who were raised in, or are still in, any faith tradition that causes them to suffer suicidal agonies of guilt

and shame can be reminded that they are not alone.

Additionally, the stories can support people breaking out of stifling relationships, mental straitjackets, or oppressive institutions of any kind. We all can be inspired by those who find the internal resources and the external support necessary to live more freely and honestly.

This explosive international best-seller is back, with a new foreword by historian Joanne Passet (author of Sex Variant Woman: The Life of Jeannette Foster and a forthcoming biography of

Barbara Grier) analyzing the unprecedented impact the book had on the lesbian community and mainstream culture. In two new afterwords, Rosemary Keefe Curb and I reveal how Lesbian Nuns; Breaking Silence came to be and what happened to our lives when, for the first time in history, a lesbian book from a small publisher went mainstream. Still myth-shattering, the stories remind us of the courage required to live—and love—in congruence with our authentic selves.



*Rosemary Keefe Curb and Nancy Manahan at the 20th anniversary of Lesbian Nuns release. Photo courtesy of Becky Bohan*

# NYU Student Discovers the Wealth of Information and Assistance Through the Tretter Collection

By Brian Ray

As a PhD Student in American Studies at New York University, I had grown increasingly frustrated last fall in New York while working in some of the most extensive and respected LGBTQ collections in the world. The absence of conservative voices in the Gay and Lesbian movement in the United States, a centerpiece of my dissertation on postindustrial labor in the Americas, struck me as astonishing. I was overcome with excitement when I found out that the Log Cabin Republicans had recently donated their papers and records to the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries!

I began communicating with the library staff in the fall of 2012 regarding the Log Cabin papers, and I was fortunate enough to receive an Elmer L. Andersen Research Grant from UMN Libraries for the 2013 academic year. During my visit earlier this spring semester, I was on a tight schedule of merely a week, and the quality of guidance I received while working The Elmer L. Andersen Library division of Archives and Special Collections was truly impressive. The Andersen staff has achieved an enviable balance between friendliness and efficiency. In my time working at the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies—started by Minnesota native and leading national activist Jean Tretter in the 1970s, and donated the University of Minnesota Libraries only in 2000 after growing too large for his apartment—I never lost footing or focus in the thousands of documents I had to go through in one week.

Flawlessly, working with a collection only in its 13th year of operation, the Tretter staff has perfectly balanced the professionalism, expertise, and indispensable orderliness of much older coastal LGBTQ archives with Midwestern friendliness and a shared

passion for an inclusive vision of LGBTQ history.

In my time at Andersen, I worked with some phenomenal staff members. First and foremost, I must say that Lisa Vecoli, curator of the Tretter Collection, should be recognized as a top-notch archivist and expert in her field. Despite having a full house of elbow-to-elbow researchers



working with the Tretter Collection in the reading room the week I was there, she exceeded any expectation I had regarding institutional gatekeepers of knowledge. She set aside time to meet with me personally multiple times that week in private meetings, pulled and flagged items of interest that changed my direction of inquiry multiple times, and added a personal touch that left me feeling less overwhelmed amidst thousands of documents and moreover invigorated and excited about my dissertation project. Lisa made the reading room feel like a home during my week in Minneapolis—it cannot be overstated how essential the comfort to experiment and ask questions

is for the successful writing of history. Not to mention this level of coziness was no small feat given the sub-zero temperatures outside the library walls that this East Coaster had never experienced!

Susan Hoffman of the Archives and Special Collections division was also essential in my research that week. Susan, in coordination with Lisa, moved my research in exiting new directions by giving me access to several not-yet catalogued boxes recently donated by Gay conservative activist Frank Ricchiuzzi. The unexpected boxes were so rich and expansive that I did not have time to finish exploring them—so I will definitely be back.

The Tretter Collection is impressive in terms of breadth and the sheer speed with which the staff and archivists at the Andersen Library have updated their collections in the past few years that will certainly guarantee a growing national and international reputation among researchers and activists concerned with LGBTQ history. With the increasing interest in grassroots conservatism in the field of history and the growing body of literature on political economy in queer studies—two areas within which the collection truly stands out—the Elmer L. Andersen Library is well situated for a boom in popularity among scholars of U.S. conservatism.

Since my visit this winter, I have been spreading the word about the archives among my colleagues, and even been in touch with scholars from Europe interested in the collection. Be warned, East and West Coast institutions, researchers are looking towards flyover country!

Curator's Note: You might think we made him up, but Brian Ray is an actual doctoral student at NYU, interested in connecting with others doing similar research. He may be reached at [btr228@nyu.edu](mailto:btr228@nyu.edu).

# You Shoulda' Been Here!!

*It's been a busy season of community outreach*

By Lisa Vecoli

The Tretter Collection has been all over town the past several months. We have been to events, hosted events and helped others with events. A few of our activities since that last newsletter:

- In November *authors Ellen Hart and R.D. Zimmerman* joined us at Andersen Library for a conversation about their work, how they write and what their days are like. They were extraordinarily generous in sharing their time and insights with us. We co-hosted this event with Friends of the Library and Quatrefoil Library.
- In November we hosted a *reception for Among Men/Man To Man* to mark the end of the program and the transition of their material to the archive.
- Curator Lisa Vecoli joined the *Schochet Endowment for their Research Showcase* in February, serving as a panel member. Lisa also served on the committee to award the Schochet Academic Awards and brought the Tretter History Display to the awards dinner in March.
- Tretter co-hosted a *"Women's Author Event"* with Quatrefoil in March. Authors Catherine Friend, Rachel Gold, Ellen Hart, Jessie Chandler and Catherine Lundoff to read from their works and answer questions.
- The Tretter Collection helped *sponsor the movie "Trans" as part of the National Public Health Week Film Fest* in April.
- Working with several University

departments and the Walker Art Center, the Tretter Collection helped arrange the April *showing of "United In Anger: A History of Act Up"* along with discussions featuring director James Hubbard, historian Jennifer Brier and Dr. Keith Henry.

- In May the Tretter Collection and Quatrefoil co-hosted a party for the re-release of *"Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence"* with co-editor Nancy Manahan. First published in 1985, the book was one of the few to cross from a lesbian press to mainstream publishing. It became an international sensation and was translated into 6 languages. Long out of print, is being made available again this spring by Bella Books.
- This spring we also had six classes visited the collection, presented at the MN Independent Scholar Forum and gave a presentation to those attending "Ally" training at North Hennepin Community College.

All of this happened between newsletters! We encourage you to "like" us on Facebook or send us your email so that we can keep you posted on events!



## Tretter Collection Adopts Materials from Social Welfare History Archives

The Tretter Collection was added to the University of Minnesota in 2001. As such, we are the youngest of the archives at Andersen Library. The University Archives are the oldest, started 85 years ago. Several collections such as the Children's Literature Research Collections, Immigration History Research Center, Kautz Family YMCA Archives and the Social Welfare History Archive were started in the 1960's. We are fortunate that the curators of the Social Welfare History Archive (SWHA) noted the development of materials directed to the GLBT community and began to collect them decades ago.

With the addition of a GLBT specific archive, it made sense to shift materials from Social Welfare to Tretter. Over the past year we have shifted over 2,000 items. These included extra copies of some materials that we already had – "The Advocate," "Equal Time," "GLC Voice" and other local publications. It also included material we did not yet have in the collection such as hundreds of issues of the Lesbian Feminist Organizing Committee Newsletter, "Les'beinformed" (the newsletter of the Lesbian Resource Center), "Matrices" and a complete set of the 26 volume print version of "Genders."

Integrating these items into the archive was challenging. It required tremendous patience and assistance from the cataloging staff. And some significant shifting of materials to make room for the new additions. But the result is a stronger collection for researchers and scholars, thanks to the early leadership in the Social Welfare History Archive and the generosity of the current staff.

## Bruce Wolfe Donates Harvey Milk Statue to Tretter Collection

Sculptor Bruce Wolfe has donated his bust of Harvey Milk to the Tretter Collection in honor of the retirement of our founder, Jean-Nickolaus Tretter. The work was one of three finalists in the 2006 competition for the Milk Memorial in San Francisco's City Hall. The bust was originally modeled in clay and has



been cast in bronze and attached to a granite base.

Harvey Milk was elected to a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977. He served almost 11 months before he and Mayor George Moscone were assassinated. In 2008 the story was made into a motion picture starring Sean Penn, for which he won an Academy Award as Best Actor.

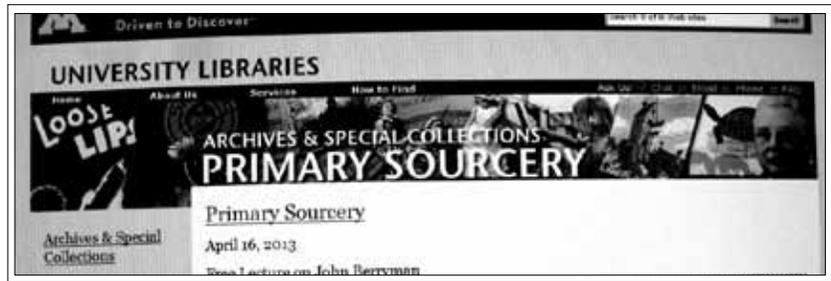
Bruce Wolfe is a native Californian with a national reputation for monumental sculpture in bronze. Examples of his public commissions include the Barbara Jordan memorial in Austin, Texas as well as the bust of Steve Silver in front of Fugazi Hall in San Francisco. Steve Silver died of complications from AIDS in 1995. Silver scripted the zany and popular "Beach Blanket Babylon," which remains to this day America's longest running musical revue.

Along with the bust, we have also added a number of news articles and photos from the competition as well as a pictorial history of Harvey Milk donated by photographer Daniel Nicoletta, Milk's assistant at his camera shop on Castro Street. The bust is based on a photograph of Milk by Nicoletta.

Our thanks go to both Bruce Wolfe and Daniel Nicoletta for their extraordinary generosity and support. The bust can be seen in the reading room of the Andersen Library.

*Photo courtesy of the Tretter Collection*

# Primary Sourcery Blog



During a meeting with a library colleague last year, instead of "primary source" they said "sourcery." The image of archivists with magic wands and mystic potions was irresistible. So even though it makes the spell checker see red, the title "Primary Sourcery" was born. The question of what we would apply it to soon became clear.

The Tretter Collection is part of Archives and Special Collections (ASC) within the University of Minnesota Libraries. ASC has over a dozen units, from Children's Literature and Sherlock Holmes to Immigration History and Performing Arts. We are a

diverse bunch and we all have interesting stories to tell, so we started a blog. Among the first stories were the tale of purchasing an Arthur Conan Doyle letter on eBay and how research at the Social Welfare History Archives helped uncover falsified data in the fight to censor comics in the 1950's. The first Tretter Collection post was a note of appreciation for the advice columnists "Dear Ann" and "Dear Abby" that was posted soon after Pauline Phillips (Abby) passed away.

To access our website, go to: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/primarysourcery/>

## Lisa Vecoli Receives 2013 GLBTA Leadership Award



This spring the GLBTA Programs Office recognized several community members with awards. Lisa Vecoli received a GLBTA Leadership Award for her work at the Tretter Collection and on campus with the Programs Office. The award presentation was held during Lavender Graduation, when GLBT graduates are awarded a

Lavender Diploma and celebrated for their accomplishments.

*Photo:* GLBTA Program Office staff member, Frankie Jader presents award to Tretter Curator, Lisa Vecoli.

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# 'GLBT 1001' Students Visit the Tretter Collection

By Regina Kunzel

My students in GLBT 1001: Introduction to GLBT/Q Studies spent their first couple of months together in the classroom learning about the vibrant interdisciplinary field of GLBT/Q Studies. Beginning with history, they read about early-twentieth-century queer urban social and cultural worlds, about homophile organizing in the 1950s, and about the backlash and hostility of the mid-twentieth century that resulted in the purge of gay men and lesbians from employment in the federal government and the aggressive policing of queer social life. They learned about the first moment of organized queer resistance to police harassment by transgender women at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco's Tenderloin in August of 1966, and about the rebellion at New York City's Stonewall Inn three years later.

In March, a visit to the Tretter Collection provided them with the wonderful opportunity to ground what they had learned about the diverse and complex histories of GLBT/queer people. Tretter Collection Curator Lisa Vecoli offered students a fascinating introduction to the collection and to the richness of its holdings, impressing upon them how vulnerable GLBT history is to marginalization, trivialization, and destruction, and how important it is to have it preserved and accessible.

Lisa generously brought in some samples from the archive to give students the opportunity to engage in hands-on encounters with primary historical documents. Students were asked to write a few words about something they encountered there that surprised them, intrigued them, or that they wanted to learn more about. Several students were excited to see evidence of early local gay organizing in leaflets produced by the University of Minnesota student group F.R.E.E. (Fight Repression of Erotic Expression). One student worked to puzzle through an early political disagreement between the Daughters of Bilitis and ONE about whether to endorse a Gay bill of rights in an issue of "The Ladder." Another read Gay news coverage of a series of murders of Gay men in the Twin Cities in the early 1980s that he had known nothing about. Students who looked through periodicals and newsletters from the 1980s were struck by news coverage in 1983, very early in the AIDS epidemic, and speculated about the terror of living in a time when so little was known about the virus. Reading a 1983 issue of "Equal Times." "I can only imagine how terrifying it would be to be living in this time period where AIDS is everywhere," one student wrote. Another was struck by an advertisement for a book in "Gay Community News" addressed to young gay people under 18, long before the recent focus on queer youth in the "It Gets Better" campaign. Several students were drawn to files containing samples from the collection's materials on transgender history, where they read early narratives of transsexual identity. Students were surprised by the global scale of the collection and by its strength in international holdings. One was drawn to an issue of the monthly periodical published by the French homophile organization Arcadie, one of a full run of the journal that is held at the Tretter.

Students in GLBT 1001 were grateful for the opportunity to leave the classroom for the day and to experience the archives. More broadly, they were grateful for the existence of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. "The mere size of the collection was mind blowing," one student wrote. "I had no idea that this existed on campus," another wrote. "I'm going back."

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much as I can to help researchers find material. Creativity, patience and a sense of humor are helpful.

**MAB: What are 3 hallmarks of LGBT history that someone could locate within the Tretter Collection?**

LV: The GLBT press is often an invaluable record for research. We have an almost complete run of the "The Advocate" ('67-today) that gets a lot of use. And the classics – "ONE Magazine" ('53-'67), "Mattachine Review" ('55-'66) and "The Ladder" ('56-'70).

We also have most of the local publications – "Equal Time," "Lavender," "GLC Voice," "TC Gaze," "Focus Point" and even the shorter lived publications in the early 1970's.



And I should highlight one of the strengths of the collection. Part of the remarkable vision Jean had was to make the collection international. It would have been easy to limit his collecting to Minnesota or the United States. But we have material from all over the world, in 58 different languages. When he started collecting, there was no reason to believe anyone would want this material, but he had the foresight not only to collect but to have a global perspective.

**MAB: What are 3 unexpected pieces that can be found within the Tretter Collection?**

LV: That is a little like asking me to pick my favorite child. But at the risk of being a bad curator, the truth is I do have a few items I especially love.

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# TRETTER LETTER



NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE  
TRETTER COLLECTION

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One of the areas I have gotten to do some research in is Gay marriage, so two of my items are related to that. When I went looking I expected that I wouldn't find much on the issue before the 1990's. But a very early copy of ONE Magazine, Volume 1, Issue 8, published in August of 1953 has a cover story on Gay marriage. What I learned was that the Gay/Lesbian community started talking about Gay marriage as soon as we had a way to do so. We also started disagreeing from the start.

My second item, and maybe my favorite, is a newspaper clipping. It is a poll on the attitudes of young adults published in the Minneapolis Tribune in 1972. They asked a number of questions, one of which was about support for Gay marriage. And over 40 years ago, the responses were 50-46% IN FAVOR of Gay marriage. It is also the only time I have seen a poll with a gender gap showing men more in favor of Gay marriage than women (55-46%). I find these results amazing and it makes me want to know more.

And finally, I have to mention the book that belonged to Magnus Hirschfeld. Magnus was a physician, gay man and scholar of human sexual behavior in Berlin before World War II. He built a library of material on sexuality that drew scholars from all over the world. When the Nazis came to power, they burned his library. If you have seen images or news reels of book burnings in WWII, they are probably Hirschfeld's library. We have a book that was rescued from the fire. It has burned edges but is intact. For me, it is a symbol of the fact that there are people who would like to erase our history and it reinforces my belief in the importance of the archive.

**MAB: Are you willing to give me your copy of the X-Men Gay Wedding issue?**

**LV:** Absolutely not! (But I donated it to the collection, so you can come over and see it anytime you want.)

*Photos courtesy of the Tretter Collection*

## Pride 2013 is Coming!

Join us in the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter History Pavilion during Twin Cities Pride this year! Over Pride weekend, June 29 and 30, we will be in the Pavilion on the east side of Loring Park. We offer a lovely respite from the overstimulation of Pride. And we are air conditioned!! Stop in and enjoy our history display with panels on the Harlem Renaissance, World War II, early GLBT organizations and more.

The transition from a founder is hard for an archive. We knew we were losing a lot of knowledge and history when Jean-Nickolaus Tretter retired in 2011. I was delighted that one of our founding Advisory Board members, Lisa Vecoli, was willing to step in on a temporary basis. It took me about a week (maybe less) to come to the conclusion that Lisa was perfect for the job, and I encouraged her to apply for the permanent position; we made it official in January. I am confident that the coming years are going to be dynamic and exciting ones for the Tretter Collection, for Lisa and for all of us.

--Kris Kiesling, Director of Archives and Special Collections