

# **UCLA**

## **CSW Update Newsletter**

### **Title**

ALMS 2011: Preserving the Collective History of the LGBT Community

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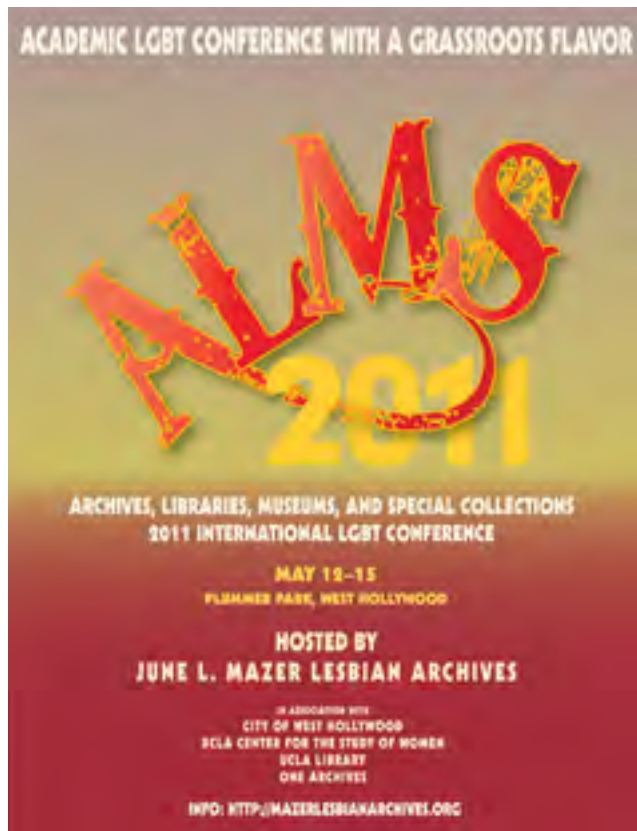
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# ALMS 2011

## Preserving the Collective History of the LGBT Community



**C**LEVE JONES, a quintessential AIDS and LGBT activist, gave the closing keynote address at this year's Archives, Libraries, Museums, and Special Collections (ALMS) 2011 International LGBT Conference. His talk covered many topics: working with Harvey Milk, the importance of activists to concern themselves with matters beyond their own interests, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, and his current work with the *Courage Campaign* and *Unite Here*. There was one topic he discussed, however, that crystallized the importance of the annual ALMS conference and its importance to those who are involved with archives, libraries, museums, and special collections that collect, preserve, and exhibit the materials and stories from the LGBT community. A main difference in, Jones said, and a distinct challenge for, the

LGBT community is that there is limited shared, collective history of this otherwise diverse minority group. Archives, libraries, museums and special collections, both grass-roots and institutional, are uniquely situated to remedy this problem of archiving the collective history for the LGBT community. The presentations, discussions, performances, and tours included in this year's conference show that although exceptional work has been done to preserve the history of the LGBT community, there are still hurdles to overcome and work to be done.

The conference began on the evening of May 15, 2011 with a program by Marie Cartier, Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at California State University Northridge, visual performance artist, and queer activist, entitled "Baby You Are My Religion: Theology, Theory, and

Praxis of Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Butch Femme Culture and Community.” Friday morning, Lillian Faderman, the internationally renowned scholar of gay and lesbian history, ethnic history, and literature, gave the opening keynote address. The breakout sessions on Friday included, among other things, presentations discussing the importance of community history, grassroots LGBT information organizations, the creation of global reference sources for LGBT materials, institutional archive expectations for donors of LGBT materials, the institutional documentation of transgendered persons, and the importance of professional relationships among community based LGBT information organizations with mainstream museums, libraries, and archives.

Friday afternoon and evening took the conference proceedings to UCLA’s campus for tours, panels, and presentations about the community-university partnerships happening at UCLA that help to preserve LGBT history. One of these impressive partnerships is titled “The Outfest Legacy Project for LGBT Film Preservation.” This partnership is a collaboration between Outfest and the UCLA Film and Television Archive. This project is the only program in the world dedicated to preserving LGBT movies. The collection boasts more than 15,000 films and the presentation at the *ALMS Conference* showed some historic highlights from the collection. The “Access Mazer” project is also a prime example of university partnership with grassroots information organizations. Facilitated by UCLA

Center for the Study of Women, the “Access Mazer” project helped establish a relationship between CSW, the UCLA Library, graduate students in the Department of Information Studies at UCLA, and the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives—the sole archival repository on the west coast dedicated to preserving lesbian and feminist history. The partnership resulted in the processing and digitizing of several collections in the archive pertaining to Los Angeles history and made them accessible on the website of the UCLA Library and at the Online Archive of California. An introduction to the partnership was given by Julie Childers, Assistant Director of UCLA Center for the Study of Women, and tours of the Special Collections at UCLA and Mazer Ephemera at UCLA were given by Tom Hyry, Director of Special Collections at UCLA, Ann Giagni, President of the Board for the Mazer Archives, and Susan Anderson, Curator at UCLA Library. Friday concluded with tours of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives and the ONE: National Gay and Lesbian Archives and a celebratory party at the HERE Lounge in West Hollywood.

The conference continued on Saturday at Plummer Park in West Hollywood with three more breakout sessions and tours of UCLA’s William’s Andrew Clark Memorial Library and the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives. The breakout sessions continued with the themes of the previous day’s presentations as well as presenting new topics for discussion. A Saturday morning session was dedicated to discussing

the issue of how to deal with art in an archive, specifically addressing the art collection at the ONE Archives. Another panel addressed the issue of accessing, documenting, and accessing sex materials and pornography in an institutional archive. A practical panel addressing the best practices for archiving film and video was offered, as well as a panel about finding and searching for LGBT material in institutional archives. On Saturday afternoon the panel presentations included a roundtable with LGBT activists who have been arrested for their activist work in the LGBT community, a discussion and presentation of LGBT home movies, and a panel discussing the future of LGBT history in archival repositories.

Sunday morning, as a conclusion to the conference, Sharon Raphael and Mina Meyer displayed a quilt made from T-shirts worn by them in their 40 years of activism. In this touching presentation, the couple shared their stories of activism and their own history as a lesbian couple, growing up across the street from each other, losing touch in their late teens and early adulthood, then reconnecting after 20 years. Their story was so wonderful that an audience member suggested retelling it on film. Their story also inspired other audience members to reminisce on their own activist activities and share those stories with the group.

Another exciting development that took place Sunday morning was the announcement of the location for ALMS 2012: Amsterdam! A

representative from IHLIA, an international gay/lesbian library, archive, information, and documentation centre about homosexuality and sexual diversity, and the sponsor of next year's conference, showed a video about the work of the archive and the preliminary plans for next year's conference. The conference will be held in August of that year and will coincide with Amsterdam's Gay Pride Week.

The presenters at this year's conference ranged from graduate students, professional librarians and archivists, faculty, to LGBT activists and addressed various issues including the collection, preservation, and accessibility of LGBT materials. The tours of the various LGBT archives, both grass-roots and institutional, displayed the types of import work being done to preserve the collective history of the LGBT community. Jones, in his closing keynote speech, gave an important example of how preserving the history and stories of the LGBT community makes a huge difference in advocating for LGBT rights in the U.S. In Jones's work to take the case of Proposition 8 in California to the U.S Supreme Court he has been working with Ted Olson, David Boies lead counsel for the effort to overturn the California same-sex marriage ban. Jones relayed a conversation he had with Olsen about how this case should be approached in the U.S Supreme Court. Olsen told him "you have to make it clear to them [U.S Supreme Court Justices] the tide of history... In the grand sweep of history, they have to see the inevita-



## IHLIA (in Amsterdam) will host ALMS 2012!

bility and decide if they want to be on the right side or the wrong side of history." This is how the preservation and collection of LGBT history makes a real difference in the fight for basic civil liberties. This is why LGBT archives and the ALMS Conference are so important. Carving out a time for activists, grass roots archives, and

institutions to come together and share their work and build bridges among each other is essential for ongoing advocacy for LGBT rights.

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