

Transgender activism and the divisions within the queer community have been chronically understudied and misunderstood. Finding, accessing, and sorting through databases pertaining to transgender history was the main barrier to discovering the wealth of sources addressing transgender activism and coalition-building with members of the LGBT movement and feminists. Library resources gave me the tools to be able to highlight trans voices and experiences, bringing a group of historically silenced people to the forefront of history. In a time when gender nonconformity is being challenged and trans voices are at risk of being further silenced, the history of transgender alliances must be given more attention to ensure the plight of transgender people is not ignored or forgotten.

Library tools and resources were essential in my research. Tackling such a large project that took place in an underdeveloped area of history was daunting. When I had no idea where to look for primary sources, the library's plethora of databases and research guides gave me a starting point. The subscriptions the library provided allowed me to access sources that would otherwise be inaccessible to people without institutional support. I scoured the archives of sexuality and gender for organizations related to transgender, gay, lesbian, and feminist activism looking for hints as to how these groups of people felt about transgender activists and alliance-building between their movements. The wide variety of organizational documents provided essential insight into activists' perspectives and how these activists viewed other movements. Findings in ACT UP's records as well as different magazines and newspapers, such as *Drag* (a magazine about practical gender nonconformity), allowed me to analyze the primary sources necessary for understanding the inner workings of activist movements and coalition-building, on which the crux of my thesis depended.

Checking out books from the library and utilizing the interlibrary loan service was also imperative in my exposure to a wide variety of sources and thus gaining the knowledge necessary to complete my work. It aided in my understanding of how people in these movements interacted and the basis of the individual movements, as well as gaining access to seminal writings of the movements. As my research pertains to several large movements, understanding background information to ground myself in the perspectives of their activists was essential in understanding how coalition-building operated and why people in these movements did or did not support trans involvement. In this aspect of my research, finding accessible secondary sources was crucial. Thus, libraries more broadly allow people to develop knowledge by providing the resources to discover an abundance of sources on a wide variety of different topics, guaranteeing widespread access to knowledge. This is a critical feature that enables people to learn and grow.

My thesis-writing experience illustrated to me the necessity of libraries. Sources that could have been lost to time were preserved for the sake of sharing them. Sharing knowledge is essential in developing a holistic view of history in which every group is recognized. In the presence of a political movement that seeks to rewrite both history and reality, developing and sharing knowledge about transgender issues and history is particularly critical. Understanding transgender history will help destigmatize being transgender, as discrimination is often based in fear and misunderstanding. Allowing people to gain insight into the plight of the trans community will offer an avenue for public perceptions of trans people to be altered.

Libraries not only function to provide general knowledge to lay people, but they also facilitate the sharing of resources and communication between scholars. Especially in a field in which relatively little scholarly work has been developed, such as transgender history, circulating

resources is essential for furthering research. Thus, libraries encourage and enable collaboration between researchers and historians, building a stronger network of people who can shed light on the overlooked past of transgender activists and transgender activism.

Well-developed libraries and loan programs give people the opportunity to access resources that they would otherwise not be able to, given the crusades to ban books and cover up history. They offer an objective assortment of materials, placing knowledge above personal or political agendas and relationships with subject matters. Especially when a particular group's history is being challenged and actively dismissed, libraries have the opportunity to highlight these histories to engage more people and offer those who may not have been interested in learning about them the opportunity and encouragement to do so. The preservation of these histories and the ability to continue sharing them in the face of mounting political suppression are what make libraries critical in the fight for equal rights.