

Speaking UP : Forming Alliances to Preserve Local Queer History

Introduction

The **Uniting Pride (UP) Center** is the LGBTQA resource center serving Champaign County in Central Illinois

- The center is currently in its fourth year of existence

In February of 2012, a partnership between the UP Center and the Champaign County Historical Archives (CCHA) was established

- Organizational documentation from the UP Center would be collected and preserved by the CCHA
- An oral history project would be conducted by the UP Center but endorsed by and stored within the CCHA

Goals

Within archival holdings, there are a few time periods with in-depth documentation while the remainder of years are sparse or missing completely

- While these documents may exist within an individual's collection and eventually make their way into the archives, recording personal narratives surrounding varying historical moments in Champaign county ensures some documentation will exist

Every interview contains a message for youth

- Showing LGBT youth that they are not alone can allot a sense of community in an accessible format which can be viewed anywhere, thus preserving privacy if desired

Method

Archival research was conducted by the interviewer beforehand

- Having a grasp on the documented history as well as the gaps that need to be filled enriches the process

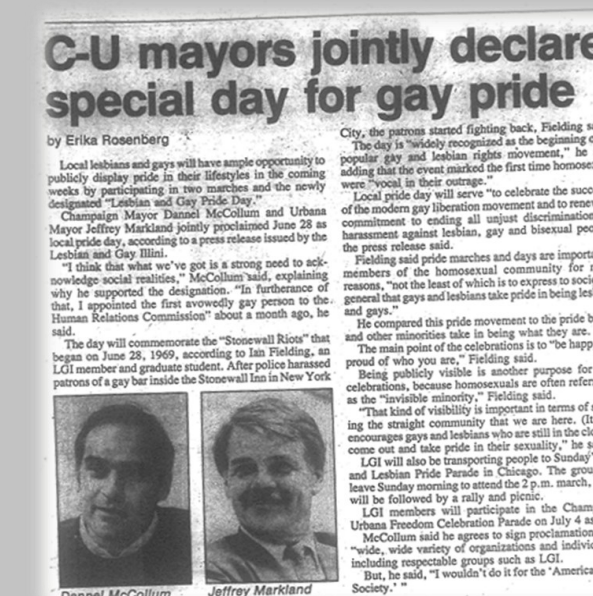
Interviews were video-recorded in the UP Center.

- In some instances, exceptions were made and audio-only recordings were obtained due to distance or privacy concerns of participants

Findings

Information gathered through interviews has drastically added to the archives in multiple ways:

- Personal experience and emotional aspects of activism are now present
- Certain documents cannot be interpreted in an LGBT historical context the same way they may be elsewhere
 - Positions of power within Registered Student Organizations (RSO)
 - Newspaper coverage signaling a collaboration with local news sources or community acceptance



- Many of the documents housed in the archives are outlining the history of a particular group of mostly Lesbian and Gay individuals rather than the larger LGBT community in Champaign-Urbana

Statistics

As of May 2013, twelve individuals have contributed their stories to the archive

- Two interviews were conducted through Skype
 - From Brooklyn, NY and Bow, NH respectively
- Two couples have been interviewed at the same time to bring individual as well as shared experience to the project
- Many individuals interviewed have participated in significant local activist efforts including:
 - Passing of an inclusive human rights ordinance in Champaign, suing an employer using this ordinance due to termination based on sexuality, establishing political and social organizations, youth advocacy, serving on the city council as an openly LGBT individual, marriage equality efforts, and more

Participants



Next Steps

Continue to conduct interviews both locally and from a distance

- As information regarding the project spreads, some individuals contact the UP Center about participating
- Address issues in representation, specifically attempting to record experiences outside of the predominantly white gay male perspective

Transcribe the interviews

- Embed the text into the videos as closed captions to increase accessibility

Upload the videos online and store copies at the Champaign County Historical Archive

- To view the available interviews, go to:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/UPCenterCU>

