

“I See Inclusive Description as the Practice That Slowly, Hopefully, Edges Out the Need for Reparative Description”: Exploring How Archival Practitioners Describe Queerness Within and Through Finding Aids

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ABSTRACT

This poster reports ongoing research involving semi-structured interviews with 29 archival practitioners who work with LGBTQIA+-focused archives and collections. The research examines how practitioners construct finding aids for their collections and how questions of LGBTQIA+ identity and queer culture informed their construction, evaluation, and maintenance of these finding aids. This poster emphasizes findings related to tensions between practitioners’ desires to be inclusive of queer potentialities within their respective collections and professional demands to adhere to steadfast concepts of archival description such as neutrality, *respect des fonds*, and more product, less process. Specifically, the discussed findings highlight how practitioners understand their work constructing LGBTQIA+-related finding aids as an additive conversation to emerging questions of reparative description. In particular, the research examines how collection-level description paradigms of finding aids requires examining how best to represent queer identity as both individual and collective concepts. Further, the research explores how these challenges of monolithic representations of queerness within finding aids surface concerns regarding other intersectional identities, while laying bare the role of privacy and transparency to archival collections, especially in moments of anti-queer political backlash. The research concludes with practical and theoretical implications from this research with a particular emphasis on how findings might inform archival pedagogy for describing diverse populations within archival records in an era of increasing automation and linked archival interaction.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Archives; Archival arrangement and description; Discovery systems; Specific populations; Records and information management.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Finding aids; LGBTQIA+ identity; Qualitative research; Queer archives; Reparative description.

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