Closeted/Out in the Quadrangles: A History of LGBTQ Life at the University of Chicago

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Instructors caught in vice raids of the 1940s, the founding of Chicago Gay Liberation in 1970, the impact of AIDS on the University of Chicago community, anti-gay violence in the 1980s, and activism for partner benefits for same-sex couples and improvements to the campus climate for queer, transgender and gender non-conforming students. As the Chicago Maroon declared in 1980, "The University of Chicago may be gayer than you think."

Drawing on the rich holdings of the University of Chicago Library—including the papers of Marion Talbot and Ernest Burgess, administrative records, and a multitude of campus publications—and other major archives, the exhibition displays letters, academic papers, and student newspaper articles, as well as posters, ephemera, photographs, a square of the AIDS Memorial Quilt made by UChicago students, and other visual documentation tracing this complex history. The exhibition also introduces new materials and selections from oral histories collected by the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality from alumni such as James Hormel, JD'58, former dean of students of the Law School and the first openly gay U.S. ambassador; cultural anthropologist Esther Newton, AM’66, PhD’68, who wrote the first major anthropological study of a homosexual community in the U.S. while a graduate student at UChicago; and Deborah Gould, AM ’90, PhD ’00, activist, scholar, and author of the first book to analyze the emergence, development, and decline of the direct-action AIDS movement, ACT UP.

Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Price: Free and open to the public

Presented by the University of Chicago Library and the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality

Curator: Lauren Stokes, Ph.D. candidate, Department of History, The University of Chicago

Associated web exhibit (coming April 2015): lib.uchicago.edu/e/webexhibits

Facebook Event Page: Exhibit

The Closeted/Out in the Quadrangles Project

Based on previous research into women’s history and experience at the University, students and faculty at the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality identified a pressing need to capture the history and experience of LGBTQ individuals and communities at the University of Chicago. In 2011, the CSGS launched the project Closeted/Out in the Quadrangles, documenting LGBTQ life at the University of Chicago from the early 20th century through the present day. During this time, students and staff working on the project have collected more than 95 oral histories, gathered donated materials from alumni, students and student groups, and mined the archives at the University of Chicago Library, Northwestern University, the Kinsey Institute, the Chicago History Museum, Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison for materials.

In addition to producing new scholarship, the
Closeted/Out in the Quadrangles Project contributes to building community and expertise around the history of sexuality across disciplines by providing undergraduate and graduate students at the University space for research and intergenerational mentorship. The project has offered a yearly undergraduate course that has trained students in oral history and archival research methods and exploring LGBTQ history. The project also brings scholars of LGBTQ history working in universities and archives across the United States to campus for public lectures and student/faculty workshops.

Opening Gala
Date: April 1
Time: 6-8 p.m.
Location: Special Collections Research Center
Exhibition Gallery, The University of Chicago Library,
1100 East 57th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637
Facebook Event Page – Opening Gala
To RSVP
Celebrate the opening of the exhibition Closeted/Out in the Quadrangles: A History of LGBTQ Life at the University of Chicago

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