

Bay Area Lesbian Archives

How Do I Organize and Preserve My Stuff?

There are many ways to organize your archival materials. We always recommend that people start at the most basic level.

1. Start gathering your memorabilia (documents, photographs, event flyers, posters, brochures, invitations, postcards, t-shirts, buttons, cassette tapes, journals, diaries, letters, magazines, newspapers...).
2. If you have not already done so, get some boxes (Banker's boxes are good), collect everything you can find in any of the above categories and put them in the boxes.
3. Now you need to start organizing. There are many ways that you can do this. Some people like to use hanging file folders (acid free are best), but you can also use large envelopes, cardboard or plastic portfolios, ziplock bags or other kinds of containers.
4. Separate out your photos from other memorabilia. Then separate your other materials into types (for example, all your buttons, all your journals, all your flyers). It might be helpful to put all documents, flyers and any kind of paper in file folders.
5. Next, label your file folders and boxes by a system that makes sense to you. One easy way is chronologically by decade. You can also label your folders or boxes by subject, for example: Photos of Dykes on Bikes 1978-present; Women's Music Concert Flyers 1975-1985; Demonstration Flyers 1973-1993. If possible, include notes explaining how memorabilia, flyers, and clippings relate to your life.
6. It's helpful for photographs to have identifying information if possible. It's best to use a #1 or #2 pencil, a fine point pen, or an archival pen to put the details on the back of your photos. For example, identify who's in the photo (from left to right), event, geographical location, approximate date, and the name of the photographer.

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