

50 Years of Pride: Creating an Archive & Oral History for the Rainbow Round Table (RRT)

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RRT Archive Project Ad hoc Committee

Background

The Rainbow Round Table (RRT) is the oldest queer professional association in the United States. Established in 1970 as the "Task Force on Gay Liberation," the RRT celebrates a milestone 50th anniversary in 2020. Recognizing a need to capture and preserve its history, RRT leaders enlisted cohorts of Emerging Leaders (2017 & 2018) and later the Archive Project Ad hoc Committee to launch a digital archive and oral history project.

Oral History

The 2018 Emerging Leaders cohort embarked on the next phase: to build an [Oral History](#), an online library of interviews profiling past and present RRT members. In 2019-2020 we sought more interviews and, to date, the project features seven, available in audiovisual form with transcripts; you can see them [here](#). To access the toolkit for these interviews (interview questions, consent forms, and more) please check it out [here](#).

Lessons Learned

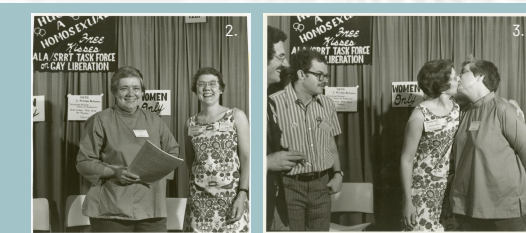
For projects with similar goals and scope, carefully assess records management practices, ever-changing technology offerings and pricing, web hosting options, and diverse representation across participants.

Left: Collage of photos, clippings, and newsletter headings from RRT history.

Archive

The 2017 Emerging Leaders cohort established a partnership with the ALA Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to digitize, preserve, and maintain a collection of historical items for the RRT. [A survey](#) was used as a baseline to better understand who could potentially donate items to the archive.

Visit the [ALA Archives!](#)



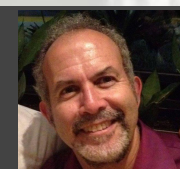
Above Left: Isabel Miller (left) and Barbara Gittings (right) at the Kissing Booth at 1971 ALA Annual in Dallas. **Above Right:** Gay Task Force members look on as Isabel and Barbara demonstrate the Kissing Booth. **Right:** Michael McConnell in 1971



Click trailer **above** for an introduction to the Oral History project

In memory of
Walt Walker, 1957-2020

He will be greatly missed and always remembered.



"We had to teach them how to be activists. You had to aggressively go forward and push your product."
Kay Tobin Lahusen

"Librarians wanted there to be access to the Gay and Lesbian press."
Robert Ridinger

"I see advocacy being the most important thing that we do."
Lisa Johnston



Above: Gay and Lesbian Task Force marching in the 1992 San Francisco Pride March.

Thank You

RRT Emerging Leaders, 2017 & 2018

Rainbow Round Table

ALA Archives

Everyone who participated in interviews and donated to the archive!

[See full list here](#)



1970:

Janet Cooper and Israel Fishman meet at Detroit Annual, and decide to form the Task Force on Gay Liberation

1970:

Barbara Gittings creates the first iteration of the "Gay Bibliography"

1971:

"Hug-a-Homosexual" kissing booth & Michael McConnell speaks about his job discrimination case at Annual in Dallas

1986:

The Gay Book Award (first awarded in 1971, and later renamed Stonewall) is recognized as an official ALA award

1992:

Task Force members marching in the San Francisco pride parade are featured on the front cover of the July/August issue of American Libraries

1999:

The GLBTF is promoted to round table status and becomes the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Round Table of the American Library Association