

[This is a pre-print version of the Alberto webtext *The Rhetorics of Retroactivism* published in *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 24(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/24.2/reviews/alberto>.]

[description: The video shows interviews with Lesbian Herstory Archives staff, including co-founder Deborah (Deb) Edel, interspersed with photos from the Archives' early days. Edel and others talk about founding the Archive, how it began in a single apartment before moving to current location; current staff, including coordinators Amy Beth and Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz, talk about how the Archives work today, and are shown seated among shelves of books and artifacts.]

[~transcript begins~]

[quiet sound of door opening; calm instrumental music plays]

Amy Beth VO: "Every time I walk in, I am awash with gratitude, that I can come to a place that we sought and fought and worked so hard to give it a home of its own, and find that it stands here, and it stands here vibrating with work to be done, and people yet to arrive, and stories to leave. It's an honor and a privilege every single time."

[music grows louder]

Deborah Edel VO: "It was 1974. A group of us realized that our history was disappearing as rapidly as we were creating it. We also know that some of us had really tried to find material, buried in libraries and journals and could not find what we needed, and so a few of us said hey wait, why don't we just start our own collections, why don't we put together what we have and build from there.' And that was the start of the Lesbian Herstory Archives."

[music plays]

Edel VO: "Luckily, Joan Nestle lived in a larger apartment on the upper West Side and so she said, 'why don't we set it up in the little back room behind the kitchen,' and so we did. And the energy was incredible, the energy was high. People walked in less to do research, and more to find a space that was a home, and so, it was in a home, so the warmth and the love and the caring, it just burst at the seams with that kind of, that kind of feeling."

Paula Grant VO: "People would say, 'can you come out and tell us, we want to have a meeting, you know, twenty or thirty people are going to come over and could you come and talk to us about the Archives?' What the slideshow was, it was a visual representation of various parts of our collection, to show people, to tell some of the history, and we would talk about material that we had found and how it came to be in our possession."

Polly Thistlethwaite VO: "I'd seen a photo, that Morgan Glenwell photo of Deb Edel in that badass leather jacket. I moved to New York in '86 and almost immediately became involved in the Lesbian Herstory Archives."

Thistlethwaite VO continued: "You know, it took me several months to like, venture back to Joan's bedroom area but when I finally did, to retrieve something, it was clear that the Archives had invaded the bedroom as well in a serious way."

Grant VO: "As the Archives began to take over the apartment at 13A and it became clear that we needed more space, it was an idea that we would have our own building."

Thistlethwaite VO: "Umm. . . Oh, here's the Archives' opening. [laughs] There's some folks there, that's JP and Sam. The first day we opened, we had a huge party. Everybody came, we had a little parade

down the street. We had some speeches, we paraded down the edge of the park and back, and then we had tour after tour after tour, people just streaming in here."

Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz VO: "And I think that's what's interesting about the Archives, what's magical, it's not even necessarily the number of people. It's that everyone who comes here, in my experience, is having a very significant moment. They had a mission to get here, and they made it, and they're in it. What ends up happening is that I think people come here looking for a piece of themselves, or like an ancestral connection to the women that came before them, that did the things that they've done, that have felt the feelings they feel."

Grant VO: "I think that we will continue in the direction that we view as positive, and be brave. We have to."

[music swells]

[music continues playing as credits roll]

[~transcript ends~]