Hard to dismiss: The archival value of gay male erotica and pornography
Hard to Dismiss: The Archival Value of Gay Male Erotica and Pornography

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Abstract

In this article, the author argues that gay male erotica and pornography is a critically important part of the gay male documentary heritage. He suggests that in the absence of other queer records – which were either suppressed or destroyed – in some ways, these documents have gained an even greater value as the “surrogate records” of the twentieth-century gay male experience in North America. The author states that gay male erotica and pornography meets Schellenberg’s definition of an archival record, and throughout the article, he demonstrates how these materials do have an enduring value, which is at once evidential, informational, and research-based. He begins by presenting the historical context that led to the creation of queer archives in Canada, like the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) in Toronto, which have a mandate to preserve gay male erotica and pornography. Then, in his discussion of the evolution of the records themselves from the earliest American beefcake magazines to recent Web resources, he reveals examples of their evidential and informational nature. In the last part of the article, which deals with North American efforts to censor these materials, he argues that the attempts to censor, mask, and otherwise alter the originals have added another level of informational and evidential value to the records, and he provides examples of the types of information embedded therein.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, l’auteur soutient que les documents érotiques et pornographiques gais forment une partie importante du patrimoine documentaire gai. Il suggère qu’en l’absence d’autres documents gais, lesbiens, bisexuels et transgenres – qu’ils aient été supprimés ou détruits – ces documents ont pris une valeur encore plus grande en tant que « documents de substitution » pour décrire l’expérience des hommes gais en Amérique du Nord au vingtième siècle. L’auteur affirme que les documents érotiques et pornographiques gais rencontrent la définition des documents d’archives, telle qu’élaborée par Schellenberg, et tout au cours de l’article, il montre comment ces documents ont effectivement une valeur durable qui prend à la fois la forme d’une valeur de preuve, d’information et de recherche. Il aborde le sujet en présentant le contexte historique qui a mené à la création des archives gais au Canada, comme les Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) à Toronto, qui ont le mandat de conserver les documents érotiques et pornographiques gais. Ensuite, en présentant l’évolution des documents à partir des toutes premières revues culturistes américaines (surnommées « magazines beefcake ») jusqu’aux ressources Web récentes, il donne des exemples de leur valeur de preuve et d’information. Dans la dernière partie de l’article, qui traite des efforts nord-américains pour censurer ces documents, il soutient qu’en tentant de censurer, de masquer ou de modifier ces documents, les censeurs ont ajouté un autre niveau d’information et une valeur de preuve additionnelle aux documents, et il donne des exemples de types d’information qui y sont inscrits.

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Some women told Neville that gay content simply had better production values and more interesting plots. Women also said that male-on-male scenes felt more authentic and that the actors appeared to be genuinely fond of one another. Some women enjoyed that men were the main object of sexual attraction. In addition, not having to worry about the exploitation of female performers was an appealing factor for some women. The different set of power dynamics in gay content was another theme to emerge. Unlike heterosexual porn, in gay porn "neither party can automatically be decreed to be submissive." Gay male pornographic films from the 1970s. Gay men's popular fiction collection, which includes "erotic and pornographic novels on gay men's subjects, including such themes as muscle, cowboy, sadomasochism, sailors, and leather," according to a summary of the entry. Maryland lesbian photo album, thought to be from the 1940s. The album includes 30 photographs of women in various poses, from hugging to dancing. Last week, the library announced that it's adding a new bundle to its shelves: the archival materials of feminist author and "sexpert" Susie Bright, w