Daughters of Bilitis records, 1955-1986


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Room A1713, Charles E. Young Research Library
Box 951575
Los Angeles, CA, 90095-1575
(310) 825-4988
spec-coll@library.ucla.edu
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Daughters of Bilitis records
1955-1986

Title: Daughters of Bilitis records
Collection number: 1946
Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 4.8 linear feet (12 document boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1955-1986

Abstract: The Daughters of Bilitis was founded by four lesbian couples in San Francisco in 1955. Its original purpose was to counteract the loneliness they felt as lesbians, though the organization increasingly began to focus on educating lesbians about their rights and on lobbying efforts. This collection includes documents related to the organization's national and local chapters. It also includes personal correspondence to and from two of the original founders, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, as well as documents from several other homophile organizations.

Language of Materials: Materials are in English.

Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. All requests to access special collections materials must be made in advance through the electronic paging system using the "Request items" button.

Creator: Daughters of Bilitis.

Conditions Governing Access
COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF: Open for research. All requests to access special collections materials must be made in advance through the electronic paging system using the "Request items" button.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Daughters of Bilitis Records (Collection 1946). Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

Provenance/Source of Acquisition
Provenance unknown. This collection is part of an outreach and collection-building partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW), and the UCLA Library.

Processing Information

General Note
The June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive at UCLA is an outreach and collection-building partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW), and the UCLA Library. These collections expand the pool of primary source materials available to researchers and to the community at large. This partnership was initiated by CSW and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to inventory, organize, preserve, and digitize more than eighty Mazer collections pertaining to lesbian and feminist activism and writings.

UCLA Catalog Record ID
UCLA Catalog Record ID: 6956271

History
The Daughters of Bilitis was founded by four lesbian couples in San Francisco in 1955. Its original purpose was to counteract the loneliness they felt as lesbians, though the organization increasingly began to focus on educating lesbians about their rights and on lobbying efforts. The organization began publishing a newsletter, The Ladder, in 1956, and had expanded to five chapters across the U.S. by 1959.

The organization began holding National Conventions in 1960, inviting members and speakers from across the country. The conventions provided members the opportunity to discuss the organization, and the group's original focus on conformity and integration was often a heated topic. Many members wanted to see the organization more involved in the direct action politics that had increasingly become employed by other organizations as the 1960s progressed.

Conflict within the organization continued, particularly between the San Francisco and New York chapters, and the National Chapter eventually disbanded in 1970. Local chapters continued to function independently, though The Ladder, too, folded in 1972.
Daughters of Bilitis records, 1955-1986

Scope and Content
The Daughters of Bilitis Records documents the efforts of lesbian communities across the country to reach out to and support other lesbian communities in need as well as ameliorate the general public's perception of lesbians and homosexuality. This rich collection includes administrative files, research, correspondence, project files, and other records related to the organization's national and local chapters. It also includes personal correspondence to and from two of the original founders, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, as well as documents from several other organizations and individuals dedicated to homosexual rights.

Organization and Arrangement
The materials are arranged in five series. Further arrangement of these is described in their respective arrangement notes. The five series are as follows:

- Series 2: San Francisco Chapter, 1956-1978
- Series 3: Other Chapters, 1960-1979
- Series 4: Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Correspondence, 1969-1983
- Series 5: Other Organizations, 1958-1986

Related Material
More documents related to the Daughters of Bilitis can be found in the Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers held at the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society in San Francisco, CA.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Daughters of Bilitis--Archives.
Lyon, Phyllis
Martin, Del
Gay liberation movement--United States--Archives.
Lesbian community--United States.
Social groups--United States--Archives.

Scope and Content Note
This series includes documents related to the founding of the Daughters of Bilitis, the National Governing Board and General Assembly, the National Conventions of Daughters of Bilitis, and various projects organized by the group.

Organization and Arrangement
This series is divided into eight subseries:

Scope and Content
This subseries contains bylaws, constitutions, policies, fact sheets, governing board memos, membership applications, resignations, officers' retreat records, and other administrative records pertaining to the national Daughters of Bilitis organization.

Box 1, Folder 1
Daughters of Bilitis officers and ladder staff. undated.

Box 1, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 3
Articles of incorporation. 1957.

Box 1, Folder 4

Box 1, Folder 5
Proposed corporate reorganization. 1968.

Box 1, Folder 6
United Daughters of Bilitis, Inc. bylaws and policies. 1969.

Box 1, Folder 7

Box 1, Folder 8
Fact sheets and pamphlets. undated.

Box 1, Folder 9
National letterhead. undated.

Box 1, Folders 10-12
Box 1, Folder 13
Box 1
Box 1, Folders 14-15
Box 1, Folder 16
Box 1, Folder 17
Box 1, Folder 18
Box 1, Folder 19
Box 1, Folder 20

Scope and Content
This subseries contains correspondence, pamphlets, speech transcriptions, program proposals, news clippings, and other records documenting the programming of the first five national conventions of the Daughters of Bilitis. Name changes of national conventions across folders reflect actual changes as documented in the records.

Box 2, Folder 1
Box 2, Folder 2
Box 2, Folder 3
Box 2, Folder 4
Box 2, Folder 5
Box 2, Folder 6
Box 2, Folder 7
Box 2, Folder 8
Box 2, Folder 9
Box 2, Folder 10
Box 2, Folder 11
Box 2, Folder 12
Box 2, Folder 13
Box 2, Folder 14

Scope and Content Note
The first folder contains correspondence written to and from Del Martin in her role as President, arranged alphabetically to preserve sequences. The second folder contains correspondence to and from Del Martin in her role as Treasurer, arranged by date. The third folder contains correspondence to and from Del Martin pertaining to the Daughters of Bilitis (but not in her role as President, Vice President, or Treasurer), arranged alphabetically.

Box 3, Folders 1-3
Box 3, Folder 4
Box 3, Folder 5
Box 3, Folder 6
Box 3, Folder 7

Daughters of Bilitis records, 1955-1986
Subseries 1.3: Correspondence. 1956-1971.

Box 3, Folder 8
Scope and Content Note
This folder contains correspondence between Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (writing together) and Julie Lee.

Box 3, Folder 9
Scope and Content Note
This folder contains assorted memos and correspondence written to and from several Daughters of Bilitis officers.

Box 3, Folders 10-11
Scope and Content Note
This folder contains assorted correspondence written to, from, and about Jess Stearn, author of "The Grapevine," a book about female homosexuality. Mr. Stearn interviewed several Daughters of Bilitis members while preparing his manuscript, and some felt his report was inaccurate, as expressed in the correspondence.

Box 3, Folder 12
Resignation of Lois Williams, Vice President. 1968.
Scope and Content Note
This folder contains correspondence about the San Francisco Chapter Board's request for the resignation of Lois Williams, National Vice President, arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content
This subseries contains correspondence with Daughters of Bilitis officers, including Florence Conrad, Research Chairman of the Daughters of Bilitis. Surveys and correspondence with psychologists Dr. Ralph Gundlach and Dr. Bernard F. Riess, regarding their work and Daughters of Bilitis member participation in their research are also included, with assorted reports at the end.

Box 3, Folder 15
Box 3, Folder 16
Box 4, Folders 1-2
Box 4, Folder 3
Gundlach Study: Correspondence. 1963-1964.
Box 4, Folder 4
Box 1, Folder 5
Box 4, Folder 6
Box 4, Folder 7
Assorted reports. undated.

Scope and Content
Contains financial reports, memos, records of membership dues, expenses, and tax documents of the Daughters of Bilitis.

Box 4, Folders 8-10
Box 4, Folder 11
Box 4, Folder 12
Box 4, Folder 13
Box 4, Folder 14
**Series 1: National Organization. 1955-1982.**

**Subseries 1.6: Daughters of Bilitis Book Service. 1960-1964.**

**Scope and Content**

This subseries contains correspondence, book orders, bibliographies, and records regarding the publication of a recording, all concerning the Daughters of Bilitis Book Service.

- **Box 5, Folder 1**  
  Correspondence. 1961-1964.

- **Box 5, Folders 2-3**  
  Book orders. 1964.

- **Box 5, Folder 4**  

- **Box 5, Folder 5**  
  Homosexual bibliographies. undated.

**Subseries 1.7: The Ladder and “Sisters”. 1956-1976.**

**Scope and Content**

*The Ladder* was a magazine published by the Daughters of Bilitis from 1956-1972. This subseries mostly contains correspondence to and from *Ladder* readers and officers, arranged chronologically, then alphabetically. Also included is one file on "Sisters," another Daughters of Bilitis publication.

- **Box 5, Folders 6-12**  
  Correspondence. 1956-1958.

- **Box 5, Folder 13**  
  Correspondence: Assorted addresses. 1956-1958.

  **Scope and Content Note**
  
  This folder contains general correspondence to all readers and correspondence with addressees without legible names, dated between 1956 and 1958.

- **Box 5, Folder 14**  
  Correspondence. 1959-1961.

- **Box 5, Folder 15**  
  Correspondence. 1962.

- **Box 5, Folder 16**  
  Correspondence: The Ladder and Daughters of Bilitis. 1963.

  **Scope and Content Note**
  
  This folder contains correspondence to and from *Ladder* officers and Daughters of Bilitis officers, arranged chronologically.

- **Box 6, Folder 1, Box 5, Folder 17**  
  Correspondence. 1963.

- **Box 6, Folder 2**  
  Correspondence: Assorted addressees. 1963.

  **Scope and Content Note**
  
  This folder contains correspondence to and from *Ladder* readers without legible names.

- **Box 6, Folder 3**  
  Correspondence: Cleo Glenn. 1964.

  **Scope and Content Note**
  
  This folder contains correspondence to and from Cleo Glenn and *Ladder* and Daughters of Bilitis officers, arranged chronologically.

- **Box 6, Folder 4**  
  Correspondence: The Ladder and Daughters of Bilitis. 1964-1965.

  **Scope and Content Note**
  
  This folder contains correspondence to and from *Ladder* officers and Daughters of Bilitis officers, arranged chronologically.

- **Box 6, Folder 5**  
  Correspondence: Layout. 1964.

  **Scope and Content Note**
  
  This folder contains correspondence to and from *Ladder* staff regarding the layout of *The Ladder*, arranged chronologically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 6, Folders 6-8</td>
<td>Correspondence. 1964.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence: Assorted addressees. 1964.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This folder contains general correspondence without legible or full addressee names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 6, Folder 9</td>
<td>Correspondence. 1965-1967.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence: Del Martin. 1962-1965.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This folder contains correspondence to and from Del Martin regarding The Ladder, arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 6, Folder 10</td>
<td>The Ladder: Assorted materials. 1963-1976.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This folder contains assorted materials related to the publication of The Ladder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This folder contains documents related to the Daughters of Bilitis publication &quot;Sisters,&quot; including: a pamphlet from the San Francisco Chapter publicizing Sisters (undated); a copy of &quot;Sisters&quot; (1971 April), and correspondence to and from readers and staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scope and Content Note
This subseries contains assorted records created by the Daughters of Bilitis national organization, as well as President Del Martin’s request for documents under the Freedom of Information Act, and correspondence related to the Blanch M. Baker scholarship administered by the Daughters of Bilitis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 6, Folder 16</td>
<td>Assorted cards. circa 1974-1978.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contains assorted correspondence related to the scholarship and Blanch M. Baker’s business card.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Scope and Content Note
This series contains documents related to the San Francisco Chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis.

Organization and Arrangement
This series is divided into 3 subseries:
- Correspondence, circa 1956-1977
- Administrative files, 1955-1966
- Outreach files, 1961-1978

Subseries 2.1: Correspondence. circa 1956-1977.

Scope and Content
This folder contains general correspondence to and from the San Francisco Chapter, primarily regarding information about the organization, arranged chronologically then alphabetically with the exception of the last file, as described below.
Scope and Content Note

This folder includes correspondence regarding a legal case against former treasurer, Kay Vanderford, after money entrusted to her went missing.

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Scope and Content

This subseries includes minutes from the first meeting of the Daughters of Bilitis (1955 Sept 21), arranged chronologically. It also includes financial documents, membership lists and records, questionnaires, letterhead, and library inventory, all produced by the San Francisco Chapter.

Scope and Content Note

In 1967, the San Francisco Chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis decided to relocate. This folder contains copies of the questionnaire was sent out to members with several questions designed to determine what type of space they should rent.

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Scope and Content

This subseries contains copies of newsletters, flyers for Daughters of Bilitis events, and assorted documents related to the San Francisco Chapter's outreach and relationship with other organizations.

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Box 8, Folder 14


Scope and Content Note
This folder contains assorted documents produced by the San Francisco Chapter, including a letter to the editor, a request for donations, a meeting announcement, assorted correspondence, a "List of Resources," a mailing list, and a tentative calendar of events, among other records.


Scope and Content Note
This series contains correspondence, minutes, membership records, financial records, and newsletters from several chapters of the Daughters of Bilitis. The New York Chapter file contains documents from 1960-1972 and includes minutes, correspondence with members and other organizations, financial documents, membership applications, and newsletters. The Chicago Chapter file spans from 1961-1966 and contains administrative files and newsletters. The file for the Los Angeles Chapter, which did not operate continuously, contains documents from 1960-1971 and includes administrative documents, correspondence, and newsletters. The documents from the Philadelphia Chapter range from 1967-1968 and include newsletters. The file for the Boston Chapter, which was the last existing chapter of Daughters of Bilitis, contains documents from 1971-1979 and includes flyers and news clippings.

Arrangement note
The materials have been arranged from the chapter with the most material to the chapter with the least.

Box 9, Folder 1

Box 9, Folder 2

Box 9, Folder 3

Box 9, Folders 4-5

Box 9, Folder 6

Box 9, Folder 7

Box 9, Folder 8

Box 9, Folder 9

Box 9, Folder 10

Box 9, Folder 11


Scope and Content Note
This series contains correspondence to and from Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin regarding their work outside of the Daughters of Bilitis, primarily after their book Lesbian/Woman was published. This series does not include correspondence produced by the Daughters of Bilitis national organization or chapters (although these are mentioned in some letters). Also included are essays written by Del Martin as well as news clippings and articles related to Martin and Lyon.

Arrangement note
Series arranged alphabetically by subject, with assorted subjects, essays, and news clippings at the end.

Box 10,
Folders 1-2

Box 10,
Folders 3-4

Box 10, Folder 5

Box 10, Folder 6

Box 10, Folder 7
Box 10, Folder 8  
**Lesbian/Woman book reviews. 1972.**

**Scope and Content Note**
This folder contains correspondence regarding book reviews for Lesbian/Woman as well as copies of book reviews.

Box 10, Folder 9  
**Lesbian/Woman general praise. 1972-1974.**

Box 10, Folder 10  
**Lesbian/Woman correspondence: Men. 1972-1976.**

Box 10, Folder 11  
**Lesbian/Woman correspondence: International. 1970-1982.**

Box 10, Folder 12  
**Married women. 1976-1980.**

Box 10, Folder 13  
**Organizing. 1972-1974.**

**Physical Description:** correspondence

Box 10, Folder 14  
**Phil Donahue responses: Lesbians and bisexual women. 1972-1983.**

Box 11, Folder 1  
**Phil Donahue responses: Married, straight, and questioning women. 1972-1973.**

Box 11, Folder 2  
**Phil Donahue responses: Religious hate mail. 1972-1973.**

Box 11, Folder 3  
**Phil Donahue responses: Men. 1972-1973.**

Box 11, Folder 4  
**Personal friends. 1969-1976.**

Box 11, Folder 5  
**Professionals. 1972-1979.**

Box 11, Folder 6  
**Religion. 1972-1979.**

Box 11, Folder 9, 7  
**Students, researchers, and writers. 1972-1980.**

**Teenagers and young women. 1973-1979.**

Box 11, Folders 8-9  
**Assorted subjects. 1971-1980.**

Box 11, Folders 10-11  
**Assorted essays. 1968.**

Box 11, Folder 12  
**News clippings. 1979-1988.**

**Series 5: Other Organizations. 1958-1986.**

**Scope and Content Note**
This series contains news clippings, administrative records, pamphlets, correspondence, and other records produced by and about other individuals and organizations that were contemporaneous with the Daughters of Bilitis.

**Organization and Arrangement**
The first six files in the subseries are arranged alphabetically by name of organization, with one folder containing documents from assorted organizations. The remaining folders are arranged by individual, then type of material, with assorted materials at the end.

Box 12, Folder 1  
**Association for Responsible Citizenship. 1966.**

Box 12, Folder 2  
**Diocese of California. 1964-1967.**

Box 12, Folders 3-5  
**East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO). 1963-1965.**

Box 12, Folder 6  
**National Planning Conference of Homophile Organizations: San Francisco. 1966.**

Box 12, Folder 7  
**National Planning Conference of Homophile Organizations: Kansas City. 1966.**

Box 12, Folder 8  
**Other organizations. 1958-1985.**

Box 12, Folder 9  
**Jeannette Foster. 1980-1981.**

Box 12, Folder 10  
**Elsa Gidlow. 1980-1986.**

Box 12, Folder 11  
**Assorted publications. 1963-1971.**

Box 12, Folder 12  
**Poetry collections. 1967.**

Box 12, Folder 13  
**News clippings. 1960-1982.**

Box 12, Folder 14  
**Assorted materials. circa 1974-1985.**

**Scope and Content Note**
Contains a photograph, a questionnaire, and assorted essays.