
Daughters of Bilitis records, 1955-1986

Finding aid prepared by Molly S. Jacobs, 2011-2012, and Sabrina Ponce and Sarah Johnson, 2017; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

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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 out 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 out 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

Processed by Molly S. Jacobs, 2011-2012. Description enhanced and further physical processing completed by Sabrina Ponce and Sarah Johnson in 2017.

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.

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 1: National Organization, 1955-1977

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.

Series 1: National Organization. 1955-1982.

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:

Subseries 1.1: Administrative files. 1955-1976.

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
Box 1, Folder 2
Box 1, Folder 3
Box 1, Folder 4
Box 1, Folder 5
Box 1, Folder 6
Box 1, Folder 7
Box 1, Folder 8
Box 1, Folder 9

Daughters of Bilitis officers and ladder staff. undated.

Constitution and bylaws. 1955-1966.

Articles of incorporation. 1957.

Policies. 1967.

Proposed corporate reorganization. 1968.

United Daughters of Bilitis, Inc. bylaws and policies. 1969.

"The Daughters of Bilitis: A Brief History". 1976.

Fact sheets and pamphlets. undated.

National letterhead. undated.

Box 1, Folders 10-12	Governing board memos. 1961-1965.
Box 1, Folder 13	Governing board minutes. 1961-1962.
Box 1, Folders 14-15	Governing board memos and minutes. 1966-1968.
Box 1, Folder 16	National newsletter. 1962.
Box 1, Folder 17	Resignations. 1960-1966.
Box 1, Folder 18	Officers' retreat. 1961.
Box 1, Folder 19	National membership applications. 1965-1967.
Box 1, Folder 20	Daughters of Bilitis Lesbian Constitutional Convention. 1971.

Subseries 1.2: National Convention. 1960-1968.

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	First National Convention: Organizational documents. 1960.
Box 2, Folder 2	First National Convention: Correspondence with speakers. 1960.
Box 2, Folder 3	First National Convention: "Why the Lesbian" panel. 1960.
Box 2, Folder 4	First National Convention: Program and publicity. 1960.
Box 2, Folder 5	First National Convention: List of bars. 1960.
Box 2, Folder 6	Second National Convention: Correspondence and organizational documents. 1961-1962.
Box 2, Folder 7	Second National Convention: Chapter proposals and minutes. 1962.
Box 2, Folder 8	Third National Convention: Planning. 1964.
Box 2, Folder 9	Third National Convention: Chapter proposals and minutes. 1964.
Box 2, Folder 10	Third National Convention: Correspondence. 1964.
Box 2, Folder 11	Fourth National Convention: Chapter proposals and minutes. 1966.
Box 2, Folder 12	Fourth National Convention: Planning, pamphlets, and correspondence. 1966.
Box 2, Folder 13	Fourth National Convention: Transcribed speeches and notes. 1966.
Box 2, Folder 14	Fifth National Convention: Denver. 1968.

Subseries 1.3: Correspondence. 1956-1971.

Scope and Content

Contains correspondence to and from several governing board members of the Daughters of Bilitis, with three files arranged according to the subject of the correspondence. Extensive correspondence between Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon is arranged in Subseries 1.4.

Organization and Arrangement

Arranged hierarchically by officer position, with the last three files arranged by subject.

Box 3, Folders 1-3	Del Martin, President. 1956-1968. 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, Folder 4	Jaye Bell, President. 1961-1964.
Box 3, Folder 5	Cleo Glenn, President. 1963-1965.
Box 3, Folder 6	Ev Howe, National Treasurer. 1960-1963.
Box 3, Folder 7	Meredith Grey, Public Relations. 1963-1966.

Box 3, Folder 8
Box 3, Folder 9

Phyllis Lyon, Public Relations. 1964-1966.
Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon with Julie Lee. 1970-1971.

Scope and Content Note

This folder contains correspondence between Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (writing together) and Julie Lee.

Box 3,
Folders 10-11

Assorted memos and correspondence. 1964-1970.

Scope and Content Note

This folder contains assorted memos and correspondence written to and from several Daughters of Bilitis officers.

Box 3, Folder 12

Jess Stearn. 1962-1964.

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 13

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.

Subseries 1.4: Research project files. 1958-1971.

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
Box 4, Folder 4
Box 1, Folder 5
Box 4, Folder 6
Box 4, Folder 7

Daughters of Bilitis survey. 1958-1960.
Research project correspondence: Daughters of Bilitis officers. 1963-1964.
Florence Conrad correspondence. Bulk, 1963-1965. 1963-1968, bulk: 1963-1965.
Gundlach Study: Correspondence. 1963-1964.
Gundlach Study: Planning. 1964.
Gundlach and Riess correspondence. 1966-1971.
Gundlach Study: Publications. 1967-1971.
Assorted reports. undated.

Subseries 1.5: Financial records. 1957-1975.

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

National financial reports. 1957-1968.
National financial memos. 1961-1963.
Membership lists and dues. 1960-1966.
National business expenses. 1974-1975.
National Tax Documents. 1963-1965.

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
Box 5, Folders 2-3
Box 5, Folder 4
Box 5, Folder 5

Correspondence. 1961-1964.
Book orders. 1964.
"Lisa Ben" recording. 1960-1961.
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
Box 5, Folder 13

Correspondence. 1956-1958.
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
Box 5, Folder 15
Box 5, Folder 16

Correspondence. 1959-1961.
Correspondence. 1962.
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
Box 6, Folder 2

Correspondence. 1963.
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.

Box 6, Folders 6-8
Box 6, Folder 9

Correspondence. 1964.
Correspondence: Assorted addressees. 1964.
Scope and Content Note

This folder contains general correspondence without legible or full addressee names.

Box 6, Folder 10
Box 6, Folder 11

Correspondence. 1965-1967.
Correspondence: Del Martin. 1962-1965.
Scope and Content Note

This folder contains correspondence to and from Del Martin regarding *The Ladder*, arranged chronologically.

Box 6, Folder 12

***The Ladder*: Assorted materials. 1963-1976.**
Scope and Content Note

This folder contains assorted materials related to the publication of *The Ladder*.

Box 6, Folder 13

"Sisters". circa 1970-1977.
Scope and Content Note

This folder contains documents related to the Daughters of Bilitis publication "Sisters," including: a pamphlet from the San Francisco Chapter publicizing Sisters (undated); a copy of "Sisters" (1971 April), and correspondence to and from readers and staff.

Subseries 1.8: Assorted documents. circa 1958-1982.

Scope and Content

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.

Box 6, Folder 14
Box 6, Folder 15
Box 6, Folder 16
Box 3, Folder 14

Assorted documents. circa 1958-1969.
Freedom of Information Act documents. 1980-1982.
Assorted cards. circa 1974-1978.
Blanch M. Baker Scholarship. 1960-1966.

Scope and Content

Contains assorted correspondence related to the scholarship and Blanch M. Baker's business card.

Series 2: San Francisco Chapter. circa 1955-1978.

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.

Box 7, Folder 1	Correspondence. circa 1956-1962.
Box 7, Folder 2	Correspondence. 1963.
Box 7, Folder 3	Correspondence. 1964.
Box 7, Folder 4	Correspondence. 1965-1966.
Box 7, Folder 5	Correspondence. 1967-1969.
Box 7, Folder 6	Correspondence. 1970.
Box 7, Folders 7-9	Correspondence. 1971.
Box 7, Folder 10	Correspondence. 1972.
Box 7, Folder 11	Correspondence. 1974-1976.
Box 7, Folder 12	Correspondence. 1977.
Box 7, Folder 13	Correspondence. undated.
Box 7, Folder 14	Correspondence: Kay Vanderford. 1966.

Scope and Content Note

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

Subseries 2.2: Administrative files. 1955-1966.

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.

Box 8, Folder 1	Meeting minutes. 1955-1959.
Box 8, Folder 2	Meeting minutes. 1960-1963.
Box 8, Folder 3	Meeting minutes. 1964.
Box 8, Folder 4	Meeting minutes. 1965-1966.
Box 8, Folder 5	Financial documents. 1958-1962.
Box 8, Folder 6	San Francisco Chapter membership. 1965-1966.
Box 8, Folder 7	Membership lists. 1967-1968.
Box 8, Folder 8	Moving questionnaire. 1967.

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.

Box 8, Folder 9	San Francisco Chapter letterhead. undated.
Box 8, Folder 10	Library inventory. undated.

Subseries 2.3: Outreach files. 1961-1978.

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.

Box 8, Folder 11	Newsletters. 1965-1966.
Box 8, Folder 12	Outreach flyers. 1961-1962.
Box 8, Folder 13	Newsletters and future directions. 1969-1978.

Box 8, Folder 14

San Francisco Chapter assorted materials. 1959-1976.

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.

Series 3: Other Chapters. 1960-1979.

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

New York Chapter minutes. 1965-1966.

Box 9, Folder 2

New York Chapter correspondence. 1960-1967.

Box 9, Folder 3

New York Chapter financial records. 1960-1967.

Box 9, Folders 4-5

New York Chapter membership applications. 1962-1966.

Box 9, Folder 6

New York Chapter newsletters. 1963-1970.

Box 9, Folder 7

Chicago Chapter administrative files. 1961-1966.

Box 9, Folder 8

Chicago Chapter newsletters. 1962-1966.

Box 9, Folder 9

Los Angeles Chapter. 1960-1971.

Box 9, Folder 10

Philadelphia Chapter. 1967-1968.

Box 9, Folder 11

Boston Chapter. 1971-1979.

Series 4: Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Correspondence. 1969-1983.

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,

Autobiographical. 1972-1979.

Folders 1-2

Box 10,

Coming Out stories. 1969-1982.

Folders 3-4

Box 10, Folder 5

Gay marriage. 1980-1981.

Box 10, Folder 6

Isolated lesbians. 1972-1979.

Box 10, Folder 7

Lesbian/Woman publicity. 1972.

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,

Students, researchers, and writers. 1972-1980.

Box 11, Folder 7

Box 11,

Teenagers and young women. 1973-1979.

Folders 8-9

Box 11,

Assorted subjects. 1971-1980.

Folders 10-11

Box 11, Folder 12

Assorted essays. 1968.

Box 11, Folder 13

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,

East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO). 1963-1965.

Folders 3-5

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.