

Sarah Dunne

The Migrating Queer Bookshelf: Queer Bookstores and the Making of Queer Communities in the United States and Canada, 1945-Present.

My dissertation demonstrates how authors, publishers, bookstore proprietors, and readers helped to make queer bookstores viable businesses and important social and movement-building spaces in the United States and Canada. Queer bookstores are more than just a location where books are sold. My dissertation investigates how a transnational network of queer booksellers founded bookstores that created communities for their customers, organized early Pride events, fought the impounding of queer publications by customs officials, and facilitated information-sharing and fundraising during the AIDS Crisis. I will be using the funds from the Mendell Graduate Fellowship in Cultural Literacy to conduct archival research trips to the ArQuives in Toronto, Canada and the GLBT Historical Society Archives in San Francisco, California, where I will examine the records of queer bookstores Glad Day (Toronto) and A Different Light (San Francisco). These bookstores have an interesting connection, as Norman Laurila worked at Glad Day in Toronto before moving to California and co-founding A Different Light in 1979. In both Toronto and San Francisco, I will investigate how regional differences, transnational networks, and customs seizures shaped how queer bookstores ran their business and interacted with other queer businesses and activist organizations. I hope my research on the importance of queer bookstores will inspire others to defend LGBTQ+ spaces and culture in our present.