

CHRIS SMITH MP WELCOMES NEW PROJECT FOR LESBIAN AND GAY NEWSMEDIA ARCHIVE

The Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive (LAGNA), based at Middlesex University's Cat Hill campus, has been given a £50,000 Heritage Lottery Fund award for an initiative charting four decades of newspaper coverage of lesbian and gay issues.

Queer Britain: The Gay Community and the Straight Press, 1953 to 1988, is a year-long outreach and cataloguing project intended not only to encourage greater use of the archive but also to stimulate historical research within local communities around the country.

The project spans the years between two significant landmarks in gay and lesbian history; the 1953 establishment of The Wolfenden Committee (which led to the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967) and the implementation of Clause 28 of the Local Government Act, which legislated against the 'promotion' of homosexuality.

Two new posts will be created. An education officer will plan and present talks and workshops throughout the UK in order to promote LAGNA and to encourage the exploration of local lesbian and gay history. He or she will also recruit and co-ordinate volunteers to work on the LAGNA collections. A half-time cataloguer will also help to identify appropriate regional material, working with the volunteer team to reduce the backlog of uncatalogued cuttings in the collection. Part of the brief for the project includes making the collection more widely known and encouraging this valuable resource to be more fully exploited.

As well as over 120,000 press cuttings on all aspects of lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual life in the UK, LAGNA includes a library of about 500 titles, complete runs of *Gay News* and *Gay Times*, collections of badges, banners and t-shirts, and the *Gay News* photographic collection.

Chris Smith, MP for Islington South and Finsbury and former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has given his support to LAGNA. "It is a timely initiative, and will help to ensure that the history of lesbian and gay issues and causes is properly recorded. I wish you all the very best with the project."