

**The New York Public Library
Stephen A. Schwarzman Building
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Guide to the
Israel David Fishman papers
1967-2002 (bulk 1970-1979)
MssCol 1012

Compiled by Susan Malsbury, June 2011

Summary

Creator: Fishman, Israel David, 1938-

Title: Israel David Fishman papers, 1967-2002 (bulk 1970-1979)

Size: 5.46 linear feet (14 boxes)

Source: Gift of Israel David Fishman, 1994-2003

Abstract: Israel David Fishman (1938-) is best known for founding the Task Force on Gay Liberation (TFGL), a section of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Libraries Association. His papers document the early years of TFGL, Fishman's collaboration with other activists, and the issues surrounding being an openly gay professional in the late-1960s and early-1970s.

Access: Advance notice required. Apply at <http://www.nypl.org/mssref> Select correspondence is closed until 2052.

Copyright information: Copyright retained by donor, and by Carl Navarro following donor's death. No restrictions on photocopies. Certain material, noted in the FA, is restricted.

Preferred citation: Israel David Fishman Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note

Original donation was received in 1995. From 1996-2004, Fishmen sent the library additions, one box at a time. These newer materials have been intellectually integrated with the original material. The organization of the papers has been rearranged from the original accession to further clarify the material in this collection.

Related collections

Barbara Gittings and Kay Tobin Lahusen gay history papers and photographs. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Butterworth Farm collection. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

LGBT Periodicals Collection. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

Israel David Fishman was born on February 21, 1938 in Westerly, Rhode Island. His given name was Israel Fishman. His parents, Minnie C. and Benjamin Fishman, were Orthodox Jews. His father was an ordained rabbi, although he never held a pulpit position or earned a living as a clergyman.

In September 1946, Israel Fishman was sent to Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. In letters, he described his childhood as one of much turmoil and loneliness. At the age of fifteen he was hospitalized for twelve weeks and treated with electric shock therapy. Fishman rebelled against the confines of Orthodoxy, finding them inconsistent and irreconcilable with an openly gay life. Still, his childhood spent in the Orthodox community formed a major part of his character and, viewed by Fishman, to be an essential part of his personal conflict. Much of this conflict is demonstrated by his name changes. In 1958, he used the name Yisroel Fishman. In early 1964, he used I. Ronald Fishman, but in June officially changed his name back to Israel Fishman. Later, Fishman added David as a middle name. His correspondence and writings are punctuated with Talmudic references and perspectives, the lives of homosexuals under the Nazis, and his interest in chazzanut, a form of Jewish liturgical music.

Fishman worked in various New York businesses as an office assistant between the years 1956 and 1965. In 1958, he enrolled in the City College of New York, first as an evening student, before enrolling full time. He graduated with a B.A. degree, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, in Philosophy in 1965. In May 1966, he received an M.L.S. from Columbia University's School of Library Science.

Fishman began his library career as the Head of Technical Services at the Jewish Theological Seminary library, before becoming an Acquisitions Librarian at Richmond College. In 1970, Fishman was hired as Circulation Librarian at Upsala College in East Orange, NJ, at the rank of Assistant Professor. In early 1973, he learned that he had been denied tenure. After considering the appeal process and other options, he requested and was granted a six month sick leave, at the end of which, in January 1974, his employment ended. This was to be the conclusion of Fishman's career as a library professional.

In 1970, Fishman attended the American Library Association meeting in Detroit and conceived the idea of a gay liberation group within the library profession. With the help of others, Fishman organized the Task Force on Gay Liberation (TFGL), a section of the Social Responsibilities Round Table. The group's activities at the Dallas convention the next year (June 1971) gained national attention. TFGL members were vocal about their work and the issues they championed were featured in library journals, in the gay press, and even in mainstream publications. Fishman believed that these public activities were responsible for the demise of his career in librarianship. He was succeeded in leadership of the TFGL by Barbara Gittings. In addition to his activist duties, Fishman has been featured in the documentary *Trembling Before God*, and wrote chapters for the anthologies, *Daring to Find Our Names* and *Liberating Minds*.

After leaving librarianship, Fishman went to Los Angeles, California for a period of work and study at the Gay Community Services Center. He returned to New York in the winter of 1973 to study Swedish massage and was licensed in 1974. The same year, Fishman met his partner, Carl Navarro at the West Side Discussion Group (a regular gathering of gay men in New York City). Fishman went on to run a mail order vitamin store, to organize tours through Hasidic Brooklyn, called Big Knish Tours, and to be active in the Park Slope Food Cooperative.

Scope and content note

The Israel David Fishman papers address his role as a librarian and activist, as well as concern the issues surrounding being an openly gay professional in the late-1960s and early-1970s. His papers contain correspondence with friends, colleagues, and family members and letters of inquiry to businesses and organizations. As founder of the Task Force on Gay Liberation (TFGL), Fishman documents the formative years of this group while simultaneously collecting material from other organizations he was involved with or interested in. Fishman was particularly concerned about the ways in gay liberation issues in the library profession were covered by the media. Fishman wrote chapters for two anthologies regarding his role in the TFGL. Files for these projects include correspondence, typescript drafts, publicity material, and reviews. Fishman also kept records of his employment as a librarian at Upsala College and the rejection of his bid for tenure at that institution. There are extensive personal documents regarding his hobbies, his daily activities, and personal milestones. This collection contains sound recordings, including talks given by early TFGL members. Select sound recordings are unavailable pending preservation transfer.

Arrangement

The Israel David Fishman papers are organized into the following series:

Series I: Correspondence, 1969-2004

I. A. Personal Correspondence, 1969-2004

I. B. Family Correspondence, 1971-2001

Series II: Library Activities, 1970-1995

II. A. American Library Association (ALA)

II. B. New Jersey Library Association, 1972-1993

II. C. Upsala College, 1970-1973

Series III: Subject Files, 1970-2002

Series IV: Writings, 1970-2002

Series V: Personal Documents, 1967-2001

Series VI: Artifacts, 1973-2001

Key terms

Subjects

Gay liberation movement

Gay rights -- United States

Occupations

Librarians

Names

Cooper, Janet

Fishman, Israel David, 1938-

Gittings, Barbara

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (U.S.)

Saxe, Susan

Sullivan, Robert Austin.

Weaver, Barry L.

Special formats

Photographs

Sound recordings

Container list

Series I: Correspondence, 1969-2004

This series is arranged alphabetically by correspondent. Fishman was a prolific correspondent; additionally, Fishman would make carbon copies of letters that he typed or hand-wrote to others. Personal correspondents included library professional colleagues, such as Janet Cooper and Barbara Gittings; others concerned either publicly or privately with gay issues and liberation struggles; holistic doctors and healers; and personal friends, many of whom Fishman and Navarro met on their many trips to Italy. Fishman often wrote letters to product manufacturers, radio stations, travel agents, and others with a commodity he wished to purchase or comment on. His employment as a librarian at Upsala College (1970-1973) is documented by resumes, job applications, reference letters, memoranda, and a few official letters. Many of Fishman's letters to individuals during this time also comment on his employment and dismissal. For additional material regarding his Upsala employment, see Series II. Library Activities.

Notable correspondents include Susan Saxe, Janet Cooper's friend, who was imprisoned in Massachusetts for bank robbery and murder; Robert Austin Sullivan, a gay prisoner on death row in Florida (he was executed on November 30, 1983); Barry Weaver, the head of Sullivan's defense fund; Allen Young, a writer on gay themes whom Fishman visited at Butterworth Farm, an intentional gay community; and Ron Lambe and Rocco Platt, members of the Radical Faerie Movement who lived at the Running Water intentional community. This series contains three sound recordings of Fishman reading correspondence. Sound recordings are unavailable for use pending preservation transfer.

Family letters consists of correspondence Fishman had with his father, and with his sister, Soro Reize. The bulk of these letters regards Fishman's anger that they would not accept his chosen lifestyle and partner. Correspondence with the Navarro family primarily includes letters regarding Carl's father, Frank Navarro, and his reluctance to sell the family business to his son and Fishman. Navarro correspondents are Carl's cousins in Italy with whom the couple visited on their trips abroad. Cards and postcards are primarily holiday and birthday cards, many gay-themed.

I. A. Personal Correspondence, 1969-2004

b.1 f.1-13	General, 1971-1994, undated
b.8 f.1-4	General, 1987-1998
b.2 f.1	Bartmess, Ken, [1974]-1980
b.2 f.2	Brozeski, Joe, 1970-1973
b.2 f.3	Childers, Steve, 1971-1974
b.2 f.4-8	Cooper, Janet, 1971-1991
b.9 f.1	Derrough, Alice, 1984
b.2 f.9	Eads, Steve, 1972
b.2 f.10	Ehrenberg, Ron, 1972-1977
b.2 f.11	Ferri, Michael, 1975-1982
b.9 f.2	Ferri, Michael, 1995
b.2 f.12	Fichtelberg, Leo and Doris, 1973-1994
b.3 f.1	Fletcher, Larry, 1972
b.3 f.2	Gittings, Barbara, 1972-1976, 1992
b.3 f.3	Jendretzky, Gisela, 1971-1975

Series I: Correspondence (cont.)

I. A. Personal Correspondence (cont.)

- b.3 f.4 Katz, Steve, 1969-1970
- b.9 f.3 Lambe, Ron and Rocco Platte, 1982-1996
- b.4 f.1-9 Leonard, Bradley W., 1971-1982
- b.9 f.4 M., Gianluca, 1984-1987 (Last name is illegible)
- b.3 f.5 Navorro, Carl, 1977-1982
- b.3 f.6 Saxe, Susan, 1976-1981
- b.9 f.5 Scaldini, Ivana, 1984-1987
- b.9 f.6 Secchi, Carla, 1984-1987
- b.14 Sezsky, Marvin, 1976-1978 (Closed until 2052.)
- b.3 f.7 Slater, David, 1976-1977
- b.3 f.8 Stoeckle, David, 1971-1976
- b.3 f.9 Sullivan, Robert Austin and Weaver, Barry L., 1979-1982
- b.9 f.7 Sullivan, Robert Austin, 1983
- b.3 f.10 Walther, Margot, 1973
- b.3 f.11 Young, Allen, 1978-1982
- b.9 f.8-9 Cards and Postcards, 1982-2004
- Audio letters and Diaries
 - Audio letters and diaries, 1972 (4 audio files)
 - Letter to Steve Childers, 1972 (1 cassette)
 - Sound recording is unavailable for use pending preservation transfer.

I. B. Family Correspondence, 1971-2001

- b.3 f.12 General, 1971-1989
- b.9 f.10 Fishman, Benjamin, 1977-1999
- b.9 f.11 Navarro Family, 1976-1996
- b.9 f.12 Reize, Soro, 1980-2001

Series II: Library Activities, 1970-1995

Series II is comprised of material reflecting Fishman's involvement with the Task Force on Gay Liberation (TFGL) and his position at Upsala College. Records of the TFGL represent the early years of the task force and contain correspondence, memoranda, minutes, and press releases. Upsala College files cover Fishman's position at the school, talks and programs he organized on LGBT issues, his work to get LGBT material into the library's holdings, correspondence regarding his colleagues responses to his sexuality, and the denial of tenure. This series contains sound recordings of early talks and speeches given by TFGL members, a recording of the 25th Anniversary Dinner, and of talks organized by Fishman at Upsala. Select sound recordings are unavailable for use pending preservation transfer.

II. A. American Library Association (ALA)

- b.5 f.1 General Topics, 1971-1973
 - Task Force of Gay Liberation (TFGL)/ Social Responsibilities Round Table
- b.5 f.2 General, 1972-1975
- b.5 f.3 History, 1990

Series II: Library Activities (cont.)

II. A. American Library Association (ALA)... (cont.)

Task Force of Gay Liberation (TFGL)... (cont.)

b.5 f.4-8

Records, 1970-1976

Talks given by TFGL Members, 1971-1973

ALA Task Force on Gay Liberation, 1971 June (4 audio files)

Proceedings of the 1971 TFGL meetings at ALA's annual meeting. Participants include Fishman, Barbara Gittings, and Mike McConnell.

"Sexual Factors in Library Personal Practices", 1971 February 23 (2 audio files)

Talk given by Fishman at the Essex County Public Library.

Gay Pride Rally, 1973 June 24 (3 audio files)

Contains speeches by Barbara Gittings and Morris Knight. Rally was hosted by Vito Russo.

Radio Broadcasts, 1973 (4 audio files)

Radio appearance by Fishman at WBAI and WFMU.

b.5 f.9

25th Anniversary, 1995

25th Anniversary Dinner , 1995 (1 cassette)

Talks given by Fishman and other early TFGL members. Sound recording is unavailable for use pending preservation transfer.

t.14

"Gay Liberation... What has your library done?" Poster, 1971 June

Displayed at the TFGL book at the ALA conference in Dallas, TX.

b.5 f.10

II. B. New Jersey Library Association, 1972-1993

II. C. Upsala College, 1970-1973

b.5 f.11-12

General, 1970-1973

Talks Organized by Fishman, 1971

Father Robert Clement of the Church of the Beloved Disciple, 1971 September (4 audio files)

Israel Fishman, 1971 November 18 (2 sound files)

Series III: Subject Files, 1970-2002

This series is arranged alphabetically. Fishman saved many items published by, or related to, the gay organizations proliferating in the early 1970s. These items reflect a broad cross-section, covering onetime events, religious organizations, health bulletins, theater productions, social and self-help groups, and conflicts and "zaps" of establishments who were perceived to be discriminating against gay men and lesbians. Later files reflect Fishman's role on the Board of Directors of the Park Slope Food Coop, publicity material for *Trembling Before G-d*, VegOut, a vegan dining group that Fishman and Navarro were active in, and their attendance at Mameloshn and radical faerie events. Select gay publications have been transferred to the LGBT Periodicals Collection

b.6 f.1 *The Advocate*, 1971-1973

b.6 f.2 *American Libraries*, 1971-1973

b.6 f.3 *Ari*, 1973

b.6 f.4 California--General, 1973-1980

b.6 f.5 *Chicago Gay Pride*, 1972

b.6 f.6 Colorado Fairy Gathering, 1980

b.6 f.7 Church of the Beloved Disciple, 1971-1973

b.6 f.8 *Dignity*, 1971-1973

Series III: Subject Files (cont.)

- b.6 f.9 *Double-F*, 1973
- b.6 f.10 *Fag Rag*, 1971-1973
- b.6 f.11 *Gay*, 1971-1973
- b.6 f.12 Gay Academic Union, 1974
- b.6 f.13 Gay Activists Alliance, 1971-1973
- b.6 f.14 *Gay Community News*, 1977
- b.6 f.15 Gay Community Services Center, 1973
- b.6 f.16 Gay Men's Health Project, undated
- b.6 f.17 *Gay Sunshine*, 1971-1974
- b.6 f.18 Identity House, undated
- b.6 f.19 Institute of Homophile Studies, 1973
- b.6 f.20 *The Le-Hi-Ho*, 1971
- b.6 f.21 *Library Journal*, 1971-1972
- b.6 f.22 Mameloshn, 1995-1997
- b.7 f.1 Mattachine Society, 1972-1973
- b.7 f.2-7 News Clips--General, 1972-1977, undated
- b.7 f.8 *Our Community*, 1971-1972
- b.7 f.9 New Jersey Gay Survival Kit, 1973
- b.7 f.10 Park Slope Food Cooperative, 1993-2001
- b.7 f.11 Religious Organizations--General, 1971-1973
- b.7 f.12 Rutgers University Homophile League, 1971-1973
Formerly Rutgers Student Homophile League
- b.7 f.13 *Synergy*, 1970-1973
- b.7 f.14 Theatrical Productions--General, 1975-1980, undated
- b.7 f.15 *Trembling Before G-d*, 2001-2002
- b.7 f.16 TV-Free America, 1995
- b.7 f.17 VegOut, 1996-1998
- b.7 f.18 WBAI, 1973
- b.7 f.19 West Side Discussion Group (WSDG), undated
- b.7 f.20 *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 1971-1974

Series IV: Writings, 1970-2002

Series IV is arranged alphabetically and holds correspondence, typescript drafts, and publicity material. Files regarding *Daring to Find Our Names* include extensive correspondence with editor James (Jim) Carmichael as well as material Carmichael collected regarding Fishman's role in the formative years of the TFGL. *The Linewaiters' Gazette* contains copies of articles or letters to the editor written by Fishman.

- b.10 f.1-3 *Daring to Find Our names*, 1970-1997
- b.10 f.4 *Liberating Minds*, 1996-1997
- b.10 f.5 *Linewaiters' Gazette: Official Newsletter of the Park Slope Food Coop*, 1994-2002
- b.10 f.6 Notes for Articles and Talks, 1971-1973

Series V: Personal Documents, 1967-2001

This series is arranged alphabetically. Topics covered here include Fishman's interest in religion and Chazzenuth music, his job searches, and his relationship with Carl Navarro. Ephemera and Memorabilia files consist of pamphlets, programs, and fliers for events and protests, call slips, LGBT zines, and clippings. This series contains one sound recording of a Yom Kippur reading by A. Bruce Goldman. Select sound recordings are unavailable for use pending preservation transfer.

- b.11 f.1 1980 Census, 1980 (Never sent)
- b.11 f.2 Anniversary Dinners, 1994-2001
- b.11 f.3 Address Books, 1970-1972, undated
- b.11 f.4 Big Knish Tours, 1995-1996
- b.11 f.5 Chazzenuth--General, 1996-2000
- b.11 f.6 Chazzenuth--Selection List, undated
- b.11 f.7 Drawings, undated
- b.11 f.8-11 Ephemera and Memorabilia, 1970-1999
- b.12 f.1 Kolodner, Arnie--Reflections, undated
- b.12 f.2 Photographs, 1967-1994
- b.12 f.3 Religious Writings--General, 1973
- b.12 f.4-6 Resumes and Job Applications, 1970-1996
- Yom Kippur Eve blessing by A. Bruce Goldman, 1972 (2 audio files)

Series VI: Artifacts, 1973-2001

Series VI is the smallest in the collection and contains a variety of ephemera such as t-shirts celebrating activist events, pride-related memorabilia, and a banner acknowledging the long-term relationship between Fishman and Navarro.

- t.1 "27 yrs. 4 mos. 22 days" Banner, undated
- b.13 f.1 Brooklyn Pride March Ribbon, 1999
- b.13 f.2 Gay Pride '73 Pin, 1973
- b.13 f.3 Gay Pride '89 T-shirt, 1989
- b.13 f.4 Image Out T-shirt, 2001
- b.13 f.5 Marriage Project Hawaii T-shirt, undated