



# **Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Explorations in Canadian Women's Archives (Life Writing)**

*Linda M. Morra, Jessica Schagerl*

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Women's letters and memoirs were until recently considered to have little historical significance. Many of these materials have disappeared or remain unarchived, often dismissed as ephemera and relegated to basements, attics, closets, and, increasingly, cyberspace rather than public institutions. This collection showcases the range of critical debates that animate thinking about women's archives in Canada.

The essays in *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace* consider a series of central questions: What are the challenges that affect archival work about women in Canada today? What are some of the ethical dilemmas that arise over the course of archival research? How do researchers read and make sense of the materials available to them? How does one approach the shifting, unstable forms of new technologies? What principles inform the decisions not only to research the lives of women but to create archival deposits? The contributors focus on how a supple research process might allow for greater engagement with unique archival forms and critical absences in narratives of past and present.

From questions of acquisition, deposition, and preservation to challenges related to the interpretation of material, the contributors track at various stages how fonds are created (or sidestepped) in response to national and other imperatives and to feminist commitments; how archival material is organized, restricted, accessed, and interpreted; how alternative and immediate archives might be conceived and approached; and how exchanges might be read when there are peculiar lacunae—missing or fragmented documents, or gaps in communication—that then require imaginative leaps on the part of the researcher.

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