



Kinsey Institute

by Jeffrey Escoffier

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The Kinsey Institute was formally incorporated on April 8, 1947 as the Institute for Sex Research. The Institute was established by the pioneering sex researcher Alfred Kinsey in order to put the work of his research group at Indiana University on a firm institutional base as it pursued pioneering studies in American sexual behavior.

Although the Institute had an independent legal status, it was housed on the Indiana University campus, and the University managed its finances. In 1981, the Institute's name was changed to the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Kinsey's death. In 1982, the name was changed again to the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction in order to reflect its expanded research mission.

The original staff was composed of the senior members of Kinsey's research team: Wardell B. Pomeroy, the first researcher Kinsey hired to conduct interviews of individuals regarding their sexual history; Paul Gebhard, a Harvard trained anthropologist; and Clyde Martin, an economist and statistician. Kinsey himself, a Professor of Zoology at the University, was the Institute's first director, a position he held until his death in 1956.

Initially, the Institute's work was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation through the National Research Council's Committee on Sex Research, which was headed by Robert M. Yerkes, the leading authority on primate behavior.

The Foundation was the primary sponsor of Kinsey's research from 1938 to 1954. Later the Institute's income was supplemented by the royalties from the two volumes published by the Kinsey group: *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, published in 1948, and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, published in 1953.

Following the publication of the female volume, the Rockefeller Foundation withdrew its financial support. It was being threatened by a Congressional investigation for its support of Kinsey's research.

After Kinsey's death in 1956, the Institute received substantial support from the National Institute for Mental Health, a branch of the Federal government, for a number of its research projects.

Paul Gebhard succeeded Kinsey as director of the Institute. Under Gebhard's capable leadership the Institute proceeded to publish the work initiated under Kinsey's guidance: a book on pregnancy, birth, and abortion (1958) and a study of sex offenders and the law (1965).

Subsequently, the Institute conducted pioneering studies of homosexuality and the military, the sex lives of college students (1967), and male homosexuality (1966-1969). Other significant works produced by the Kinsey Institute during the Gebhard years include Alan Bell and Martin Weinberg's *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity among Men and Women* (1978) and Alan Bell, Martin Weinberg, and Sue Hammersmith's *Sexual Preference: Its Development in Men and Women* (1981). Gebhard remained director until 1982.

Gebhard was succeeded as director of the Institute by June Reinisch. Her tenure as director was a turbulent one, marked by controversies over access to materials in the Institute's extensive archival collection of photography and film documenting sexual behavior, the role of sex research in the AIDS crisis, and the appropriateness of Reinisch's role as a syndicated sex advice columnist.

Reinisch resigned in 1993. Stephanie Sander served as interim director until 1995, when John Bancroft was appointed director.

Under Bancroft's guidance, the Institute has sought to recapture its place as the leading research institution on sexuality. It has developed extensive clinical and medical research on reproduction, gender, and sexual health.

The Institute is known for its extensive collection of materials on sexuality, including a vast library of erotica.

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About the Author

Jeffrey Escoffier writes on glbtq history, politics, culture, sexuality, music, and dance. One of the founders of *OUT/LOOK: National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly*, he has published widely. Among his books are *American Homo: Community and Perversity* and a biography of John Maynard Keynes in the Chelsea House series on the Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians. He co-edited (with Matthew Lore) Mark Morris' *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato: A Celebration*. His most recent book is *Sexual Revolution*, an anthology of writing on sex from the 1960s and 1970s. He is currently working on a book on sexual politics and writing about the production of pornography.