Friends and Supporters:
This letter is being sent to all supporters of the GLBT Historical Society to inform you of challenges we will be facing in the next eighteen months and to ask for your ongoing support.

Nonprofit organizations all go through times of major transition. The Historical Society has done so several times since our birth in 1985 including most recently a period of extraordinary growth. We want to build on this success and meet what can best be described as an avalanche of public interest in queer history. But it will be a challenge. Here’s why:

The Archives
A few months ago the rent for Historical Society’s offices and archives in downtown San Francisco was increased by 30% with additional increases planned in future years. Downtown is simply no longer affordable for nonprofit organizations like us. After over a decade at our current location we will need to move in early 2016.

Moving a vast archive is a major challenge. The materials are irreplaceable, often fragile, precisely organized and in constant use by researchers. We will need to keep our collections safe and minimize disruption.

However, we need to do more than just move the current set up. The new location should reflect future needs to preserve our history and make it available to future generations. For example, it will need to be larger to accommodate more staff and more researchers. It will also need to handle more material in digital formats both in the archives and the research room.

Fortunately over the last several years the archives program received a number of grants including two from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (part of the National Archives). Using these funds we have surveyed and processed many of our manuscript collections and are about to begin a new project to process much of our vast collections of photographs, sound recordings, and moving images. All of this will make relocating easier and minimize disruption of researcher access to our important collections.

We are now in the process of consulting other institutions and experts on the move and beginning the search for a new home. We will keep you posted as the process moves forward.

The Museum
In 2015 we also need to renew the lease for the GLBT History Museum, which is now in its fourth year.

Since opening, the museum has been a global phenomenon, receiving sustained media attention and drawing annually 15,000 to 20,000 visitors from around the world. Attendance at the museum is growing by about 10% every year; we expect this growth to continue.
The museum’s exhibits tell the diverse stories of queer history. They utilize hundreds of artifacts from the archives including some extraordinary pieces to make our history come alive. We use audio-visual displays to show film, sound, and photographs in engaging ways for our visitors. For most, it is their first encounter with the actual stuff of queer history.

Exhibitions change regularly in the museum’s three galleries, and we have just installed a new Main Gallery exhibit. Dozens of events are held at the museum each year, including lectures, film screenings and receptions. However, perhaps the area of greatest need is around docent-led tours and using the museum to meet the needs of students. This is a goal for our near future. The GLBT History Museum is successfully meeting enormous public demand and serving as an example for queer history museums in cities around the world. But to renew the lease while simultaneous relocating the archive will be a challenge and we know it.

**The Exploding Interest in GLBT History**

The challenges the Historical Society faces occur in the context of an avalanche of public interest in queer history which we endeavor to meet. For example, a year ago the Historical Society was asked to serve as sponsor for a project to create a citywide historic-context statement for important GLBT sites in San Francisco. The project has been underway from some months.

Last week the National Park Service announced the beginning of an effort to identify queer historic sites for the National Register of Historic Places. One of the co-directors of the San Francisco project and several people long connected to the GLBT Historical Society have been invited to participate in a “Scholars Roundtable” on this effort in Washington, DC this very week.

Remember President Obama’s description in his second inaugural address of a path that led “through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall”? There are already national monuments and historic trails at Seneca Falls and Selma. Someday soon nationally recognized GLBT historic sites, monuments, trails and national parks will also exist across the United States. This process is just beginning and will need a community voice, and the documentation that is found in archives like ours.

In the next eighteen months the GLBT Historical Society must meet the challenges of moving and re-envisioning the archive and sustaining and improving the museum. As other challenges arise we will meet them, for the GLBT Historical Society is more than the sum of our programs. The Society is the cutting edge of queer history, serving as both example and advocate for GLBT history writ large.

The Historical Society will be asked to make a series of commitments over the next 18 months, some very substantial. We will only be able to meet them, if our supporters—people like you—continue to help us. As the Society is being asked to make new commitments around the archives and museum we ask you to continue your commitment to this work.

Much has been done, but there is much more to do. Stay with us. **We ask for your support.**

Sincerely,

Paul Boneberg
Executive Director