



THE COVER

The beginnings of The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Inc., and its renowned library date back to 1938, when Dr. Alfred Kinsey, a biology professor at Indiana University, was asked to coordinate a new noncredit marriage preparation class petitioned for by the Association of Women Students. As students began coming to Dr. Kinsey with questions about sexual behavior, he found few scientific studies on which to base his answers. Dr. Kinsey's response to this void was to begin his own descriptive study of Americans' sexual behaviors and attitudes.

During the next eighteen years, more than seventeen thousand sexual histories were gathered. As context for his project and because he was a collector by nature, Dr. Kinsey began acquiring books, films, art, and artifacts related to human sexuality. To protect the confidentiality of the sex histories and the ownership of the other materials, Dr. Kinsey, at the suggestion of the president of Indiana University, Herman B. Wells, established the Institute for Sex Research as a not-for-profit corporation affiliated with Indiana University. In 1947 Dr. Kinsey sold his art and library materials to the fledgling institute for one dollar.

Bookplate courtesy of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Inc.

The 17/8-by-1¼ inch bookplate for the library of the Institute for Sex Research was designed by Robert Latou Dickinson (1861–1950), a gynecologist and noted pioneer of sex research in the United States. Dickinson's studies, including *A Thousand Marriages* (1931) and *The Single Woman* (1934), were based on more than fifty years in private practice with over five thousand New York City patients and had a significant influence on later work done by physicians, gynecologists, marriage counselors, students of fertility, and other clinical researchers. Kinsey personally credited Dickinson as one of the original sources of inspiration for his own work. At their first meeting in 1943, upon learning of Kinsey's research, Dickinson reportedly exclaimed, "At last! At last! This is what I have been hoping and praying for all these years." Their friendship and enthusiasm for each other's work prompted Dickinson's offer to design a bookplate for Kinsey's new research group. This final design was approved in 1946, and the "Inc." was added shortly thereafter with the incorporation of the institute in 1947.

The next year, the first of the so-called "Kinsey Reports," *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (W. B. Saunders, 1948) was published and became an unexpected best-seller. Five years later, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (W. B. Saunders, 1953) was published. Seventy-four scrapbooks of newspaper and magazine articles, editorials, opinion pieces, reviews, and cartoons attest to the impact of both studies on American culture. Some clergy went so far as to call Dr. Kinsey a representative of the devil. There were public statements that the "Kinsey Reports" were helping to pave the way for a Communist takeover. Around the same time, a U.S. Customs' agent began seizing sexually explicit materials addressed to the institute.

Consumed by his research and by the effort to keep the institute afloat when foundation funding ceased during the McCarthy era, Dr. Kinsey ignored medical advice to slow down. He died in 1956 at the age of sixty-two. At a conference held in honor of Dr. Kinsey's career as a sex researcher twenty-five years after his death, the institute was renamed in his honor.

The Kinsey Institute Library houses scientific and scholarly materials from many disciplines, erotica, and popular culture materials. The earliest artifact in the collections dates from 3200 B.C. There are over 80,000 books, journals, and reprints; 1,600 titles of sex magazines; 25,000 pieces of flat art; 3,500 three-dimensional objects; 40,000 photographs; and approximately 7,000 reels of film in the collections.

All materials in the collections have been acquired as donations or have been purchased with institute income. No public funds are used to acquire erotic materials. Donations are vital to the development of the institute's collections as a unique resource for use by scholars from around the world.

There have been a number of milestones in the library's forty-year history. The first was in 1957, when the United States District Court, Southern District of New York, ruled that the institute could receive sexually explicit materials for research purposes without interference by U.S. Customs and the U.S. Postal Service. This ruling governs access to the collections. Users must be scholars with "bona fide research projects."

In the 1970s the institute received funding for seven years from the National Institute of Mental Health to set up an information service and to undertake organizing and indexing the research literature of the multidisciplinary field of sexology. A number of publications resulted, including book catalogs of the monographs and periodical literature held by the library, *Sexual Nomenclature: A Thesaurus* (G. K. Hall, 1976), *Sex Research: Bibliographies from the Institute for Sex Research* (Oryx Press, 1979), and *Sex Studies Index, 1980* (G. K. Hall).

During the 1980s *Sex Research: Early Literature from Statistics to Erotica: A Guide to the Microfilm Collection* (Research Publications, 1983) was published. The most recent milestones are the library's new online public access catalog, KICAT, available as a menu selection on Indiana University's Information Online (IO) system, and its human sexuality WWW site to support the interdisciplinary research and study of human sexuality. The URL is <http://www.indiana.edu/kinsey/>.

Since its inception, the Kinsey Institute Library has attempted to collect the wide range of materials related to sexuality needed by researchers seeking insights into the interests and values of individuals, groups, and cultures. The challenge inherent in this mission has probably never been expressed better than by the Institute's founder, writing in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* almost fifty years ago:

. . . there is no aspect of human behavior about which there has been more thought, more talk, and more books written. From the dawn of human history . . . men have left a record of their sexual activities and their thinking about sex. . . . It is, at once, an interesting reflection of man's absorbing interest in sex, and his astounding ignorance of it; his desire to know and his unwillingness to face the facts; his respect for an objective, scientific approach to the problems involved, and his overwhelming urge to be poetic, pornographic, literary, philosophic, traditional, and moral.

Margaret H. Harter

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