Coasting on the long tail?

Serving LGBTQ* users of the academic library
Our students are more likely than previous generations to identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning, queer, intersex, transgender....

Or generally, not straight.

They are more likely to be non-conforming with regard to their gender and their sexuality.
Among U.S. adults aged 18 and over, 97.7% identified as straight, 1.6% as gay or lesbian, and 0.7% as bisexual. But the percentage identifying as straight is greatest for the oldest age group.

“Most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ)* youth are happy and thrive during their adolescent years.”

BUT

“Negative attitudes toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people put these youth at increased risk for experiences with violence, compared with other students. Violence can include behaviors such as bullying, teasing, harassment, physical assault, and suicide-related behaviors.”

“All students, regardless of sexual orientation, reported the lowest levels of depression, suicidal feelings, alcohol and marijuana use, and unexcused absences from school when they were

✓ In a positive school climate and
✓ Not experiencing homophobic teasing.”

LGBT youth. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.  
Libraries play a role in helping students graduate. Graduation is an anti-poverty tool.

What do we know about LGBTQ* users?
“LGBTq library users are a lot like other library users...” *

“a group of diverse individuals with diverse information needs”**


Lgbtq* content may not be labelled as such.

John Jay College’s historic *Criminal Trial Transcripts of New York County 1883-1927* collection provided the raw material for this gay history of New York City.

We need to think (and search) outside the silo!

• Users valued visible LGBTQ* affirming signs and dedicated subject guides.

• “Online chat has marginal appeal”.

• LGBTQ health professionals prefer working with medical librarians they know to be LGBTQ because of concerns about discrimination or a perceived lack of relevant knowledge.

Our international students may have low expectations for library content

“we have found only one GLB-themed title at 61% of all the public libraries in the city... there was no GLB-themed book at 33% of these public libraries”.

Adler: Survey of LGBTQ information seekers & librarians in Wisconsin:

• Users were surprised at local public library holdings having greater selections of current materials than their academic library.

• Wide range of research interests and interdisciplinarity of LGBTQ studies are a challenge for collection development.

• DVDs were the greatest challenge and source of frustration...

Privacy is still important

“I wouldn't have asked about LGBTQ, well, unless they look friendly. You can usually read people. I’m always worried that if I go ask this librarian a question, then she is going to tell the other person behind the desk and it will all be over. Or if I check out a book, everyone will be able to see what I have”.

Support privacy with self-check out technology

• “LGBT materials circulated twenty percent more via self-check, indicating that patrons appreciated the machines’ privacy” *

• Self check out machines are now common in public libraries

• Singapore libraries are using mobile apps and RFID technology.

• And train our circulation staff ( =students) to respect users’ privacy.

Libraries at colleges with lgbtq* friendly climates also have:

✓ a subscription to GLBT Life database
✓ a GLBT-related research guide
✓ A GLBT “selector or library contact”

Ciszek’ recommendations:

- Create a **top-level research guide** for GLBT-related topics and resources – not hidden under “gender studies”.
- Identify a staff member as responsible for GLBT related research assistance.
- **Assign a selector** tasked with keeping collections up to date.
- Partner with a campus GLBT organization to share or publicize resources.
- Highlight GLBT materials in the library newsletter, web site, etc.
- Perform an assessment of needs and plan to meet them.
- Include GLBT community in [campus] diversity initiatives.


• Gender neutral bathrooms
• Have a preferred name policy at circulation points.
• Develop a library inclusion statement that can be added to syllabi and/or workshop/class descriptions.

“When gender is policed to the extent that people are killed for transgressing gender rules, we all become a little more closed in, we lose a little freedom”

Waldman Recommendations

Have clearly written non-discrimination policies and show zero-tolerance for harassment.

Why do you need to know someone’s gender? (Why does a database need to know?) Gender history is private.

**Use gender inclusive language.**

Consider having workshops run by people from outside your library.

**Educate circulation staff** in helping people who’s appearance may not match their id photo or name.

Collection development: Have a **designated selector**. Collect biographies with positive portrayals. Point to/work with local organizations that maintain current information sources, nb related to to health.

Maintain a **subject guide**!

L. of C. subject headings & use still problematic. “Transgender” = SH since 2007. Relevant materials may be (mis) cataloged under “homosexuality”, etc.

“a controlled vocabulary system... implies a stability that simply does not exist in real life”.

1. Provide greater (and discrete) **access** to queer materials, while promoting awareness and visibility of collections, events, & local services.
2. Provide **referrals** to local support groups and counseling agencies.
3. Use **physical space** for queer workshops, lectures, sex education, health information classes...
4. Raise **awareness** of hate crimes; work with local organizations to promote tolerance.
5. Build **resources** & hold **exhibits** on queer history & culture on local, regional, national levels.
6. Develop ICT applications, e.g. host listservs, webpages, etc.
7. Provide avenues for empowerment and community building.
8. **Partner** with other organizations to remove legal, political, or social discrimination and prejudice.

Collection development “will continue to present a complex challenge”:

• Lgbtq* web sites are moving to social media platforms – presenting problems for discovery, access and preservation.

• Librarians must continue to assess bundles for lgbtq* content. (E-book collections did not initially include works from specialty publishing houses serving lgbtq* readers).

The joy of bundles

Kanopy: streaming video, PDA pricing model.

Images from The Watermelon Woman.
The joy of bundles....

Fig. 1. Long tail versus short tail in the library and information services context.

Long tail is thickened and lengthened by

• Improved discovery: federated searching, and global discovery tools.
• Bundled content acquisitions.
• Patron Driven Acquisition
• Increased resource sharing – ILL Is not just for graduate students anymore.
LGBTIQ titles are underrepresented in academic ebook collections. But “slowly improving”.

_LGBT Life_ e-books: Only 25% of the books were published this century, and “are not necessarily considered core resources or examples of great scholarship”.

LGBTIQ Reading Habit Survey:

“Quality of LGBT ebooks is not good” and “I can’t find any”.

Content is more important than format.

Collection development must go beyond bundles to identify and acquire award winning and well reviewed LGBTIQ titles AND promote their availability.
Disappearing content: Link rot and abandoned web projects

• Libraries can print out preservation copies of text materials – John Jay does this as part of a electronic resources cataloging project for materials within our mission area.

• *Glbtq Encyclopedia Project*, the “worlds largest encyclopedia of gay, lesbian, transgender and queer culture” launched in 2003, free to readers on the web, and closed in 2015 “*because of the collapse of the advertising business model that had supported it*”.
Disappearing content: Commercialization of archives

• We need to find ways of funding and running archival digitization projects so that LGBTQ* materials do not end up behind paywalls.

• If we find a way to pay once, materials can be free to access forever.
Open access is an LGBTQ* issue

LGBTQ* readers are already on the web – this is where they are looking for information.

Librarians have the opportunity and ability to counteract misinformation by making the work of our institutions’ own scholars more discoverable and accessible.

Libraries have a responsibility to expand collection development beyond our closed gardens, and add to the reliable, authoritative information freely accessible on the web.

We must advocate for our researchers to adopt open-access publishing practices, inform our authors of their self-archiving rights, and encourage our researchers to post their work on the institutional archive.
Lewis’ six steps to *Reimagining the Academic Library* (2016):

Step 4: “support the creation of, access to and preservation of the scholarly content created on your campus”

• The academic Library must actively support its institution’s repository, by advocacy, and provision of material resources & services.

• We need to teach our students how to discover and evaluate content housed in repositories.

• This is an lgbtq* issue!
An article NOT in an IR, though self-archived on at least two academic social networks.
Nadal et al’s taxonomy of seven sexual orientation and transgender microaggression themes

1: Use of heterosexist terminology

2: Endorsement of heteronormative or gender-conforming culture/behaviors

3: Assumption of universal LGBT experience

4: Exoticization

5: Discomfort/disapproval of LGBT experience

6: Denial of societal heterosexism/transphobia

7: Assumption of sexual pathology/abnormality

Wheeler’s solutions for librarians

• Learn about microaggressions.
• Do not make assumptions about anyone’s race, sexual orientation or gender identity. Try to use gender neutral language. “May I help you, sir?” may offend!
• Review institutional policies to ensure no disconnect; inconsistencies send mixed messages.
• Make sure staff understand policies, and how they are implemented. (e.g. inform all offices how to process name changes).

Are LGBTQ* issues relevant to the IL Framework?

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value
- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration

Note: Goal: to integrate LGBT content, references, and examples in all library user instruction practices

- Planning of students assignments that involve using library resources: find LGBTQ books, government publications, journal articles, or materials accessed through library subscription databases
- Develop instruction guides that help refine student critical evaluation skills in selecting and utilizing appropriate information sources based on LGBTQ values, priorities, and representations
- Create instruction workshops on managing privacy, cyber-bullying, safe behaviors in online social networking, and other modes of digital presence
- Tailor instruction in using library resources to course assignments and needs in specialized LGBTQ courses
- Develop and deliver effective LGBTQ-related content and assignments via use of library resources in all general courses. Offer workshops to LGBTQ parents, GSA sponsors, 6-12 librarians, public librarians on LGBTQ databases/resources available at college/university library
Using lgbtq* content and ideas for class

• Adopt a Wikipedia article – *Wikiproject LGBT studies*.

• Explore artifacts from a lgbt digitized archive; commercial or free on the web.

• Use lgbtq* topics as search examples during BI sessions.

• Use popular culture as a starting point for exploring glbtq* themes.
Conclusion

• Lgbtq* **content acquisition** must still happen at the item level; bundles are good, but not sufficient.

• Lgbtq* **research guides** can help with discoverability; preferably not “hidden” under gender studies.

• Include lgbtq* **topics in BI sessions**, classes.

• Lgbtq* users appreciate **signs/signifiers** affirming they are welcome.

• Have written **policies** affirming non-discrimination.

• Designate a **selector** for lgbtq* collection development and outreach.

• Encourage researchers to **embrace open access** publishing: especially self-archiving their work in their institutional repository.

• **Digitize, digitize, digitize!** Prioritize digitizing and making freely accessible artefacts of glbtq* history.
ALA GLBT Roundtable: bibliographies, reviews, and the Toolkit “Open to all”.  [www.ala.org/glbrt](http://www.ala.org/glbrt)

Medical Librarians Association, Relevant Issues Section, LGBT Health Librarians SIG.  [http://lgbt.mlanet.org](http://lgbt.mlanet.org)

IFLA LGBTQ/Q users special interest group.  [www.ifla.org/lgbtq](http://www.ifla.org/lgbtq)


Cited works:


Cited works - continued:


