"We Could Do Better": Librarian Engagement in LGBTQ Collection Development in Small and Rural Public Libraries in the Southern U.S.

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Although the LGBTQ community, from all appearances, maintains a strong connection to libraries as safe spaces, it is unclear whether the libraries themselves are providing relevant resources and services to the community. In addition, LIS research on LGBTQ patrons has centered on collection development how-tos and high level, broad suggestions without evaluating the actual state of the libraries' resources and services to these patrons.

In this analysis, I found that what primarily affected what the libraries had on their shelves was an actively engaged librarian dedicated to proper collection development practices. Future research will be needed to better determine motivations and best practices for the larger group.

Keywords: LGBTQ; public libraries; collection development; librarian engagement

Introduction

Although the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community, from all appearances, maintains a strong connection to libraries as safe spaces, it is unclear whether the libraries themselves are providing relevant resources and services to the community. In addition, Library and Information Studies (LIS) research on LGBTQ patrons has centered on collection development how-tos and high level, broad suggestions without evaluating the engagement of the librarians and library staff. And even in the research that has considered small or rural libraries, none have focused on the rural and small-town southern U.S., which data has shown is the most inhospitable of regions in the U.S. for LGBTQ individuals (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008; Gray, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2014; Barton, 2012). The lack of investigation into how and whether this population is being served in the rural and small-town South leaves a large gap in terms of material for librarians working in these locations. General guides are helpful to some extent, but they leave out the specific concerns and issues LGBTQ patrons in these often remote locations face, which means the librarians may or may not have an understanding of those patrons and their needs. This research gathered data that will hopefully provide a better understanding of what, if anything, librarians and library staff are doing to provide substantial collections for LGBTQ patrons and what their perceptions of both their existent collections and the development of these collections are.

Literature Review

Regardless of the problems libraries face in terms of extending adequate resources to LGBTQ patrons, the LGBTQ community in general still comes to the library seeking information and refuge. Multiple studies and personal accounts in publication tout the public library as a primary source in terms of LGBTQ identity building (Greenblatt, 1990; Stenback &

Schrader, 1999; Rothbauer, 2007; Ornelas, 2011; Day, 2013). "The library, by its very 'public' nature, has been viewed as a potential refuge from discrimination and as a repository of knowledge, impartially rendered" (Ritchie and McNeill, 2011, p.59). Public libraries, as spaces generally owned and operated by the town, county, or state, are ostensibly impartial zones that the community at large can use as common space, much the same as a community recreation center. Therefore, they at least have the aura of being a safe and nonjudgmental space for all groups within the community, including marginalized populations. The very special designation of the library as a place not only to gather but to learn lends itself to an even more rarified vision of the library by these marginalized groups.

As noted in Day, the library is especially important for LGBTQ youth in rural areas. Her work focused on her home country of Australia and the use of libraries by LGBTQ youth as refuges from bullying and harassment, but the points may be transferrable to other rural areas. Libraries are in a unique position as public institutions charged with providing services to all members of the community and expected to uphold intellectual freedom to provide welcoming and inclusive spaces. "By being visibly gay-friendly, libraries can not only give hope to a population that often has very little in terms of support, but can also educate the general public, leading to greater acceptance and tolerance" (Day, 2013, p. 46). Under-developed LGBTQ collections are, of course, problematic in any library setting; all libraries should be prepared to serve the needs of any and all patrons who happen to come through their doors. However, it becomes even more problematic when this occurs in small, rural areas of the southern United States.

Although it is certainly not relegated to only rural areas of the southern US, this region has higher rates of anti-LGBTQ sentiment, actions, and violence. This can be partially attributed

to the notably higher instances of religious fundamentalism (Pew Forum, 2008, p. 8) in these states, but generally conservative political views also contribute (Newport, 2015). Given these circumstances, the public library is often the only access LGBTQ youth in these locations have to relevant and vital information. Personal networks are often harder to establish in areas which are notoriously conservative, insular, and/or hostile to the LGBTQ community, and there are few if any community resources such as bookstores, support groups, and LGBTQ organizations, that one is much more likely to find in larger, urban areas (Wienke & Hill, 2013, p. 1258). Accessing resources at home online is also often not possible; though one's family's responses to LGBTQ individuals may not match the conservative or hostile ideals of the community, it is often safer to remain secretive than risk potential violence or rejection. In addition, rural areas lag behind the rest of the country in terms of internet access at home (Martin, 2018), and so reliable internet access may not even be a possibility outside of libraries or schools.

Rurality and the LGBTQ Community

It would be inaccurate to claim that all rural experiences are the same for all LGBTQ individuals. Wienke and Hill examine this notion in terms of past research on gay and lesbian rural residents (2013). Their study focused on the sense of wellbeing or happiness that gay men and lesbians have in rural versus urban areas. In the literature review, they cite multiple past articles that claim that rural living is much more difficult and hostile for LGBTQ individuals, but they claim that newer research, including their own, "finds little support for the premise that rural living is incompatible with the needs and wants of gay men and lesbians" (p. 1274). The authors do admit to limitations of their work but leave out several that are important to the current discussion. First, there is no stated understanding that the subjects of this study are adults. While rural living may not be incompatible for adults who are independent and potentially have

the ability to relocate, this is likely not true for youth. A majority of youth are reliant upon their parents, guardians, or other adults for their primary needs. If they are living in a situation in which there is hostility or intolerance toward LGBTQ individuals, there may be no option for them to live openly and compatibly with their rural community as with the adults in the study. Second, the study focuses entirely on gay men and lesbians. Though in the particular rural areas discussed here there may be little to no distinguishing between identities for those hostile toward them, it is often the case that transgender and gender non-conforming individuals are the target of more frequent and violent harassment. Finally, the research cited which backs up their own findings is all placed in the Northeast and Midwest. There is truth to the notion that rural areas are somewhat similar across regional divisions, but they are not identical. The area of the United States focused upon in this project, the southern states, contains a large swath known as the Bible Belt. This term covers the states indicated in the definition of South and describes the higher concentration of fundamentalist and evangelical religious believers (primarily Christian) located in these states. While this alone does not guarantee hostility and intolerance toward LGBTQ individuals, there is a decidedly higher instance of negative experiences in this area; 74% of the students from the southern U.S. polled in a Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) study on rural LGBTQ youth reported feeling unsafe in school because of anti-LGBTQ harassment and rates of feeling unsafe at school because of one of several identity markers (sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression) were higher across all rural areas than suburban or urban locations (Palmer, Kosciw, & Bartkiewicz, 2012, pp. 8-9).

Bernadette Barton describes a phenomenon present in these states, particularly in rural areas, which is an adaptation of Foucault's Panopticon and the panoptic-prison design. In his study of prisons, Foucault describes the Panopticon's purpose as follows: "to induce in the

inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power…to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action" (Foucault, 1995, p. 201). There is a "centrally located guard station so that one guard can survey many cells at one time," which leads in Foucault's argument to a constant belief one is being watched (even if they are not) "so that they regulate their own behavior according to an imagined, external authority" (Barton, 2012, p. 24). Barton specifies that there is a "Bible Belt Panopticon": "an important element of Bible Belt Christianity [that] manifests through networks of family, neighbors, church, and community members, and a plethora of Christian signs and symbols sprinkled throughout the region" (p. 24). For example, one lesbian interviewed for Barton's book mentioned that simply the sight of typically evangelical Christian symbols, such as a cross or fish symbol, on someone's car or person is enough to make her alter her speech and actions so as not to outwardly present herself as a lesbian. While not every small and rural town in the South is as unwelcoming as this would suggest, there is a higher chance and concentration of this sort of situation here, which indicates that in these particular areas, a welcoming and safe space is vital for the wellbeing of LGBTQ individuals, particularly youth. However, LGBTQ youth may see librarians as a part of this problem, and so extra effort may be needed to ensure they think of the entire library, including its staff, as a safe resource.

LGBTQ youth are both one of the most vulnerable populations and one of the hardest to identify. Their status as an "invisible population" makes assisting them more difficult than other populations served by the library, which may feel safer openly vocalizing their particular information needs. However, as Gray argues, "If rural LGBT-identifying youth are at times hard to see, it is as much because researchers rarely look for them as they have so few places to be

seen" (2009, p. 91). This can be extended to library staff as well. Downey discusses this in her "traps" of self-censorship; the fourth trap is the assumption that there are no LGBTQ patrons to serve in one's town (2013, p. 105-106). Like Gray's researchers, library staff may simply need to be more observant, and regardless of whether they are able to actually identify LGBTQ patrons, every effort should be made to ensure that an LGBTQ patron of any age could walk through the library's doors and seek information successfully, comfortably, and without fear.

Gray discusses the notion that rural communities "prioritize solidarity [and] rely on familiarity" to function and create their own microcosms (2009, p. 3). What this means for groups which are located outside the heteronormative, cisgender normative spectrum, defined by appearance and behaviors which conform to stereotypical constructs of masculinity and femininity, is that there is a lack of safe space for identifying one's difference and expressing it without fear of violence, abuse, or shunning. As Gray points out, these spaces without fear of physical or psychological harm are necessary to facilitate the "stage of identity development called coming out…[and] are presumed to be a part of a city's fabric (even if, at times, threadbare) while veritably absent out in the country" (p. 5). Compounding the issues this absence creates is the necessity in these communities to be attached to one's family. The concept of one's "people" is of high priority: "family is the primary category through which rural community members assert their right to be respected" (p. 37). Asserting one's difference or queerness can create a separation between the LGBTQ individual and their family, which in such insular situations can be extended to include school, church, or general community, meaning the LGBTQ individual is without the ability to command respect or right of inclusion into the community. This leaves LGBTQ people in many rural communities unable to work on identity

building in any functional way, so even the minimal safe space of a library without extensive resources can be of critical importance.

LIS Literature on LGBTQ Youth in Libraries

LIS has long been interested in the information needs and behaviors of diverse populations. There is no dearth of research, in general, on most populations in the context of public, academic, and school libraries; the population of interest here is no exception. What is most often covered in this research, however, are best practices and suggestions rather than hard looks at what may or may not be actually occurring in the libraries. Some research has, of course, been done regarding collection development and the presence of LGBTQ relevant literature on the shelves of libraries (Moss, 2008; Crisp & Knezek, 2010; Stringer-Stanback, 2011; Williams & Deyoe, 2014) as well as censorship both in terms of physical (Downey, 2013; Hughes-Hassell, Overberg, & Harris, 2013) and electronic resources (Storts-Brinks, 2010; Adams, 2012). All of this is useful information for librarians and scholars focusing on the LGBTQ community, but evaluations of current practices and the actual experiences of patrons seeking LGBTQ resources might be more useful, particularly in the case of small and rural libraries. Curry (2005) states the lack of research in precisely this niche, noting the fact that despite ongoing research regarding LGBTQ patrons in libraries this gap has existed for quite some time. "In their groundbreaking 1990 book *Gay and Lesbian Library Service*, Gough and Greenblatt regret that they were unable to include a chapter on a very relevant, but as yet unexamined topic: 'accounts by library users of their experiences while looking for gay- or lesbian-related information in libraries'…this deficiency…continues to exist fifteen years later" (Curry, 2005, p. 65). And though this research examines this gap from the library side rather than the patron side, it is intended to provide background and framework for future studies.

Sheila B. Anderson's *Extreme Teens: Library Services to Nontraditional Young Adults* (Libraries Unlimited, 2005) is an excellent resource, but it is a bit broad in its focus. It is not able to provide enough assistance for librarians and library staff seeking to help LGBTQ patrons. Even the information specific to LGBTQ young adults would not be very helpful to librarians in small and rural communities for the most part. For example, some of Anderson's suggestions include setting up booths at gay pride events and working with local Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), and while these are both superb ideas, they may not even be possible for small and rural areas. Many or most would not have pride events at which to set up, and though there are some GSAs scattered amongst rural and small communities, there are more likely to be found in larger or urban areas.

A second resource, *Serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Teens* by Martin and Murdock (Neal-Schuman, 2007), is focused entirely on the LGBTQ population, but it too has serious deficiencies. A glance at the index reveals one mention of rural libraries and only a handful of mentions of small libraries, and the information in these sections is problematic. In discussing rural libraries, the authors do note that "the extra step of requesting an interlibrary loan is an insurmountable, unacceptable barrier to access [for many queer and questioning teens]" (Martin & Murdock, 2007, p. 27), which is an important concern left out of much LIS literature in this area. Particularly in libraries that are part of a larger system of branches, the existence of an LGBTQ resource at one branch may be considered sufficient, but if the patron feels they may be outed by making a hold request on the item, it is as good as nonexistent for them.

The most problematic information was found in the authors' "red light" suggestions for small libraries that must be concerned about community backlash. They stress subtlety in

programming and the provision of a welcoming environment through no-tolerance policies on

bullying, both of which can be useful and doable. However, they go on to advise librarians to

"choose books that don't draw too much attention to their LGBTQ content: namely books that

have queer secondary characters" and "[booktalk] without revealing the LGBTQ characters or

content…once you've hooked the kids on a plot, their interests will be piqued enough to read the

book regardless of the characters' sexual identity" (pp. 126-127). I realize why the authors felt

this was a reasonable suggestion: it would allow a librarian in a small community to promote

LGBTQ content without actually drawing attention to it—slipping it in under the radar, so to

speak. Yet they do not temper this advice with any discussion of what this sort of tactic might

demonstrate to LGBTQ young adults.

It is true that any (good) queer content is better than none, but there are several glaring

problems with these suggestions. Books with secondary queer characters are harder to locate as

queer content than those with LGBTQ main characters or explicitly LGBTQ content. These

materials are less likely to have queer subject headings and are often not even tagged as having

queer content on social book sites such as Goodreads. A similar issue comes up with the book

talk suggestion. By not acknowledging queer content, the librarian has effectively erased it, and

for those young adults who read the book or know about the content beforehand, this sends a less

than welcoming message about what is acceptable, reinforcing what many LGBTQ young adults

already assume is true about themselves.

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Roundtable of the ALA (GLBTRT) released a

toolkit in 2016 entitled *Open to All: Serving the GLBT Community in Your Library*. It is a solid

piece of work with many excellent, standard recommendations. However, though it notes some

of the challenges facing rural and small libraries in this area, it does not make many clear

suggestions on combatting them. It seems to simply be parroting the notions present in the other resources rather than any specifics about what may or may not be occurring in the actual libraries.

There are other resources which are partially concerned with this subject, but these are often cited and mentioned in resource lists for librarians. In addition, the Martin and Murdock book is part of a series called "How-To-Do It Manuals for Librarians," making it a very visible resource. The gaps present, I think, are fairly clear. Rurality and the nature of small communities, particularly those in the U.S. South, have not been considered. The issues specific to those communities, obvious to other disciplines, have been almost completely overlooked by our field. A closer look at what libraries in these areas are doing for their LGBTQ patrons and how services can be improved for these often isolated young adults is sorely needed.

Method

The project discussed was accomplished using two qualitative methods (a content analysis of small and rural library catalogs in Alabama and a qualitative interview with library staff at these libraries). Here I am focusing only on the interview portion, but I will present a brief outline of the complete methodology for context.

The subjects for content analysis were determined by using the city lists at city-data.com, which are separated into three categories: "Bigger cities (6,000+ residents)," "Smaller cities, towns, and villages (1,000-6,000 residents)," and "Very small towns and villages (<1,000 residents)" (2011). Towns with populations less than 1,000 are much less likely than their larger counterparts to have online catalogs and so were not considered for this sample. City-data.com is

not a governmental website; however, the population data is consistent with that reported by the

2010 U.S. Census and is provided in an easily sortable format. There are 399 cities and towns

with populations between 1,000 and 25,000 in Alabama, and using a random number table to

choose subjects, 100 were taken at random to examine. It was then determined whether the city

has a public library and whether that library has an online catalog. If the city had either no library

or no online catalog, the next city in the list of cities and towns was used; the population of the

next city was similar as the list is in descending population order. I excluded any library at which

I have been or am currently a cardholder (Sylacauga, Talladega, and Thomasville). Though I

took 100 towns from the full list, the analysis only used 77 of these. Due to the interview

response rate, I chose to limit the libraries to those more closely matching the demographics of

the interviewees' libraries, which eliminated 21 of the largest libraries. I then removed two more

libraries due to technical issues with their catalogs, leaving me with 77 libraries.

Once the final list of subjects was complete, each library's catalog was searched using a

predetermined selection of subject headings, taken from Moss (2008) with one addition, shown

below truncated with possible expansions.

Keywords used in catalog analysis.

- Lesbian* (lesbian, lesbian couples, lesbians, lesbians', and lesbianism)
- Gay* (gay, gay men, gay couples, gays, and gays')
- Homosexual* (homosexual, homosexuals, homosexuals', and homosexuality)
- Bisexual* (bisexual, bisexuals, bisexuals', bisexual men, bisexual women, and bisexuality)
- Transgender* (transgender, transgender people, and transgenderism)
- *Transsexual* (transsexual, transsexuals, transsexuals', and transsexualism)*
- Sexual Orientation (sexual orientation, outing (sexual orientation), and coming out (sexual orientation)) (p. 152)
- [Queer]
- [Asexual]
- [Intersex], [*Hermaphrodite*]

Transsexual is marked with italics due to its contentious appearance on this list. Though the term is used by some to describe themselves, it is, in general, a term thought of as incorrect at best and offensive at worst. It is likely to be found in older contexts, and its continued use may signal a collection or item that is not being kept up to date. That being said, there are instances of its use in current and popular literature, such as Meredith Russo's Stonewall Award winning novel *If I Was Your Girl* (Flatiron Books, 2016). However, this is a case of the author, a trans woman, using the term as a personal identity marker, not only in the novel but also in her own life. This is a much different use than the original context, and so though Russo's usage is not problematic, much other use is. *Queer*, *asexual*, and *intersex* are listed in brackets because Moss did not use these terms in her study, but as common identity markers, they have been included here. *Hermaphrodite* is in italics because it is an outdated and no longer used term; *intersex* is the correct term to use. Much the same as *transsexual*, it may signal outdated or even offensive resources in the collection.

Materials found in the catalog with the indicated headings were noted in terms of number of items and briefly examined to determine whether these were relevant and appropriate headings for the particular item. Items found were coded as relevant or not based on whether the use of the heading constituted outdated and unused terminology and whether the item had LGBTQ headings but was anti-gay in nature or simply unrelated. For JUV and YA materials, shelving location was noted and checked against non-LGBTQ books in the reading level. An outside coder coded a small sample of the items which were compared with my own coding to help ensure reliability.

Interviews

Procedures. Subjects for interviews were recruited from the libraries examined in the content analysis stage. Potential subjects were contacted by email and/or phone, and if they were willing to participate, a time and format of interview was established. I hoped to conduct at least twenty-five interviews out of the pool of 100 libraries, but the response rate was far less than anticipated. Only five librarians of the final total of 77 libraries were willing to be interviewed. As noted above, 21 of the libraries were removed from the final sample to more closely match the demographics of the libraries in my interview sample and two for technical issues. A 6.5% response rate is neither ideal nor comprehensive, but the respondents do represent a good array of types of libraries within the sample and so prove very illuminating despite the small number. A semi-structured approach was employed to allow for flexibility and alteration of the path of inquiry. While face-to-face interviews would have been preferable, the interviews were conducted over the phone or through email. The app Tape a Call Pro was used to record phone interviews, and notes were taken in conjunction with this method. Email interviews were sent to me as attachments with responses typed into the interview question document.

Each interview was transcribed and then coded using codes that arose from the interview itself, as in grounded theory open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). After each interview was coded, any new codes were then applied to previous interviews, providing continuous evaluation of the content based on the information provided by the interview subjects. As with the content analysis, an outside coder coded an interview and then the two coding results were compared to ensure reliability.

To recruit interviewees, I sent individual emails to each of the 77 libraries included in the catalog analysis requesting that they participate in a phone interview. I sent out the emails twice

more, but despite the three rounds of email calls for participation, a total of only five librarians were willing to be interviewed for this project, though at least three others had initially expressed interest. Most gave no response whatsoever, though there were two negative responses, one of which bears further examination below. It is difficult to say why the response rate was so low. Three libraries stated that the lack of employee coverage in their locations made it impossible to carve out the time for a phone interview. Following the suggestion of one of these librarians, an email interview option was implemented. The questions remained the same. Two of the libraries expressed interest in the email option and completed the forms. Three additional interviews were conducted over the phone. Had face-to-face interviews been a possibility, response rate may have been higher, though there is no way to know for sure. Given the high levels of conservatism in this area, it is also possible that the transparency in my call for participants may have been a hindrance rather than a help. I clearly state in my email that I am researching LGBTQ resources, and it is possible that this may have contributed to the low response rate as well.

This half of the research was guided by the following research questions:

- Research Question (RQ): To what extent do the librarians and/or library staff of small and rural libraries in Alabama have an accurate conception of their library's LGBTQ collection?

   o RQ2a: To what extent do the librarians and/or library staff of small and rural libraries in Alabama actively promote and build the LGBTQ collection?

   o RQ2b: What barriers, if any, to the active promotion and building of LGBTQ collections do the librarians and/or library staff perceive to exist?

   o RQ2c: How, if at all, do the librarians and/or library staff address perceived barriers?

Results

  The librarians that consented to an interview were all enthusiastic about their collections and very willing to admit that they are a continual work in progress. In terms of the libraries, three of the five were part of a larger system. Three of the five were also part of an Alabama consortium called CamelliaNet, though not all three of these were part of a system. Their populations and legal service areas can be found in the chart below, arranged by population size (city-data.com, 2011) (IMLS). As can be seen here, the population of a town can have little to do with the number of patrons they are expected to serve. Library 2, for example, serves a population nearly ten times that of its town population.

<p align="center">[Insert Table here]</p>

In the text below, librarians are referred to by the number assigned to the library they work for in my data files. This strategy was employed to further distance the librarian from identifiable data about their library.

  Among the states included in the definition of the southeast, Alabama has the highest number of small and rural libraries (Swan, Grimes, & Owens, 2013, p. 4); it is outpaced only by West Virginia and Mississippi in terms of people living in rural areas. Many towns and communities in these areas are fairly close together, and so one town has a public library that serves multiple communities. Some are within 10 miles or so of one another and many are farther afield. My initial subject pool was only towns with populations between 1,000 and 25,000 to meet the ARSL definition of small and rural. However, there are 208 "Very Small Towns and Villages" with populations below 1,000 (city-data.com, 2011). Some of these do have libraries, and many times their service areas extend far beyond their tiny town limits; for example, Akron (population 338) has a legal service area of 1809. What this includes is primarily unincorporated

communities outlying the town as well as those living in areas not designated by any community name. It is important to understand just how stretched some of these libraries are before launching into the interview data, as this informs the majority of the issues and answers that arise there.

Basic Librarian Information

Three of the librarians earned a Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLIS), and both of the other librarians received some form of training regarding managing or working with libraries, including a year-long program through the University of Alabama and the Alabama Public Library Service. The length of time at their current libraries ranged from one year to 23, and total time working in libraries ranged from eight years to 23.

Collection Development

All five librarians were either wholly or partially responsible for collection development in their respective libraries. When asked about collection development policies, the responses were varied. Three libraries had established policies, one did not, and one librarian responded "Not really. It's very vague." Of the three with policies, only one specifically mentions diversity and includes language that, at minimum, implies that the library will actively collect resources for diverse populations. This policy also mentions the Library Bill of Rights and ALA's Freedom to Read and Freedom to View statements. One librarian said that his library does have a collection development policy but that "they do nothing…it is absolutely useless and just there to protect yourself from legal action." The remaining library with a policy does state the "need to serve the community."

All five librarians had sources to which they turned for collection development advice, though only three mentioned actively seeking LGBTQ recommendations. They all used such

sources as former professor's tweets and posts, ALA and YALSA recommendations, spotlighted resources from vendors like Ingram, online reviews from Kirkus and other sources, and "professional publications," with one stating she gets recommendations from the town's "active LGBTQ community." One said they used the services provided by the Alabama Public Library Service but has "not done any specific research," with another stating that they "don't go out specifically seeking materials."

The librarians were asked about their perception of the accuracy and relevance of their LGBTQ collections, based solely on their notions and not actual statistics. Reponses ranged from "not very" to "small but current and relevant." One librarian said, "We're pretty relevant right now. We could stand to have more…We could do better. We're doing better."

Barriers, Perceived Need, and Challenges

In terms of any perceived barriers to "promoting or supporting resources and programming" for LGBTQ patrons, the answers varied widely. One librarian believed there were no barriers and cited her town's fairly recent adoption of an LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination policy as evidence. Another librarian cited only funding as a barrier, noting that their "material budget was cut 50%," leaving only "$2500 budgeted…for all materials."; this is for the library with a service area of over 30,000. The remaining three librarians all noted potential community opposition as barriers to LGBTQ programming and acquisitions, though none have had official challenges logged.

One question sought to determine how much of a need for LGBTQ services, resources, and programming the librarians' perceived in their respective communities. Aside from the final, open-ended question, this particular question is the most important in terms of understanding how these librarians and libraries meet or do not meet the needs of their LGBTQ patrons.

Answers included "mid to low," "average to a little bit above average," "large," and "it's hard to say." One simply stated that there is likely a need for more resources, but "limited funding makes this challenging." All were fairly vague, and none seemed sure of how exactly to answer this question or how to determine the need in general. The most telling answer was from the librarian of the smallest library interviewed: "I haven't had anybody ask." One of the biggest barriers to usage of services for LGBTQ youth is the requirement, perceived or actual, to out oneself (Acevedo-Polakovich, Bell, Gamache, & Christian, 2013). It is important to note here that this expectation that the patron will always ask when in need is not necessarily applicable to LGBTQ patrons, or to many minority groups, and is one of the more widespread issues in terms of providing services to invisible populations.

In terms of actual challenges to materials, all of the libraries have received unofficial challenges to their LGBTQ materials, though none of the patrons opted to file an official complaint or go through the library's challenge procedure. One was a complaint to the librarian's personal Facebook page regarding a transgender book that had been donated, and others were basic statements of displeasure with or dislike of a particular LGBTQ item in the collection mentioned in discussion with the librarian. One library was asked to separate the LGBTQ materials into their own section, but the librarian "refused, referring the patron to the Library Bill of Rights."

Parting Thoughts

The final question in the interviews asked whether the librarians had anything they would like to add about LGBTQ resources, patrons, or programming that we had not already discussed. All of them did, and with at least one interviewee, this is where the most useful and important bits of information emerged. Two reiterated the lack of funding available to hire professional

staff who could create more programming and build better collections, not only for LGBTQ

patrons but for everyone.

> As with most libraries, we need more…Excluding myself, my staff are all part-
> time employees. One staff member has attended some college. Two others
> received their high school diplomas…Even though I'm the director, my Board has
> me classified as an hourly employee. This limits what I can do as I cannot work
> past 40 hours/week." [library with legal service area of almost 31,000]

One wondered, "How do you know they're there in order to serve them?" and went on to discuss

the merits of anonymous services such as ebooks and self-checkout stations, particularly ones not

completely visible from the circulation desk. He also stated, "I think our profession, especially

the reference, needs to do a better job of getting out the confidentiality side of our work. People

need to know that talking to us is a lot like talking to a doctor, or it should be."

Discussion

None of the five librarians interviewed were overly positive about the condition, i.e.,

accuracy and relevance, or size of their LGBTQ collections. One librarian (Library 37) stated

that their collection was "small but current and relevant." As this library is a member of

CamelliaNet but had no ebooks appear in the searches, their numbers are artificially low with 69

total print items across all of the keywords searched, only 0.25% of the slightly more than 27,000

print items reported in the IMLS data. This is not to say that there is a set percentage of items

that should be present for any one group or subject, but this is exceptionally small. Library 43, of

a slightly smaller but similar legal service area, has nearly double that percentage (0.42%) out of

almost 39,000 print items. Based on the responses from the interviewees, the areas in which the

libraries are located are of a slightly different makeup, but Library 37, with the smaller

percentage, mentioned being an "arts community [with] a large number of LGBTQ patrons" that

recently passed an LGBTQ-positive nondiscrimination policy. Library 43 stated a perceived

lower need for the items. A potential reason for this difference can be found in the expenditures column of the IMLS data. Library 43 spent nearly three and a half times the amount Library 37 did on all print materials in the year noted. However, unlike other librarians interviewed, neither of these librarians addressed budget concerns, so it is unclear whether a budget cut or reduction may be to blame for Library 37's lack despite the clear strong need for the collection. However, despite the fact that Library 43 has a higher percentage of items, the librarian's assessment of the relevance is important to note: "It's pretty good. I make sure to always have the Legal Guide for Gay Couples [*A Legal Guide for Gay and Lesbian Couples* (Nolo, 2016)]. That's important, and I know we have some fiction and some other nonfiction resources…I'd say it's good. It's not great. We're not focusing on it because I haven't seen the circulation there." This brings up a very important issue that was actually raised by the librarians in the interviews. Downey notes a lack of circulation as one of the primary traps that librarians fall into in terms of LGBTQ collections (2013). It is standard practice to periodically weed collections, and many times circulation records are the only or primary metric used. Due to the nature of certain types of materials, this metric is actually one of the least useful.

Particularly in these rural and often inhospitable communities, LGBTQ patrons may not feel comfortable requesting specifically LGBTQ materials, and if they are present on the shelf, they may or may not feel comfortable checking them out. Both Barton (in citing Foucault) and Chatman (in her Life in the Round) address this. People in these communities often exist in what can be a termed a fishbowl. Whether actual or perceived, there is a belief that their behavior is under constant scrutiny, and any slip that may inadvertently out them is to be avoided. Therefore, rather than "cross the boundaries of their world to seek information" (Chatman, 1999), they will simply do without the needed materials. If the material is found, often what happens is called

stealth circulation (Downey 2013; Koontz, Jue, & Lance, 2005). Patrons remove an item from the shelf, read it in the library, and replace it on the shelf. This allows the patron to use the material and locate the needed information, while still maintaining their privacy. In this way, there is no record of it having been used, and therefore, if the library uses circulation records as a weeding metric, the item will have artificially low use, which may lead to it being weeded out of the collection. What this does is deplete LGBTQ collections which may actually be getting heavy use but have no record of patron interest. This then sends the message to LGBTQ patrons that the library does not feel these materials are a valuable part of the collection and therefore that they are not a valued enough part of the community to warrant robust and diverse collections. This may in turn lead to reduced usage of the library in general, removing a safe space from their information world.

Day (2013) notes the vital role that libraries play for rural LGBTQ youth, and I would say rural LGBTQ patrons in general as well, citing Gray (2009) and Barton (2012). Even if the area is only perceived as hostile, this is enough reason to warrant the higher value of safe space within the community. Removal of the library from this category it has long occupied for the LGBTQ community (Greenblatt, 1990; Stenback & Schrader, 1999; Rothbauer, 2007; Ornelas, 2011; Day, 2013) can be devastating, as in rural and small town settings, there are typically very few spaces deemed safe for this population. Most other spaces fall into the category outlined by Barton in her use of Foucault—spaces in which they are monitored or perceive themselves to be monitored for deviation from the norm (2012). Librarians then become part of the disindividualized power structure, in which they are a type of person perceived to have authority and therefore power to enforce community norms, which their identities fall outside of, a state further defined by the lack of resources available (Chatman, 1999; Barton, 2012).

Interview question 4 asked the librarians about their collection development policies, specifically whether the library had a formal, written policy and, if so, whether that policy had any language regarding diversity. Three of the five libraries had formal, written policies, one said, "not really," and one did not have a policy at all. Of the three with clear, formal policies, only one, Library 66, contained any language on diversity, stating that "widely diverse points of view, including controversial and unorthodox subjects will be available in the collection. Inclusion in the collection does not imply library approval or agreement with the contents." One, a librarian at Library 43, stated that "Like all formal, written collection development policies, it is absolutely useless and just there to protect yourself from legal action." Though I understand that the opinion here is undoubtedly based on his fifteen years of experience in libraries, this is a highly questionable view of collection development policies; in addition, the verbiage in the quoted policy, though it does make clear the intention to build a diverse collection, is problematic.

In almost all of the literature for public librarians on collection development of LGBTQ materials, a clear, thorough, and robust policy is highly recommended (Alexander & Miselis, 2007; Martin & Murdock, 2007; GLBTRT, 2016; Kurz, 2018). It does serve as a protection for libraries on some level; a clear statement on how materials are selected will deflect the vast majority of challenges. However, on another level, a collection development policy that includes specific language about diversity and inclusion provides a roadmap for librarians and staff in terms of the library's duties to patrons. It makes clear that the library actively supports collections for minority groups within the community, visible or not.

In terms of the noted verbiage, calling materials "unorthodox" or "controversial" is problematic in that it puts materials such as LGBTQ items in opposition to a normative or

"normal" viewpoint. Not only does this assume that the larger patron group would find these

materials controversial and thus is possessed of only one viewpoint, but it also labels those

patrons whose identities are contained within these items as controversial and/or unorthodox and

effectively labels them an outsider. As with the statement made about policies as legal

protection, I understand why those particular phrases are there. These communities, as reflected

in both national surveys (Pew, 2008 & 2014) and statements by the interviewees, tend to be

highly conservative and religious in nature. There is a standard set of beliefs assumed to go along

with those attitudes, which would lead the library staff to assume, based both on general

assumptions and actually living in the community, that materials that potentially challenge those

beliefs will be thought of as controversial or unacceptable. In this way, the librarians themselves

are falling prey to Barton's Bible Belt Panopticon. Though they themselves may or may not be a

member of the LGBTQ community, their support could be perceived as a statement that they are

opposed to a less than tolerant community. In this case, they occupy the same space as their

LGBTQ patrons, one in which they are monitored for adherence to the community norms. The

Bible Belt Panopticon, though more specifically centered on the marginalized communities, also

circumscribes the actions and identity markers of those around the community (Barton, 2012),

which in the case of librarians whose collection development activities may be affected, further

affects the marginalized groups by limiting access to needed resources. However, it is simplistic

to make such blanket assumptions about the larger community and insulting and isolating to

reduce identities to "unorthodox" and "controversial." Qualifying phrases would be helpful in

this particular instance, e.g., "including subjects and materials some may find controversial or

unorthodox." In this way, it is not the library defining the materials (and ultimately, the groups

associated with those materials) as such, but an acknowledgement of the diversity of opinions and views inherent in their community.

Scholars and practitioners alike agree that there are barriers to LGBTQ collection development. The librarians interviewed for this project gave a variety of responses on the existence of barriers in their libraries, ranging from funding alone to conservative community beliefs. Librarian 66 noted a materials budget cut of 50%, leaving them with $2500 to purchase all materials for the year; this is following a 62% general budget cut from the county after a large employer left several years ago. This particular library is also the one with the largest population to service area difference among the librarians I interviewed. The legal service population is nearly three times the actual population of the town, spread over approximately 600 square miles. So when this librarian states that funding is their primary barrier, it is not hard to believe. Given the responses from the other interviewees, this is likely not the only barrier, but it is at least the biggest one at the moment. This librarian called her LGBTQ collection "weak" in terms of in-house items; she was indeed correct. Though there were 57 relevant physical items, there was a lot of outdated nonfiction, many mainstream novels with incidental LGBTQ content, and few YA items The remaining 374 items were ebooks available through CamelliaNet Coupled with the budgetary issues, this is not a surprising set of data. Without the membership in the CamelliaNet consortium, the patrons at this library would have very little queer content to access, and with such a large service area, this becomes even more problematic.

Chatman's Information Poverty framework, though exceptionally useful when discussing all types of marginalized populations, was initially more closely tied to socioeconomic class than other forms of marginalization. In this, it is particularly salient when discussing the lack of resources due to budgetary shortcomings. It is not news to those within LIS that libraries,

especially small public libraries, have long struggled with budgetary issues; county and municipal contributions are slashed in favor of other projects and areas of concern, leaving the libraries to support the same number of patrons with the same and growing needs on a smaller and smaller amount of money. When librarians are faced with the budget cuts, they must prioritize their expenditures even more carefully. A materials budget which is cut by half, as in the case of Library 66, means that decisions must be made on greatest need; if circulation records do not show a great need for a particular section or type of material, that section or type of material will fall to the bottom of the priorities list. As noted previously, LGBTQ materials are under-collected in general, and circulation statistics often fail to capture the true usage and needs of these patrons. Therefore, they are more likely to be categorized as low-need or low-priority, leading to exacerbation of the Information Poverty already present. As authority figures within the library and potential perceived authority figures in the community, librarians exist within a higher class, according to Chatman's propositions (1996). They become the "outsiders who withhold privileged access to information" whether intentionally or not (Chatman, 1996, pp. 197-198).

Librarian 37 stated that they "do not have any barriers," citing a "newly adopted nondiscrimination ordinance" in their town. As noted previously, this library requires a log in to view ebooks, and so their total numbers are artificially low. The CamelliaNet library with the lowest number of visible ebooks had 171, so Library 37 has at least that many more items available in digital form. Yet they, with twice the population, only $3000 less in print material expenditures, and a high stated need, still had one-third the percentage of physical items as Library 65, whose librarian stated an "average to a little above average" need and high potential

for challenges. No definitive reasoning can be made for this discrepancy, but it is an interesting

bit of data that arose.

> The remaining three librarians noted the perception of potential barriers:

> **Librarian 43:** "I think a targeted display might upset…some of my less educated patrons. I'm not saying I wouldn't do it, but I'd be ready for backlash."

> **Librarian 76:** "I think I can have a few things, but in terms of doing much promotion I think there would be questions about it."

> **Librarian 65:** "The former director told me…when she was on her way out, "I'm to the point I don't care anymore." Not that she didn't care about the collection. She just got tired of fighting, and she said, "That's when I knew it was time to go home. When I couldn't fight the fight anymore." And I think, you know, in two more years, I'll probably be the same way."

These perceptions are an excellent example of what Barton (2012) described. The librarians'

actions are circumscribed by the belief that they are being monitored for "deviant" behavior, in

this case, inclusion of LGBTQ materials in their collections. Librarian 43 *expects* backlash, and

though he states, "I'm not saying I wouldn't do it," he notes that the library has never done a

targeted display. Librarian 76 does actively try to include a "few things" in her collection but

does nothing to promote these materials due to the potential for "questions." These two

librarians, though undoubtedly devoted to their patrons, are doing a disservice to the LGBTQ

patron community. The lack of visible support may be something that the LGBTQ patrons there

understand as typical of the situation, but this does not make it any less of a problem. The silence

of the library allows the Bible Belt Panopticon to continue to function as it does, because even if

the library is still seen as a somewhat safe space, it is clearly also being monitored for

compliance in some way and is therefore only marginally safe. Librarian 65 mentions an active

fight in terms of inclusion, but she also notes extensive belief in the potential for community

backlash throughout the interview. None of the libraries provide programming for LGBTQ

patrons and only mention displays, the most basic and passive of programming in libraries, in terms of putting LGBTQ books in with the new books when they arrive.

In this same order, these librarians said their perceived need was "mid to low," unsure, and "average to a little above average." Librarian 43 did not offer any ways in which they combat their perceived barriers, and Librarian 76 said, "I think probably the best way is just not to promote, but simply to have something there." These two libraries were very different in terms of collections but have a lot in common in terms of their apparent drive to support this part of their collection. Neither had done any specific searching for recommended LGBTQ titles for their collections, and both were vague or unsure about need and what kinds of materials they had. Library 43 relies heavily on circulation data at least for this part of their collection, and Librarian 76 said, in response to the question on perceived need, that they "haven't had anybody ask." In high contrast to this, Library 65 has 60 physical items, a full 1.77% of their physical collection, which is nearly four times higher than the next highest percentage (Library 43) but with about one third as much print material expenditures, half the population, and 2000 more people in its service area as Library 43. They are not a part of CamelliaNet but do have ebook access which requires a log in to view. So why exactly are the collections so different?

As some research has shown (Downey, 2013; Kurz, 2018), one of the main barriers to LGBTQ collection development is sometimes the librarians and library staff themselves. Self-censorship is a problem that is very hard to pin down, as many times it is unconscious or unintended; occasionally, the librarian may even think that the self-censorship is working positively for the library in terms of preventing challenges. This usually occurs when the librarian believes that the community will take issue with a particular item or type of material, whether or not there is evidence to support that belief, but personal beliefs can also affect

collection development decisions (Barton, 2012; Downey, 2013). In concert with this, the

librarian's own desire to support a particular community segment may also affect their collection

development activities. Based solely on the interview responses from these three librarians, I

would say that perception of potential challenges is a barrier for all; however, it seems to be least

obstructive in Library 65. Their physical collection is the largest of the five libraries interviewed,

though their stated need is only about average. They do not have a much larger budget than any

of the other libraries and indeed have a much smaller one than some. What appears to make the

difference is intent and involvement. This librarian noted multiple conversations she has had

with "concerned" patrons who were questioning the need for LGBTQ materials in the library.

She used the opportunity to educate the patron about the changing makeup of their town, noting

in particular that there are several families with same-sex parents to a patron questioning an

LGBTQ picture book. When asked where she sought out recommendations for LGBTQ

materials, she mentioned several online avenues as well as following her former professor, Dr.

Jamie Naidoo from the University of Alabama who has done a great deal of work in the areas of

LGBTQ and diverse children's literature. She also discussed the effects of the local college on

the library patron population and seemed to be very knowledgeable about the fluctuating

demographics of her area. One librarian stated that since Alabama "is more pejorative towards

gay lifestyles…the people aren't gonna come in and check out a library book and out

themselves." Conversely, the librarian at Library 65 makes the assumption that she has a fairly

large number of LGBTQ patrons and at least an average amount of need and feels it necessary to

build a collection they can use when they need it. When asked about the condition of her

collection, she said, "We could do better. We're doing better."

Though Barton intended the force exerted by the Bible Belt Panopticon to be negative in her estimation, I think that the comparison of these two librarians' responses offers a way in which it has exerted a somewhat positive force. Librarian 65 assumes she has a population to serve and acknowledges that the community likely would offer (and has offered to some extent) resistance to LGBTQ materials. However, she specifically tries to build her LGBTQ collection as possible *because* she knows that the backlash already exists against these patrons which means they are in more need of resources, not fewer. Regardless of the end effect, Barton's description of the Panopticon does affect and control the library's activities to a great extent, judging by the responses.

Parting Thoughts

The final question asked whether the librarians had anything else they wanted to add or discuss about LGBTQ resources, patrons, or programming at their library or in general. Librarian 37, located in the town with the recent nondiscrimination ordinance, wanted to note that they had diverted collection development money to LGBTQ resources when they were told the library had no trans resources. Librarian 66 mentioned funding and the lack thereof, noting the reduction in budget had reduced their staff to entirely part-time, non-degreed library staff, excluding the director. They expressed the desire to hire professional staff in order to increase the level and quality of programming, which would allow them to better support all of their patrons. Librarians 43 and 76 expressed that they were unsure how to assist patron groups if they did not know they existed. Librarian 76 said, "I'm aware of a disconnect there…but they don't request anything. They don't ask any leading questions that might lead me to think that they are looking." Librarian 43 asked, "How do you know that they're there in order to serve them?" and stated that having a large ebook collection and the ability to use a self-checkout station not easily viewable

from the circulation desk were two of the best ways to support their LGBTQ patrons. However, Librarian 65 had a lot more to say. She expressed a desire for more "champions" like Dr. Naidoo, people in our field who will provide guideposts, recommendations, and structure to the search for quality LGBTQ materials. Though she clearly spends as much time as possible on collection development, as she notes, it can be overwhelming if you have no guide to point you in a reasonable direction.

On Those Librarians Who Declined to Participate

My low response rate was a disappointment. I began this project with the hope and intention of gathering at least 25 interviews, which would have been a quarter of the original subject group. I have no way of knowing whether any action I took or did not take had a detrimental effect on this response rate. I do not even know why the majority of my potential interviewees declined to participate. There could be any number of reasons: lack of time (one that led to the use of the email interview), lack of interest (presence in the library world does not guarantee one holds the liberal and inclusive beliefs espoused by the majority and ALA), or even active antagonism.

For the most part, I received no responses from 90% of the people to whom I sent the interview call. Five responded with interviews, two showed initial interest and then never responded to future requests, and one took the time to express a negative response, included below.

> I do not wish to take part in an interview. I have, however, looked up our titles that deal with LGBTQ subjects. I find at least 30 titles in my search. There are probably more, but they are not catalogued in a way that indicate [sic] LGBTQ subjects as a keyword. I do not actively search out titles related to that topic, but also do not delete titles, or refuse to enter titles that cover those issues.

The full reason this librarian did not want to participate cannot be determined, and so I will not make any conjectures on that subject. However, several important items can be drawn from this response. She stated that the library had "at least 30 [LGBTQ] titles," when in reality, including ebooks, they had over 400 with only 20 physical items. It is unclear what keywords this librarian was using to arrive at her totals, but they are different from the ones used in this study given the disparity in totals. It is also unclear how the titles arrived in her collection without any collection development activity, though both approval plan inclusions and donations are potential avenues. What is most important to note is the passive attitude. Without any inquiry into what kinds of items are being included, it is impossible to know the relevancy or accuracy of one's collection. It is my hope that this negative response and some of the more passive responses from my interviewees is not consistent with the beliefs and actions of librarians in these types of libraries more broadly.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The data presented here is not extensive; it is a very small sample of one state's rural and small libraries and the perceptions of a very small subset of its librarians. In addition, the interview response rate was approximately one-fifth of the desired result, but this data can be used to paint a preliminary picture of what the state of rural and small libraries in Alabama and potentially other southern states actually looks like. I chose not to use surveys in this study as I preferred the qualitative and responsive nature of interviews; it is impossible to say whether a survey would have garnered a larger response rate, but I do not feel that I would have been able to gather the same quality of data from the librarians in this instance. Future research in this area could easily use surveys to pull apart some of the more nuanced pieces my interviews only started to address. The issue of collection development policies specifically comes to mind.

When beginning this research, I carried the assumption that all of the libraries would have formal collection development policies and only the hope that they all addressed diversity. As can be seen from the results, I was incorrect. Because it is a repeatedly mentioned best practice, particularly when dealing with LGBTQ collections, the lack of clear, robust policies is troubling as are some of the attitudes and opinions about them in general. Most librarians and library students would agree that a policy is only as good as the library staff that backs it up, but having it in place is highly important. This would be a particularly interesting and potentially fruitful line of research to pursue with these libraries in the future, and it would be an excellent use of survey method, at least initially, to gather general attitudes on collection development policies in these libraries. Also, actually gaining access to the policies of the libraries to evaluate verbiage as well as how attitudes affect the policies themselves would provide a potentially important lens through which to help these libraries improve.

Face-to-face interviews would have been preferable, particularly to the email interviews, though I do not think the interviews here are any less robust than in-person interviews would have been. It is simply that I would possibly have had a higher response rate. Some people are more comfortable speaking to a person rather than a voice or simply answering questions in text format, and my own insider status as an LGBTQ person from small town Alabama may have been more apparent and helpful in person as well.

What This Means

The ultimate question of any presentation of research is, "so what?" Why did you embark on this project? What difference does the data you gathered make? And particularly in a field like LIS, what are the implications for practice? I began this project with my own younger self in mind. My hometown is larger than the largest town I looked at in this data set, but only by about

3,000. It is a highly conservative area with a large number of fundamentalist churches and politically conservative people. It is not a welcoming space for LGBTQ people—neither then nor now. As a teenager questioning my sexual identity, I had no LGBTQ adults to turn to and only one friend I knew for certain was gay. It was dangerous to ask questions or let these questions be known, so I searched the library. This was pre-internet and pre-computer catalog, and I was not the best researcher at the time. I located exactly one book on our library's shelves that had queer content. Looking back now, there were probably more; our library is larger and nicer than many in similar areas. However, I had no idea, and I would never have asked the librarians. This research was done to provide people like young me with the resources and support she so desperately needed.

Surveys and research have shown that small and rural areas of the U.S. Southeast are some of the most unwelcoming and potentially hostile spaces for LGBTQ people in the country. However, recent surveys have also shown that the South has the highest number of LGBTQ people at 3.87 million with the next highest region being the West at 2.96 million (LGBT Demographic Data Interactive). In addition, overall and in Alabama, LGBTQ people are more likely to be unemployed, uninsured, food insecure, and have incomes of less than $24,000 than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. They are less likely to have attained education beyond high school and tend to be younger. What this means is that the LGBTQ population of Alabama is highly likely to use their local libraries. Pew Research's *Libraries at the Crossroads* demonstrates that though those with higher education tend to use the library more in general, people who fall into the lower income levels use the library more for internet, assistance with parsing information, and job searching. It is a vital piece of their information world. How much more so would it be if they felt welcomed and found relevant materials on the shelves?

The LGBTQ community is a largely invisible population to the librarian. Unless they make their identity known, there is no way for library staff to know how many patrons coming in and out of the space are LGBTQ or interested in these materials. The librarian quoted from Library 43 noted, "How do you know that they're there in order to serve them?" My question is, should you even need to know for sure they are there in order to provide resources? In general, we as librarians do not know with any level of certainty the popularity or usefulness of an item we include in the collection. It is true that budgetary and special limitations circumscribe our choices, and we cannot simply purchase every item with the thought that someone might someday need it. However, with data stating that 4.5% of people in the U.S. identify as LGBTQ (Pew Research Center), it is a reasonable expectation that every library in the U.S. has LGBTQ people within its service population and therefore a reasonable expectation that every library contain relevant and accurate resources for that population. And given the interview results above, what is most apparent is that the librarian's conscious decision to advocate for their patrons made the most difference in the quality of their LGBTQ collection. Therefore, it is our responsibility to make the active choice to advocate for our LGBTQ patrons rather than expecting and waiting for them to approach the desk.

Acknowledgements:

Populations and Legal Service Areas for Interviewee Libraries

Library	Population	Legal Service Area
1	2402	6560
2	3375	30841
3	3439	7059
4	5788	5580
5	6601	6648

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a degree in librarianship?
    a. If yes, where and when was the degree earned? If no, what kind of educational and/or professional background do you have?
    b. Did you receive any specific training in children's and/or youth services?
        i. If no, have you received any professional development in these areas since earning your degree?

2. How long have you worked in this library? How long have you worked in libraries as a whole?

3. Who is responsible for collection development activities in your library?

4. Does your library have a formal, written collection development policy? Does it include any language regarding diversity?

5. Where do you look for information and resources on collection development for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) patrons (professional organizations, other librarians, print sources, online sources, other organizations, etc.)?

6. What would you say is the condition (i.e., accuracy and relevance) of your LGBTQ collection?

7. Are there any barriers you perceive to promoting or supporting resources and programming for your LGBTQ patrons? If so, how, if at all, do you combat these barriers?

8. How much of a need for LGBTQ resources, services, and/or programming do you feel there is in your community?

9. Has your library ever received a challenge on any of its LGBTQ resources or programming? How was it handled, and what was the outcome of the challenge?

10. [For libraries found to have a large LGBTQ e-book collection] If you are able to release the information, how much do your patrons use the library's e-book collection?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss about LGBTQ resources, patrons, or programming in your library or in general?

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