



“Provide the Highest Level of Service”: Public Library Collections of LGBTQ* Materials for Adolescents in the United States

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Abstract

With the growing youth LGBTQ* population comes the need for representation of those communities in library collections. To determine how well LGBTQ* populations were represented in library collections for young people, the authors reviewed the catalog holdings of 24 libraries across the country and serving various population sizes using a checklist of 80 LGBTQ* titles. The results were nuanced. Libraries serving populations greater than 300,000 held the most titles on the list; however, libraries serving populations fewer than 20,000 had the largest ratio of copies per population of the books. Libraries in the South-Central region had the fewest copies of these books overall. Libraries in the Northeast held the greatest number of titles on the checklist. The Northwest region held the most eBooks, audiobook CDs, and downloadable audiobooks, but the Northeast region held the most print copies of the books on the list.

Terminology

We have taken our terminology from the GLAAD Media Reference Guide.¹ LGBTQ indicates lesbian, gay male, bisexual, transgender, or queer. In order to include sexual orientations that are not represented in LGBTQ—such as intersex, asexual, questioning, and pansexual—we have chosen to use LGBTQ*.

Introduction

As civil rights issues have taken on prominence over the last fifty years, the LGBTQ* population in the United States has become increasingly visible. Between 2.2% and 4.0% of the adult population in the United States identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender,ⁱⁱ and over a million children are being raised by an LGBTQ* parent or by same-sex couples.ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, 5–6% of U.S. teenagers identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.^{iv} The number of teens who identify as transgender is uncertain,^v but the latest data from the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law indicates that there are nearly 1.4 million adults in the United States who identify as transgender.^{vi} The largest percentage of those adults is between the ages of 18 and 24.^{vii} This is nearly double the estimates from a decade ago.^{viii} While the population of individuals who identify as LGBTQ* is growing, the community institutions that serve them have demonstrated a mixed response to LGBTQ* issues.

We can see regional differences in those responses. Legislative actions suggest that LGBTQ* populations are viewed more negatively in the Southeast, Southwest, and South-Central regions of the United States. The eight states that have laws that restrict educators and school staff from discussing LGBTQ* issues at school are all located in the southern regions of the United States (see Appendix A): Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah.^{ix} Fifteen of the 27 states (55%) in the northern regions of the United States (see Appendix A) have laws prohibiting the bullying of students based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, while only 7 of the 24 (29%) states in the southern regions have such laws.^x LGBTQ* anti-discrimination laws have been passed in 48% of the northern regions and 33% of the southern regions. None of the states in the South-Central region have passed LGBTQ* anti-discrimination laws.^{xi} The Williams Institute estimates that 35% of the nation's LGBTQ* population lives in the South.^{xii} “More than 60% of LGBT Americans live in the South, Midwest, and Mountain states, where they face a more challenging social climate and legal landscape and have greater disparities when compared to non-LGBT people.”^{xiii}

Perceptions of anti-trans* sentiments are evident in North Carolina's “bathroom bill,” which would require people to use bathrooms based on the biological sex they were assigned at birth in all public buildings. This bill was signed into law in 2016. It was subsequently repealed in 2017. Between 2013 and 2016, similar bathroom bills were proposed in twenty-four states. Nineteen states considered such legislation in 2016: Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.^{xiv} Most of these bills did not make it to the hearing stage, but whether or not the bills are passed into law, the act of proposing them demonstrates antagonism toward transgender people. Many of these bills have come from the Southeast and Midwest regions.^{xv}

This social antagonism often affects adolescents and has been reported by LGBTQ* ally organizations. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) National School Climate Survey supports the idea that LGBTQ* students who attend rural schools are more likely to face bias, bullying, and violence.^{xvi} Almost all the rural LGBTQ* students they surveyed had

heard homophobic language and language that reinforced gender roles—mostly from other students, but also from school staff.^{xvii} Rates of homophobic language were not as high in suburban and urban areas.^{xviii} Moreover, LGBTQ* students in rural areas reported fewer supportive staff members or administrators, fewer Gay-Straight Alliance groups, and a less-inclusive curriculum.^{xix} LGBTQ* students experiencing harassment and discrimination in schools were also more likely to have lower GPAs, were less likely to plan to attend college, and had lower self-esteem than students experiencing lower levels of harassment and discrimination, with 30% reporting at least one day of absenteeism in the last month due to an unsafe school environment.^{xx} Bullying and victimization can have even more grave effects for students. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are at greater risk for depression, substance abuse, and contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, and are “more than twice as likely to have attempted suicide as their heterosexual peers.”^{xxi}

The school library may or may not be a help: 26% of rural LGBTQ* teens, 28% of suburban LGBTQ* teens, and 30% of urban LGBTQ* teens felt comfortable talking with school librarians about LGBTQ* issues.^{xxii} Only 44% of rural, 44% of suburban, and 46% of urban LGBTQ* students reported having access to LGBTQ* resources in the school library.^{xxiii} Only 39% of rural LGBTQ* students reported having Internet access to LGBTQ* resources, as compared to 44% of suburban and urban LGBT students.^{xxiv} Nonetheless, GLSEN reports that “LGBT-related resources can help counter . . . negative influences, as well as positively affect the school climate and enhance the learning environment for LGBT students.”^{xxv} When a school library cannot or does not support students’ developmental needs, the public library is often the next step.

Despite the dire consequences of hostility perpetrated upon LGBTQ* youth, their demographics continue to rise, and public libraries’ children’s and teen services are prime candidates for offering a positive environment they might not experience elsewhere. Public libraries should, by their nature and in accordance to the ALA Code of Ethics, “provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.”^{xxvi} To extend this commitment to LGBTQ* communities is not only expected, but a celebration of the public library’s purpose to represent all members of a community, regardless of marginalization.

Teen services librarians must be particularly vigilant about LGBTQ* representation among their collections and programming if they are to heed the demographic shift and lack of support that LGBTQ* children may face at school. The ALA interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights provides collection development policy guidance, stating:

Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan. Access to all content legally obtainable should be assured to the user, and policies should not unjustly exclude content even if it is offensive to the librarian or the user. This includes content that reflect a diversity of issues, whether they be, for example, political, economic, religious, social, ethnic, or

sexual. A balanced collection reflects a diversity of content, not an equality of numbers.^{xxvii}

However, the stigma surrounding the LGBTQ* community can produce multifaceted challenges to librarians and library workers striving for more inclusive youth services or who are unaware of the struggles of the LGBTQ* community to achieve visibility and acceptance in society as a whole.

With the growing youth LGBTQ* population comes the need for representation of those communities in library collections. To determine how well LGBTQ* populations were represented in public library collections for young people, we reviewed the catalog holdings of 24 public libraries across the country and serving various population sizes.

Research Questions

RQ1: What do public library LGBTQ* collections for young adults look like in the United States today?

RQ2: Are there differences in LGBTQ* collections for teens related to library size and/or location?

Literature Review

Other studies on library services have discussed possible issues in providing access to LGBTQ* collections. This includes collection development dilemmas as well as limitations on classifying LGBTQ* books using the Library of Congress Subject Headings^{xxviii} and outdated or negative content in some LGBTQ* literature.^{xxix}

Barriers to Providing Inclusive Collections

Previous literature on LGBTQ* representation in library collections has focused on the difficulties of building an inclusive collection. These difficulties include patrons' fear of self-identification in checking out and reading LGBTQ*-positive library materials,^{xxx} social and religious group opposition to homosexuality,^{xxxi} librarian self-censorship when developing collections,^{xxxii} fear of books being challenged,^{xxxiii} and fear of lack of support from library administration if a challenge were to happen.^{xxxiv}

A few recent studies focused on librarians' attitudes toward LGBTQ* collections. Two surveys of school librarians showed that the respondents' comfort level with LGBTQ* collections varied.^{xxxv} Rickman found that the school librarians in her survey were reluctant to purchase LGBTQ* materials for fear of retribution from administrators and parents, although most had not experienced those issues. Her respondents mentioned their geographic location in conservative areas as the basis of their fears.^{xxxvi} When Alexander and Miselis gathered feedback from both public and school librarians concerning LGBTQ* collection development and

programs as well as challenges to materials, they found that, in order to avoid challenges, the librarians did not promote their LGBTQ* materials and that librarians who did not have adequate LGBTQ* collections believed that there was no demand for those materials.^{xxxvii} However, their survey base was potentially biased, as they posted their survey exclusively to members of ALA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table and the Young Adult Library Services Association, and did not study the specific number of holdings in the participants' library collections.

One of the most basic challenges that library staff might face is knowledge about the LGBTQ* community within the larger community that the library serves. Whether by personal choice or by perceived restrictions imposed upon them by a conservative community, LGBTQ* patrons may avoid identification as such in their library. Alexander and Miselis note the long history of the criminalization of homosexuality.^{xxxviii} Avoiding this stigma may be an even greater concern for youth, as identity formation is such a crucial focus of adolescence. Fear of judgment and hostility may overshadow one's confidence in coming out or even allowing oneself to be seen reading or checking out LGBTQ*-positive materials from the library.^{xxxix}

Public and personal opinion might also prohibit the inclusion of LGBTQ* materials. Some social and religious groups conflate homosexuality with pedophilia and pornography, and therefore believe it does not have a place in a youth library collection.^{xl} Rauch notes the volume of reported book challenges exceeds 225 books per year, and three of the ten most frequently challenged books in 2015 were children's books, all of which were cited as "promoting homosexuality."^{xli} From administration and coworkers to library patrons and even non-users of the library, pressure can come from both within and outside the library, but Berman, Downey, Alexander and Miselis, and Rauch all cite the fear of an unsupportive administration and/or community as the cause for avoiding LGBTQ* materials.^{xlii} Berman identifies multiple ways in which library staff might enact self-censorship: from limiting materials selection to fit the status quo and using circulation-driven deselection (empirical evidence of which Rauch also cautions against using when factoring in the privacy needs of teens), to erroneous cataloging and restrictive shelving, which obstruct a user's ability to identify and locate the material.^{xliii}

Other challenges to collection development of youth materials exist but have not been as widely documented. One issue pertains to the overall availability of LGBTQ* youth literature. Some LGBTQ* literature tends to run the risk of featuring outdated or negative content, so a title purporting to have LGBTQ* content is not necessarily enough.^{xliv} Furthermore, Lo, author and co-founder of the *Diversity in YA* blog, came to several striking conclusions after assessing 371 LGBT YA novels in 2011: fewer than 1% of all YA novels had LGBT characters, and there were far more titles featuring gay male characters than there were about lesbian, bisexual, or transgender characters.^{xlv} Indeed, from the authors' research for this study, books featuring intersex or asexual characters were even more difficult to find.

Barriers to Subject-Based Access to LGBTQ Materials*

In addition to collection development issues, access to LGBTQ* materials can be limited by the language used to describe them in library catalogs. If a user cannot locate materials using intuitive, preferred terms, they, in effect, are experiencing barriers to access. Subject headings are the primary method of providing verbal subject access in online library catalogs. Libraries generally use Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) as a subject heading list. Unfortunately, a number of limitations can be identified in association with LCSH, especially in the context of subject-based searching for LGBTQ* materials in library catalogs. This is because LCSH, as the primary mechanism for verbal subject access, is limited in its ability to classify and subsequently support subject-based retrieval of LGBTQ* literature.^{xlvi}

Books with LGBTQ* content often, but not always, appear with LCSH terms such as “Gays,” “Lesbians,” “Bisexuals,” “Bisexuality,” “Transgender people,” “Intersexuality,” “Gender identity,” or “Homosexuality.” Hierarchically speaking, the LCSH term “Sexual orientation”^{xlvii} is a broader term to “Asexuality (Sexual orientation),” “Bisexuality,” “Heterosexuality,” and “Homosexuality.” Because “Sexual orientation” is a broader term, it could potentially be applied in place of a more specific term if a cataloger is unsure of the exact nature of the topic of a book. In the case of literature about asexual characters, catalogers might be unaware of this heading, created in 2016, and its relationship to topics of sexual orientation,^{xlviii} and might inadvertently prefer the heading “Platonic love.” Additionally, LCSH terms for LGBTQ* relationships are not parallel to the terms for heterosexual relationships. While “Heterosexuality” is an available LCSH term, it is rarely given to fiction titles featuring heterosexual relationships; however, “Man-woman relationships” is often used. In contrast, “Homosexuality” is frequently used with LGBTQ* titles, yet LCSH terms defining LGBTQ* relationships such as “Man-man relationships” and “Woman-woman relationships” do not exist.

LCSH terms can be unintuitive because they are based on *literary warrant*. Elaine Svenonius explains that the principle of literary warrant requires that “the vocabulary of a subject language [e.g., LCSH terms] be empirically derived from the literature it is intended to describe.”^{xlix} LCSH topical terms, therefore, are developed based on the terminology most frequently found in the literature. Given the nature of publishing and scholarly communication, these LCSH terms tend to be exceedingly savant, with the classic example of LCSH preferring “Swine” to “Pigs.”¹ In the case of terms relating to sexuality, Melissa Adler notes: “At the heart of this choice [of literature to serve as literary warrant] is the assumption that sexuality is a medical concern and certain sexual acts and identities are, in fact, medical or psychiatric problems.”^{li} As a result, the terms identified by LCSH to describe topics relevant to LGBTQ* youth are probably not intuitive to find or use when compared to natural language terms for these topics.^{lii} Users wishing to find LGBTQ* books on their own are largely left to their own devices, meaning for all practical purposes that they will need to find authors and/or titles of materials through another system and search using author or title in the library catalog.

LGBTQ Checklist Studies*

The problems of accurately locating LGBTQ* materials in library catalogs has led to alternative methods of data collection. The checklist method has been used by several authors for determining public libraries' collection depth of youth-oriented LGBTQ* materials. In 1999 Rothbauer and McKechnie used a checklist of 40 YA fiction books with gay and lesbian themes. They looked at 40 medium- and large-size Canadian public libraries to determine whether libraries held these books.^{liii} They found three large libraries that held 75% of the titles, and four medium-size libraries that held over 50% of the titles.

In their 1999 article, Loverich and Degnan surveyed public libraries' holdings of 33 critically recognized lesbian, gay male, and bisexual books against 136 libraries serving 50,000 or more patrons. They found that some libraries serving large populations had relatively small collections of LGBT books, noting that "two libraries in this study serving 50,000–99,999 held more of the recommended titles than eight libraries serving over 500,000 persons."^{liv}

Spence used a checklist of 30 children's picture books with gay characters or themes, and checked those books against the holdings of 101 public libraries in the United States, Canada, and other English-speaking countries.^{lv} The Los Angeles Public Library held 520 copies of 21 titles, and the Toronto Public Library held 269 copies of 24 titles; however, the Cleveland Public Library held the greatest number of copies per person.^{lvi} Spence also looked at "gay-related" YA fiction, checking catalogs of 19 large urban public library systems in the United States and Canada against a list of 99 YA titles.^{lvii} Of those libraries, the Boston Public Library held 91% of the titles, Chicago and Halifax Public Libraries held 82%, and the San Francisco Public Library held 81%.

In 2004 Boon and Howard used a checklist of 35 LGBTQ* YA titles published between 1998 and 2002 and compared Canadian public libraries' holdings of these titles to other control titles.^{lviii} They found that there were fewer copies of the LGBTQ* titles than the control titles, with Vancouver and Edmonton Public Libraries holding the most LGBTQ* YA titles.

Chapman and Birdi also used the checklist method to analyze public library LGBTQ* YA fiction holdings and formats in the United Kingdom.^{lix} They used a checklist of 476 titles against 13 public library services in the UK, finding that only one library held 23% of the titles on the checklist and most held between 12% and 19% of the titles. The formats most commonly offered were eBook, CD, and e-audiobook.

Williams and Deyoe conducted a checklist study of diversity-focused youth literature holdings in United States academic, public, and school libraries.^{lx} They found that "237 academic libraries, 326 public libraries, and 207 school libraries held none of the LGBTQ checklist titles."^{lxi} Libraries in the South held the fewest titles, 20 out of 116; and libraries in the Northeast held the most at 43 out of 116.^{lxii}

Our study builds on previous studies to make a new contribution to the literature. Like Spence, we look at YA books. Like Chapman and Birdi, we look at standard print format but also include other formats. Like Rothbauer and McKechnie, we look at medium- and large-size libraries, but we also include smaller libraries. With the exception of the study by Williams and

Deyoe, most studies of U.S. collections are twenty years old. Our study provides a more up-to-date look at public library LGBTQ* collections for young adults in the United States.

Methods

We took a sample of 24 public libraries from around the United States, with four representatives from each of six geographic areas: the Northwest (NW), Southwest (SW), North-Central (NC), South-Central (SC), Northeast (NE), and Southeast (SE). The geographic divisions were based on the U.S. Census regions, with two of their divisions divided in half to equalize the geographical size of the regions.^{lxiii} The West was divided into Northwest and Southwest. The South was divided into South-Central and Southeast. For a list of the states included in each region, see Appendix A. In each geographic area, we randomly selected four representative libraries based on their service populations. The data on service populations was taken from the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) *2014 Public Library Survey*.^{lxiv} The libraries were classified into service population sizes based on the definition of "small town" in the online Urban Dictionary,^{lxv} which was the most comprehensive description of population size we found:

Table 1. Service Population Descriptors

Descriptor	Service Population
Large city (LC)	300,000+
Medium city (MC)	100,000–299,999
Small city (SC)	20,000–99,999
Town (T)	up to 19,999

The libraries selected are located in 24 different states across the country. Appendix B displays the libraries, regions, and service populations we studied. To eliminate population-size bias, we did not select metropolises with more than one million residents. The data still includes large cities, but it is not skewed by having major differences in population among the cities.

Initially, we attempted to search for YA LGBTQ* materials using subject headings and keyword searches. We tried querying the online library catalog of these institutions using 24 different natural language search terms that might be employed by LGBTQ* youth (see Appendix C) and found that our results were, at best, unreliable. We determined the unreliability by searching for specific titles to check our results. This led us to the checklist method.

We used the checklist method to look at library collection holdings, similar to previous studies. The checklist was created using materials from the American Library Association's (ALA) Stonewall Awards list and Rainbow lists, practitioner journal articles on quality LGBTQ* materials, as well as the authors' personal knowledge of available literature. To be considered,

the text had to have an LGBTQ* protagonist or an LGBTQ* relationship as a major part of the story. The final list held 80 YA titles. Appendix D contains a list of the titles on the checklist.

Most of the texts were published after 2010, 2 classic titles were published prior to 2000, and 10 were published between 2000 and 2009. The majority of the titles are fiction (64), with 6 graphic novels and 10 nonfiction titles. The list includes 6 fictional titles that are series books. Most of the texts were about gay males (37), with 22 texts about lesbians (see table 2).

Table 2. Topics

Topic	Number of Texts
Bisexuality	1
Intersex	1
Lesbian	22
Gay male	37
Transgender	9
Gay male/lesbian	4
Gay male/queer	2
Lesbian/bisexual	1
LGBT	3

We accessed each library’s catalog online in order to determine the contents of its print and digital collections. For each library, we recorded whether the book title was held, how many copies of the title were held, and in what formats the copies were available. The formats included were print, eBook, audio CD (including Playaway), and downloadable audio.

Findings

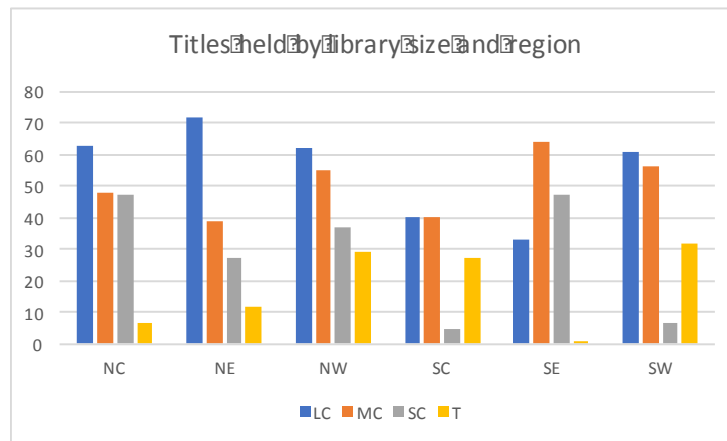
None of the libraries held 100% of the titles in any category, but all libraries held at least one of the titles. Table 3 contains the holdings of the checklist titles by region and library service population, while Figure 1 displays the information as a graphic representation.

Table 3. Titles (*n* = 80) Held by Library Size and Region

Size	NC	NE	NW	SC	SE	SW
Large city (LC)	63	72	62	40	33	61

Medium city (MC)	48	39	55	40	64	56
Small city (SC)	47	27	37	5	47	7
Town (T)	7	12	29	27	1	32

Figure 1. Titles ($n = 80$) Held by Library Size and Region



Average results by region demonstrate that libraries in the South-Central and North-Central regions had the fewest titles on average, while libraries in the Southwest held the most titles.

Table 4. Average Percentage of LGBTQ* YA Titles Held by Region

Region	Titles ($n = 80$)
North-Central	30%
Northwest	46%
Northeast	47%
South-Central	35%
Southwest	49%
Southeast	45%

Average results by size of service population also demonstrate strong patterns. Libraries with the smallest service populations were least likely to hold LGBTQ* YA books, while libraries with populations greater than 300,000 held the greatest percentage of titles. This is demonstrated visually in Figure 2.

Table 5. Average Percentage of LGBTQ* YA Titles Held by Service Population

Service Population	Titles (<i>n</i> = 80)
0–19,999	23%
20,000–99,999	18%
100,000–299,999	63%
300,000+	69%

Figure 2. Average LGBTQ* YA Titles Held by Service Population

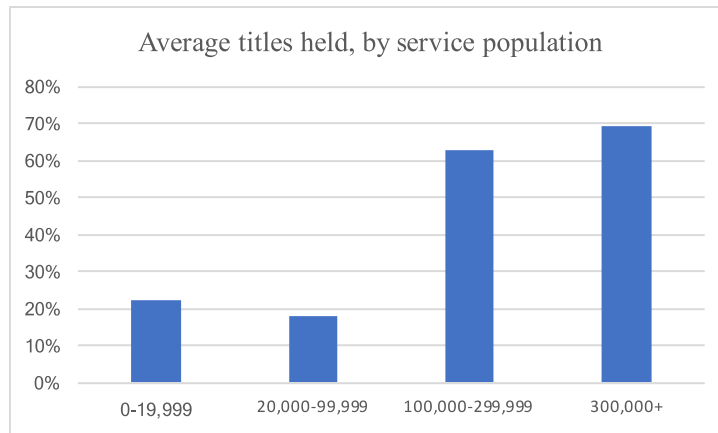


Table 6 indicates the average number of copies held for each title by region. The South-Central region had the fewest copies per title of LGBTQ* YA books. The Southwest region had the largest number of copies per title.

Table 6. Average LGBTQ* Copies per Title Held by Region

Region	Copies (<i>n</i> = 80)
North-Central	23.75
Northwest	36.50
Northeast	37.25
South-Central	28.00
Southwest	39.00

Southeast	36.25
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Table 7 shows the average number of titles of LGBTQ* books, divided by service population. These figures were then averaged across all the libraries in that service population category.

Table 7. Average LGBTQ* Titles Held by Service Population

Service Population	Titles (n = 80)
0–19,999	18.00
20,000–99,999	14.17
100,000–299,999	50.33
300,000+	55.17

Libraries with service populations smaller than 20,000 people were most likely to have the largest number of copies per capita for their YA LGBTQ* titles. In an interesting twist, libraries with populations between 20,000 and 99,999 had the fewest copies per capita. Intuitively, one would expect the largest libraries to have the fewest copies per user because they serve larger populations; however, they were second to libraries with the smallest service populations.

Table 8. Average Potential Users per Copy

Service Population	Users per Copy
0–19,999	278
20,000–99,999	1,402
100,000–299,999	1,257
300,000+	1,097

All told, we found 4,508 copies of our 80 titles spread across the 24 library systems. Three titles were not available in any format in any of the libraries: *Giraffe People* by Jill Malone, *Maybe with a Chance of Certainty* by John Goode, and *Secret City* by Julia Watts. The

title with the most copies was *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, which was held in 23 of the 24 libraries studied. Its popularity may be due to it having been released as a movie in 2012.

Table 9. Most Widely Held LGBTQ* Titles across All Libraries Studied

Titles	Copies
<i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> / Chbosky	322
<i>Will Grayson, Will Grayson</i> / Green and Levithan	242
<i>I'll Give You the Sun</i> / Nelson	217
<i>Afterworlds</i> / Westerfeld	215
<i>Drama</i> / Telgemeier	177
<i>Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe</i> / Saenz	176
<i>Grasshopper Jungle</i> / Smith	148
<i>Winger</i> / Smith	143
<i>Hold Me Closer: The Tiny Cooper Story</i> / Levithan	134
<i>Two Boys Kissing</i> / Levithan	123

Most of the copies held, 84.5%, were in print format, with another 7.5% being eBooks, 6% CD audiobooks, and 2% downloadable audiobooks. Digital collection size was much smaller than print collection size for all regions and all population sizes. The Northeast region held the most print materials, while the Northwest region held the most eBooks, audio CDs, and downloadable audio formats. The South-Central region held the fewest print and audio CD materials, while the Southeast held the fewest eBooks, and they were tied with the Southwest for the fewest downloadable audios.

Predictably, libraries that serve populations greater than 300,000 held the most copies in print, eBook, and audio CD formats. However, libraries that serve 100,000–299,999 had the most downloadable audio titles. While libraries that serve 20,000–99,999 held the fewest eBooks, libraries that serve fewer than 20,000 people held the fewest audio CD and downloadable audio formats.

Table 10. LGBTQ* Copies Held by Format and Region

Region	Print	eBooks	Audio CD	Downloadable Audio
North-Central	388	51	35	16
Northwest	1,124	89	85	23
Northeast	1,296	51	61	14
South-Central	175	64	7	12
Southwest	390	53	31	11
Southeast	430	32	59	11

Table 11. LGBTQ* Copies Held by Format and Service Population

Service Population	Print	eBooks	Audio CD	Downloadable Audio
0–19,999	197	58	4	7
20,000–99,999	204	21	13	14
100,000–299,999	1,001	107	114	35
300,000+	2,401	154	147	31

Given the continuing hostility toward LGBTQ* teens evidenced in the GLSEN report,^{lxvi} providing materials that don't require a visit to the physical library is a way to ensure better access to materials for LGBTQ* patrons. This allows them access without the possible ramifications of facing a library staff member or of carrying materials that are visible to others. Based on searches in WorldCat in February 2017, 68 of the 80 titles in the checklist are available in eBook format and 29 of the titles are available in downloadable audiobook format. The library with the largest number of eBooks on the list offered 47 titles. The library with the largest number of downloadable audiobooks on the list offered 12 titles.

Table 12. eBook Titles Held by Library Size and Region (n = 68)

Size	NC	NE	NW	SC	SE	SW
Large city	32	38	47	2	7	28
Medium city	19	7	2	33	22	24

Small city	0	0	18	0	3	0
Town	0	6	22	29	0	1

Figure 3. eBook Titles Held by Library Size and Region

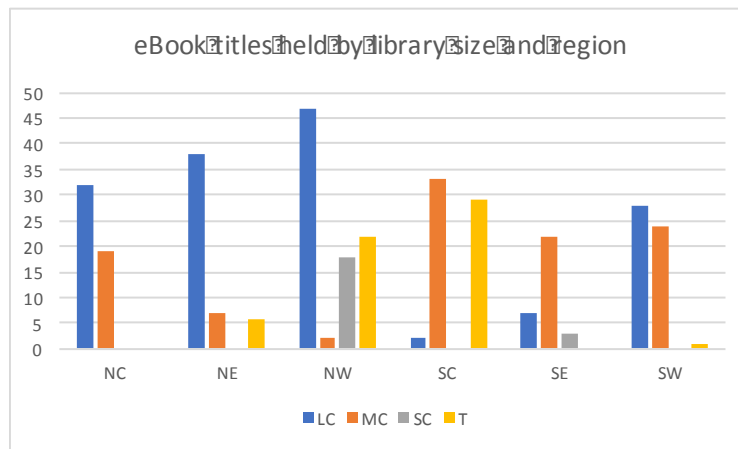
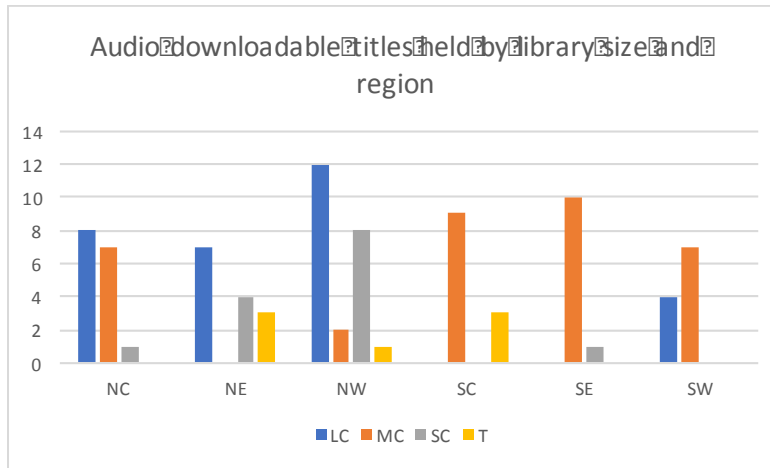


Table 13. Audio Downloadable Titles Held by Library Size and Region ($n = 29$)

Size	NC	NE	NW	SC	SE	SW
Large city	8	7	12	0	0	4
Medium city	7	0	2	9	10	7
Small city	1	4	8	0	1	0
Town	0	3	1	3	0	0

Figure 4. Audio Downloadable Titles Held by Library Size and Region



Discussion

Our intention is not to use the findings of this study to generalize about the YA collections for a whole region based on the four sample libraries we chose for each geographic division. The scope of this project would not allow for a large-enough sample size to be truly generalizable. Instead, our purpose was to look at a random cross section of public libraries throughout the United States to see what titles were held in LGBTQ* collections for teens and how well those collections represented available LGBTQ* literature.

Our research asked what public library LGBTQ* collections for young adults looked like in the United States. We found that no library we studied had all of the titles on our checklist, but some offered very representative collections. Unfortunately, there were several libraries that had very few of the titles on our list and few materials for LGBTQ* teens in general. Several of the libraries we looked at did not offer many options in eBook or downloadable audio formats. This can be problematic for users who do not feel comfortable reading physical LGBTQ* materials. In addition, given the current atmosphere surrounding teens who identify as LGBTQ*, requiring users to come to the library to check out materials that may be dangerous or embarrassing could limit their access to these materials.

We also asked whether differences in LGBTQ* collections for young adults could be related to library size and/or location. Our findings generally supported this idea, though there were some nuances. Our results corroborated the findings of Williams and Deyoe, that libraries in the South generally held fewer resources for LGBTQ* teens than libraries in the northern United States.^{lxvii} The South-Central region had the fewest copies of these books overall. The Southeast region—which included libraries in Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia—held more titles than the Southwest region; however, holdings in the Southeast region were only about 37% of the holdings in the Northeast region. The Northeast, which tends to be perceived as liberal, held the greatest number of titles on our list. The Northwest region held the most eBooks,

audiobook CDs, and downloadable audiobooks, but the Northeast region held the most print copies of the books on our checklist.

Our research also began with the idea that libraries serving smaller communities would be less likely to collect LGBTQ* materials than libraries serving larger population sizes. Public libraries with larger populations tend to have more income, and naturally have more funds to devote to their collections. Moreover, urban public libraries tend to have larger populations that are more visibly diverse than rural public libraries.

Once again, our findings were nuanced. Libraries serving populations greater than 300,000 held the most titles on our list; however, libraries serving populations fewer than 20,000 had the smallest ratio of copies per population of the books. Libraries serving populations greater than 300,000 had the fewest copies per capita, but they had largest number of books in all formats. Libraries serving populations of 20,000–99,999 had the fewest total copies and the fewest eBooks available. Libraries serving populations of 0–19,999 had the smallest number of audio CDs and downloadable audiobooks.

As we stated previously, LGBTQ* students in rural areas reported fewer supportive adults in their communities. This indicates a greater need for library workers and librarians who are more welcoming and inclusive in their collections. Three of the developmental assets for adolescents identified by the Search Institute include that a teen “perceives that adults in the community value youth; feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood; and receives support from three or more nonparent adults.”^{lxviii} Libraries can offer such support to help their community’s teens feel valued.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Our purpose in this research was to discover how well the public libraries we selected serve LGBTQ* youth, families, and allies in terms of access to LGBTQ* materials. Our intention is to illuminate libraries about LGBTQ* issues rather than critique library collections. A public library’s collection of materials represents its community in the present, but it also represents the community’s commitment to helping its citizens develop and the community’s aspirations for future growth. As the United States acknowledges the LGBTQ* populations that have existed and continue to exist, library collections can be seen as one indicator of societal openness to different sexual expressions and gender identities.

Librarians and library workers can improve access for LGBTQ* teens by becoming aware of and allied with the LGBTQ* population they serve, making sure that the LGBTQ* population sees themselves represented in a positive way in library collections and programming, and making sure that all users see the LGBTQ* population represented favorably in library collections and programming.

Library staff should be aware of and should use equitable and appropriate terminology. It is essential to make all users feel welcomed in the library, regardless of gender expression or sexual orientation. The inclusion of LGBTQ* literature helps teens feel respected and accepted

in society. In addition, all sexual orientations should be represented in literature for children as well as teens so that they understand the value of all people in our society.

Our future research will look at the attitudes and beliefs of youth librarians regarding their LGBTQ* collections and services. We are interested in the barriers that limit their effectiveness in providing service to LGBTQ* children and teens. This may help us gain a better understanding of the realities of serving LGBTQ* youth, their families, and their allies.

Appendix A. States Included in Each Region

Region	States	
Northwest	Alaska	
	Washington	
	Idaho	
	Montana	
	Oregon	
	Wyoming	
	Southwest	California
	Nevada	
	Utah	
	Colorado	
	Arizona	
	New Mexico	
	Hawaii	
North-Central	North Dakota	
	South Dakota	
	Minnesota	
	Nebraska	
	Kansas	
	Iowa	
	Missouri	
	Wisconsin	
	Michigan	
	Illinois	
	Indiana	

	Ohio
South-Central	Oklahoma
	Texas
	Arkansas
	Louisiana
	Mississippi
Northeast	Maine
	New York
	Vermont
	New Hampshire
	Massachusetts
	Connecticut
	Rhode Island
	Pennsylvania
	New Jersey
Southeast	Maryland
	Delaware
	Washington, D.C.
	West Virginia
	Virginia
	Kentucky
	Tennessee
	Alabama
	North Carolina
	South Carolina
	Georgia

	Florida
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Appendix B. Library Catalogs Studied by Region and Service Population

Library	State	Region	Service Population Size	Size Descriptor
Dayton Metro Library	OH	NC	458,677	LC
Rapid City Public Libraries	SD	NC	105,761	MC
Mason City Public Library	IA	NC	30,071	SC
Haysville Community Library	KS	NC	11,004	T
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	PA	NE	406,166	LC
Schenectady County Public Library	NY	NE	154,727	MC
Danbury Public Library	CT	NE	83,684	SC
Waterville Public Library	ME	NE	16,182	T
Multnomah County Library	OR	NW	756,530	LC
Boise Public Library	ID	NW	216,282	MC
Fairbanks North Star Burrough Public Library	AK	NW	97,972	SC
Lincoln County Library System	WY	NW	18,364	T
Corpus Christi Public Libraries	TX	SC	316,381	LC
Bossier Parish Libraries	LA	SC	125,064	MC
Texarkana Public Library	AR	SC	61,230	SC
Piedmont Public Library	OK	SC	6,485	T
Knox County Public Library	TN	SE	444,622	LC
Birmingham Public Library	AL	SE	212,038	MC
Danville Public Library	VA	SE	43,332	SC
Brooks County Public Library	GA	SE	16,570	T
Pikes Peak Library District	CO	SW	607,457	LC
The City Library	UT	SW	191,180	MC

Palo Verde Valley District Library	CA	SW	37,091	SC
Copper Queen Library	AZ	SW	5,394	T

Appendix C. Initial Search Terms

Search Terms
LGBT YA fiction
LGBT children's fiction
LGBT YA nonfiction
LGBT children's nonfiction
sexual orientation YA fiction
sexual orientation children's fiction
sexual orientation YA nonfiction
sexual orientation children's nonfiction
Queer YA fiction
Queer YA nonfiction
Queer children's fiction
Queer children's nonfiction
Stonewall awards
Transsexuals fiction
Homosexuality fiction
Gay teenagers fiction
Gays fiction
Lesbians juvenile fiction
Transgender people fiction
Lesbians fiction
Bisexuals fiction
Transgender youth
Homosexuals limit Teen
Homosexuals limit Children

Appendix D. Titles on the LGBTQ* YA Literature Checklist

- Adams, S. J. *Sparks: The Epic, Completely True Blue, (Almost) Holy Quest of Debbie*. Woodbury, MN: Flux, 2011.
- Alsenas, Linas. *Gay America: Struggle for Equality*. New York: Amulet Books, 2008.
- Anderson, Tim. *Sweet Tooth: A Memoir*. Seattle: Lake Union Publishing, 2014.
- Andrews, Arin. *Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2014.
- Anonymous. *Book of David*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2014.
- Barakiva, Michael. *One Man Guy*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 2014.
- Bausum, Ann. *Stonewall: Breaking Out in the Fight for Gay Rights*. New York: Viking, 2015.
- Beam, Cris. *I Am J*. New York: Little, Brown, 2011.
- Block, Francesca Lia. *Love in the Time of Global Warming*. New York: Henry Holt, 2013.
- Burd, Nick. *The Vast Fields of Ordinary*. New York: Dial Books, 2009.
- Charlton-Trujillo, E. E. *Fat Angie*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2013.
- Chbosky, Stephen. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999.
- Clark, Kristin Elizabeth. *Freakboy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.
- Cronn-Mills, Kirstin. *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children*. Woodbury, MN: Flux, 2012.
- Danforth, Emily. *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*. Woodbury, MN: Balzer + Bray, 2012.
- Dawson, Juno. *This Book Is Gay*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2015.
- Dos Santos, Steven. *The Culling*. Woodbury, MN: Flux, 2013.
- Egloff, Z. *Leap*. Ann Arbor, MI: Bywater Books 2013.
- Farizan, Sara. *If You Could Be Mine*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2013.
- Farizan, Sara. *Tell Me Again How a Crush Should Feel*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2014.
- Farrey, Brian. *With or Without You*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2011.
- Fishback, Jere' M. *Tyler Buckspan*. Round Rock, TX: Prizm, 2013.
- Garden, Nancy. *Annie on My Mind*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982.

Georges, Nicole J. *Calling Dr. Laura*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.

Goode, John. *Maybe with a Chance of Certainty*. Miami: Dreamspinner Press, 2011.

Green, John, and David Levithan. *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*. New York: Dutton, 2010.

Harris, Michael. *Homo*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 2012.

Hartinger, Brent. *Geography Club*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Hartzler, Aaron. *Rapture Practice: A True Story about Growing Up Gay in an Evangelical Family: A Memoir*. New York: Little, Brown, 2014.

Hoblin, Paul. *Archenemy*. Minneapolis: Darby Creek, 2013.

Hurwin, Davida. *Freaks and Revelations: A Novel*. New York: Little, Brown, 2009.

Jackson, Corrine. *If I Lie*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2012.

Jensen, Cordelia. *Skyscraping*. New York: Philomel Books, 2015.

Johnson, Alaya Dawn. *The Summer Prince*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2013.

Katcher, Brian. *Almost Perfect*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2009.

Klise, James. *Love Drugged*. Woodbury, MN: Flux, 2010.

Konigsberg, Bill. *Openly Straight*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2013.

Konigsberg, Bill. *The Porcupine of Truth*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2015.

Kuklin, Susan. *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2014.

Kumata, Suzanne. *Screaming Divas*. Blue Ash, OH: Merit Press, 2014.

LaCour, Nina. *Everything Leads to You*. New York: Dutton Books, 2014.

Lam, Laura. *Pantomime*. Long Island City, NY: Strange Chemistry, 2013.

Levithan, David. *Boy Meets Boy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Levithan, David. *Hold Me Closer: The Tiny Cooper Story*. New York: Dutton Books, 2015.

Levithan, David. *Two Boys Kissing*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

London, Alex. *Proxy*. New York: Philomel Books, 2013.

Malone, Jill. *Giraffe People*. New York: Bywater Books, 2013.

- Maroh, Julie. *Blue Is the Warmest Color*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2013.
- Merey, Ilike. *A + E 4ever: A Graphic Novel*. Maple Shade, NJ: Lethe Press, 2011.
- Miller, Saiya, Liza Bley, and Basha Smolen. *Not Your Mother's Meatloaf: A Sex Education Comic Book*. Berkeley: Soft Skull Press, 2013.
- Moore, Perry. *Hero*. New York: Hyperion, 2007.
- Moskowitz, Hannah. *Gone, Gone, Gone*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2012.
- Moynihan, Lindsay. *The Waiting Tree*. Las Vegas: Skyscape/Amazon Publishing, 2015.
- Nelson, Jandy. *I'll Give You the Sun*. New York: Dial Books, 2014.
- Ness, Patrick. *More than This*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2013.
- Newman, Lesléa. *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2012.
- Parent, Dan. *Kevin Keller 2: Drive Me Crazy*. Mamaroneck, NY: Archie Comic Publications, 2012.
- Peck, Dale. *Sprout*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2009.
- Peters, Julie Anne. *Keeping You a Secret*. New York: Little, Brown, 2003.
- Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna: A Novel*. New York: Little, Brown, 2004.
- Prince, Liz. *Tomboy: A Graphic Memoir*. San Francisco: Zest Books, 2014.
- Ryan, Sara. *Empress of the World*. New York: Viking, 2001.
- Ryan, Tom. *Tag Along*. Victoria, B.C.: Orca Book Publishers, 2013.
- Saenz, Benjamin Alire. *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2012.
- Sanchez, Alex. *Boyfriends with Girlfriends*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2011.
- Sanchez, Alex. *Rainbow Boys*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- Settingington, Ken. *Branded by the Pink Triangle*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2013.
- Sharpe, Tess. *Far from You*. New York: Hyperion Books, 2014.
- Silvera, Adam. *More Happy than Not*. New York: Soho Teen, 2015.

- Smith, Andrew. *Grasshopper Jungle: A History*. New York: Dutton Books, 2014.
- Sutherland, Suzanne. *When We Were Good*. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2013.
- Tartelin, Abigail. *Golden Boy: A Novel*. New York: Atria Books, 2013.
- Telgemeier, Raina. *Drama*. New York: Graphix/Scholastic, 2012.
- Watts, Julia. *Secret City*. Tallahassee: Bella Books, 2013.
- Westerfeld, Scott. *Afterworlds*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2014.
- Wilkinson, Lili, and Joel Tippie. *Pink*. New York: HarperTeen, 2011.
- Winger, Andrew. *Winter*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2013.
- Wittlinger, Ellen. *Parrotfish*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2007.
- Wright, Bil, and Linn Laurent. *Putting Makeup on the Fat Boy*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2011.
- Yee, Paul. *Money Boy*. Toronto: Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press, 2011.

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