

# Controversy and Diversity

## LGBTQ Titles in Academic Library Youth Collections

Virginia Kay Williams and Nancy Deyoe

*Academic libraries supporting education and library science programs collect youth literature to support courses that teach students to evaluate and use books with children and teenagers. Although children's and young adult literature with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) content is often controversial, this literature is being discussed in both the education and library literature. This paper discusses the literature on LGBTQ youth literature, explores the extent to which academic libraries supporting education and library science programs collect recently published LGBTQ youth literature, and concludes that academic librarians responsible for youth collections should evaluate their LGBTQ holdings to ensure that they are meeting the needs of future teachers and educators for access to these books. The paper offers suggestions for assessing collections, locating LGBTQ youth titles, and updating selection procedures to build a more inclusive collection.*

When Dan Savage gave the opening speech at the 2011 American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference, he spoke eloquently about his local library's importance to him as a gay teenager. Savage cofounded the *It Gets Better* YouTube project with his partner to give lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth examples of LGBTQ adults who survived the difficult teen years to live happy lives. Library books, said Savage, are still an important resource for teenagers because "not every gay kid can risk creating incriminating browser history that their parents might stumble over."<sup>1</sup> Savage talked about himself as a teenager, sneaking books about sexuality from shelves, to read quietly and anonymously at a library table.

When Savage spoke at ALA, the authors had recently identified books with LGBTQ content as an area to include in their research on diversity in youth collections. It is hard to imagine that a teacher or librarian today might not be aware that youth books with LGBTQ content exist, given the publicity given to challenges of books like *And Tango Makes Three*, but the authors wondered how much opportunity future teachers and librarians have to become familiar with youth books with LGBTQ content. That question led to this research, exploring the extent to which academic libraries supporting teacher education and library science programs collect recently published youth literature with LGBTQ content.

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## Literature Review

A variety of reports and policy statements have recommended that schools and libraries pay attention to the needs of LGBTQ individuals and their family members. As early as 1993, a Massachusetts task force recommended including “information in school libraries for gay and lesbian adolescents” and providing “education of families through information in public libraries.”<sup>2</sup> In 2007, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) adopted a resolution urging teacher preparation programs to include LGBTQ issues and urging NCTE members to address the needs of students who identify as LGBT or have LGBTQ family members.<sup>3</sup> The fifth recommendation in the *2009 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation’s Schools* was to “increase student access to appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBTQ people, history and events through inclusive curriculum and library and Internet resources.”<sup>4</sup>

Librarians, educators, and parents seeking children’s and young adult literature with LGBTQ content can refer to several annotated bibliographies. Day’s annotated bibliography includes nearly three hundred children’s and young adult books with positive depictions of gay and lesbian characters published from 1989 from 2000.<sup>5</sup> Cart and Jenkins traced the development of LGBTQ YA literature from 1969 to 2004.<sup>6</sup> Webber wrote a reading guide to LGBTQ YA literature, with annotations to assist with reader’s advisory and collection development.<sup>7</sup> Naidoo’s *Rainbow Family Collections* discusses library services for families with same-sex parents, but the heart of the book is the annotated lists of both recommended and nonrecommended children’s books with LGBTQ content.<sup>8</sup>

Thematic analyses of LGBTQ-themed literature for children and young adults have appeared in both the education and library literature during the last two decades. Crisp and Knezek compared the gay male characters in two YA novels, focusing on the different images each conveys, to demonstrate that no single book should “carry the burden of representing a diverse population.”<sup>9</sup> Gross focused on a dozen coming-out novels for YA library collections, pointing out that “the best are about more than just coming out” and “characters are more than their sexual or gender identity.”<sup>10</sup> After an extensive search of both standard selection sources and social media, Sokoll identified only fifty-one YA titles with transgender or non-gender-conforming characters published in the United States; she noted that most were from small presses and reviewed in sources not typically used for collection development.<sup>11</sup> Two papers, one by Sapp focusing on fifty-three LGBTQ-themed titles for young children and the other by Mason, Brannon, and Yarborough analyzing twenty recent YA titles with LGBTQ content, found that recent books tended to be less didactic, more focused on

telling story than making same-sex characters respectable, less focused on “negative consequences of embodying an LGBTQ identity in a homophobic society,” and more focused on “welcoming, supportive communities of LGBTQ people and their allies.”<sup>12</sup>

The education literature also includes articles and chapters about using LGBTQ-themed literature in the classroom at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels. For example, at the elementary level, Emfinger provided recommendations for building a classroom book collection that is welcoming to children with same-sex parents, the No Outsiders Project team reported on incorporating children’s literature with LGBTQ characters into units on family, Schell and Kauffman discussed children’s reactions to a one-time experience with LGBTQ-themed books in a fourth/fifth grade classroom, and Hamilton recounted his first experience teaching a novel with an LGBTQ-theme in middle school.<sup>13</sup> Discussions of using LGBTQ-themed literature at the secondary level include Meyers’ exploration of curriculum objectives that high school English teachers could address through several YA novels portraying LGBTQ, Arnold’s unit on identifying subtle bias and intolerance using films and LGBTQ-themed YA books, and Zanitsch’s account of using process drama to prepare students for reading a YA novel with LGBTQ characters.<sup>14</sup> At the tertiary level, Swartz advocated including sexual orientation as a topic when studying youth literature in college classrooms, Meixner wrote about pre-service teachers becoming aware of the difficulty of finding LGBTQ literature locally, Hermann-Wilmarth reflected on small group discussions of LGBTQ literature in an education classroom, and Mason reported finding in a survey of teacher education students and practicing teachers that over half had not read any YA literature with LGBTQ content, and many expressed concern about their ability to handle classroom discussions or parent and administrator reaction to LGBTQ content in reading assignments.<sup>15</sup>

Mason’s finding that many teachers are concerned about parent and administrator reactions to LGBTQ content in classrooms mirrors a concern frequently discussed in the library literature. For example, an essay by Kaney described how concern over potential challenges led her to set aside a positive review for *Rainbow Boys*, a book about three gay teens, until an anonymous note in a returned book prompted her to revisit her decision and select the book.<sup>16</sup> In 2008, James La Rue, director of Douglas County (Colorado) Libraries, posted a letter he had written in response to a challenge of *Uncle Bobby’s Wedding* on his blog; in a later essay, he commented that “the most touching stories were from gay people themselves, many of whom reported trying to find books in the libraries of their youth about people like themselves—and in the absence of such books concluding that they must indeed be outcasts.”<sup>17</sup> Manfredi and Rauch

both argue that librarians should both integrate LGBTQ youth titles into collections and promote them in displays.<sup>18</sup> Gough and Greenblatt discussed the reasons some librarians have used for not collecting LGBTQ-themed materials, including lack of requests, feeling unqualified to select on the topic, and availability of interlibrary loan.<sup>19</sup> As they point out, many people are uncomfortable asking strangers for information; librarians do not need to be children to select children's books, scientists to select science books, or members of a sexual or gender minority to select LGBTQ books; and, no one should have to use interlibrary loan routinely to meet their information needs.

These concerns over self-censorship appear to be well founded, since several studies have shown that libraries vary widely in the extent to which they collect LGBTQ-related literature. Sweetland and Christensen analyzed the relationship between number of reviews received and library holdings, finding that LGBTQ-themed titles were less held than non-LGBTQ titles receiving a comparable number of reviews.<sup>20</sup> Spence found that both the number of titles held and holdings per capita of LGBTQ YA literature varied significantly among nineteen urban public libraries.<sup>21</sup> Boon and Howard studied the relationship between number of reviews received and library holdings in nine Canadian public libraries, finding both that LGBTQ YA literature received fewer reviews than non-LGBTQ YA literature and that libraries held fewer copies of the LGBTQ YA titles.<sup>22</sup> Hughes-Hassell, Overberg, and Harris examined holdings of LGBTQ-themed literature in 125 school libraries, finding that half of the schools held fewer than thirty-one titles and that LGBTQ-themed titles averaged less than one-half percent of school library collections.<sup>23</sup>

### Research Questions

This project began with the authors wondering whether academic libraries are making quality LGBTQ youth literature available to students preparing for careers working with children and young adults. The authors focused on careers in education and in librarianship, although careers in social work, nursing, and other fields may also focus on working with young people. Five questions guided the research:

- Do academic libraries that support teacher education or library science programs collect children's and young adult literature?<sup>2</sup>
- Do academic libraries that support teacher education or library science programs collect children's and young adult literature that reflect the LGBTQ experience?
- Do LGBTQ youth collections in academic libraries differ by region of the United States?

- Are LGBTQ youth collections found in academic libraries of varying size?
- Do academic library LGBTQ youth collections differ by Carnegie classification?

### Research Methods

The authors used the list-checking method to determine whether academic libraries collect children's and young adult literature and whether those libraries collect youth literature that includes LGBTQ characters and relationships. The first step in assessing a library collection by list checking is selecting or developing appropriate lists.<sup>24</sup>

To answer the first question, whether academic libraries collect children's and young adult literature, the authors used three checklists composed of the titles that won the Caldecott Medal, Newbery Medal, and Printz Award. The Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC), a division of ALA, has awarded the Caldecott Medal to the artist of "the most distinguished American picture book for children" annually since 1938.<sup>25</sup> The ALSC has awarded the Newbery Medal to the author of "the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children" annually since 1922.<sup>26</sup> Another ALA division, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), has awarded the Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature to the "best book written for teens, based entirely on its literary merit" annually since 2000.<sup>27</sup> These three major awards represent the best children's and young adult literature published in the United States, so the winning titles should be a priority for any academic library that collects in this area. Since recent collecting patterns are the focus of this research, the winning titles from 2003 to 2012 were used, forming a ten-item checklist each for picture books, children's literature, and young adult literature.

The authors considered two sources for the LGBTQ checklist, the Rainbow Book List and Jaime Naidoo's *Rainbow Family Collections* (2012). The Rainbow List, established in 2008, consists of books for children and young adults "that relate to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning experience"; titles are selected annually by a committee consisting of members of ALA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table and the Social Responsibilities Round Table.<sup>28</sup> Naidoo's bibliography consists of books and media "that depict same-sex parents, queer relatives, rainbow families, gender-variant children, and other queer characters and situations"; titles are appropriate for children from birth to age eleven, with annotations indicating whether each title is recommended or not.<sup>29</sup> The authors selected the Rainbow List as the checklist for this research since it includes titles for both children and young adults and all titles are recommended. The lists from 2008 to 2013 were compiled. One item on the 2011 Rainbow Book

List was a series, *The Gallup's Modern Guide to Gay, Lesbian & Transgender Life*, which consisted of fifteen nonfiction titles; the authors decided to treat this series as a single title. The final checklist consisted of 237 titles published from 2005 to 2012.

The authors recorded each title in an Access database. The major awards title table included fields for author, title, publisher, publication year, and award. The GLBTQ title table included fields for author, title, publisher, publication year, Rainbow List starred title indicator, genre (fiction, nonfiction, picturebook), and recommended grade level. Most of the title information was obtained directly from the sponsoring groups' websites. The Rainbow Book List did not consistently include genre and recommended grade level, so the authors searched *Book Review Digest* to complete the missing information. When multiple reviews were listed, the authors used grade level listed by *School Library Journal* first, *Booklist* second, and by the first review listed if neither *School Library Journal* nor *Booklist* reviews were available. Since one title had no reviews listed, the authors checked Amazon.com's marketing materials to determine the appropriate grade range. After recording the grade levels, the authors designated titles listed as appropriate for preschool through grade six as elementary titles and those for grades seven through twelve as secondary titles; a few titles with grade level ranges of five to eight were placed in the elementary grouping. The final list included twenty-eight elementary and 209 secondary titles, with eighteen picture books, forty-four nonfiction titles, and 177 fiction titles.

The next step was to search OCLC's database for holdings. Each title was searched in OCLC Connexion and holding symbols for all formats (cloth, paper, large print, audio, video, braille) and languages were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. Since the authors chose to treat *The Gallup's Modern Guide to Gay, Lesbian & Transgender Life* as a single title, the holdings for each item in the series were looked up and recorded under the series title. After removing duplicate holding symbols, the holding symbols for each title were transferred to a holdings table in the Access database.

After recording holding symbols, the authors needed to identify the symbols of academic libraries that support teacher education or library science programs. The authors used the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) list of accredited programs to identify colleges and universities with teacher education programs and the ALA list of accredited master's degree programs to identify library science programs.<sup>30</sup> The authors looked each NCATE and ALA accredited institution up in OCLC's online directory to identify its library holding symbol.<sup>31</sup> When an institution had multiple OCLC holding symbols, the authors identified symbols for the main library and for any education, library science, or laboratory school libraries, and edited

the holdings table in the database to record all holdings for that institution under the main library holding symbol. An accredited institution table was added to the Access database, with fields for institution name, state, OCLC holding symbol, NCATE accreditation status, and ALA accreditation status. A total of 673 academic institutions were included, with twenty-five accredited by both NCATE and ALA, 624 by NCATE only, and twenty-four by ALA only.

To obtain descriptive information for each institution, the authors downloaded the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Academic Library Survey into an Access table, and manually matched each OCLC holding symbol to the corresponding NCES record.<sup>32</sup> The Academic Library Survey is a rich source of data, including the institution's Carnegie Classification and volumes held, among other information.

After compiling the data into Access database tables, the authors linked the tables and exported the data into an Excel data matrix showing which of the thirty major award-winning children's and young adult literature titles and which of the 237 LGBTQ titles were held by each of the 673 institutions. To determine the extent to which libraries supporting teacher education and library science programs collect children's and young adult literature, the authors calculated the number and percentage of NCATE and ALA accredited institutions that held each possible number of major award checklist titles, from no holdings at all to all ten titles held for each award.

For this project, the 542 institutions that held more than half of the major award-winning titles were considered as institutions that collect youth literature. To determine the extent to which libraries collect LGBTQ youth literature, the authors calculated the number and percentage of NCATE and ALA accredited institutions that held each possible number of LGBTQ checklist titles, ranging from no holdings to all 237 titles held. To determine whether a relationship exists between collection size and LGBTQ youth literature holdings, the authors calculated LGBTQ holdings per million volumes for each institution, then computed the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ). To identify variations in LGBTQ youth literature holdings by geographic region and Carnegie classification, they calculated the average number of LGBTQ youth literature titles held by region and by classification.

## Findings

The authors checked library holdings of recent Caldecott, Newbery, and Printz winners for 673 institutions to determine whether academic libraries supporting teacher education and library science programs collect recently published youth literature. These institutions held on average 7.99 of the ten Caldecott titles checked, 8.03 of the ten Newbery

**Table 1.** Major Award Titles Held by Accreditation, Carnegie Classification, and Region

	No Titles Held		1-10 Titles Held		11-20 Titles Held		21-30 Titles Held	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All Institutions	69	10.3	26	3.9	124	18.4	454	67.5
Accreditation								
ALA	6	12.2	1	2.0	3	6.1	39	79.6
NCATE	65	10.0	26	4.0	123	19.0	435	67.0
Carnegie Classification								
Baccalaureate	23	13.1	8	4.5	46	26.1	99	56.3
Masters	27	8.3	12	3.7	57	17.5	229	70.5
Doctoral/Research	17	10.2	6	3.6	20	12.0	124	74.3
Other	2	40.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	2	40.0
Region								
Midwest	9	4.4	4	2.0	42	20.7	148	72.9
Northeast	13	12.3	42	39.6	13	12.3	38	35.8
South	43	14.6	14	4.7	57	19.3	181	61.4
West	4	5.8	0	0.0	12	17.4	53	76.8

Note: Some libraries serve institutions with both ALA and NCATE accredited programs.

titles checked, and 5.03 of the ten Printz titles checked. Fourteen percent of the institutions held less than one-third of the thirty major award winners checked, with sixty-nine institutions holding no titles which won the Caldecott Medal, Newbery Medal, or Printz Award between 2003 and 2012. See table 1 for more information.

The authors checked library holdings of Rainbow List titles for the 673 institutions to determine whether the libraries collect recently published LGBTQ youth literature; these institutions held an average of 18.2 titles from the 237 Rainbow List titles. The number of Rainbow List holdings ranged from 0 to 155 titles held. Thirteen percent of academic libraries supporting ALA-accredited or NCATE-accredited programs held no Rainbow List titles while half held fewer than ten Rainbow List titles. Three institutions held slightly over half of the Rainbow List titles: Pennsylvania State University (155 titles), California State University Fresno (154 titles), and the University of Illinois (150 titles). Twenty-two of the institutions that held no titles from the major awards checklist held at least one Rainbow List title; four of them held more than twenty Rainbow List titles.

When the authors limited their examination to libraries that collect youth literature, i.e., those holding more than half of the major award winning titles checklist, they found that those 542 libraries held an average of 21.6 Rainbow List titles each. LGBTQ-themed youth literature holdings differed between ALA-accredited and NCATE-accredited institutions that collect youth literature. The 522 NCATE-accredited institutions held an average of 20.7 Rainbow List titles each, while the forty ALA-accredited institutions held

an average of 46.5 Rainbow List titles each. All the libraries supporting ALA-accredited programs held at least one Rainbow List title, but 4.2 percent ( $n = 22$ ) of the NCATE institutions held no Rainbow List titles. See table 2 for more information.

Examining the number of Rainbow List titles per million volumes held by the libraries that collect youth literature showed a modest ( $R^2 = 0.24$ ) relationship between Rainbow List titles and collection size. Larger collections tend to hold more Rainbow List titles; on average, the number of Rainbow List titles increased by 8.2 titles for each additional million books in the collection. Although larger collections tend to have more Rainbow List titles, three of the eleven institutions holding more than 100 Rainbow List titles have collection sizes of less than a million volumes, while one library holding more than a million volumes held no Rainbow List titles even though it held over half of the titles from the major awards checklist. See table 3 for more information.

Rainbow List holdings also varied by the Carnegie classifications and the institutions' geographic locations. On average, libraries collecting youth literature at institutions that primarily award bachelor's degrees held 9.6 Rainbow List titles, while those that focus on bachelor's and master's programs averaged 19.7, and doctoral and research-oriented institutions averaged 36.6 Rainbow List titles. See table 4 for details on holdings by Carnegie classification. Average holdings also varied by region, with institutions in the southern United States averaging 17.9 Rainbow List titles while the average in the other three regions was more than 23 titles; see table 5 for details. Some institutions in every region

**Table 2.** Rainbow List Holdings by Accreditation Type

Titles Held	Libraries Collecting Juvenile Literature							
	All Institutions		All Collecting		ALA Accredited		NCATE Accredited	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0–9	350	51.9	233	43.0	3	7.5	231	44.4
10–19	101	15.0	94	17.3	6	15.0	90	17.3
20–29	76	11.3	72	13.3	5	12.5	70	13.5
30–39	45	6.7	45	8.3	5	12.5	43	8.2
40–49	44	6.5	42	7.7	8	20.0	38	7.3
50–59	21	3.1	20	3.7	3	7.5	19	3.7
60–99	25	3.7	25	4.6	8	20.0	21	4.0
100–155	11	1.6	11	2.0	2	5.0	10	1.9
Total	673		542		40		522	

lacked Rainbow List holdings, ranging from 1.2 percent with none in the northeastern region to 6.2 percent with none in the midwestern United States. Although the southern region had the lowest average Rainbow List holdings, it also had two of the eleven institutions that held more than 100 Rainbow List titles. More than half of the libraries holding more than 100 Rainbow List titles were in the Midwest, although that region also had the highest percentage of libraries with no Rainbow List titles. See table 6 for a list of institutions holding the most Rainbow List titles.

Only seven Rainbow List titles were held by more than 200 libraries supporting NCATE or ALA accredited programs, while four titles were not held by any of the libraries. Since only 12 percent of the Rainbow List titles were elementary titles, the authors were surprised that the two most commonly held titles were elementary titles. The most commonly held title, *After Tupac and D Foster*, was named a Newbery Honor title for 2009, which may have contributed to its wide holding.<sup>33</sup> The picture book *And Tango Makes Three* was first on ALA's annual list of most frequently challenged books in 2006, 2007, and 2008, leading the authors to speculate that its notoriety prompted some selectors to add it to academic youth collections.<sup>34</sup> See table 7 for a list of least and most frequently held titles.

### Implications for Collection Development

The results of this study indicate that many libraries supporting teacher education and library science programs have few or no holdings of recently published LGBTQ-themed youth literature. Since both the education and library science literature include many recent articles and books related to LGBTQ-themed youth literature, interest in this area appears to be steady and possibly growing. Libraries may hold little LGBTQ-themed youth literature for many reasons, including lack of need, limited budgets, unfamiliarity

**Table 3.** Average Rainbow List Titles (RLTs) by Collection Size

Collection Size (Volumes)	Number of Institutions	Average RLTs	Number with 0 RLTs
1–249,999	209	8.07	19
250,000–499,999	114	17.89	1
500,000–999,999	93	30.30	1
1 million	59	33.70	1
2 million	27	45.20	0
3 million	15	40.20	0
4 million	6	48.80	0
5 million or more	16	62.20	0

Note: Data on books held was not available for 3 institutions.

with this emerging literature, and limited time to devote to collection development. While every library should build a collection that meets the needs of its users, the authors hope that this study will prompt librarians to assess their collections, review their selection procedures, and build more inclusive youth collections.

The finding that 43 percent of libraries supporting NCATE or ALA accredited programs held fewer than ten Rainbow List titles suggests that librarians should consider assessing needs for LGBTQ-themed youth literature to ensure that the curriculum needs are being met. Needs assessment may range from explicitly including LGBTQ-themed youth literature in a comprehensive assessment of the youth collection, including it in a targeted assessment of support for youth literature featuring underserved populations, or providing informal assessments via chats with faculty in relevant programs. The librarian could review course descriptions, syllabi, or recommended reading lists to determine which topics are taught. Librarians might consider a short survey about youth literature needs, perhaps with

**Table 4.** Rainbow List Titles (RLTs) Held by Carnegie Classification

Basic Carnegie Classification	No. of Institutions	No. of RLTs Held	Avg. RLTs per Institution	No. Holding No RLTs
Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences	46	633	13.8	1
Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields	79	603	7.6	9
Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges	5	10	2.0	1
Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)	38	362	9.5	4
Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)	65	1,078	16.6	0
Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	168	3,909	23.3	4
Doctoral/Research Universities	35	885	25.3	2
Research Universities (high research activity)	61	2,118	34.7	1
Research Universities (very high research activity)	42	2,045	48.7	0
Other Classifications	3	62	20.7	0
Total	542			

**Table 5.** Rainbow List Titles (RLTs) by US Regions

Region	No. of Institutions	Avg. Number of RLTs	No. Holding No RLTs	% Holding No RLTs
Midwest	177	23.9	11	6.2
Northeast	83	24.3	1	1.2
South	221	17.9	9	4.1
West	61	24.7	1	1.6

Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin

Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont

South: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia

West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

LGBTQ-themed youth literature as one of a list of topics that faculty can mark as needed or with an item asking about needs for youth literature featuring under-served populations. Selectors may also simply ask faculty who teach youth literature, teaching methods, or diversity-related courses if they address LGBTQ issues in their courses or if award-winning LGBTQ youth literature is needed.

Librarians who find that LGBTQ-themed youth literature is needed to support the curriculum should consider how many titles would be sufficient to meet the needs of their teacher education and library science students. While two percent of the academic libraries in this study held over 100 Rainbow List titles, suggesting that those libraries provide strong support to faculty and students with an interest in LGBTQ-themed youth literature, it is possible that

many of the 43 percent of libraries in this study who held from zero to nine Rainbow List titles have made a strategic decision to rely on interlibrary loan for LGBTQ-themed youth literature because the topic is not addressed in the curriculum. Each librarian responsible for youth literature collection development must decide based on local needs and available budget resources whether the youth collection needs no LGBTQ-themed titles, a small sample of the best titles, enough titles to support a course assignment, or an extensive collection that supports research into LGBTQ-themed youth literature.

Librarians may wish to construct a checklist to assess the collection while keeping their collection goals in mind. If the librarian has decided that the youth collection should include a small sample of the best LGBTQ-themed titles, the checklist might be composed solely of titles that won the Stonewall Book Awards—Mike Morgan & Larry Romans Children's and Young Adult Literature Award or the Lambda Literary Awards LGBT Children's/Young Adult categories. If a more extensive collection is needed, the checklist might include titles that reflect a wide range of LGBTQ experiences, older titles that remain important, and more recent titles so that students can become familiar with titles that reflect changing social trends. Sources for a more extensive checklist could include the Rainbow List starred titles and highly recommended titles from Naidoo's *Rainbow Family Collections*. After holdings have been checked against the selected list, the librarian should review results in terms of collection goals; holding half of the award winners may be sufficient for a library with a limited budget to provide access to a sample of best titles, but may be inadequate for a library with a larger budget and the goal of supporting faculty with strong teaching and research interests in this area.

If a collection assessment indicates a need to acquire more LGBTQ-themed youth literature, librarians may need

to review and update selection procedures. If the library's goal is to acquire a representative sample of the best titles each year, the librarian could consider placing Stonewall Book Award winners on standing order through a vendor that offers plans for award-winning youth titles. Selectors could add a note to their work calendars to review the Rainbow List each February, which would prompt them to update collections with recent LGBTQ-themed youth literature titles. If the library supports faculty and students with research interests in LGBTQ-themed youth literature, the selector may want to use blogs such as *Gay-Themed Picture Books for Children* and *I'm Here. I'm Queer. What the Hell Do I Read?*<sup>9</sup> to select titles that may not appear in standard selection tools.<sup>35</sup> Selectors who have funds to fill gaps with retrospective purchases may want to ask faculty for their recommended reading lists or the recommended reading lists of any youth literature textbooks they assign. Another method to identify titles is to search ERIC for articles on teaching LGBTQ-themed literature, then selecting titles from those articles for the collection; while this option is time-consuming, it can be helpful in selecting LGBTQ-themed youth titles that support curriculum standards. Adding any one of these methods to the selector's routine will help build a youth collection that meets local needs for LGBTQ-themed youth literature.

Although the focus of this research was LGBTQ-themed youth literature, the authors also discovered that 10 percent of academic libraries supporting NCATE or ALA accredited programs do not hold any recent titles that have won the Caldecott, Newbery, or Printz awards, indicating that they probably do not collect youth literature to support teacher education and library science programs.

The authors presume that students at these institutions are expected to use local public library collections when they need youth literature for their coursework, although it is possible that some obtain materials from small faculty or department libraries that do not set their holdings in OCLC. Since the library literature includes several studies indicating that many libraries have little or no LGBTQ-themed youth literature, the authors suggest that academic librarians consider a brief assessment of the local public library collection if the college or university curriculum includes LGBTQ-themed youth literature and students are expected to use the public library for youth literature. Searching the public library's online catalog for the most recent winners of the Stonewall and Lambda awards for youth literature could reveal whether the local public library is aware of and

**Table 6.** Institutions Holding More than 100 Rainbow List Titles (RLTs)

Region	Institution	RLTs Held
Northeastern	Pennsylvania State University	155
Western	California State University, Fresno	154
Midwestern	University of Illinois	150
Southern	East Carolina University	131
Midwestern	Minnesota State University, Mankato	116
Southern	University of Southern Mississippi	116
Midwestern	Western Michigan University	115
Midwestern	Ohio University	110
Midwestern	Eastern Illinois University	108
Midwestern	University of Nebraska At Kearney	102
Midwestern	Saint Olaf College	101

**Table 7.** Least Frequently and Most Frequently Held Titles

Holding Libraries	Title	School level, genre, grade
0	Thorne, Hayden. <i>The Winter Garden and Other Stories</i> . CreateSpace, 2012. 194 p.	High, fiction, gr. 6+
0	Cordova, Jeanne. <i>When We Were Outlaws: A Memoir of Love &amp; Revolution</i> . Spinsters Ink, 2011. 456 p.	High, fiction, gr. 9+
0	Belgue, Nancy. <i>Soames on the Range</i> . New York: HarperTrophy, 2011.	High, fiction, gr. 7-10
0	Park, Judith. <i>YSquare Plus</i> . Yen Press/Hachette Group, 2008. 183 p.	High, fiction, gr. 9+
210	Tamaki, Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. <i>Skim</i> . Groundwood Books, 2008. 140 p.	High, fiction, gr. 9-12
220	Cart, Michael and Christine A. Jenkins. <i>The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969–2004</i> . Scarecrow Press, 2006. 205 p.	High, nonfiction, gr. 9-12
222	Rapp, Adam. <i>Punkzilla</i> . Candlewick, 2009. 244 p.	High, fiction, gr. 8+
286	Radclyffe and Katherine E. Lynch, editors. <i>OMG Queer</i> . Bold Strokes Books, 2012. 264 p.	High, fiction, gr. 8+
312	Bechdel, Alison. <i>Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic</i> . Houghton Mifflin, 2006. 240 p.	High, nonfiction, gr. 11–12
333	Richardson, Justin and Peter Parnell. <i>And Tango Makes Three</i> . Illustrated by Henry Cole. Simon & Schuster, 2005. unpag.	Elem, picturebook, K–2
398	Woodson, Jacqueline. <i>After Tupac &amp; D Foster</i> . Putnam, 2008. 153 p.	Elem, Fiction, gr. 5–8

collecting LGBTQ-themed youth literature. Since LGBTQ-themed youth literature is controversial and self-censorship is a concern, and if the local public library does not hold any recent award winners, the academic librarian should consider whether some titles should be selected to ensure students have access for assignments and projects even if the academic library does not generally collect youth literature.

## Conclusion

Helping students to become familiar with a wide range of youth literature so that they can promote reading is an important goal of many education and library science programs. As a fifteen-year-old, identified only as Brent, wrote:

The world needs more librarians who are devoted to finding the right book to put in the right person's lap. . . . There are tons of gay teens struggling to find a group to fit into. LGBT YA lit helps us realize that no, we aren't alone and no, we aren't worthless. It helps us discover that we are part of the LGBT group, which includes tons of brilliant people, doing brilliant things.<sup>36</sup>

Brent wrote of librarians, but teachers also nurture children's and young adults' development by helping them to find the right book at the right time. Future librarians and future teachers need opportunities to learn about LGBTQ-themed literature so that they know good books with gay uncles, lesbian mothers, and questioning teens are available for the children and young adults they will soon be encountering in libraries and schools. Academic librarians cannot ensure that LGBTQ-themed youth literature is part of the education or library science curriculum, but librarians can express an interest in supporting instruction on LGBTQ issues by including questions about it on collection need surveys, assessing whether local collections provide adequate access to LGBTQ-themed youth literature for curriculum support, and updating collection procedures to routinely consider LGBTQ-themed youth literature if a local needs assessment shows that it is needed.

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