

Queering the Academic Library

Supporting and Empowering LGBTQ+ Patrons and Allies

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LGBTQ+ TERMINOLOGY

- **L is for Lesbian:** women who are attracted to women.
- **G is for Gay (Men):** men who are attracted to men.
(Gay is sometimes also used as a more general term, like “LGBTQ+” itself.)
- **B is for Bisexual:** people who are attracted to two (or sometimes more) genders. For example: people who are attracted to both women and non-binary people, or people who are attracted to both women and men.

LGBTQ+ TERMINOLOGY (CONTINUED)

- **T is for Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Q is for Queer:** an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual and/or not cisgender.
- **+**: The plus sign is meant to include other specific groups who do not necessarily fit into the groups already mentioned. One example is Genderqueer or Non-Binary people, who identify outside the female/male gender binary in various ways. Another is pansexual people, who are potentially attracted to people of any gender identity.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

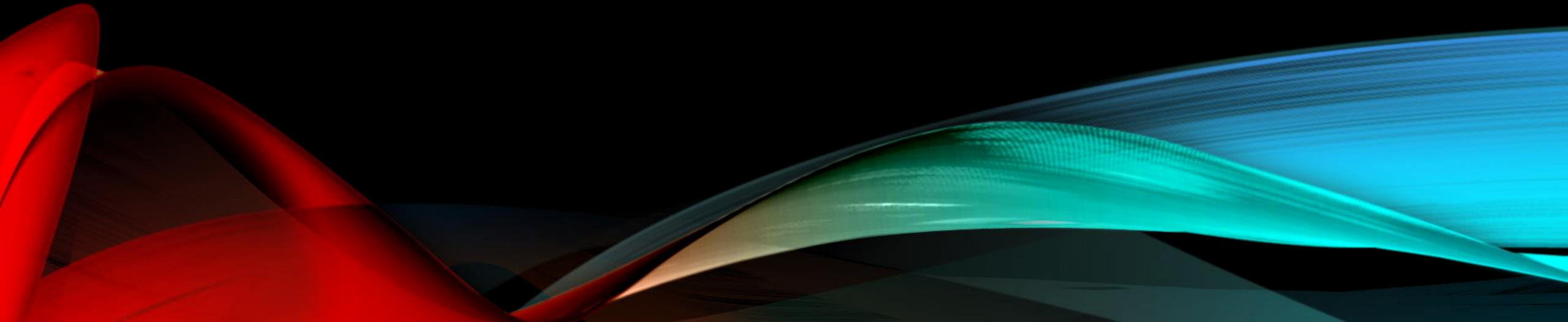
- To **me**, and how can I do this work...
- Although things have gotten much better for LGBTQ+ people (in general) in recent decades, they still face a great deal of prejudice, oppression, and violence.
- Because of this, LGBTQ+ people are more likely to suffer from depression, suicidal thoughts and actions, substance abuse, and other mental and physical health issues.*
- Coming out is a difficult and ongoing process that makes LGBTQ+ people vulnerable **each time** they come out to anyone.
- Academic librarians and libraries can and SHOULD do all that is possible to be of support and assistance to our LGBTQ+ patrons.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE LIBRARY PROFESSION

Several documents that are central to the profession of librarianship include mandates for librarians to be involved in social justice issues:

- American Library Association (ALA) Library Bill of Rights
- ALA Code of Ethics
- Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL, a division of ALA) Diversity Standards

So, then, what can we as Librarians do to
best serve our LGBTQ+ patrons?



Mehra and Braquet (2011) have designed a framework involving five areas of library reference work, in relation to five stages of coming out for LGBTQ+ people.

- Self-recognition of oneself as an LGBTQ+ person
- Sharing this with other LGBTQ+ people
- Telling close friends and family
- Positive self-identification
- Integration of LGBTQ+ identity

Mehra, Bharat, and Donna Braquet. "Progressive LGBTQ Reference: Coming Out in the 21st Century." *Reference Services Review*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2011, pp. 401-422.



COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

- What are your ideas, current practices?

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

- See LibGuides from other libraries for lists of databases, journals, e-books, other web-based sources.
- Topics to look for: nature of sexuality, gender identity. Stories and experiences of coming out. Just high quality books/media by LGBTQ+ authors & creators.



REFERENCE WORK

- What are your ideas, current practices?

REFERENCE WORK

- People in coming-out process may prefer **online** or other sources that can be accessed remotely/anonymously
- Be prepared to refer to local places, groups and gatherings associated with LGBTQ+ people
- Referral to local PFLAG group, GSAs, crisis lines, resource centers
- Use LibGuides from other institutions - eg. [LGBT Studies: Getting Started](#) for inspiration
- Promote library policies of confidentiality
- Respond positively to LGBTQ+ questions



PROGRAMMING

- What are your ideas, current practices?

PROGRAMMING

- Book or A/V displays?
- Mention LGBTQ+ resources, books/films by LGBTQ+ writers on library social media accounts
- Promote library as a safe place.
- Host LGBTQ+ films, speakers, art exhibits



OUTREACH/LIAISON WORK

- What are your ideas, current practices?

OUTREACH AND LIAISON WORK

Librarians can work with various campus departments, offices, and centers in our efforts to best assist LGBTQ+ library patrons, such as:

- Women's and Gender Studies academic department
- Campus LGBTQ+ and Women's centers
- Student organizations that focus on LGBTQ+ and related people and issues.

OUTREACH/LIAISON WORK

- Social media outreach
- Participate in Safe Zone training, become a trainer?
- Represent LGBTQ+ interests in institutional forums, meetings, etc.



INSTRUCTION

- What are your ideas, current practices?



INSTRUCTION

- Integrate LGBTQ+ content, references and examples in all library user instruction practices.

OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS

- Cataloging and Tech Services?
- Support for colleagues
- Pronouns
- Gender neutral bathrooms
- Safe Zone training
- Also can be useful to family/friends of LGBTQ+ patrons and colleagues



THINK INTERSECTIONALLY!!!

Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality addresses the many different aspects of identity that people have, and how these aspects intersect with each other to produce our *overall* identities. Aspects of identity include race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and more.

While our main focus may be on what we as librarians can do for LGBTQ+ people, we also need to be aware of the other aspects of our patrons identities so that we can best respond to each person's specific needs.

There is no "one size fits all" approach, each person has their own unique mix of identities and so our approach needs to take that into account.



OTHER QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?

- THANK-YOU!