

The Importance of LGBTQ Resources

The college years are some of the most life-changing and life-shaping years in a person's life. I chose to focus on providing substantial resources to the LGBTQ community on campus at my internship site through the library. The choice to focus on LGBTQ resources had three major factors: my own interests, input from the university's librarians, and research on the subject of LGBTQ resources in libraries.

I personally consider myself an advocate for LGBTQ rights and the opposition to restriction of access and censorship of these items in libraries. In my career, it is my goal to promote the visibility of the LGBTQ community in libraries and to highlight and develop available resources that will directly impact everyone in the LGBTQ community and its allies. I have focused on some aspect of the LGBTQ community as it relates to librarianship in each of my classes throughout the program and for my in-service project, I wanted to create an informative hub for students and patrons to access to educate them on the resources the library has available and how to navigate those resources, specifically resources for and about LGBTQ individuals. I think this project serves as an excellent capstone project for my time in the MLS program as well as an informative display of my skills, to jumpstart my career and solidify my career goals.

After discussing my ideas and intentions with different librarians at my internship site, I discovered that they had actually been discussing creating some kind of centralized resource guide for the LGBTQ community to promote diversity and inclusivity at the library. My idea for this project also was in the realm of their own interests as well and we all felt that this project would be beneficial to everyone involved: myself, the librarians, and the patrons.

There is not an endless amount of literature specifically on LGBTQ issues within libraries, but after researching through books and journal articles, I was able to discover the points that I needed to reinforce the need for a service like the one I created for my in-service project:

- Libraries are places where people from all backgrounds can coexist peacefully (Massey, 2016).
- “Encountering a book with queer characters and storylines can be a personal or academic milestone—a transformative awakening to self- knowledge,” (Adler, 2015).
- In one survey of an LGBTQ population, at least 75% indicated that they had sought refuge from bullying in a library at some point—this goes to show that libraries are extremely important, especially in more rural areas where LGBTQ resources are scarce (Day, 2013).
- Promotion and awareness of LGBTQ issues in each and every campus and community is important to change the ideas of those people and groups who think less of or look down upon LGBTQ individuals. As library and information science professionals, we have a unique position that allows us to promote these issues community and even worldwide in order to gain acceptance and understanding on behalf of our patrons in the LGBTQ community (Mehra & Braquet, 2007).
- Rochester boast one of the largest LGBTQ libraries in the nation and they started out making booklists and promoting LGBTQ materials to their patrons. Today they are a central location for those in the LGBTQ community and those wanting to learn more about it (Kramer, 2016).

In short, libraries are refuges and places of learning and information for those that are perhaps struggling with their own sexuality or gender identity and those that may know someone or just want to learn more about LGBTQ individuals in order to better themselves. It is clear that libraries can have a great impact on the acceptance of LGBTQ individuals and therefore promote lifelong learning for everyone.

Why UNC-Asheville Will Benefit

When it comes to taking a look at the southern part of the US, and even more specifically at North Carolina, Asheville is a very liberal and LGBTQ-friendly city. However, a 15 minute drive out into the country can put LGBTQ individuals in places and situations where they are not welcome. This goes to show that while there are concentrated areas of acceptance, the rural south is still very much conservative and want nothing to do with the LGBTQ community.

Looking at UNCA, it is a very progressive community in the area and other colleges and schools in the area interact quite a bit with it. UNCA has the right focus, drive, and staff to encourage those in surrounding areas to research and learn more about those that are different. There are several LGBTQ groups on campus and as stated earlier, the librarians here have had aspirations of creating a hub specifically for this community to interact and to easier navigate the LGBTQ resources offered here. This project not only will allow the LGBTQ community on campus to easier find and use the library's resources, but it will set an example for other schools in the community and even other schools around the region and state to follow suit and create LGBTQ informational hubs of their own.

Creation of the Website and LibGuide

In preparation of my in-service project, I started out with gaining access to UNCA's LibGuides and began work on making booklists of different LGBTQ resources by exploring the

stacks and seeing what materials UNCA currently had in their collection (physical and digital). I used different booklists from the American Library Association's GLBT Round Table, other well-known LGBTQ literary awards websites, as well as my own knowledge on the subject as I make it a priority from a professional standpoint to keep up with what is being published on the subject. After creating the LibGuide, I moved on to create the central website for the library's LGBTQ resources, which uses elements from the LibGuide such as the booklists. Where the LibGuide was limited, I expanded it with the use of the website. I used Google Sites as the platform for creation of my website as it is free to use, offers a wide variety of customizable features, as well as being extremely user-friendly for the creator and the users. I used different resources such as books and my own research knowledge to provide research tips specifically geared towards LGBTQ research topics as well as steps to making a more LGBTQ-friendly library environment.

In presenting my website and LibGuide to librarians and staff in the public services and outreach department of the library, I began with a Prezi showcasing the eight core competencies of the ALA and how they each were involved with my project. I think this served as a refresher for some and it also displayed each competency in action. After the Prezi portion of my presentation, I navigated through every section of the website and LibGuide, taking time to explain the purpose of everything there as well as how each element is used. For example, there is a section on the website for open community discussion through the use of a public (moderated) discussion board. This makes the website function not only as informational but as an interactive way for students to discuss LGBTQ needs and issues within the library and on campus in general. To conclude my presentation, I offered a chance for those in attendance to

respond and ask questions and made it clear that I would be happy to discuss any element of the site individually with them at any time.

The in-service website I created can be found at <http://unca.lgbtlibrary.org>. The LibGuide can be accessed by clicking “LibGuide” on the menu there.

My presentation can be viewed on my portfolio website at:

<http://mls.librarytyler.com/in-service/presentation> along with an accompanying Prezi, or directly from YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTaxy3zZy1E>

The Project’s Contribution and Continued Use

In creating this digital hub for LGBTQ resources at UNCA’s Ramsey Library, my intentions were to make something that could be of use for individuals in the LGBTQ community here and that could promote inclusion and acceptance of this community on campus and in the community as well as promoting the library and highlighting its wide variety of resources.

I also wanted to create something that the university could keep and continue to use, which is why I purposefully used a web domain special to the school that they could continue to direct students and staff to the site and even link to it from the library’s website itself. Our hopes for this site is that it can:

- A) Help and encourage those in the LGBTQ community on campus,
- B) Promote diversity and inclusivity campus-wide, and
- C) Be an example for other schools, universities, and public libraries on how to promote diversity and develop LGBTQ resources.

References

- Adler, M. A. (2015). "Let's Not Homosexualize the Library Stacks": Liberating Gays in the Library Catalog. *Journal Of The History Of Sexuality*, 24(3), 478-507.
Doi:10.7560/JHS24306
- Day, S. (2013). Libraries As LGBTIQ Venues. *Gay & Lesbian Issues & Psychology Review*, 9(1), 46-50.
- Kramer, D. (2016). Rochester boasts one of the largest LGBTQ libraries in the nation. *Empty Closet*, (506), 15.
- Massey, L. (2016). Checking Out Equality. *Echo Magazine*, 27(12), 68.
- Mehra, B., & Braquet, D. (2007). Library and Information Science Professionals as Community Action Researchers in an Academic Setting: Top Ten Directions to Further Institutional Change for People of Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities. *Library Trends*, 56(2), 542-565.