The Inclusive Library – Best Practices for Serving Your LGBTQ Communities

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Pronouns: she/her/hers

Education
• B.A. Sociology (Criminology) – Ohio University
• M.A. Higher Education Administration – The University of Akron

• Director, Pride Alliance at the University of North Texas
• Board Member, Black Tie Dinner
• Vice Chair Networking, ACRL Coalition for LGBT Awareness

Objectives
After participating in this session, you should be able to:

• Articulate the differences between sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality/sexual orientation
• Utilize tools and strategies to support LGBT+ patrons
• Identify national resources that provide further education about LGBT+ identities and equity/inclusion in libraries
Your Role in the Library

- Who are you serving and supporting?
- As library staff, why is it important to educate yourself about gender and sexuality?

ALA Library Bill of Rights

The Library Bill of Rights affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas and provides for access to information for all people.

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender peoples’ access to libraries may be limited or prohibited by many issues, including:
  - Collections which do not present LGBT content or perspectives. LGBT materials can often be censored under partisan or doctrinal disapproval
  - Environments which are not welcoming or inclusive of LGBT people and which, through actions by staff or other patrons, may be made unwelcome to LGBT people and their families
  - Programs which do not address the LGBT experiences
  - Services which are not promoted to LGBT populations or in collaborations with local LGBT organizations

The TLA Diversity Vision

The Texas Library Association recognizes the value of providing excellent service to diverse communities and works to promote excellence through inclusiveness in services and programs to our members.

Summary of Goals
1. To increase cultural competencies among TLA members.
2. To establish core content for civic discussions that empower libraries and library personnel to impact diversity and social justice.
3. To foster a vibrant and diverse workforce for Texas libraries, working with institutions to recruit and retain diverse individuals.
Common Language

- **Sex Assigned at Birth**: A medically assigned status based on chromosomes, hormones, and sex/reproductive organs.
- **Gender Identity**: An individual’s personal experience of their own gender; gender identity is not determined by sex assigned at birth.
- **Cisgender**: A person whose sex assigned at birth matches their gender identity, based upon what society has prescribed (assigned female at birth and identifies as a woman).
- **Gender Expression**: The ways in which a person externally communicates their gender to others.
- **Sexual Attraction (Sexuality)**: Attraction that deals with sexual desire, contact, or interest in another person(s), or lack thereof.
- **Romantic Attraction**: Attraction that deals with romantic desire, contact, or interest in another person(s), or lack thereof.

Intersections of Identity

- It is important to keep in mind that even within LGBT communities, there are varying levels of privilege, especially surrounding:
  - Ability
  - Country of Origin
  - English as a Second Language
  - Ethnicity
  - Immigration Status
  - Race
  - Religion
  - Socioeconomic Status
Libraries As Safe Spaces

- Helping LGBT patrons search for resources on coming out, health, family
- Homeless LGBT Youth
- Alexander Parks and others have identified libraries as potentially important safe places for LGBTQ youth and teens, especially in the face of bullying. He suggests the inclusion of LGBTQ titles in library displays or book talks to promote greater visibility.
- Studies by Carmichael and Greenblatt have emphasized that the library is an important place for teens who are coming out to find information because of the potential anonymity it provides.

When Someone Comes Out to You

DON'T:
1. Say "I always knew" or downplay the significance of their coming out with you.
2. Tell everyone, bringing about your "how I knew" friends.
3. Forget that they are still the person you have bullied, or lied about.
4. And forcing questions, or even personal barriers you wouldn't have asked earlier.
5. Because you know why they come out to you.

DO:
1. Know this is a sign of huge trust. Hey!
2. Check in on how confidential this is to other people, because it is this a secret?
3. Remember that their gender/sexuality is just one dimension of who they are.
4. Slow interest and curiosity, and then tell them you are coming out with you.
5. But how you can help support them.

Gender Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>Her</td>
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<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>Them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ze</td>
<td>Zir</td>
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For more information, please visit https://www.genderpronouns.org.
Ways to be Inclusive/Supportive of Patrons

As a member of the library staff, how can you personally be inclusive?

- Use/Ask Pronouns When Making Introductions
  - Business Cards
  - Email Signature
  - Name tag

- Use inclusive language
  - Not assuming
    - Miss/Mrs./Mrs./Mr.
    - M'am/Sir
    - Ladies and Gentlemen

- Include LGBT+ people and identities in collections, displays, exhibits, promotional materials

- Knowing and Understanding Policies
  - Library Cards
  - Restrooms

- Respond to anti-LGBT+ language and behaviors

Use Your Knowledge & Keep Learning

- Identify Your Biases
- Know How to Report Discrimination
- Professional Development & Education
- Validate Experiences and Identities
Resources

- Toolkit from the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Round Table of the American Library Association
  - [http://www.ala.org/glbtrt/tools](http://www.ala.org/glbtrt/tools)
- Outreach Resources for Services to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People (ALA)
  - [http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/outreachtounderservedpopulations/servicesgay](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/outreachtounderservedpopulations/servicesgay)
- Gender Spectrum – Gender Inclusive Resources

- Trans Student Educational Resources
  - [http://www.transstudent.org/](http://www.transstudent.org/)
- Practice with Pronouns
  - [https://www.mypronouns.org/](https://www.mypronouns.org/)
- Libraries and the LGBTQ Community
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libraries_and_the_LGBTQ_community](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libraries_and_the_LGBTQ_community)

The Pride Alliance

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Questions?