SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICES FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANS (LGBT) STUDENTS

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Abstract

**Background:** Barely any research exists on the topic of school library provision for LGBT youth. From literature that is available, it appears that provision for the user group is poor. Estimates suggest that a significant percentage of young people in the UK may require access to LGBT-related information. Consequently, more research on the topic is vital.

**Aims:** The aim of the study was twofold; to understand how and why LGBT pupils use their school library to access LGBT-related information, and to comprehend the attitudes and knowledge of school librarians towards supporting LGBT youth.

**Methods:** A literature review was conducted and two qualitative questionnaires were developed; one for librarians currently working in UK secondary schools, and one for LGBT people who are either pupils at UK secondary schools, or who left a UK secondary school within the last ten years. The questionnaires were disseminated using targeted mailing lists and social media. The LGBT survey received 104 responses. The librarian survey received 27 responses.

**Results:** The vast majority of LGBT respondents would have highly valued LGBT-related support in their school library. Support appeared non-existent though. School library use among LGBT teens is also low. Many pupils are not aware that their library is a potential resource for LGBT support. The problem is compounded by the fact that LGBT pupils are often embarrassed or afraid to look for LGBT resources or to ask for help locating them.

Librarians are generally positive about LGBT provision. They respond differently to diversity though; some adopt an active approach to inclusion, others remain neutral. Librarians’ knowledge also varies. The conscious-competence model shows that most librarians are in the incompetence stages of LGBT provision. Several broader social constraints are also shown to impact librarians’ LGBT provision.

**Conclusions:** There is an obvious need for LGBT support in school libraries and this need is clearly not being met. Librarians cannot remain neutral. They must take active steps to develop their knowledge regarding LGBT provision and to overcome broader difficulties associated with serving LGBT teens.
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Introduction

Preliminary research revealed that there is a considerable gap in the literature regarding library provision for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans2) youth. The lack of research is concerning because estimates suggest a significant proportion, around 5-7%, of the UK’s population identifies as LGB (CILIP, 2010b; Stonewall, n.d.c). Estimates further suggest that the trans community constitutes around 0.6% of the population (GIRES, 2008). Moreover, since the Adoption and Children Act (which allows same-sex couples to adopt) came into force in 2005, and since the same-sex marriage bill was passed earlier this year (Stonewall, n.d.a; Stonewall, n.d.b), the number of young people growing up with same-sex parents in the UK is likely to increase. Additionally, numerous other young people have close relationships with LGBT individuals; those with LGBT siblings, friends or neighbours for instance. Consequently, it can be assumed that a significant percentage of young people in the UK may require access to LGBT-related information. More research on the topic is thus vital.

This research study focuses on LGBT provision in UK school libraries over the last ten years. The ten-year limit was decided upon because it is ten years since Section 28, the law which prohibited local authorities from ‘promoting’ homosexuality, was repealed in England and Wales (it was repealed slightly earlier in Scotland, in 2000) (Stonewall, n.d.d). Although the law did not apply directly to schools, it did have an impact on how they dealt with issues of sexuality and/or gender identity (Ellis & High, 2004; Burton, 1995; Charlesworth, n.d). Consequently, it is only since then that school librarians have been at full liberty to address the needs of their LGBT students.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the study was twofold; to understand how and why LGBT pupils use their school library to access LGBT-related information, and to comprehend the attitudes and knowledge of school librarians towards supporting LGBT youth.

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1 Conducted for an essay earlier this year (see Walker, 2013)
2 Referring to transgender, transexual, transvestite and other gender identities
The specific objectives were:

- To conduct a literature review to gain a contextual understanding of the subject
- To survey the LGBT community to gain insight into their views and experiences
- To survey secondary school librarians to gain insight into their views and knowledge
- To establish recommendations for how secondary school librarians can best support their LGBT students

*Dissertation Outline*

In the following chapter a review of the literature is undertaken. The research approach and methodology adopted for the study are then detailed before the research findings are discussed. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for best practice and future research are outlined.
Research into the provision of LGBT services in secondary school libraries in the UK is almost non-existent. Only two studies address the topic directly. Both are small-scale MA-level dissertations. The first, by Wright (2007; see also Chapman & Wright, 2008), explores the views of school librarians regarding LGBT provision. The second, by Bridge (2010), focuses on student and librarian views of provision in Northern Ireland. No UK-wide research exploring the views of both LGBT students and school librarians has been conducted.

Since school library provision of LGBT services is a severely neglected area of research, broader literature into the provision for, and needs of, the LGBT community in general can be drawn upon. For instance, Chapman explored the topic of public library provision for children and young people in her MA dissertation (2007a; see also Chapman, 2013; Chapman & Wright, 2008). Two further MA dissertations, by Currant (2002) and O’Leary (2005), explore the issue of UK public library services for LGBT users. Norman (1999) also looks at public library provision. Like most works on the topic, his paper is based on the findings of a small-scale MA study. Along with MA research, Bates and Rowley (2011) explored social exclusion in the subject indexing of public libraries and work by Vincent (2000) points out the needs for public libraries to be more socially inclusive.

Literature on the topic of library provision for LGBT communities is slightly more prolific in the US and Canada. Again however, no large-scale or in-depth school-library-specific research has been conducted; existing school-library-specific works are either scholarly articles (see: Jones, 2011; Schrader & Wells, 2011; Schrader, 2007; Jenkins, 1990), or opinion-pieces (Brent, 2010; Kenney, 2006; Whelan, 2006). Studies into LGBT youth provision in other library sectors are more prevalent; research has been conducted by Alexander & Miselis (2007), Curry (2005), Boon & Howard (2004), Linville (2004) and Rothbauer & McKechnie (1999). Studies into the specific information needs of the LGBT community during the coming-out process have also been carried out (Mehra & Braquet, 2011; Mehra & Braquet, 2006; Joyce & Schrader, 1997), as has a study into the particular information needs of trans individuals (Taylor, 2002). Additionally, various articles, manuals and collected works on library provision for LGBT teens exist (Greenblatt 2011; Maycock, 2011; Martin & Murdock, 2007; Holt, 2006; Hughes-Hassel & Hinkley, 2001; Carmichael &

3 This review is based on a review done earlier this year for INF6350 (see Walker, 2013)
Shontz, 1996; Gough & Greenblatt, 1990). A plethora of opinion-pieces on LGBT youth provision also contribute to the literary corpus (Parks, 2012; Farrelly, 2007; Farrelly, 2006; Levithan, 2004).

As the above overview demonstrates, library-specific literature on LGBT services and provision is small. Consequently, works exploring the subject of LGBT students’ experiences of education may also be drawn upon for this study (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013; Black, Fedewa, & Gonzalez, 2012; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Whittingham & Rickman, 2007; Ellis & High, 2004; Cole, 2000; Forrest, 2000; Rivers, 2000; Burton, 1995; Epstein, 1994; Harris, 1990; Trenchard & Warren, 1984). So too can the research and resources of LGBT charities (EACH, 2012a; EACH, 2012b; Guasp, 2012; Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen & Palmer, 2012; GIRES, 2011; Guasp, 2009; GIRES, 2008; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Charlesworth, n.d.; GI, n.d.; GIRES, n.d.; Stonewall, n.d.c). Guidance offered to schools by UK governmental bodies can also be used (Ofsted, 2013; DfEducation, 2012; Ofsted 2012a; Ofsted, 2012b; DCSF, 2007).

Five key themes have been identified in the available literature: understanding the users of LGBT services and resources, the vulnerability of LGBT youth, the need for LGBT library provision, the information needs of LGBT youth, and the low level of current LGBT provision in libraries. Each will be discussed in turn.

**Understanding the users of LGBT services and resources**
Reference to the user population for LGBT library materials have developed over the years. In early works binary terms are used almost exclusively. (e.g. see works in Gough & Greenblatt, 1990). In more recent works, diverse terminology is used; "bisexual", "trans", "queer", "LGBT" and "LGBTIQ"\(^4\) appear frequently (for example, see Greenblatt, 2011; Chapman and Wright, 2008; Alexander and Miselis, 2007; Martin & Murdock, 2007). It is also now acknowledged that different members of the LGBT community have different needs; Chapman and Wright (2008) for example, state that “The LGBT community is not homogenous and the majority opinion may conceal minority needs” (p.33) (see also Taylor, 2002; Norman, 1999).

\(^4\) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and questioning
Determining the size of the LGBT community is difficult because sexual or gender identity cannot be determined simply by looking at someone; the community is largely ‘invisible’ (Chapman & Wright, 2008; p. 29) (see also Whelan, 2006; Taylor, 2002; Burton, 1995; Jenkins, 1990). Estimates of the size of the LGB community range between 20% (Whelan, 2006, p.46) and 5% (CILIP, 2010b; Stonewall, n.d.c). Even at their lowest levels, the statistics show that the community constitutes a significant percentage of the population. The figure further increases when one adds to it estimates of the trans population, which, according to the charity GIRES (2008), is approximately 0.6%.

Additionally, it is broadly accepted that LGBT-related services and resources are useful to more than just the LGBT community. The need to support children who have LGBT family members and/or friends is strongly advocated (Chapman & Wright, 2008; Clyde & Lobban, 2001; Rothbauer & McKechnie, 1999; Jenkins, 1990), as is the need to provide information to teachers, counsellors or others who regularly work with youth (Alexander & Miselis, 2007). Indeed, it is also iterated that LGBT materials are important for everybody, to raise awareness of the existence of the LGBT community and to widen people’s views; Clyde and Lobban (2001), for example, state: “it is important to have these [LGBT-themed] titles represented in school library collections to broaden straight students’ view of the world and of sexuality and so to inform their interactions with lesbian/gay students or students with lesbian/gay parents” (p.27) (see also Schrader & Wells, 2011; Clyde, 2003).

The vulnerability of LGBT youth
The deep embedment of heterosexism, or “the assumption that everybody is heterosexual” (Chapman & Wright, 2008, p.21), in our society and schools is widely attested in the literature; LGBT charities and governmental bodies have warned schools against assuming all pupils are straight (EACH, 2012a; DfCSF, 2007; Charlesworth, n.d.), and concern over the damaging impact it has on LGBT youth is raised. Chapman and Wright (2008), for example, point out that heterosexism can “serve to further exclude” pupils who do not conform to heterosexual expectations (pp.21-22) (see also Mehra & Braquet, 2011; Bridge, 2010; Forrest, 2000; Epstein, 1994).

The presence of societal homophobia/transphobia is also addressed; over the last two decades almost every work on the subject has made reference to it. A recent survey conducted by the LGB charity Stonewall shows that 55% of UK secondary school students have experienced homophobic bullying in one form or another, while at least 96% of pupils
have heard homophobic comments, such as “poof”, “lezza”, or “that’s so gay” (Guasp, 2012, p.2). The study findings do show some improvement from surveys carried out by the charity in previous years. However, the decrease is not deemed high enough (Guasp, 2012). A similar decline has been observed in US schools (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen & Palmer, 2012). Again, however, the level of bullying is still a cause for concern; on the issue, Martin and Murdock (2007) state: “even if this is the most tolerant generation yet [...] discrimination remains a fact of life [...] the average day of the average queer teenager is anything but a warm and fuzzy walk through post-gay utopia” (pp.12-13).

The negative consequences of heterosexism and homophobia/transphobia, and the risks they present to LGBT youth are widely discussed; Savin-Williams’ (1994) literature review on the subject has been widely cited. It suggests that, due to the physical and verbal abuse young LGBT people experience, they are more likely than their heterosexual peers to have poor school performance and are at a greater risk of alcoholism and substance abuse; they are more likely to run away from home, and to engage in criminal activity or prostitution; they are also more likely to have suicidal thoughts and even to commit suicide. More recent studies echo the findings of the literature review (see Kosciw, Palmer, Kull & Greytak, 2013; Birkett, Espelag & Koenig, 2009; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Rivers, 2000).

The need for LGBT library provision

In the literature, several reasons are given for the importance of providing LGBT-themed resources and library services. The first is that provision for the LGBT community is mandated by legislation (Chapman & Wright, 2008; Martin & Murdock, 2007) and that failure to provide access to LGBT information is a breach of intellectual freedom and a violation of human rights (Maycock, 2011; Holt, 2006; Clyde, 2003).

In the UK, the 2010 Equalities Act directs that UK schools must provide equal support and access to students and must not discriminate against pupils from minority groups, such as the LGBT community, either in the way they provide services and facilities, or by not providing services and facilities for them (HMG, 2010, Pt.6: Chapt.1). In line with the legislation, CILIP (2010a) advocates the “duty” of libraries to support all people and provides some guidance to librarians on serving LGBT users (2010a-b). The guidance is somewhat out-dated however; the legislation outlined in Sexual orientation has not been

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5 In 2007 for example, 65% of LGB students reported being homophobically bullied (Hunt & Jensen, 2007, p.3)
amended since the introduction of the 2010 Equalities Act (2010c). CILIP’s policy (2010a-b) is also rather passive, especially when compared to that of the ALA (2010) which professes the need for librarians to actively defend LGBT-related services; “ALA encourages all American Library Association chapters to take active stands against all legislative or other government attempts to proscribe materials related to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression” (see also ALA, 2008; ALA, n.d.).

Another frequently cited reason for the provision of LGBT-related services is that display of LGBT materials and positive portrayal of LGBT issues can have encouraging impacts on the physical and mental well-being of LGBT youth. Hunt and Jensen (2007), for example, found that pupils who are given positive LGBT-related information, and who feel that their school is tolerant and accepting of diversity, are 60% more likely to feel happy, and 40% more likely to feel respected, than those who are not. Research from the US shows similar positive outcomes (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull & Greytak, 2013; Black, Fedewa & Gonzalez, 2012; Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen & Palmer, 2012; Birkett, Espelag & Koenig, 2009).

Secondary schools and school libraries have also been invested with an especially important role in supporting LGBT youth since most LGBT people begin to question their gender identity and/or sexual orientation during adolescence; Epstein (1994), for example states that “the interconnections between gender and sexuality may be more obvious in the secondary school, where there is an expectation that girls will start to have boyfriends and vice versa” (pp.5-6). A survey conducted by Stormbreak (2000) found too that one third of people knew that they were gay by the age of twelve (see also Bridge, 2010). Adolescence is also noted as a particularly significant and stressful time for trans individuals because it is during this period that their body begins to develop contrary to their internal identity (GIRES, 2008). In addition, it is noted that school is the one place through which almost all young LGBT people pass so schools have a unique opportunity to reach out to, and support, them (Black and Underwood, 1998).

The information needs of LGBT youth
Linville (2004) and Taylor (2000) have both conducted research studies into the information needs of the LGBT community. The studies highlight the need for provision of varied collections of material on a diverse range of LGBT topics. Real-life stories of LGBT people were found to be an especially popular type of information sought by LGBT youth. Other topics of interest were noted as: queer activism, health, community information, ways to
access support networks, information about ‘coming out’, and fictional stories. The Internet is also an invaluable information resource; it gives young LGBT people, who may feel isolated or who may fear rejection from their friends and family, the chance to privately access information and support networks (Mehra & Braquet, 2011; Bridge, 2010; Holt, 2006; Martin & Murdock, 2007; Curry, 2005; Taylor, 2002; Hughes-Hassel & Hinkley, 2001).

Along with specific resources, it is widely acknowledged in the literature that LGBT users, especially teens, often desire privacy and anonymity when looking for information; a study by Bridge (2010), for example, showed that 73% of respondents felt uncomfortable asking library staff for help locating information (p.54). Additionally, Wright (2007) found that almost 25% of LGBT teens feel judged when they are in the library (p.184) (see too: Chapman & Wright, 2008; Alexander & Miselis, 2007; Taylor, 2002; Hughes-Hassel & Hinkley, 2001).

Debate, about whether libraries should have separate LGBT collections or whether LGBT material should be integrated with other resources, is also related to the idea of privacy. No definitive solution has been reached. As Chapman (2007b) has noted; “there is no ‘correct’ strategy [...] both opinions and practices are divided, with many authors and survey respondents recognising the pros and cons of both approaches” (p.5). Key benefits of having separate collections are identified as: ease with which materials can be located, the affirmation of LGBT identity and the positive statement the collection makes about tolerance and inclusion. On the other hand, lack of privacy, ghettoisation, and increased likelihood of LGBT materials being vandalised are noted as cons (Chapman, 2007b; O’Leary, 2005; Linville, 2004; Currant, 2002; Norman, 1999).

The low level of current LGBT provision in libraries
While there is a legal obligation for libraries to provide LGBT-related services and resources, and while an obvious need for such provision exists, it is stated almost unanimously in the literature that library services for the LGBT community are poor; there has been strong advocacy for improved services over the years (see for example Parks, 2012; Bates & Rowley, 2011; Bridge, 2010; Alexander & Miselis, 2007; Boon & Howard, 2004; Vincent, 2000; Norman, 1999; Bryant, 1995).
Poor provision has been identified in several areas. Firstly, it has been observed in the number and range of LGBT-related resources in library collections, especially with regard to books for bisexual and trans people, and materials in alternative formats (see: Mehra & Braquet, 2011; Bridge, 2010; Chapman, 2007a; Wright, 2007; Linville, 2004; Clyde, 2003; Rothbauer & McKechnie, 1999).

Secondly, it is seen in the subject headings used in library catalogues; research by Bates and Rowley (2011), for example, found that the index terms used in three public library catalogues embodied dominant heteronormative ideologies which did not correspond to the way that minority groups self-identified or referred to themselves (see also Wright, 2007; Mehra & Braquet, 2006; Boon & Howard, 2004; Jenkins, 1990).

A third area in which poor provision is noted is in reference services; in an influential study of Canadian public libraries, for example, Curry (2005) found that reference librarians often handled enquiries on LGBT-related topics badly; in 60% of the libraries studied, library staff were found to either display “negative physical reactions” to LGBT related-enquiries (either because of their disapproval or their lack of knowledge about the subject), or to give only brief and “abrupt” service, making the enquirer feel that they had been “sent... away” (p.73) (see also Mehra & Braquet, 2011; Schrader & Wells, 2011).

Two further areas in which poor provision has been identified are promotion (or lack thereof) of LGBT services and resources (for example see Bridge, 2010; Chapman, 2007a; Wright, 2007; Mehra & Braquet, 2006; Linville, 2004; Clyde, 2003), and Internet access; in her study, for example, Wright (2007) found that around only 50% of the participating school libraries had Internet filters which permitted access LGBT sites (see also Bridge, 2010).

Several explanations for poor library provision are outlined in the literature. For example, numerous studies show that library staff are largely unaware of any demand for LGBT-related services because LGBT users are often reluctant to make their needs known (see Bridge, 2010; Alexander & Miselis, 2007; Wright, 2007; Currant, 2002). The fact that LGBT materials often fail to appear on the major publishers’ publication lists has also been deemed problematic (see Bridge, 2010; Chapman, 2007a; Wright, 2007; Boon & Howard, 2004). Numerous studies also reveal that library staff receive little, or no, training in how to support LGBT users; in Wright’s (2007) study school librarians said that they “did not know
very much” and that “any ideas they did have were based on guesswork and assumptions [...] arrived at on an ad hoc basis” (p.44) (see also Bridge, 2010; Currant, 2002; Carmichael and Shontz, 1996).

Conclusion

The literature reviewed shows that LGBT provision is vital, and that LGBT youth require material (both print and online) covering a range of topics, which can be accessed discreetly. It is also clear that libraries still have a long way to go to effectively meet these needs. Special importance is placed on secondary school libraries because schools are places through which all LGBT youth pass, and because adolescence is a significant period in the formation and acceptance of gender identity and sexual orientation.
Methodology

Research approach

Given the lack of research on the topic of LGBT provision in UK school libraries, this study is exploratory in nature and an inductive approach is taken. Qualitative research is recommended for induction and the exploration of unknown topics; as Bryman (2012) notes;

“If a researcher is interested in a topic on which no or virtually no research has been done in the past, the quantitative strategy may be difficult to employ, because there is so little prior literature from which to draw leads. A more exploratory stance may be preferable, and, in this connection, qualitative research may serve the researcher’s needs better” (p.41)

A qualitative research design was, thus, chosen. Qualitative research was also chosen because this study is interpretive; it seeks to understand not only what librarian views are, but also why librarians hold them. Similarly, it looks not only at how LGBT pupils use their school library, but considers why they use it in ways they do. Qualitative research is advocated when researchers are as much concerned with the motivations behind actions as they are in actions themselves (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p.5). Furthermore, unlike quantitative studies, qualitative research allows respondents to freely express themselves in their own words. It, thus, yields better insight into their thoughts and interpretation of events (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p.6) (see also Bryman, 2012; Walliman, 2006).

Research Methods

Data Collection Method

Qualitative questionnaires were used for the study. The data-collection method was chosen for three reasons. Firstly, only very limited financial resources were available for the study and there was only three months in which to conduct and write up the research. A data-collection method that could be carried out relatively cheaply and in a short amount of time was thus needed. Secondly, it was necessary to contact two different sets of people; school librarians and LGBT individuals. It was also important to gather as wide-a-range of
views as possible since the research was exploratory. Finally, it was important that the data-collection method used allowed participants to express themselves honestly and freely. This point was especially pertinent since the topic being investigated was sensitive (being related to sexuality and library provision for a minority group) and may have led some participants to feel pressured to give ‘socially acceptable’ responses rather than divulging their true thoughts on the subject.

Questionnaires met all of the research requirements; they are relatively cheap, they can be distributed to lots of people at the same time and they can encourage more honest responses from participants than interviews or focus groups because respondents can answer questions in privacy (Bryman, 2012; Walliman, 2006; Frazer & Lawley, 2000;). It is acknowledged that, even with questionnaires, social desirability bias cannot be eradicated entirely however (Frazer & Lawley, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992).

Despite the advantages of using qualitative questionnaires, three problems with the data-collection method are acknowledged. Firstly, it is not possible to prompt respondents, or clarify their meaning (Bryman, 2012; Walliman, 2006). Secondly, open-ended questions are far more demanding of respondents than closed questions because they are more time-consuming and more mentally challenging. Consequently, only a limited number of points could be explored (Bryman, 2012; Frazer & Lawley, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992). The third problem is that, since participation in a questionnaire-based study is generally voluntary, self-selection bias can occur (Oppenheim, 1992, p.30).

Conducting follow-up interviews with respondents may have negated the first two problems to some extent. Unfortunately, conducting additional interviews was not possible in the time available. Due to the need to adhere to the University’s (2013) ethical guidance (and obtain informed consent), it was impossible to overcome the third problem either. However, the problem would remain whatever type of data collection method was employed. Overall, it was felt that collecting honest and rich data, even if somewhat limited, was more useful for this study than, either risking a higher likelihood of ‘socially acceptable’ answers, or asking lots of closed questions which would yield only a surface impression of respondents’ thoughts.

Two questionnaires were developed for the study; one for the LGBT community and one for secondary school librarians. Both questionnaires were created using Survey Monkey and
both were designed according to long-established guidance in the literature; careful attention was paid to wording and layout. In accord with Oppenheim (1992), for instance, an attempt was made to reduce social desirability bias by placing questions which had the potential to evoke negative responses in a “more permissive situation” (p.139); in the school librarians’ questionnaire, for example, a question asking librarians to detail any factors which dissuade them from providing LGBT-related support was placed after a question asking them to detail factors that encourage them to provide support. A small pilot sample was also sent out prior to large-scale distribution, to ensure that the questionnaires were clear and fit for purpose (Frazer & Lawley, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992). A copy of each questionnaire is included in the appendix of this report (see Appendix 1-2).

**Study Participants and distribution**

For the study contact needed to be made with two groups of people; library staff currently working in UK secondary schools and LGBT individuals who were either still at secondary school, or who left secondary school after 2003 (when Section 28 was repealed so when schools were at full liberty to support their LGBT pupils). An attempt was made to gather the views of as large and as varied a sample of participants as possible since, as Walliman (2006) notes,

> “The greater the accuracy required... the larger the sample must be. The amount of variability within the population... is also significant” (p.80)

To contact LGBT individuals a variety of approaches were used. Initially, contact was made with the LGBT societies of two local universities (the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University). A local LGBT youth-support group for under 18s (Fruitbowl) was also approached. The three groups were very supportive, allowing the researcher to attend their meetings and/or use their mailing lists to disseminate the questionnaire and/or promoting the questionnaire. The three LGBT groups were selected because, when combined, they provided a varied sample of people from the young LGBT community; the two university groups provided access to people from a variety of school-types from across the UK. They only gave access to recent school leavers and people who likely achieved well academically however. Fruitbowl, on the other hand, only gave access to people from one geographical location; Sheffield. However, many of the group’s members were still at school. They also have a range of academic abilities.
In addition, social media (Facebook and Twitter) was used to disseminate and promote the LGBT survey. Social media made it possible to further gather the views of LGBT people from diverse backgrounds, of various abilities, and from different parts of the UK. Due to limits stipulated by the University’s Research Ethics Committee, it was only possible to use views of social-media-respondents who had already left school though; collecting the views of minors (under 18s) came with special restrictions which were strictly adhered to (see Ethical Considerations below).

To access the views of school librarians, the School Librarians’ Network (SLN) mailing list was initially used to disseminate the questionnaire. The SLN was an ideal gateway for the study because its members work in a variety of school-types and are spread across the UK. The network only gave access to library staff who were already members of the SLN however. Social media (Facebook and Twitter) was thus additionally used to distribute and promote the librarians’ survey.

Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis was used to examine the qualitative research findings. The analysis method was selected because it is ideally suited to exploratory research; a bottom-up, or “data-driven” approach can be adopted which allows the data to be interpreted freely, without forcing it into a pre-existing framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.83). Although thematic analysis allows for a flexible, organic interpretation of data, it does rely on subjective interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78-79). Preconceptions must thus be acknowledged. As a member of both the librarian and LGBT communities, the researcher is not a disinterested investigator. While conducting the study and analysing data however, a concerted effort was made to suspend all assumptions.

To identify key themes in the qualitative responses a four-stage process was undertaken. First, a preliminary reading of the responses for each survey was done to gain an overall ‘feel’ for the respondents’ views and experiences. A question-by-question comparison of participants’ responses was then carried out. Similar answers were grouped and a note was made of any comments that stood out. The third step involved reading through each survey group’s responses collectively. This read-through was done repeatedly so that key themes could be identified. A colour-coded highlighting system was used. Finally, for the fourth
stage, the themed findings for the librarian and LGBT surveys were compared and weighed against one another. Similarities and differences were noted.

Along with qualitative questions, both the librarian and LGBT questionnaires contained a few demographic and closed questions. The demographic questions were asked to see if there were any patterns in the views and/or experiences of different participant cohorts (those that had gone to a particular type of school, or those who worked in a particular region of the UK for instance). To identify patterns, the responses of each demographic group were looked at separately and then compared with the responses of people from different groups. The few closed questions that were asked were done so to give an overview of respondents’ views. To analyse the closed-question responses, percentages were calculated.

**Ethical Considerations**

To ensure the research study was ethically sound, several precautions were taken in accord with professional guidance and the University of Sheffield’s (2013) research regulations (Bryman, 2012; Walliman, 2006; Gorman & Clayton, 2005). First, informed and voluntary consent was retrieved from participants; they were asked to read an outline of the research and to give their consent if they agreed to the terms detailed (see Appendix 5-6). Second, confidentiality was maintained because all questionnaires were anonymous. Third, to ensure participant data was secure all data that was collected online was stored on a password-protected Survey Monkey account. Data collected via paper questionnaires was temporarily stored in a folder before being transferred to a password-protected computer. Once the project was complete, all data was destroyed. Finally, careful consideration was given to the sensitive nature of the study. The research was deemed ‘sensitive’ because its topic, relating to sexual orientation, is personal and because it involved working with under 18s (University of Sheffield, 2013).

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6 Some participants did not answer the demographic questions. Those that did not were analysed as their own separate cohort
7 For a copy of the ethics approval for this study see Appendix 3
Sensitivity of topic

No particularly sensitive questions were asked in the questionnaires; all focused generally on the information needs of the LGBT community and librarian/pupil views regarding library provision to meet these needs. Example questions were also submitted to the University’s Ethics Committee for approval.

Working with minors

A number of steps were taken to ensure that no minor was taken advantage of. Parental consent was obtained in accord with University guidance (2013). In addition, to ensure that all members of the youth group fully understood their rights and the implications of their participation, the researcher personally explained to them what the information collected would be used for. It was also made clear to the participants that they could withdraw from the study if they so wished. The context in which data was collected from younger participants also differed from that of the adults; no online questionnaires were sent out. Only print versions were taken to the Fruitbowl meeting. Adult members of staff at Fruitbowl were also present during all interaction with participants.

Response

Overall, 27 responses were collected for the librarian survey and 104 were gathered for the LGBT survey. In the LGBT sample only one respondent was currently still at school. The low response from pupils still at school is unfortunate; it means that the views of LGBT respondents are biased towards those that are no longer in the school system (and may thus be a little outdated). The response is unsurprising though; the need for parental consent meant that many of the young people who attended Fruitbowl could not participate in the study because they were not yet ‘out’ to their parents.

Research Quality

Generalisability, reliability and validity are three measures for determining research quality. With regard to generalisability, it is acknowledged that the findings from this study are not statistically representative of either the LGBT or librarian communities. Gaining a probabilistic sample would have been impossible because the exact size and demographic of the UK’s LGBT population is unknown (CILIP, 2010b). The lack of statistical generalisability does not undermine the value of the research findings however. The
research provides useful insight into the (little explored) views of LGBT pupils and librarians (regarding LGBT-related school library provision) because responses were gathered from a broad and diverse range of participants, reflecting an array of outlooks (Walliman, 2006; Gorman & Clayton, 2005). Moreover, the legitimacy of qualitative research is not so dependent on statistical generalisability, as quantitative data is (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, pp.81-82).

To ensure the reliability and validity of qualitative research, six practices are frequently advocated in social research literature: acknowledging biases and research limitations; explaining data collection and analysis procedures; showing sound connections between data and conclusions; using multiple questions to test attitudes; triangulating data collected from multiple sources; and saving data so that it can be reanalysed by future researchers (Bryman, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Walliman, 2006; Gorman & Clayton, 2005; Oppenheim, 1992).

Unfortunately, it was not possible to apply all of the listed recommendations to the research design. For ethical reasons, it was not possible to save data for future re-analysis. Since only limited questions could be asked (due to the qualitative nature of the questionnaire), it was not realistic to test participant attitudes multiple ways either. Due to time constraints, data from each participant group was only collected in one way too. On the other hand, data collection and analysis procedures have been fully explained, and conclusions drawn from the study are supported by direct quotations from the data. Research limitations and biases (including sample and self-selection bias, social desirability bias and researcher bias) have all been recognised too. Additionally, all findings have been triangulated with the findings from similar research studies and the wider literature.

Although not all criteria for reliability and validity has been integrated into the research design, it is widely accepted that the legitimacy of qualitative research is not so dependent on validity and reliability as quantitative data is (since understanding people’s emotions, feelings and views is complex and relies largely on intuition and interpretation); indeed there is much debate as to whether reliability and validity testing is applicable to qualitative research at all (see Bryman, 2012; Walliman, 2006; Gorman & Clayton, 2005). Consequently, it was felt that those measures that were put in place to ensure the validity and reliability of this research study were sufficient.
Discussion:
How and why LGBT pupils use school libraries to access LGBT-related information

Sample details
The survey of LGBT teens received a good response; 104 people took part. The respondent group was fairly diverse (see figs 1-4). From the data received, no demographic patterns appeared; the experiences and perceptions of LGBT youth were generally consistent and largely unanimous irrespective of the pupils’ background or identity.

![Identity](image_url)

Figure 1- LGBT demographic information
Figure 2 - LGBT demographic information

Figure 3 - LGBT demographic information
Overall, the survey revealed that school library use among LGBT teens is low; almost 78.5% of respondents reported never using their school library to look for LGBT information (see fig. 5). Similar studies reveal comparable patterns (see Bridge, 2010, p.39). Three themes were identified in the questionnaire responses: invisibility, fear and value. All reveal greater insight into why and how LGBT youth use (or indeed, do not use) their school library. Each topic will be discussed in turn.
Invisibility

The theme of invisibility relates to the fact that in schools there appears to be general silence around LGBT issues. There is also an apparent lack of LGBT-related support in school libraries. Almost unanimously, LGBT respondents stated that their library did nothing to support them, or if it did they did not see it:

“There was no support regarding LGBT issues in the library”

“LGBT support was non-existant [sic]”

“Nothing visible, may have been some LGBT material but it was not easy to find”

“Nothing, or if they did it wasn’t advertised”

Though most respondents said that their library offered no support, eight did detail some provision. All but one referred to that provision as hidden or limited however:

“Fiction books containing same-sex relationships or exploring queer issues were stocked, but not usually clearly signposted”

“One or two books about LGBT romances”

The respondent who did not say their library’s provision was limited, said that their library contained “LGBT theme novels” with no further clarification. Later in their questionnaire
they suggested that their library could have supported them better by having “Increase[d] materials surround [sic] the LGBT community”. It may, thus, be inferred that the LGBT materials offered by their library were also limited.

The reported lack of LGBT support in school libraries correlates with research findings in the wider literature. In a survey of over 1600 LGB pupils conducted by Stonewall, for example, more than a third reported that their school library provided no LGB materials (Guasp, 2012, p.19). Similarly, Bridge (2010) found that over 80% of pupils surveyed said they were unaware of any LGBT materials in their library (pp.51-52).

Along with the invisibility of LGBT resources/support in the school library specifically, many respondents also referred to silence around LGBT issues in their school generally:

“In my school there is [...] a complete ignoring of the existence of LGBT people”

“In general, the school offered no advertised LGBT advise [sic]”

A general silence on LGBT issues has been raised in similar studies; for example, Bridge (2010) found the majority (76%) of pupils in her study had not been taught about sexuality in their lessons either (pp.47-48).

From the questionnaire responses it is clear that the invisibility of LGBT-related support influenced pupils’ use and perception of their school library in several ways. Firstly, of the respondents who stated that they never used their school library to look for LGBT-related information, the most cited reason (by twenty-five respondents/47% of those who answered the question) was the assumption that the library would have nothing on the topic or that Internet access would be blocked:

“I didn’t expect to find anything”

“Assumptions about internet filtering”

Many of those who gave an explanation for their assumption equated it with a lack of visibility and/or silence on LGBT-topics:

“I don’t think there was any information regarding the LGBT community there; we were never told that there was anything available”
In addition, several respondents said that they would have felt uncomfortable asking their librarian for help locating LGBT information because the lack of visible resources led them either to assume that no help would be available, or to feel that LGBT topics were not allowed to be discussed:

“I couldn’t see any books on it then I didn’t think the librarian would be able to show me any as I didn’t think we had any at all”

“If material on LGBT topics are not openly apparent then you feel as if it is not a topic to be talked about”

“I wouldn’t have known how to bring it up. I suppose maybe if it was something that had come up in class ever (like in sex ed, or citizenship or whatever) I might have felt able to. But it always felt like asking would be a bit weird, or out of the blue”

Assumptions pupils make, about LGBT provision being unavailable, have been noted by other researchers. Bridge (2010) for example, found that 59% of pupils had never attempted to use their school library’s computers to access LGBT information, maybe due to a lack of promotion; most said they would have done if they thought they were able to (pp.49-50).

Along with putting many pupils off looking for LGBT information and off asking their librarian for help, the invisibility of LGBT support was also problematic for the few pupils who did look for LGBT resources in their school library because over half (60%) said they were unable to find what they were looking for (see fig. 6).
The reported inability of pupils to find LGBT resources in their school library again correlates with the results of Bridge’s (2010) study, which revealed that c.70% of pupils found locating LGBT material in their school library to be difficult (p.52).

The need to increase the visibility and availability of LGBT resources and services was the most frequently made suggestion for improvement by LGBT respondents; fifty-two (76.5% of those who answered the question) mentioned it. They put forward several proposals. The first (suggested twenty-nine times) was to actually provide LGBT-themed resources and services:

“Have some LGBT-related resources and books on sexuality!”

“Provided basic LGBT information resources”

When asked what types of information they looked for, students gave a range of answers (see fig. 7). The findings, show that while at school LGBT pupils tend to focused on looking
at information around coming to terms with and/or disclosing their sexuality and/or gender identity.

Along with stocking more resources, the second suggestion for improvement, (proposed twenty-seven times), was that LGBT services and resources should be better advertised. Displays were particularly favoured (they were mentioned specifically by fourteen participants):

8 Beyond school it seems a broader spectrum of LGBT-related topics are explored. This pattern may reflect a change in the interests of LGBT people once they have accepted and acknowledged their sexuality/gender identity, as suggested by Taylor (2002, p.93).
“There would have had to be a lot of awareness raising that the library was a possible source around this sort of info”

“Made displays - made LGBT topics more visible…”

“…having a display for LGBT history months in the same way they did for black history month and international women’s day […] may have gone some way to normalising it”

A third suggestion made by some of the respondents was for library staff to refrain from restricting access to LGBT information. Three of the respondents mentioned this improvement with regard to Internet filters and another mentioned it in relation to age-banding books:

“Not have blocked websites”

“…not labelling books with ANY queer content as ’14 and up’”

Finally, the need for a school-wide effort to raise awareness about LGBT issues, and to be open about LGBT topics was iterated:

“Run a campaign with the rest of the school on sexuality”

“Made a move as a school to be known to be approachable about lgbt [sic] topics”

When the wider literature on LGBT provision in libraries is considered, it is unsurprising that most LGBT pupils do not ever look in their school library for LGBT-related information, that many assume that their school librarian will be unable to help them, and that the needs of those few pupils that do look for LGBT support go unmet. The call for increased visibility of materials is also expected.

Poor promotion of LGBT services is noted by many researchers (see: Chapman, 2013; Chapman, 2007a; Mehra & Braquet, 2006; Linville, 2004; Clyde, 2003). In Wright’s study (2007), for example, fifteen of eighteen librarians said that they did not promote LGBT materials (p.39). Similarly, Bridge (2010) found that almost 100% of librarians failed to promote LGBT stock (p.53). The problem of LGBT materials being limited or restricted is also widely noted. For instance, Bridge found that “The majority” of school libraries in Northern Ireland did not provide LGBT materials, and that only two (of the fourteen that did) identified the resources using LGBT-related keywords in their catalogue (pp.51-52). Further, both Bridge (2010, pp.49-50) and Wright (2007, p.34) discovered that Internet
filters frequently block access to LGBT websites in school libraries in Northern Ireland and the UK respectively.

**Fear**

The second theme, fear, relates to pupils’ fear of discovery, either because of embarrassment and/or confusion about being LGBT, or because of negative responses such as stigmatisation, bullying and rejection. Fear of discovery had a clear impact on pupils’ use of their school library; after the assumption there would be no support, fear was the second most cited reason given by respondents who had never looked in their school library for LGBT-related information (35% of those who answered the question referred to it):

“Too public - wouldn’t want to be ‘caught’ by homophobic students”

“Couldn’t access online information resources through fear of monitoring of online content”

Of the students who did not use their school library, most cited using the Internet instead because it offered more privacy:

“All LGBT-related information I wanted I found the internet to be sufficiently informative. I also found that more discreet”

Interestingly, though many respondents thought the school library was too public, three said that they used their school library to look up LGBT-related information because it offered them privacy from their parents:

“...couldn’t access information in private at home, because my family only had one computer with access to the internet (dial-up) which was in the office. The risk of getting caught looking up lgbt [sic] topics put me off”

In line with these findings, findings in the wider literature suggest that fear has a strong impact on how LGBT youth use their library. In Linville’s (2004), study, almost 25% of LGBT youth reported feeling conspicuous when they were in the library (p.184), while Bridge (2010) noted that many of the LGBT youth she surveyed were worried about accessing LGBT resources publicly (p.69). Like in this survey, in Bridge’s study the Internet was a
favoured resource for finding LGBT information (pp.39-40). Although most pupils do not use their school library, the idea that some might prefer to, because they think it offers privacy from parents, is also a point raised in the literature (see Holt, 2006, p.2).

Fear of discovery not only affected whether or not LGBT pupils used their school library to look for LGBT resources, it also had a major impact on the way pupils searched for information. Among the few respondents who did use their school library, browsing was the most popular way of looking. Using the Internet and online catalogue were mentioned too. Privacy was the predominant answer given for searching in these ways:

“It was a private way of looking”
“I would just pretend I was looking for something else if anyone asked”

Fear also had a significant impact on pupils’ feelings about making LGBT-related enquiries. The vast majority said they would have felt uncomfortable asking their librarian for help locating LGBT information. The reasons why pupils were afraid varied however. For many respondents fear had little to do with the library staff. For some, it was related to their own feelings of anxiety or embarrassment about being LGBT:

“I would not of [sic] felt comfortable at the time in asking any sort of question on LGBT topics. The discovery and realization of being 'gay' was difficult enough as a problem for myself”
“No, but purely because I wasn't yet sure of my sexuality and I hadn't come out to anyone. I knew she was accepting of LGBT people”

For others, it was related to their fear of other students finding out and bullying them as a consequence:

“Other students might have overheard and it would have fuelled rumours, bullying etc”
“I didn’t want to ask anybody for help - I was scared I would get judged or that other people would find out and then I’d get bullied”

On the other hand, for many respondents, the (actual or assumed) behaviour of the librarian was a considerable problem. For example, worry about the reaction of the librarian put eleven respondents off asking for help:
“I didn't know whether my librarian would be really intolerant”

“I am afraid the librarian will laugh at me”

It seems that particulars such as the age, gender or general appearance of library staff influenced the way some pupils perceived them:

“No, she was an older religious woman”

“I might have felt comfortable if it was a librarian who looked slightly 'alternative' and who was a woman - probably not an older man”

Along with fear of their reaction, seven respondents also said that they were put off asking their librarian about LGBT information because they were afraid the librarian would tell other people:

“No, we had two female librarians and they were often heard gossiping about things they'd come across in the school and I didn't want to be the topic of one of their conversations”

“I was worried she'd think I was a freak and report me to the headteacher or something”

Pupils’ personal relationships with library staff also affected how they felt about making LGBT-related enquiries. A general pattern was observed; respondents (albeit only a few) who had good relationships with their librarian were more likely to feel comfortable asking about LGBT-related information, while those that did not, would not have:

“I would have felt comfortable because she was a nice person who I spoke to often”

“No [...] the librarian there was completely off-putting and unfriendly”

The pattern was not universal however; one pupil, for instance, feared talking to their librarian precisely because they had a good relationship with them; they did not want to jeopardise the support they already had:

“We were on good terms, and I didn't want to spoil that, because I didn't have many friends and spent most of my time in the library - I didn't want to turn the library into an uncomfortable space”
In the literature, LGBT youths’ fear of talking to librarians is discussed. Bridge (2010) for instance found that 73% of LGBT pupils either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that they would feel comfortable asking their librarian for help locating LGBT information (p. 54). Curry’s (2005) study also showed that 50% of librarians were found to have potentially off-putting reactions to LGBT-related enquiries (30% were generally reported as being “cold” and “disinterested” while the remaining 20% were found to be distinctly negative) (p.70). The lower percentage in Curry’s study could be equated to the fact that the context of Curry’s research differs from the context of this study and Bridge’s work; it took place outside the UK in a public library setting. More research would need to be done to say this with any certainty though. Additionally, it was part of Curry’s experiment that the LGBT participant actually approached the library staff. Thus, judgements made were based on the staff’s actual responses, not those assumed by pupils. Finally, the enquirer in Curry’s study was not a young teen; they were nineteen years old. Consequently, they were likely to be more certain and much less vulnerable than LGBT pupils still in secondary school (Curry, 2005, p.73).

As with invisibility, it was also apparent that pupils’ fear was often connected to the wider negative treatment of LGBT issues in the school generally:

“Being LGBT was very much a taboo at my school and staff members that I was ‘out’ to were sometimes hostile and unfriendly. The attitude to LGBT pupils was that it was something that must be hidden or brushed under the carpet so to speak”

“When I asked my science teacher what caused homosexuality, he became very awkward/uncomfortable, so I got the impression it wasn’t OK in school”

“I went to a girls school with a ‘no hugging’ rule, because hugging, according to the staff, made you gay. It was not okay to discuss homosexuality in the school”

Problems of negative and homophobic/transphobic school climates on LGBT youth have been noted in the literature; research by Black, Fedewa & Gonzales (2012) for instance, shows that school teachers may occasionally “actually contribute to heterosexism and homophobia in schools” (p.337). Similar findings were exhibited by Bridge (2010, pp.47-48).

Along with making LGBT support more visible, when respondents were asked about ways their school library could have better supported them, a need for assurance was strongly expressed. Having approachable library staff who are respectful of the need for privacy and
who are both positive and knowledgeable about supporting LGBT needs was iterated by many:

“It would have been great if the librarian had been someone that I could have talked to”

“Respected confidentiality”

“Librarians who would respond positively to students asking about these topics”

“Staff with knowledge of LGBT issues would be helpful”

The need for libraries to provide ways for LGBT pupils to access information independently and discreetly was also suggested; displays and more online resources were particularly favoured in this regard:

“Displays engaging with history etc months/weeks making it ok to browse information without identifying you as seeking that information maybe”

“More online reading and resources to be looked at via library or from home”

Some tension regarding the location and identification of LGBT materials is apparent in the responses. On the one hand, five respondents recommended that libraries integrate LGBT resources with other resources, so that pupils would not have to ‘out’ themselves when accessing LGBT information:

“Leaflets etc about figuring stuff out/resources, mixed in with other leaflets to help with self-consciousness about looking at them”

On the other hand, four respondents suggested that libraries should have a specific LGBT section:

“Had a clear lgbt [sic] section so that no one has to out themselves to know where to look”

The debate over separate versus integrated collections here is echoed in similar studies; for example, in Linville’s (2004) research, some of the teen respondents said that it would be easier to find LGBT books if they were in their own separate section, while others felt that a separate collection would “stick the label on their foreheads, pointing out to other teens that they are gay” if they accessed it (p.186). The lack of agreement echoes findings in other studies too (see: Chapman, 2007a; O’Leary, 2005).
Along with improvements their school library could make, for many respondents it appeared that it was the negative and homophobic/transphobic school environment which most affected their ability to access LGBT information:

“The overall school atmosphere seemed the biggest hurdle”
“I think it’s more to do with the social stigma in the school environment”

The need for a school-wide approach to encourage tolerance was, thus, widely referred to in respondents’ suggestions for improvement:

“There would have had to be [...] a general change in attitude across the whole anti-queer/homophobic school culture”

They pointed out that any effort the library made would only be helpful if the school atmosphere improved too:

“...would only have been helpful had the whole school worked to create a more LGBT-friendly environment”

Value
The theme of value relates to pupils’ perceptions of the usefulness of school libraries as a source for LGBT information and support. Of the LGBT respondents, a few said that they never desired LGBT library support while at school. Five said that they had no need for LGBT information because, at the time, they were not aware of their LGBT identity:

“During my years at secondary school I did not consider myself to be bisexual, in fact sexuality was not an issue that played on my mind until I started university”
“Pre-16 i wasnt [sic] really aware of my orientation”
In addition, one respondent said that they have simply never been interested in researching the subject:

“I've never felt the need to look up information on LGBT topics”

A minority of respondents (three) said that they did not feel school libraries were an appropriate place for LGBT provision. Two did not explain their views. The third saw the school library as an academic facility rather than a resource for personal information:

“As I have mentioned, it is an academic facility to aid study, not a self help facility for gay people (or indeed any minorities)”

Despite the view of this respondent, it should be noted here that school libraries not only have a responsibility to provide educational materials for pupils; they also have a wider duty to ensure all pupils have access to resources that support their “emotional, cultural, leisure and wider needs” (CILIP, 2011).

Although a few of the respondents did not need school library support (or did not think it appropriate), from 87% of responses received it is clear that school library provision of LGBT services was, or would have been, highly valued by the majority of LGBT pupils. One respondent, for example, commented that:

“Having a school library that acknowledged LGBT would have been so precious to me as a kid”

While another reported the significance of finding an LGBT book in their library, describing it as their salvation:

“I have INCREDIBLY clear memories of coming across Paula Boock's novel Dare, Truth or Promise and finding it an absolute lifeline”

It is also apparent that school libraries are an important place of LGBT information for teens because of the convenience of their location. Many of those that did use their library, for instance, said that:
“I was often in the school library anyway, so it was convenient”
“...I had easy access to it”

As already noted, school libraries were also used by a few students because they offered some privacy from parental oversight. In addition, it was clear from several questionnaire responses that library support for LGBT youth in schools is essential since it is at school that LGBT teens most experience bullying, and because it is often in the library that they take refuge:

“…experienced a lot of homophobic bullying at school so I tended to look for support on the spur of the moment when I couldn’t cope anymore”

“School libraries are a vital place for LGBT representation in school. Because […] it’s where the bullied kids who don’t fit in hang out”

In accord with the views expressed by LGBT pupils in this study, Bridge (2010) also found that LGBT students generally view their school library as a safe space (pp.46-47). Bridge thus concluded that “access to the library is essential for LGBT students who not only need information, but a safe place from which to access it.” (p.47) and that, since the LGBT pupils often hung out in their library anyway, they are “a readily accessible user group” for which librarians should extend support (pp.67-68).

In existing literature, little mention is made of the views of LGBT youth who do not want or need LGBT provision in their library. The importance of providing LGBT services is widely noted however. As discussed in the literature review, provision of LGBT materials have been shown to have positive impacts on the mental and physical well-being and esteem of LGBT teens (see Kosciw, Palmer, Kull & Greytak, 2013; Black, Fedewa & Gonzalez, 2012; Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen & Palmer, 2012; Birkett, Espelag & Koenig, 2009; Hunt & Jensen, 2007). It is also important to give all people, regardless of their sexuality and/or gender identity, a broad and tolerant view of the diverse society in which they live (Schrader & Wells, 2011; Clyde, 2003; Clyde & Lobban, 2001).
Conclusion

It is clear that not all LGBT people want or need LGBT support while they are at school. However, the presence of such material has a dramatic impact on the lives of the majority of LGBT pupils who do. School library use among LGBT teens is generally low because, due to the invisibility of LGBT materials and school-wide silence about LGBT issues, many pupils are not aware that their library is a potential resource for LGBT support. The problem is compounded by the fact that LGBT pupils are frequently embarrassed or afraid to look for LGBT resources or to ask for help locating them. Often, transphobic/homophobic school environments further add to their fear and insecurity.

There is a clear need for more visible services and resources, so that LGBT youth know support is available and so that they can access LGBT material without having to ask for help. Some conflict about how this material should be identified and located is clear however. The need for positive, knowledgeable library staff is also evident. A school-wide approach to raising awareness about, and to tackling intolerance towards, the LGBT community is essential too, to enable LGBT teens to feel comfortable and safe in their quest for information.
Discussion:
The attitudes and knowledge of school librarians towards supporting LGBT youth

Sample details
The librarian survey received a much lower response than the LGBT survey; twenty-seven people took part. The different rate of response is noteworthy since both surveys were disseminated in similar ways (via specific mailing lists and via social media). Precise reasons for the difference are unclear. However, it may be interpreted that prioritisation of, and enthusiasm for, the topic is greater among the LGBT community than among librarians.

Like the LGBT group, the librarian respondents were generally diverse (though rather less so in terms of geographical spread, school type and, most unsurprisingly, identity)9 (see figs 8-12).

9 No librarians appeared to be members of special interest groups related to equality and diversity. One mentioned being a member of CILIP and the SLA, but these groups have a general focus (even if they are committed to equality and diversity). Four respondents also did not answer the question.
What type of school do you work in?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of types of schools where librarians work.](Figure 9- Librarian demographic information)

Where is the school you work in?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of locations where librarians work.](Figure 10- Librarian demographic information)
On all but one occasion, no patterns between demographic groupings and librarian views were observed. The single correlation identified is that only one librarian was LGBT and it was only this librarian who showed full competence, understanding and positivity towards LGBT support. Since there was only one LGBT librarian, this finding does not really equate to a ‘pattern’ and no firm conclusions can be drawn from it. However, the observation is
interesting in light of O’Leary’s (2005) finding that a higher percentage of LGBT librarians may correspond to better LGBT provision (pp.89-90).

**Overall librarian views regarding LGBT provision**

Overall, as in other studies (see Chapman, 2007a; Wright, 2007), the librarians were generally in favour of LGBT provision. There was clear variation in some of their responses though; notably in the way they reacted to difference, and in their exhibition of knowledge and competence. Additionally, some librarians referred to broader social issues which affect their attitude towards LGBT provision. Each theme will be discussed in turn.

**Responding to difference**

Seven librarians responded rather neutrally to the idea of supporting LGBT students; they emphasised the similarities between all pupils in their responses and cited equality as the motivating factor behind their provision:

“Access to relevant information should be equally available to all”

“Suitable resources should be available for all pupils”

“*I know I should provide suitable resources for all pupils whatever their needs*”

One librarian further stated that they were encouraged to support LGBT students only as much as they were other students:

“*N [sic] more than for other students*”

Additionally, several respondents seemed rather ambivalent about LGBT provision. For example, one used the word “perhaps” when saying that LGBT materials should be provided, while another said they were “not sure” whether LGBT resources should be a concern of school libraries. Two others also emphasised their impartiality:

“*Think they should be provided, don't really have any views positive or negative*”

“*My view is not relevant in the provision of services and resources for the school community*”
In contrast to the neutral stance, eight respondents took a more active and targeted approach, which manifested itself in several ways. First, rather than focusing on the similarities between pupils, these respondents pointed out the need to support diverse pupil requirements differently to ensure equality:

“All students should be catered for. Some groups, being more vulnerable to active or careless abuse should have resources more explicitly available where possible”

A desire to specifically meet the needs of the LGBT community was also a motivating factor behind their views, as was a desire to challenge homophobia and encourage tolerance:

“Students who are LGBT may well have difficulty initially discussing the matter at home [...] I would hope providing the material here helps them when they want to start their discussions at home and give them some confidence in where to start”

“Recently I have developed more fiction dealing with LGBT issues, and having LGBT love stories as I feel it is important for pupils to be able to identify their feelings with events in fiction [...] I think as a teenager reading someone else's feelings on loving a same-sex person is important to their self-esteem and recognising their emotions as normal”

“If I provide it and it is read, it helps increase people’s understanding, their empathy and that all contributes to decreasing prejudice”

Unlike those who were ambivalent about LGBT provision, these librarians also declared the importance of providing LGBT resources:

“It is vital that libraries provide LGBT services and resources similar to that they provide for other minority groups/communities”

Not all of the librarians’ views fitted neatly into either a ‘neutral’ or an ‘active/targeted’ stance. Some expressed views which appeared passive in one instance and active in another. One librarian, for example, appeared neutral when they emphasised the need to support all pupils the same:

“School libraries should be providing services and resrouces [sic] to support ALL of the pupils”
However, they later went on to say that they “actively seek out material which will support LGBT students” because “Most teenage fiction and information books are heteronormative [sic] and LBGT teens do not see themselves reflected much in these or the wider media”.

If there had been time, follow-up interviews could perhaps have given a clearer impression of librarian views about LGBT provision. In Wright’s (2007) study, interviews with school librarians were conducted. Interestingly, a similar tendency of librarians towards neutrality was revealed (pp.46-48), though Wright does not pick it up as such. The tendency of librarians towards neutrality is also reflected in the passive CILIP policy (2010a-b) (as already noted in the literature review), and in wider professional literature (see: Bridge, 2010, pp.71-72; Smith, 2010; Lewis, 2008; Jensen, 2006; Graham, 2003).

Though neutrality is not negative in itself, it can have negative impacts on LGBT pupils. As both the review of the literature and the findings of the LGBT survey show, LGBT youth have special requirements (such as the need for resources to be made extra visible, sensitive and private reference services, and a discreet means of accessing LGBT information) which are currently not being met. These needs cannot be met if LGBT teen requirements are simply lumped together with the needs of all other teenagers. It is also a legal obligation of librarians to move beyond neutrality; the Equalities Act (HMG, 2010) states that schools must not discriminate against pupils from minority groups either in the way they provide services and facilities, or by not providing services and facilities for them (Pt.6: Chapt.1). The need for an active and targeted approach is expressed in the wider literature too (see Bridge, 2010; Lewis, 2008; Elis & High, 2004; Bryant, 1995).

Knowledge and competence

Librarian knowledge about LGBT provision appeared to vary. In their questionnaire responses, seven librarians revealed a fairly good understanding of some of the needs of LGBT youth:

“Representation in fiction is crucial, and good quality information must be available to students on as broad a range of LGBT topics as possible”
“The general information needs of LGBT pupils [...] will obviously be similar to the needs of their peers. However, if we are specifically considering information related to their sexuality then their needs would be: • Information that is as current as possible • Information aimed at their specific age group • Supportive information • Collaborative information (i.e. online forums, groups etc) • Local information (i.e. clubs, support groups in their area)”

Additionally, some of these librarians acknowledged the fact that LGBT teens may feel embarrassed, or be sensitive about looking for information:

“Pupils want the information but don’t want to be seen borrowing it or would be embarrassed taking sex education information home”

“We put fiction and non-fiction in the main sequence of the library but we also have a separate section which is not security tagged. This means people can borrow from it without going through the issue system if they wish”

Even though some librarians showed fairly good knowledge of LGBT needs, when discussing their knowledge none mentioned the promotion of LGBT services/resources. Although no question was directly asked about promotion, the fact that advertisement was such an obvious wish of LGBT pupils, in the LGBT survey, yet was totally overlooked by librarians here, is significant. The idea that librarians overlook the importance of promotion is confirmed in other studies on the topic, as referred to earlier (on p.31).

Despite some good examples, not all librarians revealed an understanding of supporting LGBT youth. Five librarians (18.5%) suggested that the needs of LGBT pupils were no different from the needs of any other teenager:

“Each young person is an individual labels help no one”

“They are as individual and varied a bunch of people as the rest of their cohort [sic]”

Additionally, the provision described by some librarians also shows that there is often a mismatch between their understanding of LGBT needs, and the actual needs of LGBT youth. Several librarians equated effective support simply with providing a good enquiry service, for example:
“As a librarian, I am able to meet the information needs of any user by asking questions to ascertain what they are looking for”

“I would like to think I could answer any pupils’ query effectively - however, I deal with each pupils’ [sic] needs specifically and try and find out exactly what they want to know - then I can do further research if necessary to help fulfil their information need”

Three librarians also said that they were discouraged from providing LGBT support due to a lack of demand for it:

“If students ever asked for them I would prioritise providing the resources but as there is little demand I direct my funds elsewhere”

Although providing a good enquiry service is positive, both the equation of good LGBT support simply with a good enquiry service, and the idea that no LGBT enquiries means a lack of demand, arises because the librarians do not take into account the fact that LGBT pupils will likely never ask them for information (as clearly exhibited in the findings of the LGBT survey). A mismatch between librarian knowledge and student experiences can also be observed in LGBT and librarian perceptions of the problem of homophobia in society and school (see figs 13-15).

![Bar chart showing the extent of homophobia/homophobic bullying in secondary schools in the UK](chart.png)

**Figure 13- To what extent do you feel that homophobia/homophobic bullying is an issue in secondary schools in the UK?**

LGBT respondents  Librarians
How welcoming and supportive is/was your school for LGBT students?

Figure 14- How welcoming and supportive is/was your school for LGBT students?

Figure 15- (Librarian views) Do you think that the welcome and support your school offers to LGBT pupils is average?
Along with a mismatch between librarian knowledge and student needs/experiences, five librarians reported having very little, or no, knowledge of supporting LGBT youth; they stated that they know: “Very little”, “Next to nothing”, “Nothing in detail”, or “Only what they [pupils] ask for”. Two admitted never much thinking about provision for the LGBT community before:

“It’s not really something I’ve though [sic] about extensively”

“I have not thought much about this issue”

As noted in the literature review, other research studies into library provision for LGBT youth similarly show that librarians generally have poor knowledge of LGBT needs; in Wright’s (2007) study for example, the majority of librarians said that they knew little about the needs of LGBT teens (p.44). Knowledge about how to promote LGBT resources was shown to be a particularly lacking (p.45) and the assumption that there was a lack of demand for resources because students did not ask for it was also revealed (p.49). Bridge (2010) found similar patterns in her research (pp. 54-56). Both researchers also found a mismatch between LGBT needs, and library provision (Bridge, 2010, pp.40-41, p.71; Wright, 2007).

Encouragingly and, again, as in studies by Bridge (2010) and Wright (2007), seven librarian respondents did say that they would like to have training on LGBT provision; in particular, they were interested in what types of information LGBT youth want and where to source LGBT materials:

“What specific resources are available and where from”

“I would like to know what information the pupils themselves would most like to have, if there are any gaps in the service I provide to them”

Along with what they know, the school librarians were also asked to detail how they acquired their understanding. From their responses it is clear that some librarians have actively engaged in developing their knowledge. Among other ways: conducting research, collaborating with other youth professionals, and making an effort to work with LGBT pupils themselves, were all noted knowledge sources:

“We are very active in talking to our young people, we have had some training from Stonewall’s services and we actively look for relevant materials”
“When I first started in the library I had only thought of the non-fiction part of the collection. It was only after discussion with our school nurse [...] I did a lot of research and found some excellent YA fiction covering same-sex relationships”

On the other hand, though five librarians said they had knowledge of supporting the information needs of LGBT youth, they appear to have made little conscious effort to acquire or develop their understanding:

“I have a degree in Psychology and a large circle of friends with all sorts of lifestyles”
“From experience of customer service and reference interviews - this is transferable to the information needs of any group”

An ad-hoc and serendipitous librarian-approach to understanding the needs of LGBT youth was noted by Wright (2007, p.44), though, as with this study, Wright’s research did find that some librarians consciously sought out knowledge about LGBT-provision (p. 70).

Despite the variation in librarian knowledge and knowledge-seeking methods, when asked how confident they felt in supporting LGBT students, only three librarians said that they did not feel confident. Most librarians (just over half) said they were “unsure” how effective their provision was, and eight said that they felt their knowledge was sufficient (see fig.16). Interestingly, confidence had little to do with the quality of knowledge displayed by the librarian; for instance, one of the librarians who admitted they knew nothing about the information needs of LGBT teens, and who said that they had never really thought about the issue before, declared themselves confident in their ability to provide effective support.

Neither Bridge (2010) nor Wright (2007) appear to have asked librarians how confident they felt about LGBT provision directly. Confidence levels were gleaned in Bridge’s (2010) study however, and they confirm findings here; Bridge found that many librarians felt that “common sense” and general librarian experience was enough to enable them to effectively support the needs of LGBT teens (p. 56, 70). Bridge did not explore confidence/knowledge further; she simply called for more training and stated that

“...looking at the absence of provision in the libraries and reading comments from librarians who feel that they have no LGBT students, it is clear that this approach [common sense] is not working” (p.70).
To understand the seeming disparity between confidence and knowledge, the conscious-competence learning model, developed by Gordon Training International can be used (UCLAN, n.d.). The model works on the theory that learning is a staged process and that, to become competent, learners must pass through four phases as exhibited in fig. 17.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conscious</strong></td>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Stage 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learners gain confidence because they become consciously competent; they are now aware of the need for knowledge and are aware that they have knowledge. Learners in this stage still need to concentrate on their knowledge however.</td>
<td>Learners become consciously incompetent so lose confidence; they have enough awareness to appreciate the need for knowledge, but realise that they know nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unconscious</strong></td>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Stage 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finally, learners become unconsciously competent; their knowledge becomes ‘second nature’ to them.</td>
<td>To begin with learners are unconsciously incompetent; they are unaware of the need for knowledge on a given topic and are unaware that they have deficient knowledge about it (they are thus confident).</td>
</tr>
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**Figure 17- Conscious-competence learning model**

By considering the confidence and knowledge of librarians (as revealed in the questionnaire responses) and applying these to the model (see fig. 18) it is clear that most librarians are either in or between the stages of ‘unconscious-incompetence’ and ‘conscious-incompetence’. A few are between ‘conscious-incompetence’ and ‘conscious-competence’. Only two appear to be firmly in the competence stages however. Using the conscious-competence model to map knowledge may help librarians to understand their learning, and to see how to move to best develop their awareness.

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10 It was difficult to map the competence of nine respondents because, either the answers they gave were too vague, or they did not answer enough questions to gain a picture of their awareness and/or confidence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent</th>
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<td>Conscious</td>
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Figure 18- Librarian knowledge/confidence applied to the conscious-competence learning model
Broader social constraints

Other than their knowledge and desire to support LGBT youth, nine librarians referred to a number of additional factors which affected their views about LGBT provision. These were: a lack of available LGBT resources, a lack of finances, and the ethos of the school for which they work (all three issues were mentioned twice):

“As a librarian I find it quite difficult to find LGBT fiction, especially teenage fiction published in this country”

“Sadly, as I have had no book budget for the last 4 years and will not have one for the foreseeable future the needs of very few children are being met at present”

“I know where to look for advice and resources, but have to take my school’s Catholic ethos into consideration when stocking the Library”

That LGBT provision was a low priority for the school managers was mentioned (by one respondent) too, and one respondent mentioned parental complaints as a potential area for concern, though this respondent did say that parental objection would not discourage them from providing support:

“It’s a very very low priority for my superiors and for Ofsted”

“No, but I [sic] can imagine that some parents would not approve”

The most frequently cited problem (mentioned three times) was a lack of opportunity to learn about LGBT provision:

“I don’t know enough about the information needs of LGBT teens to effectively serve them, nor is there really any opportunity of finding this out”

Many of the broader social constraints outlined by librarians in this study have been acknowledged in other research (see: Bridge, 2010; Chapman 2007a; Wright, 2007). Although acknowledged elsewhere, none of the constraints outlined are an excuse for failing to provide LGBT support in school libraries. Suggestions of how librarians can overcome the difficulties are available in numerous works (again see: Bridge, 2010; Chapman 2007a; Wright, 2007). Further recommendations will also be made at the conclusion of this study.
Conclusion

Librarians respond differently to diversity; while some adopt an active approach to inclusion, others remain neutral. Neutrality is problematic, however, as not only does it maintain the status quo (where LGBT youth are ineffectively served) but it is also a violation of the Equalities Act (HMG, 2010).

Librarian knowledge of the information needs of LGBT youth varies. Some examples of understanding are shown and a number of librarians appear to make a concerted effort to actively seek information. Concerningly, other librarians show a fundamental misunderstanding of LGBT needs and appear to make no effort to improve their knowledge. A mismatch between librarian confidence in their ability to support LGBT youth, and their understanding of LGBT teen needs is also observed.

The conscious-competence model shows that most librarians are still in the incompetence stages of LGBT provision, though a few are moving into competence. The model explains the mismatch between librarian confidence and knowledge and can provide a framework for future learning. Encouragingly, several librarians said they would like to learn more about LGBT support.

Finally, a number of broader social constraints are shown to impact the support librarians offer to LGBT pupils. While they may present difficulties, none of the constraints outlined are an excuse for librarians to fail to support such a vulnerable user group. Active steps must be taken to overcome them.
Conclusion

This research aimed both to understand how and why LGBT pupils use their school library to access LGBT-related information, and to comprehend the attitudes and knowledge of school librarians towards supporting LGBT youth.

How and why LGBT pupils use school libraries to access LGBT-related information
LGBT respondents’ experiences and opinions regarding their schools’ LGBT library provision were largely consistent. School library use is generally low; almost 78.5% of pupils had never looked in their library for LGBT-themed resources. The themes of invisibility and fear recurred in respondents’ explanations why. Pupils often assume there will be no LGBT-related resources available in their library because LGBT materials are not made visible. School-wide silence on LGBT issues fuels their assumption. The invisibility and silence of LGBT topics can also make pupils feel uncomfortable about making their information needs known; pupils do not feel able to openly discuss their needs and they think that LGBT-related enquiries will be deemed inappropriate by library staff. Invisibility is further problematic for the few pupils that do search for LGBT-related information in their library because over half of those that did were unable to find what they were looking for.

After assumption that there will be no support, fear of discovery was the second most cited reason why pupils did not look for LGBT-themed information in their school library. It was also the most given reason why pupils would feel uncomfortable asking their librarian for help. For some pupils fear was related to their personal embarrassment or confusion about being LGBT. Others however, were afraid of negative reactions, either from other pupils or from library staff themselves. Again, the school-wide climate was influential; negative homophobic/transphobic environments exacerbated pupils’ fear of discovery. Most pupils, who did not use their school library, reported using the Internet because it offered more privacy. Of the few that did use their library, all searched in covert ways (by browsing or searching the library’s online catalogue) so that they would not be ‘caught’.

Though most pupils did not use their school library either because of their assumptions or because they were afraid, a minority of pupils said that they did not use their school library simply because they never felt the need to. For most, this was because they were unaware of their LGBT identity while they were at school. Although not all LGBT pupils wanted
support at school, it is clear from the vast majority of responses that school library provision (of LGBT resources) would have been highly valued. Not only are school libraries conveniently located for teens, and not only do they allow embarrassed/scared pupils to search for information independent of their parents, but they are also often used as a refuge by vulnerable youth. For many LGBT pupils, school is the place where they experience the harshest bullying. Their need for support there is obvious; respondents report turning to the library for support when they can no longer cope with bullying, and the discovery of LGBT-related library materials is described as a ‘lifeline’. Despite the evident need for support, it is clear that the needs of most LGBT youth are not being met by school librarians.

The attitudes and knowledge of school librarians towards supporting LGBT youth
School library provision of LGBT-related support appears to be an area of much less interest and of much lower priority for school librarians than for the LGBT community. Despite being disseminated in similar ways, significantly fewer librarians responded to the survey.

Overall, school librarians appear to agree with the need to support LGBT pupils. Variation in how they respond to supporting their LGBT users was evident though. While some librarians recognised the need to provide targeted and active support, others adopted a neutral stance; they emphasised the similarities between all pupils and suggested that, in order to achieve equality, all pupils should be treated the same. The tendency of librarians towards neutrality is concerning. Though the neutral response is not itself negative, it does have negative consequences for LGBT teens because, as evidenced in the views of LGBT pupils in this study (and in the wider literature), LGBT teens have specific information needs and to meet these needs librarians must make special allowances (such as the making resources extra visible and developing a discreet means of accessing them). Treating all pupils’ needs the same leads to inequality. It is also a violation of the Equalities Act (HMG, 2010).

As with the way they respond to difference, variation was also identified in librarians’ knowledge. While some librarians showed awareness of some of the needs of LGBT youth and took active steps to develop their understanding, others relied on acquiring knowledge serendipitously and displayed a distinct misunderstanding of, both, what their LGBT pupils need, and their experiences. Some librarians also reported having no knowledge of the needs of LGBT pupils and of never thinking much about the issue before.
Librarians’ knowledge did not match with the confidence levels they expressed (about being able to support LGBT teens). Some who said they knew nothing expressed confidence, while others who showed some knowledge were unsure about their ability to provide for the user group. To explain the mismatch, the conscious-competence model was used. It shows that most librarians are in the incompetence stage regarding LGBT support. Two librarians did display competence though and a few others appeared to be moving towards it. Encouragingly, several librarians also expressed a desire to learn more about the needs of their LGBT pupils.

Along with their attitudes and knowledge, several broader social constraints also influence librarians’ LGBT provision. Factors such as a lack of training opportunities, a scarcity of LGBT-themed resources, and limited library budgets, were all outlined as discouraging, as were and a lack of managerial support and the ethos of the school in which librarians worked. Parental complaints were flagged as potentially discouraging too. Though inconvenient, these constraints are no excuse for failing to support LGBT pupils who constitute a significant proportion of every school’s community, who are especially vulnerable, and who express such an obvious need for support. Librarians must take active steps to overcome these difficulties.
Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on findings from the LGBT and librarian surveys in this study, and from suggestions made in wider literature on the topic. Librarians can best support LGBT users by:

- Providing more LGBT-related resources:

  LGBT youth require quality information (in print, online and in a variety of alternative formats wherever possible) on a range of topics including: positive representations in fiction, autobiographical works, general advice, specific advice (on issues such as dealing with homophobia/transphobia and ‘coming out’), sexual health information, information about how to meet other LGBT people, and information pertaining specifically to different identities within the LGBT community (especially bisexual, trans, asexual and intersex). Information on local support groups is also essential.

  Though LGBT-related resources often do not appear on major publishers lists, they can be sourced from specialist publishers (e.g. from Gays the Word bookshop). Chapman (2012a; 2012b) has also listed LGBT teen fiction available in the UK. Limited budgets also do not prevent librarians from sourcing LGBT-related information. Online access to LGBT websites can be provided. Local LGBT charities and support groups can also be approached; they may supply posters, flyers and leaflets about their services.

- Promoting LGBT-related services and resources:

  Displays of resources, booklists and lists of websites can all be used to promote LGBT materials and open up discussion around the topic of sexuality/gender identity, so too can creating displays celebrating famous LGBT people and holding activities or events to celebrate diversity (for LGBT history month or for IDAHT¹¹ for instance).

- Ensuring LGBT resources are accessible to LGBT pupils:

  Ensuring accessibility not only includes providing resources, but also means ensuring Internet filters do not block LGBT-related websites, that library catalogues identify LGBT-related materials with user-friendly terminology, and that LGBT materials are not age-

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¹¹ International Day Against Homophobia/Transphobia
banded. Further, it also means ensuring that pupils can access LGBT-themed resources independently and discreetly; displays, reading lists, online resources, and having an honour-loan system can all provide discreet access.

- Initiating and/or becoming involved in school-wide efforts to raise awareness of LGBT issues and to combat prejudice among pupils, teachers, school managers, parents and the wider community:
  Ofsted (2012a; 2012b) has outlined good examples of how homophobia/transphobia can be tackled using a school-wide approach. Awareness must also be raised among managers that, whatever the ethos of the school, it is a legal obligation to support the needs of all pupils (HMG, 2010, Pt.6: Chapt.1) and that is a school librarian’s professional obligation to provide materials not only for pupils’ academic leaning but also for their emotional development and leisure needs (CILIP, 2011). Creating collection development polices and complaints procedures which specifically discuss LGBT provision will also help assuage fear of complaints from parents and other members of the community, and should provide support if challenges are met.

- Taking active steps to understand the needs of LGBT pupils:
  It is vital librarians develop knowledge of the needs of their LGBT pupils, not only with regard to type of information pupils want, but also regarding the concerns and assumptions LGBT pupils make, and the issues they face as they are coming to terms with their LGBT identity. Since existing opportunities for training are limited, librarians must raise the need for training with their employers and professional bodies. They must also take responsibility for their own learning; actively researching the topic and joining professional groups dedicated to inclusion and diversity are two ways knowledge can be gained. Finding ways to collect feedback from LGBT pupils may be another way school librarians can develop understanding about LGBT provision. Additionally, Stonewall offers training on supporting LGB youth at school.

Along with what school librarians can do specifically, the literature review made it clear that LGBT-related library provision is generally poor across all library sectors. Consequently, there is clearly a pressing need for the library and information profession as a whole to take more active steps to implement initiatives for, and to stringently defend, equality. The neutral stance of librarians must be challenged and CILIP’s rather passive policies related to
LGBT provision need to be strengthened. There is also a need for greater training and awareness-raising about LGBT provision in the profession, and for the sharing of good practice. Additionally, since the topic of LGBT provision is so little explored, there is also an urgent need for more research on the subject.

_Suggestions for future research_

There is a pressing need for more research into library provision for the LGBT community generally and in all library sectors, both within and beyond the UK. Specific suggestions for further research into LGBT youth support in UK school libraries, though, are:

- Exploration into the views of LGBT pupils who are still at school
- Large-scale research both into librarian attitudes, knowledge and provision, and into the needs and experiences of LGBT pupils.
- Exploration of the relationship between the social inclusion efforts of school libraries and the ethos/general climate of the wider school environment
- Exploration of the needs of youth identifying separately as L/G/B/T and into the needs of asexual and intersex teens

[Word Count: 14,875]
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Appendices

Appendix 1: LGBT Questionnaire

Secondary School Library Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Students

What is the research about?

The provision of materials and services for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) students in school libraries is a largely under researched area, especially in the UK. This study aims to:

• Explore what members of the LGBT community think about the support and services offered to them by their secondary school library

• Explore the views of secondary school librarians regarding provision of support and services for LGBT students

• Establish recommendations for how secondary school libraries can best support their LGBT students

Who will be participating?

We are inviting both librarians and members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) community, who are either currently at school, or who left school within the last ten years, to participate in the study.

What will we ask you to do?

We will ask you to complete a brief survey about your experiences of, and thoughts regarding, using your school library to access LGBT services and resources.

What are the risks of participating?

The risks of participating are minimal. We will ensure all information you give us is anonymised and will remain confidential. The survey will contain no sensitive questions. It will focus generally on your information needs and your views regarding the provision of LGBT materials and services in school libraries.

What data will we collect?

We will collect only the information you give us on the survey.

What will we do with the data?

We will be analysing the data for inclusion in an MA dissertation. Once the data has been analysed it will be deleted.

Will your data be confidential?

We will ensure all data you give us is anonymised and will remain confidential until it is deleted.
What will happen to the results of the project?

The results of this study will be included in an MA dissertation which will be publicly available.

If you would like to participate in the study please read the following information carefully and then check the tickbox to give your consent. If you have any questions please feel free to contact either the principal researcher; Janine Walker, at jwalker4@sheffield.ac.uk, or the research supervisor; Jo Bates, at jo.bates@sheffield.ac.uk.

• I confirm that I have read and understand the description of the research project, and that I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.

• I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

• I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question or questions, or to do any of the activities. If I stop participating at any time, all of my data will be purged.

• I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, that my name or identity will not be linked to any research materials, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in any report or reports that result from the research.

• I give permission for the research team members to have access to my anonymised responses.

• I give permission for the research team to reuse my data for future research as specified above.

• I agree to take part in the research project as described above.

Please tick the check-box if you agree to take part in the research project as described above

[ ]

Note: If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Angela Lin, Research Ethics Coordinator, Information School, The University of Sheffield (ischool_ethics@sheffield.ac.uk)
1) Have you ever looked for information on LGBT topics?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

2) If yes, what sort of information have you looked for?

3) What did your school library do to support LGBT students?

4) Did you ever try to find information on LGBT topics in your school library?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

*If you answered no to question four please go to question ten

5) Why did you use your school library?

6) What sort of information were you looking for?
7) How did you look for information? For example, did you search the library
catalogue? Browse the shelves? Ask library staff for help? See information in a
display?

8) Why did you choose to look for information in this way?

9) Did you manage to find what you were looking for?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [x] No

*If you answered yes to question four, please go to question eleven

10) If you answered no to question four, please explain why you did not use your school
library to look for information on LGBT topics.

11) Would you have/did you feel comfortable asking your school librarian for help
finding information on LGBT topics? Please explain your answer
12) What could the school library have done to have supported you better?

13) How welcoming and supportive was your school for LGBT students?
- Very supportive and welcoming
- Fairly supportive and welcoming
- Not very supportive or welcoming
- Unsure

14) To what extent do you feel that homophobia/homophobic bullying is an issue in secondary schools in the UK?
- A big problem
- A moderate problem
- No problem
- Unsure

Thank you for your participation. The last page contains a few demographic questions. These are to help me better understand and interpret the results I receive.
15) Please select all that apply to you

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Trans
- Questioning

Other (please specify) ____________________________

16) What year did you leave secondary school?

17) What type of secondary school did you go to?

- Comprehensive
- Private
- Academy
- Grammar

Other (please specify) ____________________________

18) Where did you go to secondary school?

- Midlands
- North East
- North West
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- South East
- South West
- Yorkshire
- Wales

Other (please specify) ____________________________

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. If you would like to make any other comments please do so below:
Appendix 2: School Librarian Questionnaire

Secondary School Library Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Students

What is the research about?

The provision of materials and services for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) students in school libraries is a largely under researched area, especially in the UK. This study aims to:

- Explore what members of the LGBT community think about the support and services offered to them by their secondary school library
- Explore the views of secondary school librarians regarding provision of support and services for LGBT students
- Establish recommendations for how secondary school libraries can best support their LGBT students

Who will be participating?

We are inviting both librarians and members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) community, who are either currently at school, or who left school within the last ten years, to participate in the study.

What will we ask you to do?

We will ask you to complete a brief survey about your views regarding the provision of services and resources for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) community in secondary school libraries.

What are the risks of participating?

The risks of participating are minimal. We will ensure all information you give us is anonymised and will remain confidential. The survey will contain no sensitive questions. It will focus generally on your views regarding the provision of materials and services for LGBT students.

What data will we collect?

We will collect only the information you give us on the survey.

What will we do with the data?

We will be analysing the data for inclusion in an MA dissertation. Once the data has been analysed it will be deleted.

Will your data be confidential?

We will ensure all data you give us is anonymised and will remain confidential until it is deleted.
What will happen to the results of the project?

The results of this study will be included in an MA dissertation which will be publicly available.

If you would like to participate in the study please read the following information carefully and then check the tickbox to give your consent. If you have any questions please feel free to contact either the principal researcher Janine Walker at jwalker4@sheffield.ac.uk, or the research supervisor Jo Bates at jo.bates@sheffield.ac.uk.

• I confirm that I have read and understand the description of the research project, and that I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.

• I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

• I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question or questions, or to do any of the activities. If I stop participating at any time, all of my data will be purged.

• I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, that my name or identity will not be linked to any research materials, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in any report or reports that result from the research.

• I give permission for the research team members to have access to my anonymised responses.

• I give permission for the research team to reuse my data for future research as specified above.

• I agree to take part in the research project as described above.

Please tick the check-box if you agree to take part in the research project as described above

- [ ]

If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Angela Lin, Research Ethics Coordinator, Information School, The University of Sheffield (ischool_ethics@sheffield.ac.uk).
1) What do you feel the role of a school library should be in a secondary school?

2) What is your view regarding school library provision of services and resources to LGBT students?

3) Have you always held this view or has your view changed over time? Please explain your answer?

4) What do you know about the information needs of young LGBT people?

5) Do you think that your knowledge is sufficient to effectively serve LGBT teens?
   
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No

   Please explain your answer
6) If you answered ‘yes’ to question 6, where did you get your knowledge?

7) If you answered ‘no’ to question 6, what would you like to know more about?

8) Is there anything that encourages you to provide resources and services for LGBT students?

9) Is there anything that dissuades you from providing resources and services to LGBT students?
10) How welcoming and supportive do you think the secondary school you work in is to LGBT students?

- [ ] Very supportive and welcoming
- [ ] Fairly supportive and welcoming
- [ ] Not very supportive or welcoming
- [ ] Unsure

11) Do you think the welcome and support your school offers to LGBT students is:

- [ ] Above average
- [ ] Average
- [ ] Below average
- [ ] Unsure

12) To what extent do you feel that homophobia/homophobic bullying is an issue in secondary schools in the UK?

- [ ] A big problem
- [ ] A moderate problem
- [ ] No problem
- [ ] Unsure

Thank you for your participation. The last two pages contain a few demographic questions. These are to help me better understand and interpret the results I receive.
13) How long have you been a school librarian?
- [ ] 0-5 years
- [ ] 6-10 years
- [ ] 11-15 years
- [ ] Over 15 years

14) Are you a qualified librarian?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

15) Are you a member of any professional special interest group related to equality and diversity?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
If yes, please give details

16) What type of school do you work in?
- [ ] Comprehensive
- [ ] Academy
- [ ] Private
- [ ] Grammar
- [ ] Other (please specify)
17) Where is the school you work in?
- Midlands
- North East
- North West
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- South East
- South West
- Yorkshire
- Wales
Other (please specify)

18) Please select all that apply to you:
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Questioning
- Straight
- Trans
Other (please specify)

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. If you would like to make any other comments please do so below:
Appendix 3: Certificate of Ethics Approval

Information School Research Ethics Panel

Letter of Approval

Date: 23rd May 2013

TO: Janine Walker

The Information School Research Ethics Panel has examined the following application:

Title: Secondary School Library Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Students

Submitted by: Janine Walker

And found the proposed research involving human participants to be in accordance with the University of Sheffield’s policies and procedures, which include the University’s ‘Financial Regulations’, ‘Good Research Practice Standards’ and the ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’ (Ethics Policy).

This letter is the official record of ethics approval by the School, and should accompany any formal requests for evidence of research ethics approval.

Effective Date: 23/05/2013

Dr Angela Lin

Research Ethics Coordinator
Appendix 4: Ethics Application Form

The University of Sheffield.
Information School

Proposal for
Research Ethics Review

Students
This proposal submitted by:

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<th>Undergraduate</th>
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<td>X Postgraduate (Taught) – PGT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate (Research) – PGR</td>
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This proposal is for:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
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<tr>
<td>X Postgraduate (Taught) – PGT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate (Research) – PGR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project is funded by:

Project Title: Secondary School Library Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Students

Start Date: April 2013
End Date: September 2013

Principal Investigator (PI):
(student for supervised UG/PGT/PGR research)
Janine Walker

Email: jwalker4@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervisor:
(if PI is a student)
Jo Bates

Email: Jo.bates@sheffield.ac.uk

Indicate if the research: (put an X in front of all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness, or those unable to make a personal decision</th>
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<tr>
<td>Involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Involves children or young people aged under 18 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Involves highly sensitive topics such as ‘race’ or ethnicity; political opinion; religious, spiritual or other beliefs; physical or mental health conditions; sexuality; abuse (child, adult); nudity and the body; criminal activities; political asylum; conflict situations; and personal violence.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Part B. Summary of the Research

B1. Briefly summarise the project’s aims and objectives:
(This must be in language comprehensible to a layperson and should take no more than one-half page. Provide enough information so that the reviewer can understand the intent of the research)

Summary:
The provision of materials and services for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) students in school libraries is a largely under researched area, especially in the UK. This study aims to:

- Explore what members of the LGBT community think about the support and services offered to them by their secondary school library
- Explore the views of secondary school librarians regarding provision of support and services for LGBT students
- Establish recommendations for how secondary school libraries can best support their LGBT students

B2. Methodology:
Provide a broad overview of the methodology in no more than one-half page.

Overview of Methods:

- To collect the views of the LGBT community:
  Three LGBT groups in Sheffield have agreed to help me with my research-
  - Sheffield University LGBT Society
  - Sheffield Hallam University LGBT Society
  - Fruitbowl (the LGBT young people’s support network)

  To collect data from these groups I plan to use qualitative questionnaires.

- To collect the views of library staff:

  I am hoping to collect the views of library staff via the School Librarians’ Network. An MA Librarianship student did use the SLN for similar research a few years ago (Wright, 2007), so it is hoped that I will receive a positive response. If not, alternative groups, such as Sheffield’s School Library Service, could be contacted. I plan to use qualitative questionnaires to collect my data.

  - Social media (Facebook and Twitter) will also be used to disseminate the questionnaires for both survey groups.
Depending on the response I receive, I will consider following up both means of data collection with interviews to gain a deeper/clearer understanding of the issues raised.

If more than one method, e.g., survey, interview, etc. is used, please respond to the questions in Section C for each method. That is, if you are using both a survey and interviews, duplicate the page and answer the questions for each method; you need not duplicate the information, and may simply indicate, “see previous section.”

C1. Briefly describe how each method will be applied

Method (e.g., survey, interview, observation, experiment):

Survey- students

Description – how will you apply the method?

Paper and electronic surveys will be used. Two of the three groups I have contacted (Sheffield Hallam LGBT Society and Fruitbowl) have invited me to attend one of their meetings to explain my research and hand out paper copies of my survey.

In addition, Sheffield Hallam LGBT Society has offered to send an electronic version of my survey around their email mailing list.

Sheffield University LGBT Society suggested I send an electronic version of my survey out via the Sheffield University student mailing list. In accordance with the University’s rules, my supervisor will do this for me. The society also offered to promote the survey via their Facebook and Twitter channels.

Example questions: Do you look for information on LGBT topics? What sort of information do you look for? Have you tried to find information on LGBT topics in your school library? Why not? How successful were you? What sort of information were you looking for? Would you feel comfortable asking your school librarian for help finding information on LGBT topics?
About your Participants

C2. Who will be potential participants?

My participants will include:

- LGBT adults (over 18s) from both Sheffield Hallam University LGBT Society and Sheffield University LGBT Society
- Minors (aged 12-17) from the Sheffield-based LGBT youth support group, Fruitbowl

C3. How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?

My participants have been identified and will be recruited via Sheffield Hallam and Sheffield University LGBT societies, and via the Fruitbowl support group.

C4. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

The potential for harm and distress to participants is minimal. The focus on the LGBT community means that the topic is potentially sensitive (because it is dealing with sexuality). However, the survey will focus generally on the students’ information needs and their views regarding the provision of materials and services for the LGBT community in school libraries. No sensitive questions will be asked (example questions are detailed above).

At the Fruitbowl meeting (with minors), I will always be in the presence of an adult member of staff and, if any of the group’s members do not wish to participate in the survey/do not have parental consent, an alternative activity will be arranged for them by the Fruitbowl staff.

Since I will always be in the presence of a staff member it is not necessary for me to have a CRB check. I was fully CRB checked in 2010 however, when I was a PGCE student.

C5. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

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If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

Consent will be obtained from participants in the following ways:

- From adults (over 18s) - On the survey participants are asked to complete there will be a clear outline of what the research is about and how the participants' responses will be used. Participants will be able to give their consent by checking a tick-box.
- From minors (aged 12-17) - two types of consent will be collected. Firstly, in line with the University's guidance on working with minors [http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent/consent-involving-children](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent/consent-involving-children), parental consent will be obtained; Fruitbowl staff members will collect the parent/carers names and addresses of potential participants, and will post consent forms directly to them. Only when the consent forms have been returned to the researcher will the participants be able to take part in the survey. After this initial step, as for the adults, on the survey participants are asked to complete there will be a clear outline of what the research is about and how the participants' responses will be used. Participants will be able to give their own consent by checking a tick-box.
In addition, to ensure that all members of the youth group fully understand their rights and the implications of their participation, I will explain in person precisely what the information collected will be used for, and will make it clear to the participants that they can withdraw from the study if they so wish.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

N/A

C6. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided).

No financial or in-kind payments will be offered to participants.

About the Data

C7. What data will be collected? (Tick all that apply)

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<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
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<td>Participant observation</td>
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</table>
C8. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

To ensure confidentiality of personal data all questionnaires will be anonymous unless participants choose to identify themselves; participants will be given the option to give their name and contact details if they are willing to be contacted for a follow up interview. This will not be compulsory and a statement to make this clear will be included on the questionnaire. The statement will read along the lines of “Please fill in your name and contact details if you would like to participate in a follow-up interview on this subject. This is NOT compulsory and you are under no obligation to do so. Any data you provide will be confidential”. Additionally, I will also explain this in person to participants under the age of 18 to make sure they understand it.

If participants do give their name and contact details, the information will be handled confidentially and stored securely (see sections C9 and C10). Any reference made to the participants in the dissertation write-up will be anonymised.

C9. How/Where will the data be stored?

Data will be stored on my personal, password-protected computer and, for back-up, on Google Drive. The Google account is private and password-protected. Data will also be stored on the paper surveys and parental consent forms, which will be kept in a folder at my home. Where online surveys are used (for adult participants only) information will also be stored online. For the online survey I will use Survey Monkey and trust that the system’s own security settings will be sufficient to ensure data remains protected and private.

C10. Will the data be stored for future re-use? If so, please explain

Data will not be stored for future re-use. It will be deleted once the project is completed.

About the Procedure

C11. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.

The research does not raise any issues of personal safety for me or any other researcher involved in the project.
### C1. Briefly describe how each method will be applied

**Method (e.g., survey, interview, observation, experiment):**

Survey- librarians

**Description – how will you apply the method?**

I am hoping to collect the views of library staff via the School Librarians’ Network. I plan to use electronic qualitative questionnaires (through Survey Monkey) to collect my data. The survey will also be promoted via social media by people who work in libraries who, knowing of my research topic, have offered to advertise it on Facebook and Twitter. I will also promote the survey on my own personal Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Example questions: What do you feel the role of a school library should be in a secondary school? What is your view regarding school library provision of services and resources to LGBT students? What do you know about the information needs of young LGBT people? Are you aware of any guidelines from national, government or professional associations that relate to library provision for the LGBT community? Do you think that your knowledge is sufficient to effectively serve the LGBT community? Why not? What would you like to know more about? Is there anything that encourages you to provide resources and services for LGBT students? Is there anything that dissuades you from serving the community? To what extent do you feel that homophobia/homophobic bullying is an issue in secondary schools in the UK?

### About your Participants

#### C2. Who will be potential participants?

My participants will include members of the School Librarians’ Network

#### C3. How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?

My participants will be identified and recruited via the School Librarians’ Network
C4. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

The potential for harm and distress to participants is minimal. The survey will contain no sensitive questions. It will focus generally on the librarians’ views regarding the provision of materials and services for LGBT students.

C5. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

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If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

On the survey participants are asked to complete there will be a clear outline of what the research is about and how the participants' responses will be used. Participants will be able to give their consent by checking a tick-box.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

N/A

C6. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided).

No financial or in-kind payments will be offered to participants.
C7. What data will be collected? (Tick all that apply)

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C8. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

To ensure confidentiality of personal data all surveys will be anonymous. Participants will be given the option to give their name and contact details if they are willing to be contacted for a follow up interview. This will not be compulsory and a statement to make this clear will be included on the questionnaire. The statement will read along the lines of “Please fill in your name and contact details if you would like to participate in a follow-up interview on this subject. This is NOT compulsory and you are under no obligation to do so. Any data you provide will be confidential”. If participants do give their name and contact details, the information will be handled confidentially and stored securely (see sections C9 and C10). Any reference made to the participants in the dissertation write-up will be anonymised.

C9. How/Where will the data be stored?

Data will be stored on my personal, password-protected computer and, for back-up, on Google Drive. The Google account is private and password-protected. For the questionnaire, I will use Survey Monkey and trust that the system's own security settings will be sufficient to ensure data remains protected and private.

C10. Will the data be stored for future re-use? If so, please explain

Data will not be stored for future re-use. It will be deleted once the project is completed.
C11. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.

The research does not raise any issues of personal safety for me or any other researcher involved in the project.
**Method (e.g., survey, interview, observation, experiment):**

Interviews - student

**Description – how will you apply the method?**

On the surveys sent out there will an option for participants to state whether or not they would be willing to participate in a follow up interview. If they are, participants can give their contact details, and I will follow these up, either directly (for adults), or indirectly, via the Fruitbowl centre (for minors).

Adult interviews will be held at the Information School

Interviews with minors will be held at the Fruitbowl centre and will be conducted in the presence of adult staff who work there.

The interview will follow up in more detail responses to survey questions. The purpose of the follow up questions will be to gain more insight into the information needs of LGBT students and to get a better idea of how their school library supported them (or not). It will not be to probe them for highly sensitive personal information. Since the questions are dependent on the survey responses, it is difficult to know precisely what questions will need to be asked until the surveys have been collected and analysed. Potential issues that could be raised may include: information needs regarding coming out, sexual health, questioning your sexuality, or how to meet other LGBT people. Example questions may thus be: What types of information did you seek when you first began to question your sexuality/when you first thought about coming out to your family/friends? Did you go to your school library to find this information? Why? Why not? What could your library have done to have helped you (more) during these times?

**About your Participants**

**C2. Who will be potential participants?**

My participants will include:

- LGBT adults (over 18s) from both Sheffield Hallam University LGBT Society and Sheffield University LGBT Society
- Minors (aged 12-17) from the Sheffield-based LGBT youth support group, Fruitbowl
C3. How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?

My participants have been identified and will be recruited via Sheffield Hallam and Sheffield University LGBT societies, and via the Fruitbowl support group.

Only participants who stated (via the survey) their willingness to participate in the interview will be contacted.

C4. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

The potential for harm and distress to participants is minimal. The interviews will follow up in more detail responses to survey questions. Topics like coming out or sexual health information needs might be discussed if the respondent brings this up in the survey, but no sensitive questions (e.g. about sexual practices etc) will be asked directly. The focus will remain on the students’ information needs and their views regarding the provision of materials and services for the LGBT community in school libraries.

At interviews with minors, I will always be in the presence of an adult member of staff. Since I will always be in the presence of a staff member it is not necessary for me to have a CRB check. I was fully CRB checked in 2010 however, when I was a PGCE student.

C5. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

Consent will be obtained from participants in the following ways:

- From adults (over 18s)- A clear outline of what the research is about and how the participants’ responses will be used will be given to participants prior to the interview. Participants will be able to give their consent by checking a tick-box/signing their name.

- From minors (aged 12-17)- two types of consent will be collected. Firstly, in line with the University’s guidance on working with minors http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent/consent-involving-children, parental consent will be obtained; Fruitbowl staff members will collect the parent/carer names and addresses of potential participants, and will post consent forms directly to them. Only when the consent forms have been returned to the researcher will the participants be able to be interviewed. After this initial step, as for the adults, a clear outline of what the research is about and how the participants’ responses will be used will be given to participants prior to the interview. Participants will be able to give their consent by checking a tick-box.
In addition, to ensure that all members of the youth group fully understand their rights and the implications of their participation, I will explain in person precisely what the information collected will be used for, and will make it clear to the participants that they can withdraw from the study if they so wish.

**If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?**

N/A

C6. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided).

No financial or in-kind payments will be offered to participants.

**About the Data**

C7. What data will be collected? (Tick all that apply)

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<td>Other:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

C8. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

To ensure confidentiality of personal data all data will be anonymised. All recordings and transcripts of the interview will be given a number and, if a participant from the interview is referred to specifically in the dissertation, a pseudonym will be used.

C9. How/Where will the data be stored?

Data will be stored temporarily on the audio recording devices; however, this will be transcribed immediately after the interview, and then deleted. All transcribed data will be stored on my personal, password-protected computer and, for back-up, on Google Drive. The Google account is private and
password-protected. Data will also be stored on the consent forms, which will be kept in a folder at my home.

**C10. Will the data be stored for future re-use? If so, please explain**

Data will not be stored for future re-use. It will be deleted once the project is completed.

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**About the Procedure**

**C11. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.**

The research does not raise any issues of personal safety for me or any other researcher involved in the project.
C1. Briefly describe how each method will be applied

Method (e.g., survey, interview, observation, experiment):

Interviews - librarians

Description – how will you apply the method?

On the surveys sent out there will an option for participants to state whether or not they would be willing to participate in a follow up interview. If they are, they can give their contact details, and I will follow these up directly. The interviews will be held at the Information School.

The interview will follow up in more detail responses to survey questions. It is therefore difficult to know precisely what questions will need to be asked until the surveys have been collected and analysed. Potential issues for discussion may include reasons why librarians feel encouraged or dissuaded from providing services and resources for LGBT students (e.g. their personal knowledge or understanding/the school ethos/fear of complaints from parents etc). Example questions may thus be: To what extent do you think other members of staff would be/are supportive of your provision for LGBT students? Why? Do you think parents would/do parents support your efforts? Do you think it is the duty of a school librarian to provide support to LGBT students even if some parents complain?

About your Participants

C2. Who will be potential participants?

My participants will include members of the School Librarians’ Network

C3. How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?

My participants will be identified and recruited via the School Librarians' Network

C4. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

The potential for harm and distress to participants is minimal. The interview will contain no sensitive questions. It will focus generally on the librarians’ views regarding the provision of materials and services for LGBT students.
C5. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

A clear outline of what the research is about and how the participants' responses will be used will be given to participants prior to the interview. Participants will be able to give their consent by checking a tick-box.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

N/A

C6. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided).

No financial or in-kind payments will be offered to participants.

About the Data

C7. What data will be collected? (Tick all that apply)

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<tr>
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<th>Print</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audio recording</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Video recording</td>
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<td>Computer logs</td>
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<td>Questionnaires/Surveys</td>
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<td>Other:</td>
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<td>Other:</td>
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</table>
C8. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

To ensure confidentiality of personal data all data will be anonymised. All recordings and transcripts of the interview will be given a number and, if a participant from the interview is referred to specifically in the dissertation, a pseudonym will be used.

C9. How/Where will the data be stored?

Data will be stored temporarily on the audio recording devices; however, this will be transcribed immediately after the interview, and then deleted. All transcribed data will be stored on my personal, password-protected computer and, for back-up, on Google Drive. The Google account is private and password-protected. Data will also be stored on the consent forms, which will be kept in a folder at my home.

C10. Will the data be stored for future re-use? If so, please explain

Data will not be stored for future re-use. It will be deleted once the project is completed.

About the Procedure

C11. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.

The research does not raise any issues of personal safety for me or any other researcher involved in the project.
Title of Research Project: Secondary School Library Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Students

We confirm our responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Sheffield’s policies and procedures, which include the University’s 'Financial Regulations', 'Good Research Practice Standards' and the 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue' (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

In submitting this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:

- The form is accurate to the best of our knowledge and belief.
- The project will abide by the University’s Ethics Policy.
- There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.
- Subject to the research being approved, we undertake to adhere to the project protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.
- We undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol (by contacting our academic department's Ethics Coordinator in the first instance).
- We are aware of our responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CiCS).
- We understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.
- We understand that personal data about us as researchers in this form will be held by those involved in the ethics review procedure (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or ethics reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- If this is an application for a 'generic' project all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.
- **We understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.**

Name of the Student (if applicable): Janine Walker

Name of Principal Investigator (or the Supervisor): Jo Bates

Date: 23/04/2013
Appendix 5: Consent Form (LGBT participants)

| The University of Sheffield. Information School | Secondary School Library Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Students |

Researchers
Principal Investigator: Janine Walker
jwalker4@sheffield.ac.uk
Supervisor: Jo Bates
jo.bates@sheffield.ac.uk

Purpose of the research
The provision of materials and services for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) students in school libraries is a largely under researched area, especially in the UK. This study aims to:

- Explore what members of the LGBT community think about the support and services offered to them by their secondary school library
- Explore the views of secondary school librarians regarding provision of support and services for LGBT students
- Establish recommendations for how secondary school libraries can best support their LGBT students

Who will be participating?
We are inviting both librarians and members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) community, who are either currently at school, or who left school within the last ten years, to participate in the study.

What will you be asked to do?
We will ask you to complete a brief survey about your experiences of, and thoughts regarding, using your school library to access services and resources for the LGBT community.

What are the potential risks of participating?
The risks of participating are minimal. We will ensure all information you give us is anonymised and will remain confidential. The survey will contain no sensitive questions. It will focus generally on your information needs and your views regarding the provision of materials and services for LGBT students in school libraries.
What data will we collect?
We will collect only the information you give us on the survey.

What will we do with the data?
We will be analysing the data for inclusion in my MA dissertation. Once the data has been analysed it will be deleted.

Will my participation be confidential?
We will ensure all data you give us is anonymised and will remain confidential until it is deleted.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
The results of this study will be included in my MA dissertation which will be publicly available.

- I confirm that I have read and understand the description of the research project, and that I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.
- I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question or questions, or to do any of the activities. If I stop participating at all time, all of my data will be purged.
- I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, that my name or identity will not be linked to any research materials, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in any report or reports that result from the research.
- I give permission for the research team members to have access to my anonymised responses.
- I give permission for the research team to re-use my data for future research as specified above.
- I agree to take part in the research project as described above.

Participant Name (Please print)  Participant Signature

Researcher Name (Please print)  Researcher Signature

Date

Note: If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Angela Lin, Research Ethics Coordinator, Information School, The University of Sheffield (ischool_ethics@sheffield.ac.uk), or to the University Registrar and Secretary.
Appendix 6: Consent form (Librarian participants)

The University of Sheffield. Information School

| The University of Sheffield. Information School | Secondary School Library Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Students |

Researchers
Principal Investigator: Janine Walker
jwalker4@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervisor: Jo Bates
jo.bates@sheffield.ac.uk

Purpose of the research
The provision of materials and services for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) students in school libraries is a largely under researched area, especially in the UK. This study aims to:

- Explore what members of the LGBT community think about the support and services offered to them by their secondary school library
- Explore the views of secondary school librarians regarding provision of support and services for LGBT students
- Establish recommendations for how secondary school libraries can best support their LGBT students

Who will be participating?
We are inviting both librarians and members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) community, who are either currently at school, or who left school within the last ten years, to participate in the study.

What will you be asked to do?
We will ask you to complete a brief survey about your views regarding the provision of services and resources for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) community in secondary school libraries.

What are the potential risks of participating?
The risks of participating are minimal. We will ensure all information you give us is anonymised and will remain confidential. The survey will contain no sensitive questions. It will focus generally on your views regarding the provision of materials and services for LGBT students.
What data will we collect?
We will collect only the information you give us on the survey.

What will we do with the data?
We will be analysing the data for inclusion in my MA dissertation. Once the data has been analysed it will be deleted.

Will my participation be confidential?
We will ensure all data you give us is anonymised and will remain confidential until it is deleted.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
The results of this study will be included in my MA dissertation which will be publicly available.

- I confirm that I have read and understand the description of the research project, and that I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.
- I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question or questions, or to do any of the activities. If I stop participating at all time, all of my data will be purged.
- I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, that my name or identity will not be linked to any research materials, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in any report or reports that result from the research.
- I give permission for the research team members to have access to my anonymised responses.
- I give permission for the research team to re-use my data for future research as specified above.
- I agree to take part in the research project as described above.

Participant Name (Please print)  
Participant Signature

Researcher Name (Please print)  
Researcher Signature

Date

Note: If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Angela Lin, Research Ethics Coordinator, Information School, The University of Sheffield (ischool_ethics@sheffield.ac.uk), or to the University Registrar and Secretary.
Access to Dissertation

A Dissertation submitted to the University may be held by the Department (or School) within which the Dissertation was undertaken and made available for borrowing or consultation in accordance with University Regulations.

Requests for the loan of dissertations may be received from libraries in the UK and overseas. The Department may also receive requests from other organisations, as well as individuals. The conservation of the original dissertation is better assured if the Department and/or Library can fulfill such requests by sending a copy. The Department may also make your dissertation available via its web pages.

In certain cases where confidentiality of information is concerned, if either the author or the supervisor so requests, the Department will withhold the dissertation from loan or consultation for the period specified below. Where no such restriction is in force, the Department may also deposit the Dissertation in the University of Sheffield Library.

To be completed by the Author – Select (a) or (b) by placing a tick in the appropriate box

If you are willing to give permission for the Information School to make your dissertation available in these ways, please complete the following:

(a) Subject to the General Regulation on Intellectual Property, I, the author, agree to this dissertation being made immediately available through the Department and/or University Library for consultation, and for the Department and/or Library to reproduce this dissertation in whole or part in order to supply single copies for the purpose of research or private study

(b) Subject to the General Regulation on Intellectual Property, I, the author, request that this dissertation be withheld from loan, consultation or reproduction for a period of [ ] years from the date of its submission. Subsequent to this period, I agree to this dissertation being made available through the Department and/or University Library for consultation, and for the Department and/or Library to reproduce this dissertation in whole or part in order to supply single copies for the purpose of research or private study.

Name: Janine Walker
Department: Information School
To be completed by the Supervisor – Select (a) or (b) by placing a tick in the appropriate box

(a) I, the supervisor, agree to this dissertation being made immediately available through the Department and/or University Library for loan or consultation, subject to any special restrictions (*) agreed with external organisations as part of a collaborative project.

*Special restrictions

(b) I, the supervisor, request that this dissertation be withheld from loan, consultation or reproduction for a period of [   ] years from the date of its submission. Subsequent to this period, I, agree to this dissertation being made available through the Department and/or University Library for loan or consultation, subject to any special restrictions (*) agreed with external organisations as part of a collaborative project.

Name

Department

Signed  Date

THIS SHEET MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH DISSERTATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEPARTMENTAL REQUIREMENTS.