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The goal of this study has been to analyze the classification of prominent, award winning books on LGBT topics, to see how these topics are being treated in libraries and bookstores today. These materials have, in the past, been placed in a variety of locations throughout the library, sometimes with unsavory connotations. This study, however, does more to show the limited reach of even the most acclaimed fiction and nonfiction LGBT titles in today's libraries and bookstores, with eleven books from the sample appearing in three or fewer institutions. Those books that were frequently held across all institutions visited were frequently organized alphabetically by author or topic, and very few of them were discoverable or browsable based upon their LGBT content.

#### Headings:

Classification of books

Dewey decimal classification

Library of Congress classification

LGBT library materials

LGBT literature

LGBT literary prizes

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: AN EXPLORATION OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF  
LGBT MATERIALS IN LIBRARIES AND BOOKSTORES

by  
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## Introduction

Libraries are often portrayed as paragons of freedom and the sharing of public knowledge, with their spaces acting as vital community centers and places for learning. This belief often is tied to an image of the library as a neutral space, a shining, unbiased authority in the realm of information dissemination. This idea, while noble and aspirational, ignores the very real biases and skewed perspectives inscribed in any organization built and operated by human beings. This study explores the classification and placement of books with LGBT themes in order to explore some of these biases, not to correct them, but to better understand how they are woven into the structure of our library systems.

Much research has been done over the past fifty years into how systems of organization in libraries represent diverse perspectives, and how those systems may alienate or diminish those perspectives. Starting with Sanford Berman's *Prejudices and Antipathies* (Berman 1971), which focused on an item by item description of all of the Library of Congress Subject Headings which he felt were exclusionary or offensive, along with his suggestions for their change or removal, several other researchers have given attention to the issue of biases inherent in library cataloging and classification systems (Olson and Schlegl 2001). The goal of much of this research has been either to identify and name explicit cases of bias, and campaign for their removal, or to evaluate the presence of materials pertaining to specific marginalized populations, and gauge

how easily they could be found through the existing organizational structure, such as through the application of subject access terms.

While the focus on analyzing and correcting elements of our current library organizational systems has led to a great number of outdated and offensive terms being replaced or removed, some feel that this focus on 'fixing' the catalog is insufficient. In her paper "Queering the Catalog" (Drabinski 2013), Emily Drabinski discussed how these corrective methods fall short of their own goals. By her estimation, the creation of an unbiased, objective catalog is not possible, as any organizational structure will inherently reflect the beliefs of those in power who created it, and that the act of creating a codified, organized structure inherently creates outsiders and fringe elements out of anything that is not defined within the structure. Her conclusion is that a library catalog or classification system cannot be fully rid of biases, and that the act of trying to correct individual cases of bias actually makes it harder to expose and discuss those biases in other settings.

If we are not studying bias within organizational systems for the purposes of correcting it, in order to provide better, more accurate information search and retrieval, then why study them at all? Melanie Feinberg answers this in part with her discussion of exploring databases for reasons other than information retrieval, a process she calls database reading (Feinberg 2017). The goal here is not to find information within an organizing system, but to read the structure of a system itself, in order to better understand how it is built, and what it says about the information it contains. This meshes well with Drabinski's discussion of

the biases inherent in organizational systems as systems of power; by reading the structure of these systems, we can better understand what biases and opinions went into creating them, and what they say about their material and the world.

In relation to this, there is a relative lack of research on how library classification systems exhibit and perpetuate biases. Both have been studied since the 1970s, but greater emphasis has often been given to biased terminology within subject access systems, most commonly the Library of Congress Subject Headings. Studies have been done on how subject access terms perpetuate bias, as well as how subject terms are applied to materials dealing with perspectives outside of the dominant perspective and inherent bias of the library, and how those subject terms aid or obfuscate search and retrieval. This study, in contrast, examines library classification schemes, which determine how books and other materials are categorized and physically placed, as well as the implementation of these classification schemes within individual public and academic libraries. In addition, this study analyzes the structure of several bookstores, in order to compare how materials with diverse perspectives are organized and physically placed outside of traditional library structures. The goal for this study has been to observe how libraries and bookstores implement organizational systems with regards to materials about marginalized groups, in order to better understand if and how they display biases inherent in their systems.

## Literature Review

In some respects, much of modern critique of the Library of Congress Classification and Subject Headings began in the 1970s, spurred on by the writings of Sanford Berman, Joan Marshall, Steve Wolf, and many others (Berman 1971; Wolf 1972; Marshall, 1977). After learning how certain terms in the Library of Congress Subject Headings were perceived as offensive and demeaning by cultures outside of the US, Berman performed an extensive review of the LCSH, culminating in his book *Prejudices and Antipathies* (Berman 1971). In his book, Berman laid out a comprehensive list of subject terms which he believed were biased or offensive towards marginalized groups, along with suggestions for their alteration or removal. He continued to campaign for these changes and others throughout his career.

The goal of this type of work may seem self-evident, but is perhaps worth explaining. Libraries, especially public libraries, quite famously love to advertise themselves as being open for everyone. Their mission is to serve all members of their community. These libraries also use organizational systems to sort their materials, and the overwhelming majority use either the Library of Congress or Dewey Decimal Classification systems. However, problems can arise when those systems are designed and implemented by people with biases against particular groups or populations. Those biases can lead to materials about certain groups or ideas being placed separately within a classification, or being

described with unhelpful or outright derogatory terminology. This can lead to people from these affected populations feeling frustrated when they cannot find materials about themselves, or even unwanted in a library space, because the books they do find are cataloged using offensive, derogatory terminology, or have been organized alongside other works with negative implications. This is no small problem within our current systems of library organization. As Berman wrote in the introduction to his book, “the LC list can only ‘satisfy’ parochial, jingoistic Europeans and North Americans, white-hued, at least nominally Christian (and preferably Protestant) in faith, comfortably situated in the middle and higher-income brackets, largely domiciled in suburbia, fundamentally loyal to the Established Order, and heavily imbued with the transcendent incomparable glory of Western civilization” (Berman 1971).

Since the first major wave of LC criticism in the 1970s, many other writers have observed and explored examples of bias in library organization. Hope Olson and Rose Schlegl summarized many of these studies at the turn of the century (Olson and Schlegl, 2001), and found that most examples of bias in library organization systems fell into five main categories. They are: treatment of a topic as an exception, ‘ghettoization’ of a topic, omission of a topic, biased structuring of a classification, and biased terminology. Some of these forms appear more often in subject access, such as the LCSH, while others are more relevant to classification systems. Treatment as an exception occurs when a subject heading implies that members of one group are out of the ordinary in a certain setting as compared to others, while biased terminology in subject



headings refers to terminology that may once have been deemed appropriate, but which is now considered offensive or derogatory. Omission of a topic can either occur at the collection development level, where books on a topic are not collected by a library, or at the subject heading level, where a topic is not included as a subject for a book, thus making it difficult to search for by that topic. Ghettoization of a topic and biased structuring both primarily involve classification systems; the former refers to a topic becoming ostracized from other, related topics within a classification scheme, and biased structuring occurs when one topic receives far more room within a scheme than other versions of a topic, such as the different spaces given to American history and to all other world history.

There have also been a number of more specific studies since, focusing on subject headings in both public and school libraries (McClary and Howard 2007; Hughes-Hassell, Overberg, and Harris 2013; Williams 2017). These studies have looked at materials pertaining to particular groups in particular contexts. They have studied whether or not libraries have collected certain books, what subject headings have been applied to these books, and whether or not those books included subject headings that reflected their traditionally underserved topics and populations. While their results are not all directly comparable, they do show some evidence that libraries are doing a better job of representing these topics than in the past. This plays out as well in a study from 2005, where Steven Knowlton reviewed Berman's recommended changes from the 1970s to the current LCSH, and found that a significant portion of the suggested changes had been made (Knowlton 2005).

While this progress is generally commendable, some have argued that the theoretical basis for this sort of work is unsound. In her article “Queering the Catalog” (Drabinski 2013), Emily Drabinski argued that the majority of scholarship surrounding biased cataloging over the past few decades has focused on a philosophy of correction. If we just take the time to consider all perspectives, we can create a perfect, unbiased catalog, which reflects our unbiased neutrality as librarians. Drabinski argues that this goal is unattainable, for any organizing system we create will inherently reflect the biases of its creators. Instead of focusing on biases as a cataloging problem, she argues for viewing them as a reference education problem. By using ruptures in the otherwise seeming neutrality of the library catalog as teaching moments, librarians can work to teach patrons about how to understand and better navigate the inevitable biases of the library.

While not discussing cataloging biases and corrections directly, Melanie Feinberg touches on some related points in her discussion of reading databases (Feinberg 2017). In this paper, she argues that information science has long been preoccupied with information search and retrieval, and has focused on the optimization of these processes to the detriment of other potential forms of information study. Her discussion of database reading as a process of exploring and interpreting the structure of a database could be likened to Drabinski’s approach to teaching catalogs to library patrons. Rather than focusing on ‘correcting’ subject headings and classification, both useful for information searching and retrieval, Drabinski argues for using the ruptures and breaking

points of the catalog as teaching moments, which is only possible if the teacher has themselves taken time to read and understand the structure and failings of the catalog.

Finally, while specific studies have been conducted on how subject headings are applied to materials pertaining to marginalized groups, much of the recent discussion of related issues in classification has been historical or conceptual in nature. Tennis (2012) put forward a discussion of how topics within a classification system such as the Library of Congress Classification can change over time, as our understanding and cultural perception of that topic changes. He discusses the ontogeny of a topic as the collection of meanings and interpretations that a topic has had over time, and argues that a greater understanding of topics with varied ontogenies could help libraries to connect otherwise disparate topics. For his examples, he uses the topic of eugenics, but the study of ontogeny could just as easily be applied to the representations of marginalized groups. Melissa Adler did just this in her recent book, *Cruising the Library*, which discusses a variety of issues pertaining to LGBT representation within the Library of Congress across history (Adler 2017). This includes a discussion of the history of 'sexual perversion' within the LCC, an exploration of the many places works on homosexuality have been shelved, and the other topics it has been shelved alongside.

Adler's work leads on directly to the focus of this study. As mentioned in her book, materials about LGBT topics have had a varied and interesting ontogeny within the LCC. Also, recent studies of LGBT and other forms of

representation within library catalogs have focused on subject headings, as opposed to classification. This study, therefore, focuses on observing and describing the recent organization of LGBT materials within a variety of book-holding institutions, including public libraries, academic libraries, and bookstores. The goal is to see how said materials have been classified and physically placed in relation to each other, and in relation to other books and materials. This will lead to a greater understanding of how libraries and other institutions perceive these books and their topics.

## **Methods**

The goal of this project was to observe and analyze the classification and physical placement of fiction and nonfiction LGBT books in a variety of libraries and bookstores. This was accomplished by developing a list of books to search for and a list of institutions to visit, visiting said institutions to observe where each book in the sample had been placed and what it had been placed next to, and then analyzing what topics or subjects each book had been classified under, to search for any underlying meanings and better understand each institution's interpretation of their collections. The locations and neighbors of each instance of each book were recorded, primarily by recording the title and call number of the ten books situated to the left and to the right of each sample book in question.

## **Booklist Selection**

The first step in this process was to develop two samples; a sample of representative LGBT books to search for, and a set of libraries and bookstores to search in. In previous studies of this type, researchers have developed lists of books from relevant award winner lists, suggested reading lists, and other previous studies. For this project, three such sources were consulted: the American Library Association's Stonewall Book Awards, the ALA Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Roundtable's "Over the Rainbow" booklist, and the Lambda Literary Foundation's Lambda Literary Awards. As this project intended to examine both libraries and bookstores, the initial sample frame focused on relatively recent books; the idea here being that, unlike libraries, bookstores cannot be as reliably checked ahead of time online to see which books they hold, and that bookstores are more likely to have recent publications on their shelves. So, the initial sample frame consisted of all books nominated for either the Stonewall Book Award or Lambda Literary Award from 2013-2017, as well as the complete Over the Rainbow booklists from each of those years.

From this sample frame, ten fiction books and ten nonfiction books were randomly selected. After this initial selection, the next step was to make sure that these books were actually available in nearby libraries. If not for this rule that each book on the list must be actually held in at least one local library, this study would have likely been dead before it got off the ground. This check was accomplished using OCLC's WorldCat; each book on the list was searched for, and if they were not held in any libraries within a reasonable distance of the

University of North Carolina, they were removed from the list and a new book was randomly selected. The goal here was to develop a list of books which were all held in at least one library locally, to ensure that data could be collected for each of them.

Table 1: Selected Books

Title	Author	Fiction / Nonfiction
The Life and Death of Sophie Stark	Anna North	Fiction
The King	Tiffany Reisz	Fiction
God in Pink	Hasan Namir	Fiction
The Paying Guests	Sarah Waters	Fiction
Month of Sundays	Yolanda Wallace	Fiction
Golden Boy	Abigail Tarttelin	Fiction
The Myopia and Other Plays by David Greenspan	Marc Robinson	Fiction
Mr. Loverman : a novel	Bernardine Evaristo	Fiction
Yabo	Alexis De Veaux	Fiction
Another Brooklyn	Jacqueline Woodson	Fiction
Fire Shut Up In My Bones	Charles M. Blow	Nonfiction
Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around: Forty Years of Movement Building with Barbara Smith	Alethia Jones and Virginia Eubanks, with Barbara Smith	Nonfiction
Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics	Ramón H. Rivera-Servera	Nonfiction
Irrepressible : the Jazz Age life of Henrietta Bingham	Emily Bingham	Nonfiction
Flagrant conduct : the story of Lawrence v. Texas : how a bedroom arrest decriminalized gay Americans	Dale Carpenter	Nonfiction
Red-inked retablos	Rigoberto González	Nonfiction
Arresting dress : cross-dressing, law, and fascination in nineteenth-century San Francisco	Clare Sears	Nonfiction
The gay revolution : the story of the struggle	Lillian Faderman	Nonfiction
How to grow up : a memoir	Michelle Tea	Nonfiction
Bettyville : a memoir	George Hodgman	Nonfiction

However, even after this initial sample list was completed, there were very few libraries nearby which held even a couple of the books. Since a second aim of the study was to only visit libraries which held a significant portion of the sample, a new, narrower sample frame was devised, using only books which had won either the Stonewall Book Award or Lambda Literary Award between 2013-2017, or which had been placed in the Over the Rainbow booklist's "Top 10" section in that time period. From this, a booklist was created which was held more frequently across several nearby library systems. This list can be seen in Table 1.

### **Site Selection**

The intent of this study was to explore the placement of the books in the sample in a wide range of institutions. Due to the need to travel to each institution and conduct observations on site, a convenience sample of institutions was developed, primarily based on their proximity to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. To meet the goal of observing a variety of different types of institutions, five different categories were envisioned; "small" public libraries, "large" public libraries, academic libraries, "independent" bookstores, and large, "chain" bookstores. The goal was to develop a list which included three of each of these categories of institution. As is implied by the heavy use of quotation marks, these categories may have been envisioned as separate, easily definable entities during the planning process, but were less easily defined during the course of the study. There were very few single, "small" public libraries within the

sample range, with most public libraries nearby belonging to a county-wide system. In these cases, a central library within the system was identified, if possible. As for bookstores, it turned out that there was not much variety with regards to “large, chain” bookstores in the area, so the one chain available was visited three times, at different physical locations.

An initial list of libraries to be considered was created alongside the booklist. As each book was checked in WorldCat, to see if it was held at any local libraries, a list was also made of which libraries consistently came up. This list was used as a starting point for testing to find libraries which held a significant portion of the books on the booklist. For this study, a library was considered to hold a significant number of books from the list if it held at least 25% of the booklist. This method produced a good selection of possible academic libraries, including the three used for this study (NC State University, Duke University, and Elon University), but not as many public libraries (only Wake County Public Libraries appeared frequently in WorldCat). Additional possible public libraries were added based on their proximity to the study area, which led to the selection of the Orange, Chatham, Durham, and Alamance county public library systems, and the Chapel Hill Public Library.

Libraries identified as possible candidates were vetted through their online public access catalogs. Each book on the finalized booklist was searched for within a library’s catalog, with the goal of ensuring that the institution held a minimum of 25% of the sample books. Also, where possible, the central library of each system was targeted. In two cases, there was no central library available



within a county system, and so a regional branch with the greatest number of books from the sample was selected as the system's representative. In two other cases, a library system held different parts of the sample in different locations, and so two libraries in the system were visited, to create a more comprehensive dataset.

Bookstores were also selected based on proximity. Since they could not be easily surveyed and selected through a system like WorldCat, a simple Google Maps search for "bookstores" close to the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill area was conducted. From there, an attempt was made to check the websites of each store, to search for the availability of the books on the booklist, and in one instance, this led to a store being passed over for the study; despite its close proximity to Chapel Hill, its online catalog indicated that it had only one book from the list, while a more distant store in Raleigh, Quail Ridge Books, indicated that it had four. The other two independent bookstores selected, The Regulator Bookshop and Letters Bookshop, did not have useful online catalogs of their in-store books, and so were visited conditionally. As it so happened, they did have some books on the list (two each), and so were used as sites. For larger chain bookstores, only Barnes and Noble was identified within the study area, and their online catalog indicated that all of the nearby stores held the same three books from the booklist, so the three closest store locations were used.

## Results

Of the twenty books selected for this study, nineteen were found across fifteen institutions, and seventeen different physical locations. Two outlier situations should be mentioned here. One of the books selected for the list, which was originally confirmed to be held by one university library, turned out to be held in a closed stacks library, and therefore was inaccessible. This was discovered after data had been collected at several other institutions, and so it was decided that it was too late to replace it with a new 20th book and return to the other institutions. Also, when selecting libraries, a mistake was made while counting the number of books held by one of the university libraries, and some of their electronically held books were included in the count. When that library was visited, it was discovered that they only held four of the books in the sample

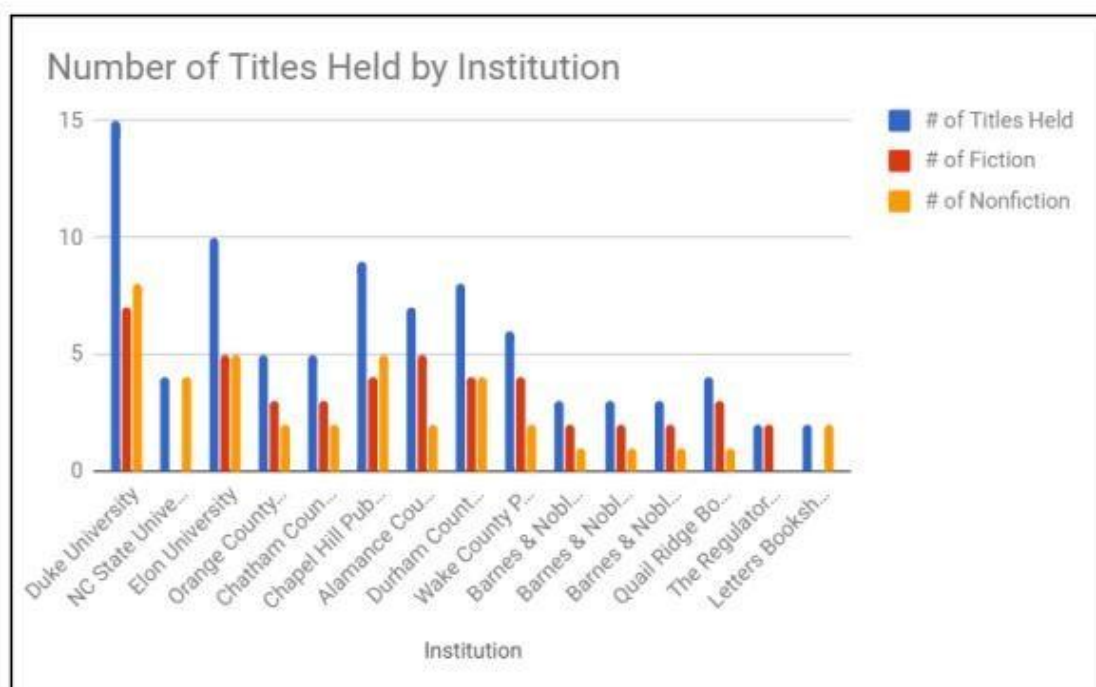


Figure 1: Number of Titles Held by Institution

physically, or less than 25% of the list. Their data was included anyway, instead of searching for a new third university library to include. The overall spread of books held at each institution, and the number of places each book was observed, can be seen in Tables 2-3 and Figures 1-2.

Table 2: Books held by each Institution

Institution	# of Titles Held	# of Fiction	# of Nonfiction
Duke University	15	7	8
NC State University	4	0	4
Elon University	10	5	5
Orange County Public Library	5	3	2
Chatham County Public Library	5	3	2
Chapel Hill Public Library	9	4	5
Alamance County Public Library	7	5	2
Durham County Public Library	8	4	4
Wake County Public Library	6	4	2
Barnes & Noble - New Hope Commons	3	2	1
Barnes & Noble - Southpoint	3	2	1
Barnes & Noble - Brier Creek Commons	3	2	1
Quail Ridge Books	4	3	1
The Regulator Bookshop	2	2	0
Letters Bookshop	2	0	2

Even for a relatively narrow list of award winning and “top 10” books, only a few titles in the sample were widely held. Less than half of the books on the list were found in even a third of the visited institutions, and a third of them were found in only one institution. The three most commonly found, “The Paying Guests”, “Another Brooklyn”, and “Bettyville”, all had their numbers slightly boosted by being the only three books found at all three of the larger bookstores visited, but

they were also held by almost all of the libraries as well. None of them are particularly recent books either; the most recently published of the three being

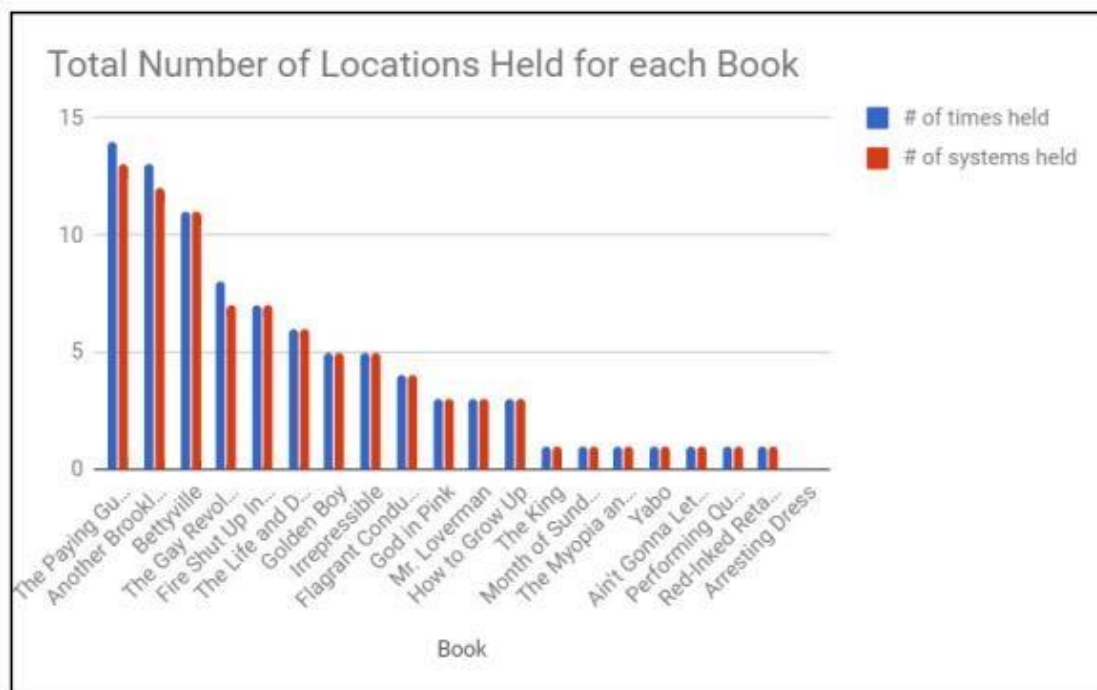


Figure 2: Number of Locations each Book was Held

“Almost Brooklyn” in 2016. On the other end of the scale, seven of the books were only held in one location, which in each case was one of two of the university libraries. As for the breakdown between fiction and nonfiction, fiction appeared slightly more often; fiction titles were held 48 times, while nonfiction titles were held 41 times. The three university libraries had roughly even or larger nonfiction holdings than fiction, while most of the public libraries and bookstores had larger fiction holdings than nonfiction, with a couple of exceptions.

Table 3: Number of Locations each Book was Held

Book	# of times held	# of systems held
The Paying Guests	14	13
Another Brooklyn	13	12
Bettyville	11	11
The Gay Revolution	8	7
Fire Shut Up In My Bones	7	7
The Life and Death of Sophie Stark	6	6
Golden Boy	5	5
Irrepressible	5	5
Flagrant Conduct	4	4
God in Pink	3	3
Mr. Loverman	3	3
How to Grow Up	3	3
The King	1	1
Month of Sundays	1	1
The Myopia and Other Plays	1	1
Yabo	1	1
Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around	1	1
Performing Queer Latinidad	1	1
Red-Inked Retablos	1	1
Arresting Dress	0	0

## Discussion

Originally, this study intended to analyze the subject headings or other terms associated with the ten books located to either side of each book in the study sample. However, the majority of the instances observed in this study were shelved by genre or form, alphabetical by author. Specifically, there were 89 different instances of sample books observed on shelves recorded for this study. Of those, 50 were placed in some form of general fiction or literature section, alphabetical by author. On top of that, 13 instances were placed with

biographies, sorted alphabetically by the subject of the biography. This left only 26 instances, or 29%, which were placed on shelves based on their topic, not their genre. For this reason, it was decided that analyzing books by their subject headings may be misleading, since for the majority of the instances observed, books had not been organized with



Figure 3: "Bettyville" and neighboring books at May Memorial Library.

regards to their subjects. Any associations made between the subjects of these books would be purely due to the circumstances of which authors last names were close to each other. To illustrate this, consider the book "Bettyville: a memoir", the third most frequently held book in the sample. This book, written by George Hodgman, was placed alongside other biographies seven times, alphabetically by the name of the subject of the biography. In five of those instances, this placement put Hodgman within ten books distance of one or more biographies about Adolf Hitler (For example, see Figure 3). However, it would clearly be incorrect to conclude from this that any of the libraries or bookstores

which had done so felt that Hodgman's memoir was topically related to Hitler. For another example, data from three observations of the book "Another Brooklyn" are included in Table 4. As can be seen in this example, Jacqueline Woodson's book frequently ended up next to popular and well known authors Cindy Woodsmall, Stephen Woods, Virginia Woolf, and Herman Wouk. However, it would be incorrect to try to draw conclusions between these associations, beyond the fact that both public libraries and bookstores prefer to organize their fiction collections by author's names, and not by their subjects. For this reason, a more surface level analysis of call number topics was conducted.

In order to conduct this call number topic analysis, the call numbers of the books placed alongside the book being observed were coded for the general topic or area they were meant to designate. For each book, the ten books placed to either side were recorded, and the topics represented by their call numbers were counted. If a topic was found in the range around a book more than once, it was counted only once. This was done to counteract the large number of fiction titles at public libraries, which were exclusively placed with other fiction titles. It was felt that counting "Fiction" 20 times for each of these titles would unnecessarily skew the data. Even so, as can be seen in Tables 5a-d, in each subset of call number topics, fiction is the most common.

Table 4 - Neighboring Books Sample for "Another Brooklyn"

	Ten Books to the Left	Ten Books to the Right
Orange County Main Library	"The scent of cherry blossoms" - Cindy Woodsmall "A love undone" - Cindy Woodsmall "The christmas singing" - Cindy Woodsmall "The angel of forest hill" - Cindy Woodsmall "When the soul mends" - Cindy Woodsmall "When the morning comes" - Cindy Woodsmall "When the heart cries" - Cindy Woodsmall "Seasons of tomorrow" - Cindy Woodsmall "For every season" - Cindy Woodsmall "The winnowing season" - Cindy Woodsmall	"August" - Gerard Woodward "A curious earth" - Gerard Woodward "Raiding with morgan" - Jim R. Woolard "Mrs. dalloway" - Virginia Woolf "Orlando" - Virginia Woolf "The caine mutiny" - Herman Wouk "The glory" - Herman Wouk "A hole in texas" - Herman Wouk "The hope" - Herman Wouk "The lawgiver" - Herman Wouk
Chapel Hill Public Library	"D.C. dead" - Stuart Woods "Heat" - Stuart Woods "Unnatural acts" - Stuart Woods "Iron orchid" - Stuart Woods "Collateral damage" - Stuart Woods "Scandalous behavior" - Stuart Woods "Naked greed" - Stuart Woods "Family jewels" - Stuart Woods "Fresh disasters" - Stuart Woods "Indecent exposure" - Stuart Woods	"The voyage out" - Virginia Woolf "Between the acts" - Virginia Woolf "The complete shorter fiction of virginia woolf" - Virginia Woolf "Jacob's room" - Virginia Woolf "The waves" - Virginia Woolf "The world of the short story" - Clifton Fadiman "Any approaching enemy" - Jay Worrall "Sails on the horizon" - Jay Worrall "A hole in texas" - Herman Wouk "She rises" - Kate Worsley
Barnes & Noble - Southpoint	"The wrong sister" - T. E. Woods "Unnatural acts" - Stuart Woods "Naked greed" - Stuart Woods "Orchid beach" - Stuart Woods "Chiefs" - Stuart Woods "Imperfect strangers" - Stuart Woods "Choke" - Stuart Woods "Santa fe edge" - Stuart Woods "Standup guy" - Stuart Woods "Scandalous behavior" - Stuart Woods	"Dear carolina" - Kristy Woodson Harvey "John dies at the end" - David Wong "Orlando" - Virginia Woolf "Mrs. dalloway" - Virginia Woolf "The waves" - Virginia Woolf "The complete shorter fiction of virginia woolf" - Virginia Woolf "Night and day" - Virginia Woolf "The lawgiver" - Herman Wouk "War and remembrance" - Herman Wouk "The winds of war" - Herman Wouk

To better display the call number categories that were found, three general categories were devised. First of all, most of the public libraries used their own call numbers for fiction and biography books, based on the last name of the author or subject. Also, none of the bookstores used any call numbers, and



so the shelf labels for each book's section were used instead. These two situations are collected together in Table 5a, and are referred to as 'institution-supplied' call number topics. The public libraries visited generally used Dewey Decimal call numbers for nonfiction books other than biographies, while the university libraries visited used Library of Congress call numbers for all of the books in their collection. One of the three university libraries made an exception to this rule, however, and used Dewey Decimal numbers for its entire collection. The Dewey call number topics are collected in Table 5b, while the Library of Congress call number topics are spread across Tables 5c and 5d.

A few outliers can be seen in this data. For one, there are a sprinkling of genre-specific call number topics in the institution-supplied list; these cases entirely originate from the Durham County Southwest Regional Library branch. This library branch had separate call number indicators for a variety of genres, such as F for fiction, FAN for fantasy, and MYS for mystery. However, unlike some other libraries which made physical distinctions for genres of fiction, these were all shelved together by author's last name, rather than shelved by genre. There are a couple possible explanations for this. The library could have previously separated fiction genres and recently made the decision to shelve them all together in one general fiction collection, but not had the time to relabel everything. They also may have made a decision to use their call numbers to highlight various genres of fiction, but not felt that these subgenres warranted separate sections.

Table 5a: Call Number Breakdown, Institution-Supplied

	Fiction	Biography	Mystery	Fantasy	Science Fiction	Romance	Adventure	Horror	LGBTQIA+	Featured Non-Fiction	New Fiction	Backlist Fiction
The Paying Guests	11		1	1	1							1
Another Brooklyn	9										1	
Bettyville		7										
The Gay Revolution									1			
Fire Shut Up In My Bones		2										
The Life and Death of Sophie Stark	5			1	1	1	1					
Golden Boy	5		1	1	1							
Irrepressible		2								1		
God in Pink	1											
Mr. Loverman	2		1			1		1				
How to Grow Up		2										
TOTALS:	33	13	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 5b: Call Number Breakdown, Dewey Decimal Classification

	DDC Culture & institutions	DDC American Fiction in English	DDC News media, journalism & publishing	DDC Constitutional & administrative law	DDC English fiction	DDC American Drama in English	DDC Stage presentations	DDC Athletic & outdoor sports & games	DDC Communities	DDC Social Groups
The Paying Guests					1					
Another Brooklyn		1								
Bettyville	3									
The Gay Revolution	2								1	1
Fire Shut Up In My Bones			3							
The Life and Death of Sophie Stark		1								
Flagrant Conduct				2						
God in Pink		1								
The Myopia and Other Plays						1				
Performing Queer Latinidad							1	1		
TOTALS:	5	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 5c: Call Number Breakdown, Library of Congress Classification

	LC American Literature	LC The family, marriage, women -- ... -- Homosexuality, lesbianism	LC English Literature	LC Law of the United States -- Criminal trials	LC Social history and conditions, social problems, social reform	LC The family, marriage, women -- ... -- Transsexualism, transgenderism	LC The family, marriage, women -- The family, marriage, home	LC The family, marriage, women -- Women, feminism	LC Journalism	LC Social pathology, social and public welfare, criminology	LC Sociology - - Social change
The Paying Guests			1								
Another Brooklyn	2										
Bettyville		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	
The Gay Revolution		3			1	1	1	1	1	1	
Fire Shut Up In My Bones								2			
Irrepressible		1									
Flagrant Conduct				2							
God in Pink			1								
Mr. Loverman			1								
How to Grow Up	1										
The King	1										
Month of Sundays	1										
Yabo	1										
Red-Inked Retablos	1										
TOTALS:	7	5	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	

Table 5d: Call Number Breakdown, Library of Congress Classification (continued)

	LC Sociology -- Social stratification, social inequality, equality	LC Political Theory, the State, Theories of the State	LC The family, marriage, women -- ... - Bisexuality	LC Communities, classes, races	LC Transportation and communications -- Postal service	LC Commerce - Business	LC Finance -- Banking
Bettyville				1			
The Gay Revolution	1				1	1	1
Irrepressible			1				
Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around		1					
TOTALS:	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Another outlier case was the use of Dewey Decimal classification at Elon University. Because of their use of Dewey over LC, there are several more books represented on the Dewey chart than might otherwise be there. This is due to their use of Dewey for everything in their collection, including their fiction titles, and their inclusion of several nonfiction books not held in any of the public libraries visited. Lastly, the extensive range of LC call number topics observed can mostly be attributed to two books, “The Gay Revolution” and “Bettyville”, both of which were held in a “Current Lit” section at Duke University’s Lily Library, meant to provide easier access to popular, current titles. This section covered a much wider range of nonfiction topics within the span of 10 books than any other library observed, leading to “The Gay Revolution” in particular being placed alongside books about the postal service, business, and banking.

So, what does this survey of call number topics tell us? The clearest takeaway from this study is that the majority of the books in this sample have not, in fact, been cataloged or shelved based on their LGBT content. The most common topic used is some variation on ‘Fiction’ or ‘Literature’. In the institution-supplied and Library of Congress sections, these are the most common topics, while in the Dewey table, literature comes second, likely due to Dewey’s more prevalent use for nonfiction than for fiction. Indeed, all of the Dewey topics which could be considered fiction or literature, were found at the one library using Dewey for its fiction collection, Elon University. Interestingly, even two of the nonfiction titles, “How to Grow Up” and “Red-Inked Retablos” were placed with

fiction by one of the other university libraries, Duke, as they were autobiographies written by fiction authors.

After fiction and literature, the next most common designation is the 'Biography' label, used frequently in public libraries and bookstores. After that, the topic occurrences begin to trail off. Of the 20 books in the sample, only three were placed in sections with other 'LGBT' topics, and only one was placed there consistently. One bookstore held one book in an 'LGBTQIA+' section, a handful of public libraries held one or two books in the Dewey "Culture & Institutions" section alongside similar LGBT content, and the academic libraries using Library of Congress shelved three of the sample books alongside books with classification topics such as 'Homosexuality, lesbianism', 'Transsexualism, transgenderism', and 'Bisexuality'.

This overwhelming tendency towards organizing books alphabetically by author clearly shows how public libraries, academic libraries, and bookstores all make an effort to show themselves as neutral, welcoming places, where people can come to borrow, or purchase, books of all kinds. The use of authors' names to organize fiction, and subjects' names to organize biographies, both show that libraries and bookstores expect their patrons to arrive already knowing who or what they are generally looking for. This system works great if a person knows they want a fiction book by Herman Wouk, or a biography of Charlton Heston. It is not as helpful if a person wants to find a book about a seaside town, or a Civil War general, or, as was explored here, a book with LGBT characters or dealing with LGBT issues.

Table 6: Goodreads Genres

The Paying Guests	Historical -- Historical Fiction	Fiction	Historical	Lgbt	Romance
Another Brooklyn	Fiction	Historical -- Historical Fiction	Adult	Young Adult -- Coming of Age	Young Adult
Bettyville	Autobiography -- Memoir	Nonfiction	Biography	Abandoned	Biography Memoir
The Gay Revolution	History	Nonfiction	Lgbt	Politics	Glb -- Queer
Fire Shut Up In My Bones	Nonfiction	Autobiography -- Memoir	Biography	Cultural -- African American	Race
The Life and Death of Sophie Stark	Fiction	Contemporary	Literary Fiction		
Golden Boy	Fiction	Young Adult	Contemporary	Lgbt	
Irrepressible	Biography	Nonfiction	History	Lgbt	Glb -- Queer
Flagrant Conduct	History	Law	Nonfiction	Lgbt	Politics
God in Pink	Fiction	Lgbt	Glb -- Queer	Religion	Glb -- Gay
Mr. Loverman	Fiction	Lgbt	Glb -- Queer	Glb -- Gay	
How to Grow Up	Autobiography -- Memoir	Nonfiction	Glb -- Queer	Writing -- Essays	Feminism
The King	Erotica -- Bds	Adult Fiction -- Erotica	Romance	Romance -- M M Romance	
Month of Sundays	Romance	Glb -- Lesbian	Lgbt	Contemporary	Glb -- Queer
The Myopia and Other Plays	Glb -- Queer	Plays -- Theatre			
Yabo	Poetry	Lgbt	Glb -- Queer	Fiction	Lgb -- Intersex
Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around	Nonfiction	Feminism	Lgbt	Biography	Glb -- Queer
Performing Queer Latinidad	Glb -- Queer	Sexuality			
Red-Inked Retablos	Philosophy -- Theory	Lgbt			

The question then is, if these books are not being classified and shelved based on their LGBT content, should they be? An argument could be made that



it is better for these books to be treated the same as other books on non-LGBT topics; not only is this an equal and supposedly neutral treatment, but it stops books on sensitive or marginalized topics from being singled out. In theory, part of the purpose of subject access is to help users search for materials based on topics other than the main topic or genre used for their classification, and collecting all fiction together alphabetically, for example, should allow patrons to search for and find books on particular or sensitive topics in privacy, as opposed to forcing them to go to a section of the collection clearly and overtly labeled "LGBT" to find what they need. Herein lies the problem with any supposedly neutral system of organization; we could assume that one way of displaying things is better for the greatest number of patrons, and that we are catering to the needs of the 'average user'. However, for each patron who may know exactly which author they are looking for, and who appreciates the anonymity of searching for an LGBT author amidst a sea of alphabetized fiction, there is another patron who has not arrived at the library with a clear book in mind, and would prefer a "genrefied" or topic-oriented system which helps them find LGBT content expressly and explicitly.

The biggest issue with deciding how to classify and shelve a book is the fact that, unless an institution is willing to invest in having several copies of each book placed in different sections, a book can really only be placed in one spot. Even if a library were to try to support multiple organizational systems at once, such as a general alphabetized fiction section, and a rotating collection of genre clusters, with changing subject and topic foci, they would still fall short of pleasing

every patron's particular organizational whims. One way in which this may be supplemented, at least in part, is through increasing reliance on digital shelves and interfaces. An ebook file can, in theory, be shelved alongside any multitude of other titles in different ways, to help highlight its various genres, topics, subjects, and other relevant associations. For example, on the website [goodreads.com](http://goodreads.com), users can place books on their own shelves, based on what they think is most relevant about the book. These are aggregated, and through a quick search of the platform, the top five genre shelves for each of the books in this study were gathered, as shown in Table 6. While only one of them has 'Lgbt' or a related term as its top genre, all but four of them include some variation in their top five. By adapting this sort of system, institutions could potentially involve patrons in digitally classifying and arranging their own sub-collections for topics they are passionate about, and feature some of these alternate classifications in the physical library, thereby allowing others to explore alternate methods of access within the collection as a whole.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to analyze the classification of prominent, award winning books on LGBT topics, to see how these topics are being treated in libraries and bookstores today. These materials have, in the past, been placed in a variety of locations throughout the library, sometimes with unsavory connotations. This study, however, does more to show the limited reach of even the most acclaimed fiction and nonfiction LGBT titles in today's libraries and

bookstores, with eleven books from the sample appearing in three or fewer institutions. An interesting follow-up to this study could involve a comparison of highly rated or award winning titles, and an investigation into how likely it is that a title will be added to a collection based on which awards it has won. Is it normal for award winners to be collected at a relatively low rate, or are books which win “minority representation” awards collected differently? Of the books that were available for observation, all of the fiction titles were shelved with other fiction alphabetically by author, and most of the nonfiction titles were either shelved as biographies, or under topics not pertaining to their LGBT content. This shows how, with what few LGBT titles libraries do collect, they have done their best to cast them amidst the rest of their collection, aiming to show off the fairness and neutrality of their organization, for the benefit of the known item searcher, but to the detriment of the browser and the explorer.

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