


12-15-2023

Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies

Allison P. Brown

Deborah P. Amory

Follow this and additional works at: <https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/library-research>

 Part of the [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), [Scholarly Communication Commons](#), [Scholarly Publishing Commons](#), and the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](#)

Case Studies in Library Publishing • Issue 1, Fall 2023

Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies

Allison P. Brown¹ Deborah P. Amory²

¹SUNY—Geneseo, ²SUNY—Empire

LibraryPress@UF

Published on: Dec 15, 2023

URL: <https://cslp.pubpub.org/pub/pakcexne>

License: [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License \(CC-BY-NC 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

ABSTRACT

[Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies](https://milneopentextbooks.org/introduction-to-lgbtq-studies-a-cross-disciplinary-approach/) was a collaborative, multi-year open textbook project that engaged faculty authors, librarians, a university press, and OER professionals. The resulting textbook takes a cross-disciplinary approach to the study of LGBTQ+ issues that helps students grasp core concepts through a variety of different perspectives. The text offers accessible, academically sound information on a wide range of topics, including history, culture, and Queer Theory; an exploration of LGBTQ+ relationships, families, parenting, health, and education; and how to conduct research on LGBTQ+ topics. This case study will cover the project's transformation through years of development, including engaging a large group of participants, working with a funding body, releasing a beta edition, incorporating feedback, and partnering with a university press.

Project Team

- Deborah P. Amory, SUNY Empire
- Sean G. Massey, SUNY Binghamton
- Jennifer Miller, University of Texas Arlington
- Allison P. Brown, SUNY Geneseo

Project Link

<https://milneopentextbooks.org/introduction-to-lgbtq-studies-a-cross-disciplinary-approach/>

Project Takeaways

- Be open minded about product & outcomes
 - An open call for volunteers brought out many interested librarians, leading to an unplanned feature in the textbook (“Research Resources,” essentially an annotated bibliography)
- It will take longer than you think
 - Especially with this multi-author work, multiple peer reviews, and then a couple rounds of editing, the human element and the nature of the work will make a project take longer
- Have a small dedicated leadership group
 - Having 2-3 people that will stick with the project long term will help move the project forward and ensure that deliverables are complete
 - The pairing of a faculty author with a library publishing professional was key
- Get feedback and acknowledge your gaps
 - A beta edition gave us the opportunity to solicit feedback from both instructors and students and informed the later development of the text. Examples of forms and surveys are provided.

- Bringing new partners later in the project surfaced issues and to-dos that we hadn't previously planned on (such as developmental editing) that improved the project greatly.

Project Background

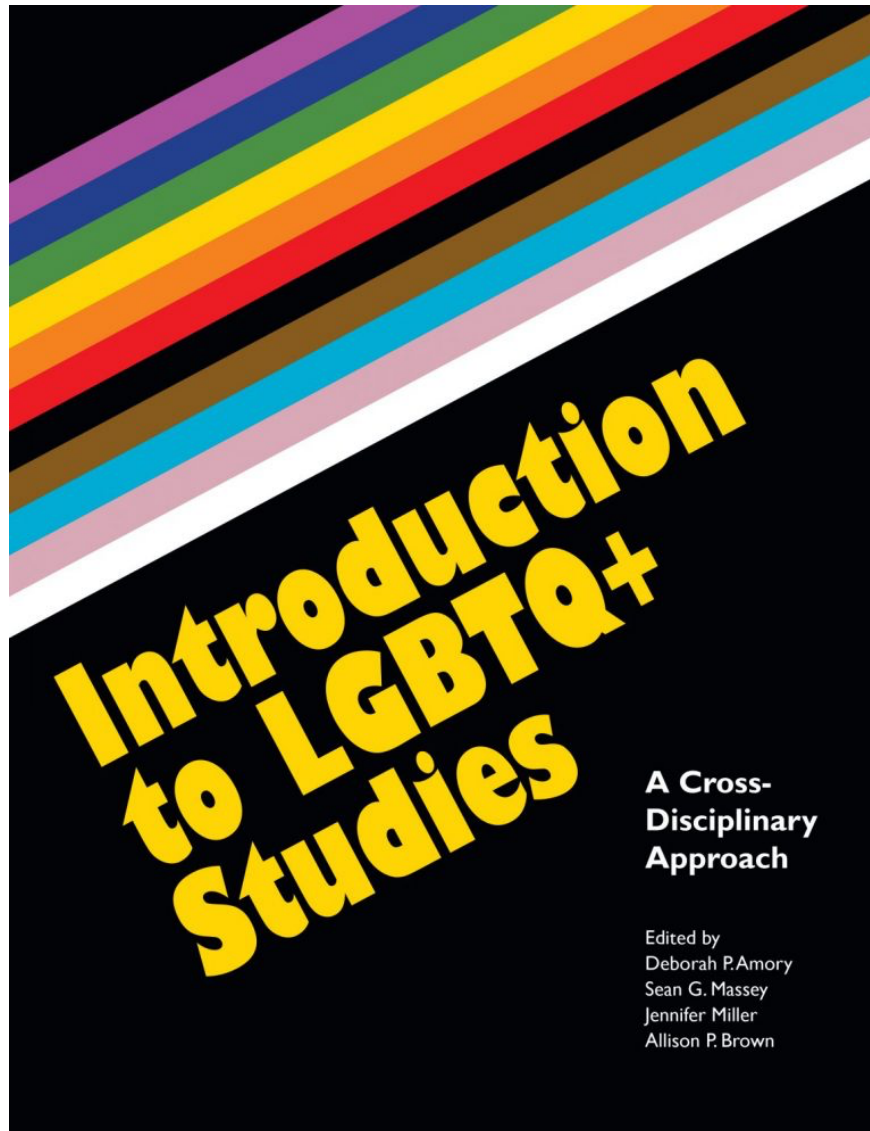


Figure 1
The cover of *Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies: A Cross-Disciplinary Approach*

This project began when Deborah Amory, a faculty member at Empire State College, identified a lack of Introduction to LGBTQ studies educational materials from a social sciences perspective, the need for a course or textbook that was geared toward an adult learner of these topics, and the lack of affordable texts in the subject area.

The students that Dr. Amory encountered in teaching LGBTQ studies wanted to learn more about contemporary LGBTQ social issues, and to be able to advocate for LGBTQ youth and adults in their workplaces, which often included educational and human services organizations. For Human Services and Business students, a social science perspective would complement a more humanities-based form of cultural analysis.

Dr. Amory reached out to the State University of New York's (SUNY) then-new OER Services, and was connected with Allison Brown, the Digital Publishing Services Manager in the library at SUNY Geneseo. Ms. Brown had nearly five years of library publishing and OER experience and served as a partner, project manager, and editor throughout the project. We believe part of the success of this project was due to this partnership; the faculty and subject expert had project management and publishing support to navigate through the many phases of making this project a reality. The combination of a strong vision, deep knowledge, and teaching experience with the expertise of open education and publishing management behind it provided a foundation for what was an ever-shifting and complicated development process.

As you will read in this case study, this idea and partnership grew into a project that engaged with 25 chapter authors, 8 profile authors, 7 librarian authors of annotated bibliographies, 19 reviewers, a nonprofit organization, a state-wide OER initiative, and a university press. The main author/editor, Dr. Amory, proposed the idea in the fall of 2017, and the final text was published online in the summer of 2022 with the print edition released that fall.

The main stages of the project consisted of:

1. Deb applying for a sabbatical and connecting with the staff at the State University of New York OER Services initiative, which resulted in initial planning and brainstorming in the fall of 2017 and winter/early spring of 2018.
2. Application and acceptance to the Rebus Project Beta group beginning in May 2018 and running a full year. This program was the precursor to the current Rebus Textbook Success Program and consisted of a cohort approach to learning about publishing open textbooks, community building with other creators and in one's own team, and the use of beta software for managing in-progress OER projects.
3. Applying for and receiving \$30,000 funding from SUNY OER Services in the summer of 2018 and onboarding a second editor, Sean Massey from SUNY Binghamton.
4. Developing the initial table of contents, distributing a call for contributors, and evaluating applications over the fall and winter 2018-19.
5. Assigning chapters and writing initial drafts through the spring and early summer of 2018.
6. Holding an in-person author workshop in Saratoga Springs in June 2019 to further develop the outline of the textbook, identify learning outcomes, and agree on language issues.

1. Peer review, revisions, and editor review through the remainder of the summer and fall of 2019.
2. Release of [an online beta edition](#) in January of 2020, with classroom testing and instructor feedback throughout the spring.
3. Partnership with SUNY Press established in the summer of 2020, which kicked off new market research and developmental editing that extended through 2021.
4. Final copy editing and rights and permissions confirmations in fall/spring 2021-22.
5. Final files to the press in May 2022 and online production and layout.
6. Online release in June 2022 and the print release in November 2022.

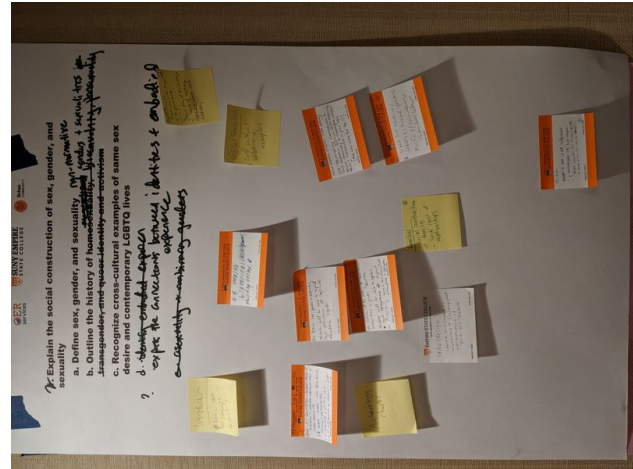


Figure 2

The results of an interactive activity for assessing and editing the book's learning outcomes at the in-person author workshop in June 2019.

In this case study we will address the major transformations over the four plus years of development, the strengths and challenges from the partnerships and resources we had at our disposal, and what we hope are helpful takeaways or considerations for others engaging with similar projects.



Figure 3
*[Human Open by Wolf Böse](#) from the Noun
Project with alterations*

Open-mindedness

One of the most exciting stages of a project is in the brainstorming phase, when ideas and possibilities seem endless. As participants engage with a new idea, both the process and the outcomes are invigorating and important. We are not yet bogged down by deadlines, disappearing collaborators, administrative red tape, and the myriad of other realities that can make an initially passionate endeavor just another to-do on the list.

This project took a long time and a lot of energy on the part of all the participants, but on the editors especially. But one of the elements that renewed the excitement of the initial vision throughout the process was a general open mindedness to reimagining the particulars of the outcome and the partners engaged along the way.

We took particular care in crafting the guiding vision of the project. The central idea remained consistently to create an open and free resource that would serve as a textbook for an introductory level LGBTQ+ Studies course, one that also expanded the traditional coverage of the field from humanities-based topics to include more social science perspectives and disciplines. The “Motivations and Values” defined in our original [Project Summary](#) were as follows:

- To develop an accessible (in terms of writing style, in terms of technical requirements, in terms of ideas and information) introduction to the wide range of theoretical and topical issues that fall within LGBTQ Studies and Queer Theory.
- To serve the curious public and non-traditional college students, that is, students who are working and/or raising families as they struggle both to secure a college degree and to learn more about the world they live in.
- To employ an interdisciplinary approach that is nonetheless informed by a social science perspective and particularly by feminist, intersectional analyses and a commitment to social justice.
- To develop educational resources that counter contemporary fears and hatred of “the other,” including immigrants, LGBTQ people, religious minorities, and people of color.
- To embrace multiple learning styles by integrating visual elements and multimedia resources into the textbook. (Amory & Brown, 2019)

Many particulars of the initial vision of the project changed. The text was originally conceived as a course. One initial idea was to have a Learning Object Repository with articles and videos to accompany it. This idea ended up manifesting as embedded resources in the text itself.

When the opportunity to apply for funding was available and the possible scope of the project widened considerably, the vision shifted to fit more of an edited volume concept, both so that experts in each area could delve deeper into their area of expertise, and to spread the work over multiple authors. Additionally, we were mindful of the somewhat conflicted status of OER publications in regards to tenure review and evaluation, and the value of a traditional approach to publication with an established press. While awareness of OER has increased considerably according to a Bay View Analytics report (26% of faculty respondents in 2014-15 to 44% in 2018-19) (Spilovoy et al., 2020), there were and are few examples of institutions formally incorporating OER authoring or adoption into tenure standards, [although more recently this issue is being explored by DOERS3](#) and [expanded on by the IOWA Open Education Action Team](#). Taking these factors into consideration, we eventually partnered with SUNY Press, which provided access to additional resources.

We also issued a general call for participants that drew out a diverse group of contributors, and brought in folks who eventually became editors and who suggested brand new features for what the textbook might include. One example was the robust and passionate response of librarians to our call. In brainstorming how to engage and involve them, the idea to incorporate annotated bibliographies to assist users with the research in each area was proposed and came to be the valuable “Research Resources” included with each chapter. We were open to hearing ideas from the community stepping forward to participate and made accommodations accordingly.

Another area where flexibility and open mindedness served the project well was exploring partnerships—with academics, creators, activists, and even companies. In imagining what resources would be valuable to include to complement the main text, we did not restrict ourselves to already openly licensed content, and we were able to include videos, articles, and illustrations that greatly enhanced the book. We had the greatest success directly

contacting the creator of any given work, whether or not they held the actual rights. In doing so, often the author would advocate with their publisher for licensing the content free of charge. This allowed us to digitize some primarily print material (text and illustrations by Meg-John Barker and Jules Scheele) in [the Queer Theory chapter](#), and rights to copy, host, and transcribe (rather than embed) a video of Judith Butler. Some discussions with publications/companies mirrored the overall lifespan of the project—initially we had many ideas that were eventually pared down. Some initial discussions were not fruitful in the end due to turnover, or to the necessity of specific contracts when we eventually partnered with the press.

Lastly, we were cognizant that along the way, with each new resource and collaborator added to the project, time was also added to reaching the eventual end product. While we were eager to make the resource available, and didn't want the content to get out of date while working on publishing it, the steps that added time also added value and usefulness to the project. We also chose to release an early version as a beta release so that the work would be accessible and usable while we explored ways to make it better. This took off some of the time pressure and allowed us to concentrate on edits and improvements to the text, with the bonus of being informed by feedback on that early beta version.

Three major time elements stand out in this later period of development: market research, developmental editing, and copy editing constituted key finalizing steps before releasing the final project (both online and in print).

- Market research was led by SUNY Press once the collaboration was solidified and consisted of detailed reviews of similar titles (all commercial in this case), soliciting feedback from faculty on the coverage of the text, and generally gathering information about possible users.
- The press hired a developmental editor to address the inconsistencies between chapters and the general reading level and clarity in response to feedback from the beta edition. Both coordinating schedules with the editor and engaging with the chapter authors made this a lengthy process, but greatly enhanced the quality of the final project.
- Similarly, a copy editor was engaged to address any last errors or inconsistencies. This work focused on citations, captions, and the uniformity of other pedagogical elements of the text such as discussion questions and the “Research Resources,” as the annotated bibliographies came to be called. Alongside this process the editors gathered documentation of any rights and permissions, double checked the attributions of openly licensed media, reviewed media against printing standards (such as resolution), and followed [the press's guidelines](#) in terms of how to name and organize files.

We saw all of these steps as important for making an excellent text, sticking to our mission of making this work accessible in terms of readability, and expanding the reach of the final work.

Cultivate diverse resources



Figure 4
*[cultivate by WeiKang Wang](#) from [Noun Project](#)
with alterations*

This project is an apt case study in demonstrating the many possible resources that are available to open publishing projects; along the way we engaged in many types of resources: financial, personnel, time, and many other types of invisible resources. A free resource cannot be produced for free; any high-quality end product needs investment of some kind on the part of the producers. Thankfully, there are multiple avenues creators can explore to support similar projects, even beyond financial (though financial investment helps considerably).

We were extremely fortunate and privileged to be the recipient of funding through SUNY OER Services, a funding opportunity with a category for “OER Creation Projects” in the 2018-19 academic/fiscal year (SUNY OER Services, n.d.). The funding was allocated for stipends for contributors and travel and event expenses for an author workshop in the summer of 2019. The stipends varied based on the contributors’ role:

- Editors received \$5,000
- Chapter authors received \$300
- Profile authors received \$150
- Librarians providing annotated bibliographies received \$100

The project received a great deal of administrative support from Dr. Amory’s home institution in order to manage these funds, the payments, and individual’s travel arrangements and reimbursements. Passing along the incentives to the contributors did add to the burden of administration and organization, but the entire leadership team felt strongly about compensating the work being done for the project.

Another important resource that set the tone for this project was the opportunity to participate in the Rebus Project beta, the precursor of Rebus's Textbook Success Program. We were accepted into a cohort of about 6 projects that met regularly to learn about and discuss steps of the OER publishing process. Not only did this provide helpful structure to the beginning phases of the project, but it built in accountability and community to what could have been an isolating experience for both editors. Particularly helpful were templates and guidance around setting strong project goals, calls for contributors, and the peer review process. It was timely and fortunate that we were accepted into this program when we were; as the first and test cohort we were able to participate for free. We applied and were accepted before the SUNY OER Services funding was announced, so we were operating under the assumption of a shoestring budget. The program itself was a great resource, and also connected us to contributors, testers, and readers, as Rebus amplified all our calls for contributions and publication announcements.

This platform, along with other communities in the library publishing sphere such as the Library Publishing Forum, the SPARC OER listserv, and more, were important resources. As mentioned above, amplifying our call for contributors connected us to many librarians with subject expertise who were eager and passionate about contributing to the project. As a result, so many librarians were interested that we were able to add the entirely new resource of an annotated bibliography that drew on this community's skillset—in particular we were grateful for Rachel Wexelbaum, who was willing to lead and organize this effort. Alongside that, we incorporated a chapter about doing research on LGBTQ+ topics that supported these additions. We wanted to highlight the many great resources in each topic area that already existed, especially seminal works that new scholars should be aware of. The annotations brought important context to the resources, and were later enhanced with a set of suggested projects and activities that could be integrated into the classroom. This aspect of the project, coupled with being able to meet and brainstorm in person, also led to an offshoot project and poster publication presented at ACRL/NY in 2019, "Holding Up the Mirror: Embedded Citation Analysis as Ethical Practice" (Stahl et al., 2019).

Often overlooked in the professional environment, the element of camaraderie and enjoyment is a powerful addition to projects such as these. Dr. Amory and Ms. Brown formed a partnership and friendship that was the throughline of this project. As mentioned in the introduction, the combination of a faculty member with a library publishing professional made a strong foundation to weather the challenges of a long-term project such as this, but additionally served as an important anchor for each other and for the larger group that often came and went along the way. Of the larger leadership/editorial team, we had some participants able to spend more time on the project early on, and some later. Having the stable core of Amory and Brown allowed the project to stay organized and moving forward. What greatly helped us to keep moving forward was genuinely enjoying both working together and getting to know one another. Having a collaborator that is understanding and caring, not just about how the work is going, but also about one's work-life balance and how the outside world impacts the work we do, transforms the experience from mundane to extraordinary.

Similarly, our in-person author workshop gave us the opportunity to meet and socialize with many of our collaborators, which otherwise would have been strictly virtual relationships. In hindsight, this may have helped with retaining contributor engagement, especially as our timeline overlapped with the height of the pandemic, when busy schedules collided with pervasive challenges and anxiety, both personally and professionally. Having an in-person face to put with the names, so to speak, helped maintain these relationships throughout the project.

Test early and often



Figure 5
test by SBTS from Noun Project with alterations

Our first release of the *Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies* was in the form of [a Beta Edition](#) that we published in January 2020. A few reasons led us to this early release:

- We were interested in students and instructors' feedback and were very much encouraged by the Rebus Community to use a beta model.
- A couple of the editors wanted to use the resource in their courses, both to get student feedback and also to fast track having a free resource.
- We wanted to make sure we had a deliverable to fulfill the funding requirements of our SUNY OER Services award.

The timeline was ambitious, as the revisions after peer reviews extended through the fall of 2019. Between splitting up the revisions and author communications between editors (there were two main content editors at the time), and formatting and publishing the online version (completed by Ms. Brown, assisted by Nicole

Callahan and Jack Terwilliger, then student workers at SUNY Geneseo), the text was available by the start of classes for the spring semester. The beta was published on Lumen Learning’s Candela platform, a version of Pressbooks software that we had access to as a part of SUNY OER Service’s partnership with Lumen Learning. We chose this option because we knew it would be interoperable with SUNY learning management systems for testing and with other instances of Pressbooks if the software was used for further editions of the book.

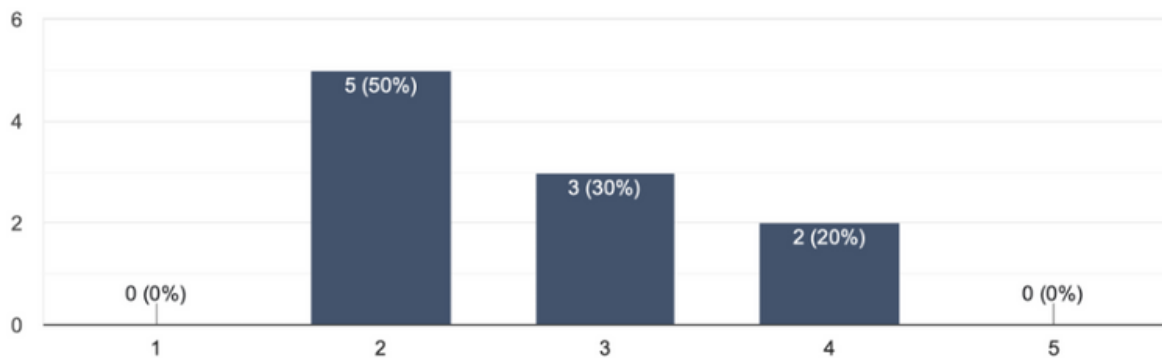
We gathered feedback in a number of ways. We embedded surveys/included links to surveys that asked about the [adoption of the text](#), [a general feedback/errata form](#), and [a form to report accessibility issues](#). The content of these forms were based on templates provided in *The Rebus Guide to Publishing Textbooks (so far)* (Ashok & Hyde, 2019) and the examples in the textbooks in the *Introduction to Philosophy* series (Abumere et al., 2019).

We also had [more granular surveys](#) that the editors asked students to fill out for extra credit, and that we provided to other instructors who we knew were using our text. This survey evaluated individual chapters on the reading experience of the chapter, the visual experience in print vs online, the learning impact of the content in general, and the effectiveness of elements like the glossary and embedded media (see Appendix A). The content of this survey was an adapted version of the “Textbook Evaluation Toolkit” by Christopher McHale, Ian McDermott, and Steven Ovadia at CUNY Laguardia Community College (2019).

While we did not have an overwhelming number of responses, we did get valuable feedback about the usability of the resource. The main criticism was the readability and clarity of the text (from students), and the sometimes overwhelming amount of information in a chapter (from instructors). Another comment was that the chosen citation style (APA) made the reading experience, and specifically using a screen reader, very awkward when multiple parenthetical references were listed. The positives were that the students really liked the embedded media, the research profiles, and the glossary and, despite the comments about readability, reported positive learning experiences. When choosing contributors, we were cognizant of inviting authors who had teaching experience, but classroom experience doesn’t automatically translate to a writing style that will be accessible to undergraduate students. We found that the authors still wrote from an academic perspective and tone, possibly because the chapter length and peer review process mirrored traditional academic journal or edited volume publishing practices.

In general, how understandable/clear is the writing?

10 responses

**Figure 6**

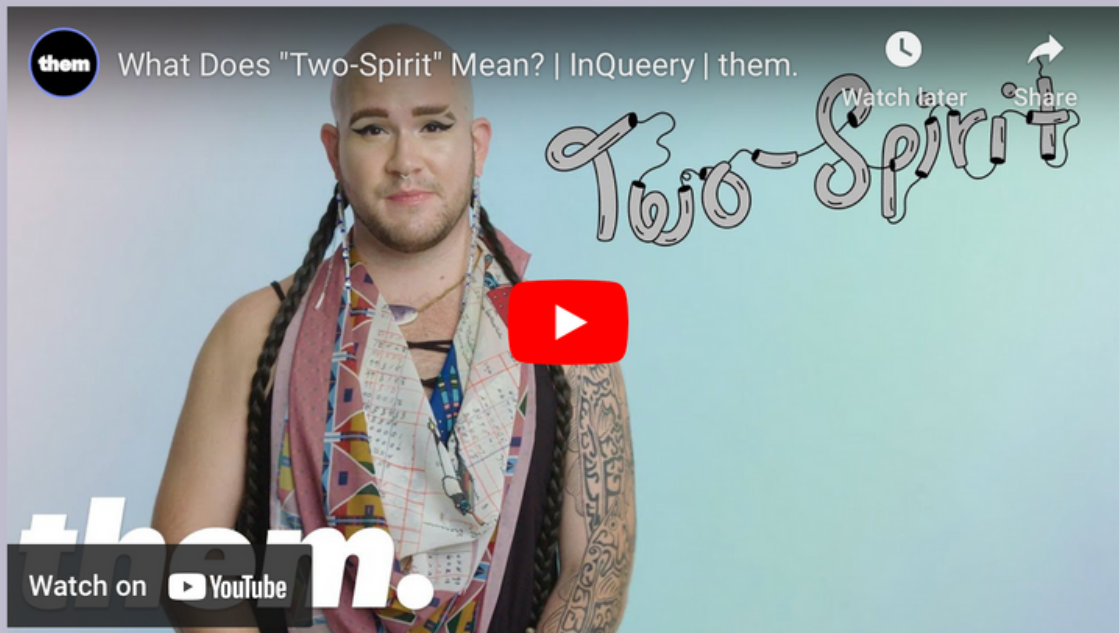
Responses to the survey question “In general, how understandable/clear is the writing?” (5 = A great deal, 1 = none at all).

On a more macro level, the instructors noted the absence of a literature chapter, as we weren't able to engage an appropriate author in the timeframe. Additionally, the “Culture” section was in general shorter and provided less coverage than our text’s commercial counterparts. While the text’s aim was to provide a social science perspective within LGBTQ+ Studies, we hoped the final product might be more balanced than the beta release. Ultimately, we were able to add a literature section that combined a collection of profiles focusing on important aspects of LGBTQ+ literature (such as children’s literature and memoir).

As discussed above, these user experiences led us to focus on developmental editing and providing more pedagogical elements throughout the text in the last year-and-a-half of the project. In particular, we added learning objectives and corresponding key questions to each section, and discussion questions with each embedded resource. We also converted all citations from APA to Chicago so that citations would be footnoted and less intrusive to the reader.

Watch

Learn more about the history of the word *two spirit* from Geo Neptune on this episode in the InQueery series (<https://youtu.be/A4lBibGzUnE>).



- Describe the history of the term *two spirit*. Why was it important for Native American activists to create this umbrella term?
- In what ways is the meaning of *two spirit* similar to, and different from, *gay* and *queer*?
- Were there elements of the history of the development of the term *two spirit* that surprised you? What were they, and why were you surprised?

Figure 7

A callout box in the chapter "[Global Sexualities](#)"

Conclusion

The final text was published in two stages. The online version was released in June 2022, after the final copy editing and print proof was shared with the authors. We were able to ensure that the print and online versions were as identical as possible. Through a previously established partnership, the online version was published in Milne Library Publishing's Pressbooks platform in order to best facilitate the text's accessibility and

adaptability. SUNY Press released the print version in November 2022 as well as [a PDF of the typeset pages](#) in the [SUNY Open Access Repository](#), which we advocated for partially so that the text would be eligible for inclusion in [the Open Textbook Library](#) and receive post-publication reviews.

The reception of the text has been positive, and we have recorded about 40 self-reported adoptions that were gathered via the text's adoption form and Milne Library Publishing's general adoption form. We are also able to gather analytics from the online Pressbook version of the text, which shows around 3,000 visitors per month and gives us insight into unreported adoptions through referrals from institutions' learning management systems. The introductory chapter on Queer Theory is the most-accessed chapter, and many users find the book via web search.

We are hoping to continue getting feedback on the text with the ambition of updating it in the next few years. As a part of this update, we are hoping to incorporate some student-generated content and projects that resulted from using the text.

We were extremely fortunate throughout the project to have fruitful partnerships, financial resources, and a team with a diverse array of perspectives and expertise. While not all of our initial ideas became reality, because we had clear guiding objectives, we were able to take advantage of new opportunities that presented themselves along the way and to reimagine how to fulfill those goals. We were able share an OER that will hopefully impact many students, both by being accessible and by providing LGBTQ+ history, information, and context at a time when it is greatly needed.

References

Abumere, F. A., Giles, D., Kao, Y. Y., Klenk, M., Kranak, J., MacKay, K., Morgan, J., & Rezkalla, P. (2019). *Introduction to Philosophy: Ethics* (G. Matthews & C. Hendricks, Eds.). Rebus Community.

<https://press.rebus.community/intro-to-phil-ethics/>

Amory, D., & Brown, A. (2019). *Project Summary*. Project Summary Introduction to LGBTQ+ Studies: An Open Textbook. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hGOX1d1ruRR8ea1LDmCa1Hm-OnoXK_N8viQnvcoNHwc/edit?usp=sharing

Ashok, A., & Hyde, Z. W. (2019). *The Rebus Guide to Publishing Open Textbooks (so Far)* (D. Szanto, Ed.). Rebus Community. <https://press.rebus.community/the-rebus-guide-to-publishing-open-textbooks/>

McHale, C., McDermott, I., & Ovadia, S. (2019, March 12). *Textbook Evaluation Toolkit*. CUNY Academic Works. Retrieved May 10, 2023, from https://academicworks.cuny.edu/lg_oers/72/

Spilovoy, T., Seaman, J., & Ralph, N. (2020). *The Impact of OER Initiatives on Faculty Selection of Classroom Materials*. Bay View Analytics. Retrieved May 2023, from

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230923051803/https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/reports/impactoforinitiatives.pdf>

Stahl, L., Phillips, G., Brown, A., & Rotramel, A. (2019). *Holding Up the Mirror: Embedded Citation Analysis as Ethical Practice*. <https://acrlny2019symposium.wordpress.com/posters/>

SUNY OER Services. (n.d.). *About Us*. SUNY OER Services. Retrieved May 10, 2023, from <https://oer.suny.edu/about>