

# **RAINBOW model: Is my library LGBTQAI+ friendly?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The present article is an effort to develop RAINBOW model for a library, public library to be specific, to become a friend of LGBTQAI+ community, their parents, friends circle, allies, opponents and the society around. Recommendations on various library services, programmes are also discussed for implementation in the changing scenario.*

**KEYWORDS:** RAINBOW model, Library, LGBTQAI+, Homosexuals, PRIDE.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, the Father of Library Science in India, propounded the five laws of library science in 1928 and published in 1931. It is also known as Punch sheel of library science, normative principles of library science. They are viz., (1) Books are for use; (2). Every reader his or her (3) Every book its reader (4) Save the time of user (5) Library is a growing organism. the first law replaces the old concept "Books are for Preservation" by "books are for use". The second law widens this concept still further that is books are for all. It takes into consideration the basic educational approach, which is education for everybody without exclusion of any community, sex, caste, colour or creed. The third law "Every book its reader" means the finding out a reader for every book in the library, it is the duty of library staff to provide right book to the right user at the right time by provide well established system of cataloguing, classification and shelf arrangement. (Singh and Pandey, n.d.)

But, are the libraries in real sense implementing the five laws of library science? Are they providing service irrespective of sex, gender, orientation? Do the users have confidence in the library staff that library is impartially providing the service with maintaining confidentiality?

The opposition has not been limited to the classes and the people. We come across several others when we trace the prejudices of the ages in light of the Second Law of Library Science. It is not just the income line that has historically separated humanity into those who have access to books and those who do not. Another aspect that

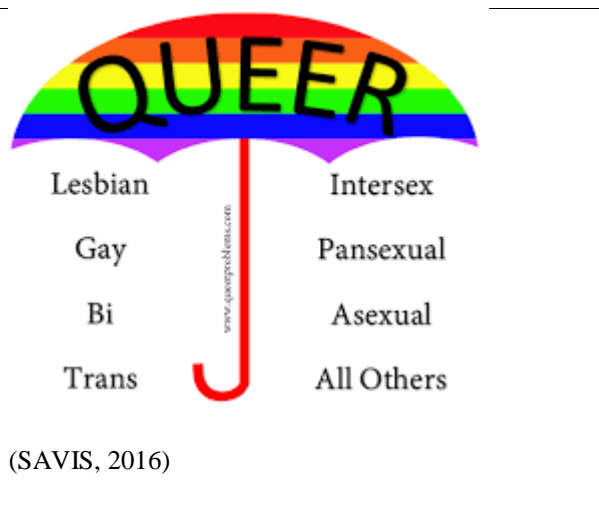
hampered the execution of the law, 'Books for All,' was a person's gender. The Second Law has not yet entirely succeeded in removing such sex impairments in our own country (Ranganathan, 2011).

Sandfort, T. G. (2019) stated that The acronym LGBTQAI+ comprises persons who because of their gender and sexuality have specific needs and are treated differently than other persons, which might negatively affect their well-being. Booth (2020) noted that the acronym LGBTQAI+ is currently considered the most inclusive and recognized for those who do not identify as straight or cisgender.

In Indian context, according Indian Pinal Code 377, homosexuals were considered and treated as criminals. On 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018 the IPC 377 was ruled out and decriminalised. (Lama, B., 2020).

Now, by law, LGBTQAI+ are not criminals and so very few celebrities are now openly declaring themselves as a member of LGBTQAI+ community and coming out of their closets, but still homophobia and non-acceptance by the society is a common picture.

L stands for Lesbian,  
G stands for Gay  
B stands for Bisexual,  
T stands for Transgender  
Q stands for Queer  
A stands for Asexual  
I stands for Intersex  
‘+’ means there are some more forms of sexual minorities which can be accommodated here. Except Transgender, almost all other homosexual variations are invisible.



Parents / care takers / guardians / allies of LGBTQAI+ have their own specific information needs like LGBTQAI+ members. Do the public libraries try to fulfil information needs of LGBTQAI+ members and their parents / caretakers / guardians?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Mehra and Hernandez (2016) pointed out that, following a four-year period of legalisation that helped bring homosexuality out of the closet in this communally conservative country, India's Supreme Court recently reinstated a prohibition on gay sex on December 11, 2013, after a four-year period of decriminalisation. In light of such punishment and denial of LGBT human rights in India, this chapter proposes a library manifesto for progressive change in support of this neglected and "invisible" group.

Ford (2017) discussed about a totally new angle, in the sense, from library staff point of view, if any library staff is a member of LGBTQAI+ community and if he / she / they are ‘Out’, his / her /their sexual harassment in the library needs to be stopped, it may be by the staff itself or the patrons.

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Dhanya and Thanuskodi (2021) determined the obstacles that India's transgender population experiences in terms of social life and information needs. A literature review looked into the possibility of developing community libraries or Library-cum-Resource Centres (LRC) in India for the benefit of the transgender population. READ (Rural Education and Development) is a successful community library model that might be reproduced and altered to start similar projects across India's transgender-populated areas, according to the report, limitations and implications thereof.

Siegel et.al. (2020) claimed that, while prior studies have looked into the information needs of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and queers (LGBTQ), none have looked into librarian confidence in addressing LGBTQ-themed information needs or the elements that influence this confidence. The authors utilised a mixed-methods survey to analyse academic librarians' knowledge and opinions on sexual orientation and gender identity-related information requests. Three variables were found based on an exploratory factor analysis: the inquirer's duty of care/vulnerability, the public visibility of the work performed, and personal biases and prejudices. These variables may limit or influence the ability to address LGBTQ information requirements in some way.

Freeman (2011) stated that, Queer (used in this context to refer to all members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning communities) individuals typically have neutral-to-negative attitudes towards public libraries. This review of the contemporary scholarly literature focuses primarily on the relationship between the queer community and the public libraries inside their own communities, and how the public library's ability (or lack thereof) to meet the information needs of queer youth influences the opinions of the queer community towards the public library over time

Because of the delicate nature of these information demands, Schaller (2011) suggested that LGBT youth information seekers' primary concerns are confidence and privacy, as they wish to stay anonymous as queer people. This demand for privacy also applied to self-identified LGBT persons, who (rightfully) feared that if their queer status became public knowledge, they would face hostility in public contexts (Curry, 2005).

Mehra and Braquet (2006) recommended that libraries develop strategies for meeting the needs of queer youth at all stages of the coming out process. They further advocated for libraries to become a resource in their communities for queer individuals of all ages to seek information to further their knowledge about their queer self-identity. Mehra and Braquet also called for libraries to become gateways to other geographically-related services for the queer community that queer patrons may be previously unaware of.

Williams and Deyoe (2014) discussed about public and academic library collections in the United States provide books that reflect varied families and life experiences to the children, young adults, and future teachers they serve. The authors evaluated the extent to which libraries collect juvenile fiction featuring characters from racial and ethnic minorities, characters with disabilities, and characters who identify as LGBTQ using checklists and OCLC holdings. They also assessed youth-diversity holdings by collection expenses and allocated public libraries to Conspectus categories.

Hays (2020) compares how self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students use the library within a campus culture centre supporting LGBTQ students to how they use the main

campus library. This research focuses on how LGBTQ students' library needs may alter depending on where those collections are located. While there has been a lot published on library pluralism, diversity, and multiculturalism, there have been surprisingly few studies by librarians attempting to collaborate with minority student cultural centres on campus. This study directly questions LGBTQ students who use the LGBTQ Resource Center about their needs and usage habits in each library collection through an in-depth survey. By directly learning from students, it is possible to establish claims about best practises for outreach, collection development, and information literacy techniques that are relevant to LGBTQ students, who may have distinct needs for collections in different spaces. Naidoo (2014) underlines the need of having culturally diverse print and digital library resources, as well as how librarians may foster cultural understanding through library activities that reflect the diversity of their communities and the world at large.

Kitsune (2015) stated that, embodying the experience of the LGBTQ community remains a serious challenge within the Library and Information Science (LIS) field, even in the context of politically progressive organizations and projects. While some information spaces today, such as libraries and archives, claim to support LGBTQ culture—as do many media texts and artistic works—those claims mislead in so far as these spaces fail to take into account or equitably represent transgender issues and identities.

Wexelbaum (2017) discussed many issues like, “The State of LGBTQ Library Resources and Services around the World; LGBT Library Resources and Services as Legal and Ethical Obligation; LGBTQ Mobile Device Ownership, Internet Access, and Social Media Preferences Rapid Expansion, Use of Social Media to Promote LGBTQ Information; Challenges to Serving LGBTQ Populations through Social Media”

Morales et al. (2014) suggests that librarians actively promote a social justice agenda within our libraries and in the communities we serve. In order to achieve this vision, we must recognise that many of our current practises reinforce existing structures of inequity and privilege, and we must utilise our services and resources to promote, document, and encourage diversity and social justice actions in librarianship and society.

Although LGBT children use libraries (Rothbauer, 2004), negative adult experiences with libraries lead to the belief that libraries are another heteronormative public service where they have no place (Pruitt, 2010).

During their coming-out and self-identification processes, queer adolescents largely use libraries as a source of information (Hamer, 2003). As contemporary public libraries fail to address information demands connected to the coming-out process (Hamer, 2003) and the development of a queer self-identity (Encarnacion, 2005; Mehra and Braquet, 2006), LGBT people turn to other sources for answers.

LGBTQ people commonly use the Internet, alternative bookstores, and members of the queer community as knowledge sources to make up for the absence of library support (Pruitt, 2010). As LGBT youth mature into queer adults, stereotypes about the library as a location separate from the queer experience become entrenched, resulting in fewer library utilisation and other public services (Helms, 2004; Pruitt, 2010; Thistlethwaite, 2002).

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Although not all queer adults hold negative views of libraries (Fikar and Keith, 2004), and not all queer youth have negative experiences with public libraries (Curry, 2005), public library service to the queer community is frequently haphazard and out-of-date, resulting in a reduced ability to meet queer individuals' contemporary needs. More research into the changing information demands of the gay community as a whole is required.

Furthermore, a large body of recent research encourages libraries to continue to train staff on how to interact with queer people in order to meet the information needs of the queer community (Helms, 2004; Thistlethwaite, 2002); the literature also expresses the need for libraries to constantly and actively expand their holdings of queer-related materials that are both academic and general interest in nature (Helms, 2004; Thistlethwaite, 2002). (Encarnacion, 2005; Mehra and Braquet, 2006).

The present literature agrees that queer youth's major information need is information to help them with the coming out process.

The necessity of supporting LGBT youth's information requirements has been recognised in the literature, as this group is more likely to face prejudice, suicidal impulses, and social stigma as they come to grips with their sexual identity than other groups in their age bracket (Mehra and Braquet, 2006).

Because queer individuals typically come from non-queer parents, Mehra and Braquet (2006) saw the importance of providing queer youth with the opportunity to develop internal coping mechanisms for dealing with prejudice. Queer youth do not "have parents who teach coping skills for dealing with discrimination and intolerance."

The goal of meeting queer youth's information needs was also hailed as a necessity in recent literature due to its potential for saving lives (Encarnacion, 2005), preventing AIDS (Hamer, 2003), lowering suicide rates (Mehra and Braquet, 2006), and increasing the interior comfort that queer youth have with self-identification (Mehra and Braquet, 2006). (Curry, 2005).

Queer teenagers are more likely to use remotely accessible OPACs to search library catalogues for queer-appropriate materials than they are to visit the library in person, according to many recent studies (Hamer, 2003; Rothbauer, 2004).

Because of a patron's unfamiliarity with the regulated language required to search library OPACs, these searches were frequently unsuccessful (Curry, 2005). Queer patrons were more likely to use language they were familiar with from other sources (such as television, other queer people, or other media) than the standard vocabulary used by most libraries (Adler, 2009; Rothbauer, 2004).

The absence of readily available resources irritated queer patrons as well.

Curry (2005) advocated for the growth of LGBTQ literature holdings as well as staff training on how to respond to these questions. This is in line with Encarnacion's (2005) study of LGBT collection development, which recommended more staff training to support the gay community with their periodical needs. Queer individuals who have completed their first self-identification and coming out processes often have information demands similar to the general population: self-help literature, health-related materials, business-related materials, and other general

interest resources (Pruitt, 2010). Indeed, according to Pruitt (2010), many LGBT people have self-censored their access to public libraries because they believe the publications they want are too contentious (because to their queer nature) to be included in public library collections. The homosexual community and libraries don't always get along. On two levels, libraries face queer-related problems. The older generation argues that libraries are still heteronormative and homophobic since they did not support their information requirements during their formative coming-out experiences. Older LGBT people have less faith in libraries to protect their secrets or meet their information needs. Younger LGBT people, on the other hand, do not believe they require the assistance of a public library. Though LGBT youth may use libraries as a doorway to the Internet, I doubt that many of them associate this use with the library supporting them; rather, the library serves as a portal to what is beneficial. According to the research and my personal experience, the LGBT community does not anticipate or require libraries to change. Queer people have dealt with information gaps in the past and feel they will be able to do so again in the future. If libraries wish to promote queer patronage and improve gay people's attitudes toward public libraries, it's up to them to do the outreach, not the other way around.

Members of the queer community write a big amount of the literature. Although anyone can study queer studies, the majority of those who are interested are members of the gay community. This could lead to a lack of external neutrality, skewing the outcomes of studies into the information needs and goals of the LGBT population. Because of the leading nature of the questions in these research, libraries may be over-emphasized in their value to the gay community. Almost without exception, the current work examines queer library usage in metropolitan (Pruitt, 2010) and semi-urban (Pruitt, 2010) environments with significant academic institutions (Schaller, 2011). Research in rural areas would be challenging by definition, but it would be valuable in the end because these gay people are often the most underserved of any LGBT geographic group.

Mehra and Braquet (2011) presented an exploratory practice-based framework that identifies strategic goals, objectives, and activities for each of the five areas of modern-day reference, namely – access to electronic resources, user instruction, library commons, outreach liaison, and virtual reference – with a focus on meeting the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) people during the coming out process.

According to Albright (2006), libraries, as a cultural repository and community centre, are obligated to provide materials, programmes, and exhibits that reflect the various and varying parts of society, including the LGBT population. There should be no conflicts, personal opinions, or prejudices that prevent the authorities from providing these services.

### **Some Indian Initiatives**

- ✓ Libraries in India have not been at the forefront of eradicating the deep-seated stigma against transgender people in Indian society. Only in 2016 did a transgender library open in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, with the goal of serving as a resource centre to raise knowledge of ambisexual persons and those who do not fit into the traditional binary gender conventions. (Reetika, 2019)
- ✓ In 2016, Thiruvananthapuram's State Central Library became the first public library in Kerala to accept a member of the LGBTQ community. Sheethal Shyam, a transgender activist, received a membership card from then-Minister of Education C. Raveendranath, announcing the government's support for trans-friendly

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programmes. Sheethal emphasised her need for more transgender-related resources in libraries. (TNN, 2016)

- ✓ In 2018, the Government PDDU Divisional Library in Kota, Rajasthan, granted Sahiba, a transgender woman, lifetime membership as a gesture of support for the tremendous efforts being made across the country to address transgender issues. (Quazi, 2018)
- ✓ R. Gunavathi, a transgender, postgraduate in psychology, started a library in NGO Colony, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, on February 14, 2020, with the goal of revitalising the lives of transgender persons. (Special Correspondent, 2020)
- ✓ The Union Government should implement the necessary policy changes to ensure that transgender people have access to library services. The Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, which is part of the Ministry of Culture, helps public libraries all around the country improve their services. (Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation, 2021)
- ✓ In 2019, Uttar Pradesh, which has India's greatest population of transgender people, lay the groundwork for the country's first transgender university. (PTI, 2021)

### **Developing RAINBOW model for Public libraries**

**R**eference service as a tool to communicate with the LGBTQAI+ community and their families, friends, opponents **A**lly of LGBTQAI+ and their parents by providing Authentic and up-to-date information about the LGBTQAI issues.

**I**ncrease visibility of LGBTQAI+ materials in the library by including them in regular displays or featuring them in pathfinders or book lists.

**N**on-binary, gender fluid identities in catalogues / indexes.

**B**ibliographies of LGBTQAI+ resources including English literature as well as local language.

**O**ut / coming out easier with the help of Library

**W**orks by and works on LGBTQAI+ are included in the library collection.

### **Recommendations and way forward:**

1. PRIDE month (June) celebration.

Stonewall Riots:

The **Stonewall riots** (also known as the **Stonewall uprising**, **Stonewall rebellion**, or simply **Stonewall**) were a series of spontaneous protests by members of the gay community in response to a police raid that began in the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Lower Manhattan in New York City. Patrons of the Stonewall, other Village lesbian and gay bars, and neighborhood street people fought back when the police became violent. The riots are widely considered the watershed event that transformed the gay liberation movement and the twentieth-century fight for LGBT rights in the United States. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stonewall\\_riots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stonewall_riots) Accessed on 6.6.2020) From 1970, the month of June is celebrated as Pride month all over the world.

Some examples of PRIDE month celebration in libraries are presented here:

A. In honor of National Pride Month, in June 2021, the Leatherby Libraries, USA presented a virtual display of titles that honor and provide understanding and education about the LGBTQIA+ community, especially at Chapman

University, USA. In previous years, the Leatherby Libraries has celebrated Pride Month with in-person book displays, as in 2015 and 2016. Puentes, M., & Carson, D. (2021)

B. In honour of Pride Month, UCF Library teachers and staff have recommended books, movies, and music from the library's collection that feature a diverse range of gay authors and characters. "UCF Remembers," a week-long series of events commemorating the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting, will also take place at UCF in June. Continue reading to view the complete list, descriptions, and catalogue links for the 30 LGBTQIA-themed works recommended by UCF Library personnel. These and other volumes can also be found on the second (main) floor, adjacent to the bank of two elevators, in the Featured Bookshelf exhibit. Haught, Megan M. (2019)

2. Collaboration with LGBTQAI+ friendly Counsellor / Lawyer / local Police department / Doctor / Psychiatrist / Psychologist / Social worker / NGOs working for welfare of LGBTQAI+ community. Calling them for lectures on different occasions, so that the society around will come to know about this subject.

3. Collection development policies to specifically include LGBTQAI+ related material, with special emphasis on scientific material in the local languages. Eg. Mr. Bindu Madhav Khire (Samapathik Trust, Pune; Bindu Queer Foundation) had published scientific fact books on homosexuality in Marathi (local language)

(Anon, n.d.).

Queer Ink is a queer-owned media company based in Mumbai, India. We are implementing our (2020-2030) next ten-year vision of changing the popular narrative of LGBTQIA+ India. We will do this by curating, developing and promoting such works in print, across screens and languages, in collaboration with Storytellers, Experts and Funders (Anon, n.d.).

These materials will create confidence among library staff while providing different library and information services as well as among closeted homosexual members and their parents.

4. Including proper subject headings while cataloguing / indexing.

5. Reference service with confidence to sexual minority member readers.

6. Formation of Focus groups to know LGBTQAI+ community members and their ally's information needs..

7. Maintain confidentiality and be ally of LGBTQAI+ member readers, so that they will feel Library as a safe and prejudice free place and Library as an ally.

8. Librarian training to gain familiarity with publishers or sources for LGBTQAI+ materials including the utilization of local book stores or community groups.

9. Training library staff to work with diverse populations, specifically LGBTQAI+ patrons.

10. Library staff- tolerant, open minded, unbiased, unprejudiced, impartial, anti-discrimination, non aligned, acceptor, understanding, non judgemental

11. Build rapport, gain trust of the patrons and the society around so that they will approach the library to share their needs.

12. Focus on local language collection development (scientific and literary works) related to LGBTQAI+.

13. Inclusion of LGBTQAI+ community member as a library staff at work place & avoiding discrimination, bully of any LGBTQAI+ staff member in the library.

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