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Rachel S. Wexelbaum

*Saint Cloud State University*, [rswexelbaum@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:rswexelbaum@stcloudstate.edu)

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# GLOBAL PROMOTION OF LGBTQ LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Rachel Wexelbaum

## Introduction

People around the world do not have equal access to traditionally published LGBTQ information resources. Censorship, legalized persecution of LGBTQ people, poverty, lack of native language publishing industries, and cultural differences in information sharing all contribute to global LGBTQ information inequities. At the same time, the number of people with smart phones and wireless Internet is outstripping the number of people who live within a reasonable distance to a physical library<sup>1</sup>. LGBTQ information seekers use social media and Web 2.0—often without intervention from librarians—to research and exchange knowledge and resources in online communities of like-minded people.

Wikipedia, YouTube, blog feeds, Twitter, Facebook, GoodReads, LGBTQ social media apps, and other media channels currently serve as alternatives to library resources and services for LGBTQ information seekers around the world. While social media and Web 2.0 appear to increase access to LGBTQ information, the authority, validity, objectivity, and safety of these unregulated information resources varies widely. As content creators predominantly come from those nations with the widest economic, cultural, and linguistic reach, the artifacts that LGBTQ information seekers locate may provide no answers to their local realities. At the same time, LGBTQ content creators from nations most in need of such information may jeopardize their safety by posting their work online or lack an appropriate venue for their work. Public and academic librarians who wish to provide outreach to LGBTQ information seekers should join their online communities and connect a diverse population of local and global users to legitimate, relevant LGBTQ information resources and services.

## The State of LGBTQ Library Resources and Services around the World

LGBTQ library resources and services in most countries remain an unknown entity. Availability of traditionally published native language LGBTQ materials varies widely in countries where governments sanction the marginalization of LGBTQ people. If librarians in those countries are collecting LGBTQ resources, they must take care with how they make traditional resources accessible, how they promote those resources to users, or how they will address such resources and services in international surveys. People living in countries that criminalize LGBTQ existence in person or in print may generate “born digital” LGBTQ content such as blogs, podcasts, Facebook groups, Twitter accounts, and Wikipedia content, thus bypassing the library completely for LGBTQ information.

A young queer person who may have access to a physical library in his or her town may hesitate to approach a reference desk and ask for a book about queer people. The phenomenon of LGBTQ library anxiety would definitely take place in countries that criminalize LGBTQ existence. Librarians in countries that criminalize LGBTQ existence may hesitate or flat out refuse to add LGBTQ-affirming materials to their collections due to state-sanctioned prejudice or fear for their own safety. In countries with limited

native language publishing output, libraries often must pay more for translations of global bestsellers and award winning titles; this is especially so if they purchase access to electronic versions of these titles<sup>2</sup>.

A complete global directory of LGBTQ collections does not exist. The most comprehensive list reveals that at least forty independent LGBTQ-specific library collections exist around the world, the vast majority in English-speaking countries<sup>3</sup>. More than half of these collections exist as independent archives or museums, and twenty per cent exist in higher education institutions. While some public libraries collect LGBTQ-specific materials, and may even have a special section in the library for LGBTQ materials, not all of them promote their LGBTQ holdings to the public. In fact, the movement to “de-segregate” LGBTQ collections in public libraries, to integrate LGBT fiction with the rest of the fiction for example, often makes it difficult for interested library users to locate LGBT books in libraries<sup>4</sup>. If curious queers in disadvantaged or hostile environments have Internet access, they will most likely attempt to search for LGBT information, books, and films on their own.

Most research literature on LGBT library resources and services—as well as library resources and services for marginalized populations—comes from “first world” English-speaking countries. While homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, and transphobia still exist in these countries, their laws protect freedom of expression and the civil rights of all individuals. This manifests in libraries having the privilege of providing access to library resources and services to all individuals in their communities without fear of professional censure, imprisonment, torture, or execution. Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands also enjoy such privilege. Little if any published material exists on LGBT library resources and services in southern and eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East (including Israel), Africa, or Asia.

In 2013, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) stated that, “substantial discussions of issues related to library services for LGBTQ community members have not taken place at IFLA.” This resulted in the launch of the LGBTQ Users Special Interest Group, supported by the Acquisition and Collection Development Section, in December 2013<sup>5</sup>. Although the American Libraries Association (ALA) Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender (GLBT) Roundtable has had a profound influence on LGBT library practices in the United States and other countries, no federal or state laws of any nation mandate that libraries must acquire LGBT resources or provide services specifically for LGBT patrons.

### LGBT Library Resources and Services as Legal and Ethical Obligation

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) identified “five core legal obligations of states with respect to protecting the human rights of LGBT persons”. These include “1) protect individuals from homophobic and transphobic violence, 2) prevent torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of LGBT persons, 3) decriminalize homosexuality, 4) prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and 5) respect freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly”<sup>6</sup>. LGBT people, even in countries with advanced civil rights protections, face microaggressions<sup>7</sup>, discrimination, abuse, health disparities, and unsafe physical spaces around the world<sup>8</sup>.

In the IFLA Internet Manifesto 2014, Section 3, “The role and responsibilities of library and information services”, states at the very top of the list that libraries have the responsibility of “serv[ing] all of the members of their communities, regardless of age, race, nationality, religion, culture, political affiliation,

physical or mental abilities, **gender or sexual orientation, or other status**<sup>9</sup>. While librarians may want to take on this responsibility, they may find themselves walking a tightrope between compliance and subversion against the state.

Countries that suppress or criminalize LGBTQ expression or existence may not support libraries that provide resources and services that support *all* people in their communities. As nations strive to create “safe” cyberspace for children in state funded environments such as schools and libraries, such policies can also restrict or eliminate access to LGBTQ content—particularly in areas where LGBTQ existence is perceived as a threat to minors<sup>10</sup>. Websites with URLs that end in two-letter country code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs) represent the state and its norms<sup>11</sup>. This includes library websites, as the vast majority of libraries around the world receive local, state, and federal funding to persist. Depending on state control of education, freedom of the press, and freedom of expression, libraries will develop collections and services that represent national and local interests, thus making a statement about national identity. For this reason, librarians who wish to provide resources and services to LGBTQ people around the world must resist and work outside of traditional library environments with non-traditional information resources.

## LGBTQ Mobile Device Ownership, Internet Access, and Social Media Preferences

### Rapid Expansion...But in Libraries?

As of November 2014, the number of global Internet users passed 3 billion—nearly half of the world’s population<sup>12</sup>. As of January 2015, the number of active mobile connections surpassed the total world population<sup>13</sup>. According to Cisco’s Global Mobile Data Traffic Forecast 2011-2016, over 10 billion mobile devices will be connected to the Internet by 2016, with the most rapid expansion taking place in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe<sup>14</sup>. This explosion of mobile access to the Internet worldwide has expanded public access to information and education. In some developing countries, Millennials believe that they can learn independently through a mobile device to supplement or replace traditional schooling<sup>15</sup>. Libraries worldwide remain behind in addressing the needs of mobile users, whether through the creation of mobile versions of their online resources and services, or effective employment of social media to promote library resources and services<sup>16</sup>.

In 2014 IFLA published its “Internet Manifesto”. In Section 1.3, it states

*1.3 Library and information services should be essential gateways to the Internet, its resources and services. Their role is to act as access points which offer convenience, guidance and support, whilst helping overcome barriers created by differences in resources, technology, and skills.*<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, according to the live IFLA World Report, eighty six of the world’s nations—nearly half of them!—do not provide adequate Internet access to their users. Less than 40 per cent of public and research libraries in those nations offer Internet access to users<sup>18</sup>. Included in this count are South Africa, Russia, and China. Even in nations where nearly all libraries provide Internet access in libraries, no legal obligation exists to provide free unlimited Internet access for patrons<sup>19</sup>. This reality creates more barriers for LGBTQ patrons—particularly those who may prefer locating LGBTQ information online.

### LGBTQ Internet Access and Ownership of Mobile Devices

The majority of studies conducted on LGBTQ Internet users have taken place in the United States. At the same time, it may be a safe assumption to make that, around the world, LGBTQ populations may be

more likely than cisgender heterosexual populations to have access to the Internet and mobile devices. LGBTQ individuals are cited for early adoption of emerging technologies, online spaces, and social media<sup>20</sup>.

LGBTQ people, including LGBTQ people in countries historically unfriendly to LGBTQ populations, perceive the Internet as a “safe space”<sup>21</sup>. Those who have access to the Internet through personal smartphones, tablets, or laptops create social media accounts and join a wide variety of LGBTQ social, academic, and professional networks. Those who cannot afford mobile devices may visit Internet cafés and, if unfettered by government-mandated filtering or the blocking of particular sites altogether, will attempt to reach out to other LGBTQ people through more indirect means. LGBTQ social media users may depend on pseudonyms and a wide variety of IP addresses to use LGBTQ social media or create LGBTQ content. This includes LGBTQ Wikipedia contributors from countries where LGBTQ identity and expression remains illegal.

In the Wikipedia community, LGBTQ Wikipedia contributors maintain anonymity through their own actions and the loyalty of fellow Wikipedians. Some LGBTQ Wikipedia contributors do not create user profiles, and simply log in to Wikipedia to make edits; the IP addresses from devices used are recorded in the “View History” page of every entry. Some LGBTQ Wikipedia contributors from countries that criminalize LGBTQ existence may choose to create user profiles with names that do not reflect their true gender identity or ethnicity. These people are “known” in the LGBT Wikimedia community: out of respect for their privacy and safety LGBT Wikimedians will not “out” them in any forum or publication. In discussions where these LGBT Wikimedians cannot be present, participants will only refer to these people by their Wikipedia username.

### Social media preferences

Global data on social media preferences does not make specific mention of LGBTQ media preferences. At the same time, it appears that a greater percentage of LGBTQ individuals around the world have access to the Internet, mobile devices, and online spaces<sup>22</sup>. For this reason, we might be able to make the assumption that LGBTQ social media preferences in different countries may mirror those of the mainstream populations. Librarians must take generational differences into account, as those who have used social media and mobile technologies since childhood may prefer different media channels than older generations. English language proficiency may also play a role in social media preferences for LGBTQ populations in non-English speaking countries. Finally, if governments monitor individual Internet activity through well-known mainstream social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, LGBTQ populations may seek out alternative social media channels.

The most comprehensive data collected on LGBTQ social media usage has come from American market research companies<sup>23</sup>. Community Marketing Inc. (CMI) has also conducted a marketing research survey on LGBTQ people in China. CMI gathered market research data on LGBTQ individuals in China through collaboration with an organization called Shanghai LGBT Professionals, “a non-profit network for gay and lesbian employees and platform for dialogue and cooperation with companies across China on LGBT inclusion”<sup>24</sup>. Shanghai LGBT Professionals had partnered with 20 LGBTQ-friendly organizations in China to conduct their survey. Approximately 8,000 individuals from different regions of China completed the survey. The majority of respondents were young adults, as they were most likely to be out and involved in China’s increasingly visible LGBTQ community. While the number of participants is small, and primarily from educated, affluent backgrounds, it is enormous considering that China still does not have

civil rights laws to address discrimination or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, and Internet monitoring and censorship is a government-approved practice. As the majority of Chinese young adults surveyed had smartphones, information access through these devices is very important to them. This population enjoys using LGBTQ mobile apps and reading LGBTQ websites and blogs<sup>25</sup> which is a similar online information consumption pattern as American LGBTQ individuals surveyed by CMI<sup>26</sup>.

Some studies exist on LGBTQ media preferences for advertising in other countries, which may prove informative to librarians in those countries who wish to promote their LGBTQ resources and services to LGBTQ populations. In general, however, more research is needed on LGBTQ social media preferences in other regions of the world.

### LGBTQ Information Seeking through Social Media

In the past, physical spaces such as bars, cafés, bookstores, and libraries have played a role in building LGBT community and providing LGBT-related information resources to all interested people. In the twenty-first century, even in nations that criminalize LGBT existence or behavior, librarians can still provide access to reliable, authoritative information on LGBT health issues, law, immigration, and relationships—as well as leisure reading and media with significant LGBT characters and content—in online environments. Roughly half of LGBT youth use the Internet to gather information and seek connection with others during the “coming out” process<sup>27</sup>. Social media channels present an exciting opportunity for librarians around the world to reach out to LGBT individuals and organizations to determine their information needs and promote the LGBT-related resources and services that they do have.

Historically, LGBTQ populations have been early adopters of online spaces, as well as pioneers in digital content creation<sup>28</sup>. LGBTQ individuals can participate in online activities through pseudonyms and alternate identities if they wish. The Internet also gives LGBTQ individuals opportunities to meet and exchange information with other LGBTQ people from around the world. While language, national social media preferences, and government Internet filtering and website blocking often impact the reach of LGBTQ individuals in particular countries to all the world’s information resources, access to local or national LGBTQ online social networks still benefits LGBTQ individuals. Global organizations that serve LGBTQ populations of minority religions and cultures also create online presences to bring people together and provide support.

Social media has provided LGBTQ populations with spaces that they perceive as “safe” for coming out and finding support<sup>29</sup>. Around the world, LGBTQ individuals use social media to locate information about sexual health, transitioning, safe ways to come out, and legislation that affects LGBTQ individuals. They also use social media to find friends, sexual partners, significant others, social groups or political groups. Last but not least, LGBTQ individuals may employ social media to look for LGBTQ books and media for entertainment—or to find forums where they can discuss books and films.

As of 2015, no official directory of LGBTQ online spaces exists. Online spaces are often ephemeral, and may only be accessible on certain platforms. No one has noted the national origins of the social media administrators or content creators, so no clear picture exists on LGBTQ-specific social media activity around the world. In 2013, a poster on LGBTQ wedding site PrideZillas.com shared a list published by gaydatingsites.net of the top 100 most frequently liked LGBTQ Facebook pages published in English.

Twenty percent of those pages focus on LGBTQ populations in other countries such as Scotland, Denmark, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Russia. They also focus on global populations such as Latinos/as, Arabs, Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists<sup>30</sup>.

I decided to search on Facebook for other LGBTQ Facebook pages published in Spanish, French, German, Russian, Turkish, Arabic, and Chinese<sup>31</sup>. I used the native language terms for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and LGBT. Facebook pages in Spanish, French, and German included pages focused on particular nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures who spoke those languages. The most popular page categories varied; Community pages were most popular for Spanish speakers and French speakers, while the most popular pages for German speakers were for events, a magazine, and a community organization. There were significantly fewer German LGBTQ Facebook pages than there were for French and Spanish; this could result from the fact that fewer German speakers exist than Spanish or French speakers, or because German LGBTQ social media users may prefer other social media channels to connect. There were very few Arabic language LGBTQ Facebook pages; the most popular were for movies, community groups, and a book store. Turkish language searches for LGBTQ pages, surprisingly, retrieved Facebook pages for the International Lesbian Gay Transgender Association (IGLTA), International Gay & Lesbian Travel, and Lesbian and Gay Inter-University Organizations. No LGBTQ Facebook pages existed for Russian or Chinese speakers—at least, none using globally recognized queer terminology.

Slight cultural differences exist in regard to LGBTQ-specific social networking sites. I conducted searches through the Google search engines of the United States, Mexico, France, Germany, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Hong Kong, South Africa, and Israel to find out what LGBTQ, gay, and lesbian social media sites they used. The searches revealed that several English LGBTQ-specific social networking sites consistently appear in the first top ten results from each country, but native language searches for in those sites retrieve very different results. In only two countries studied—Germany and Russia—were native language LGBTQ, gay, and lesbian social media sites as plentiful as those in English. If social media sites had apps for mobile devices, those often proved more popular than the web-based media, particularly in countries where LGBTQ existence and expression is at risk.

In the past, physical spaces such as bars, cafés, bookstores, and libraries have played a role in building LGBTQ community and providing LGBTQ-related information resources to all interested people. In the twenty-first century, when queer existence remains illegal in eighty countries<sup>32</sup>, librarians can still provide access to reliable, authoritative information on LGBTQ health issues, law, immigration, and relationships—as well as leisure reading and media with significant LGBTQ characters and content—in online environments. Social media channels present an exciting opportunity for librarians around the world to reach out to LGBTQ individuals and organizations to determine their information needs and promote the LGBTQ-related resources and services that they do have.

### Use of Social Media to Promote LGBTQ Information

Research on LGBTQ individuals and their Internet and social media usage often biases toward and privileges those LGBTQ people on the “right side” of the digital divide. Those using the Internet and social media often own at least one mobile device that allows them to do so. LGBTQ individuals in nations where they may be at risk may or may not use libraries for Internet access if they perceive that librarians work in tandem with the government or if they perceive libraries as unsafe spaces. As libraries push more of their collections, resources, and services online, they should also continue to collect

physical LGBTQ resources whenever possible, and communicate through local LGBTQ social media channels that those resources exist at the library.

Most published research about LGBTQ social media usage addresses undergraduates and sexual minority youth, as well as gay and bisexual men<sup>33</sup>. Studies on usage of social media to connect with other people for friendship, romantic relationships, or sex are common<sup>34</sup>, along with the use of the Internet and social media to locate health information<sup>35</sup>. Libraries are slowly transitioning from a focus on collection development to a focus on community development, which would include reaching out to vulnerable populations through social media<sup>36</sup>.

LGBTQ-friendly librarians working and living in unsafe environments for LGBTQ information and people must develop creative strategies to serve patrons in need of LGBTQ-related information. While some information professionals promote information resources at HIV/AIDS related events and community organization gatherings, others infiltrate social media and other Web 2.0 tools to make LGBTQ-related information accessible to everyone, not just to local audiences but the world at large. Librarians can employ the same social media strategies as organizations that provide health information to LGBTQ populations<sup>37</sup>. Also, librarians can communicate information about LGBTQ books, magazines, or online resources through YouTube and share those videos through Twitter, a more universal social media channel around the world than Facebook<sup>38</sup>. Perhaps the best strategy for librarians to use for promoting LGBTQ library resources and services through social media is to have people from the LGBTQ community take on this role as “library promoters”. Librarians can “befriend” LGBTQ community leaders, ask to visit centers of LGBTQ activity, and engage in dialogue about LGBTQ library resources and services, whether or not people have access to the LGBTQ information or resources that they would like, or generate interest in reading clubs or use of library space for support groups. The LGBTQ community, if they have reached a certain comfort level with the librarian, may discuss their social media usage, their media preferences, and what the library could do to fill in information or Internet access gaps for this community. If librarians must make a report to their compliance-focused director, they do not have to state that this feedback came specifically from the LGBTQ community. Instead, they can simply state that this feedback and requests came from *the community*. Data such as this would come in handy to explain declines in gate counts and circulation, and may spur a library to provide more online resources and services for all users.

### Challenges to Serving LGBTQ Populations through Social Media

LGBTQ populations living in unsafe physical environments, including countries that monitor Internet usage and LGBTQ-related activities, may not speak openly about their online information needs or preferences. In these environments, locating LGBTQ participants for research studies would prove incredibly difficult and might not be supported by local or state grants. For these reasons, the majority of studies conducted on LGBTQ Internet and social media use have taken place in spaces that protect LGBTQ civil rights, freedom of expression, or both<sup>39</sup>.

Social media trends, particularly among marginalized communities, change over time. This is especially the case for youth who may not want to be associated with social media channels that older family members may use. In situations where governments may monitor native language social media channels, such as in China or Russia, LGBTQ populations will seek alternate media. English, French, or German fluency can open many doors if their wish is to connect and share information with people

around the world. If LGBTQ individuals wish to focus on connecting with local communities, they may create an online space using a locally popular social media channel to do so, using “code words” to intimate that the site is for LGBTQ socialization. The group may shift their space from one media channel to another if they feel that they are under scrutiny or if younger or more tech-savvy members find a different media that meets their needs.

Internet censorship of LGBTQ individuals and content is very real. During the time of writing this article, Lane Raspberry posted to the LGBT Wikimedia Outreach listserv that Wikipedians in Azerbaijan had been kidnapped and tortured for publishing “political propaganda” on Wikipedia<sup>40</sup>. LGBT Wikipedians from countries that criminalize LGBTQ existence and information sharing must contribute to Wikipedia using pseudonyms and roaming IP addresses. As libraries around the world provide space for Wikipedia parties, it is possible that librarians around the world may find themselves taking a stand on civil rights issues in their countries that they have not imagined.

In 2012, Facebook estimated that they had 83 million “fake” accounts. When they made this information public, their stock prices plummeted<sup>41</sup>. For this reason, Facebook decided to implement its “real-name policy” for user profiles. According to the real name policy, a “real name” is “your real name as it would be listed on your credit card, driver’s license, or student ID”<sup>42</sup>. This policy has caused disproportionate harm to LGBTQ individuals, especially transgender people who may not have had formal name changes with their governments, closeted youth and other vulnerable individuals, and drag queens. While Facebook insists that their real name policy “keeps our community safe”, it endangers LGBTQ people who may not have a safe place to engage in LGBTQ-related communication using their real names. While Facebook Chief Product Officer Chris Cox issued an apology to the LGBTQ community, making the claim that “we’re going to fix the way this policy gets handled so that everyone affected here can go back to using Facebook”, the real name policy has led Facebook to deactivate the user profiles of Native Americans and other groups<sup>43</sup>. Facebook’s faux pas inspired disgruntled Facebook users to migrate to the up-and-coming Ello, a more intimate social media channel that allows people to use pseudonyms<sup>44</sup>. While it is possible that Ello may gain popularity with the mainstream in the future, at the time of this writing it lacks the user-friendly features and user protections that most regular social media users have come to expect<sup>45</sup>.

### Future Research and Future Action

Around the world, more research is needed on LGBTQ social media usage, and best practices for libraries to promote library resources and services to LGBTQ populations in their countries. As IFLA has created a special interest group to address the needs of LGBTQ library users around the world, they are well-positioned to serve as the voice of these library users, to reach the ears of IFLA and other international organizations that provide funding for research. Entities in countries that persecuted LGBTQ existence and expression would often support research and publishing initiatives related to HIV/AIDS education and prevention. Library-related research on LGBTQ populations, their information seeking behaviors, and information needs could easily fall under this umbrella. Library related research on LGBTQ populations could also fall under the umbrella of mobile education, and providing library resources and services to populations at a distance for the purposes of education and the well-being of youth.

Libraries that do not provide Internet access to their patrons should assess whether or not lack of Internet access contributes to a decline in the use of library resources and services. Librarians can

conduct casual face-to-face interviews with people in the community to find out if this is so, or can leave anonymous paper surveys with a locked box in strategic locations to find out if this is so. Data collected from interviews or surveys will provide evidence of community members' information seeking preferences. If local or national governments wish to support libraries, library directors around the world must petition for Internet access so that those without mobile devices or Internet access at home or school can learn and grow. Libraries can serve as centers for online education, which may help provoke governments into funding Internet access.

Language barriers remain in our global world. Those fluent in major European languages—English in particular—are privileged in their access to LGBTQ culture and global community, as well as the most widely distributed research on LGBTQ populations and LGBTQ library resources and services. LGBTQ individuals and communities primarily fluent in languages with a smaller global reach face a systemic information divide, which includes access to social media channels. At the same time, these groups might not come forward to announce their existence to the world if their existence is at risk in their countries. The Wikimedia Foundation has advice and best practices to reach minority language groups to encourage them to add content to Wikipedia; these practices could also be applied to library outreach<sup>46</sup>.

A trend in libraries involves the library as a supporter of content creation<sup>47</sup>. In places where libraries may not have money for LGBTQ print books, or sufficient access to LGBTQ eBooks due to cost or language barriers, librarians can support eBook publishing, Wikipedia edit-a-thons, blogging, podcasting, or digital storytelling on a secure, password protected hosting site and server where access would be limited to interested library users, or a mobile app with cloud storage specifically designed for this purpose. This has the potential to encourage LGBTQ individuals to use the library, provide security for individuals under threat, and support native language LGBTQ cultural development.

To find out how best to reach and support LGBTQ communities through social media, librarians must go into those communities and develop relationships with LGBTQ community leaders. The community leaders may be the ones to take on the duties of providing information about the library to the community through their social media channels. The community leaders could share information about library-sponsored events or new resources and services that would be of interest to LGBTQ users, and provide contact information for the library (or the particular librarian) in case anyone has any questions.

Librarians around the world should assess their library spaces—physical and online—and ask themselves whether or not these spaces are *safe spaces* for education, expression, and community building for their most vulnerable users. The building of safe space does not only benefit LGBTQ populations—it helps everyone. If libraries currently use social media to reach out to their users, user satisfaction surveys may inform librarians as to whether or not patrons feel comfortable commenting, posting, or sharing through library social media channels. It is possible that library social media may push racist, heteronormative, ableist messages of which librarians may not have awareness. In the article “Progressive LGBTQ Reference: Coming Out in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, Mehra and Braquet have published excellent lists of what librarians need to learn and commit to in order to create safe spaces for LGBTQ people in libraries<sup>48</sup>; these best practices can also guide librarians as to providing a rationale, content, and plan for social media communication with the LGBTQ community. In response to the arrest and torture of the Azerbaijani Wikipedians, libraries around the world should have serious discussions on how libraries,

their online spaces, and Wikipedia itself—would serve as global “safe spaces” for expression and education.

Librarians around the world face multiple challenges in keeping their libraries welcoming and relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They must ask difficult questions, such as how can they acquire resources on limited budgets, and why those who need information the most may not walk through their doors or visit their webpages. In an increasingly globalized world, librarians working for states that enforce censorship and criminalize the existence of racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, sexual, and differently abled minorities may find themselves walking a tightrope between compliance and social justice.

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<sup>1</sup> This is particularly the case for people living in rural or economically disadvantaged communities without access to transportation. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project report "How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities", people of color, the physically disabled, and the unemployed in the United States are more likely to report that it is difficult to visit a library than white, able, employed people. Similar patterns may emerge in other countries, particularly those that have fewer libraries to serve the population to start off with. For more information on the number of libraries per people in the population, see the 2010 IFLA World Report.

<sup>2</sup> A visit with the director of the public library in Uppsala, Sweden in November 2013 revealed that Swedish public libraries have a more expensive pay-per-view platform for eBooks in Swedish; this may also be the case for libraries in other non-English speaking countries where the number of speakers falls below a certain number and those eBooks, originally published or translated into that native language, would not have a broad global audience. Also, nations around the world still add a high VAT to eBooks; see the latest International Publishers Association report *VAT/GST on Books & E-Books: An IPA/FEP Global Special Report*, July 20, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.internationalpublishers.org/images/VAT2015.pdf>

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<sup>4</sup> In the United States, librarians have discouraged the labeling and segregation of LGBT books for fear of stigmatizing patrons and violating their privacy. In Canada, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, however, separate shelving and labeling of LGBT materials for easy access has become a common practice. Compare Naidoo's article "Over the Rainbow and Under the Radar: Library Services and Programs to LGBTQ Families" to Cooper's "Rainbow Flags and Donor Tags: Queer Materials at the Pride Library", Ederholt and Lindgren's "The Rainbow Library at Umeå City Library and The Swedish Network for LGBTQ Issues at Libraries", and Chapman's "Provision of LGBT-Related Fiction to Children and Young People in Public Libraries", which addresses both sides of this debate in public libraries in the UK.

<sup>5</sup> International Federation of Libraries and Archives (IFLA). "IFLA approves creation of LGBTQ Users SIG." Dec. 24, 2013. <http://www.ifla.org/node/8253?og=8291>

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<sup>7</sup> "Microaggressions are the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group" (Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. p. 5)

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- <sup>30</sup> As of September 2015, the original page no longer exists. The information is available through a Facebook post published by Omar Kuddus: <https://www.facebook.com/okuddus/posts/644259152261043>
- <sup>31</sup> This informal study was conducted in my home, located in the United States, on June 11, 2015 using a personal laptop with a Windows operating system and Mozilla Firefox as my browser and unfiltered Internet access. I used Facebook as well as Google to search for Facebook pages and popular LGBTQ social networking sites. Those attempting to replicate this study may find that their results may differ if conducted in restricted Internet spaces or in countries where languages other than English are spoken.
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- <sup>33</sup> Please refer to the bibliography of this chapter.
- <sup>34</sup> Please refer to the bibliography of this chapter.
- <sup>35</sup> Shelley Craig. "Connecting Without Fear: Clinical Implications of the Consumption of Information and Communication Technologies by Sexual Minority Youth and Young Adults." *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 43, no. 2 (2015): 159-168.
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- <sup>37</sup> According to reports from Business Insider and Forbes, while the distribution of Twitter users around the world changes, the United States lags behind Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Japan, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and other countries in Twitter usage.
- <sup>38</sup> Taylor & Francis. *Use of social media by the library: current practices and future opportunities*. Taylor & Francis Group, Oct. 2014.
- <sup>39</sup> Searches in Google Scholar and academic databases available through the St. Cloud State University Library have shown that most national surveys, books, journal articles, masters' theses, and dissertations cover LGBT library users and library spaces as observed in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Sweden. In addition to researchers in those countries, LGBT social media usage studies are advancing in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Turkey. It is possible that more studies exist of LGBT library users, library spaces, and social media usage in other countries, but may not be available online or in English.
- <sup>40</sup> Message from the LGBT Wikimedia listserv, May 26, 2015.
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[https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Model\\_projects/Engaging\\_a\\_different\\_language\\_or\\_cultural\\_community](https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Model_projects/Engaging_a_different_language_or_cultural_community) . Through GLAM, Wikipedia has developed projects to create wikis that embrace entire towns or cities; see "JoburgpediA" for a terrific example of this: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/JoburgpediA>

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