A Helping Hand for Queer & Questioning Youth –
Provision for Young LGBTIQ People in Irish Public
Libraries

Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

MSc in Library and Information Management

at Dublin Business School

Grant Goodwin
I, Grant Goodwin, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and this work is fully compliant with Dublin Business School’s academic honesty policy.

Signed: ____________________________

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Abstract
This research offers a review of the current state of provision for young LGBTIQ people in Irish public libraries. No previous published research exists within an Irish context, and this thesis seeks to open the discussion for Irish public libraries. Although progress in Ireland regarding LGBTIQ legal and social recognition is evident, the lack of research into public library provision forestalls attempts to develop LGBTIQ collections, and results in public libraries being overlooked in the development of national strategies to support young LGBTIQ people. This study investigates existing public library policies regarding LGBTIQ collections and patrons, undertakes a catalogue review of recommended LGBTIQ titles by county, considers existing collection practice and provision identified by librarians, and explores librarian experience with dealing with young LGBTIQ people and recognition of their Information Needs is reviewed, with consideration of the challenges present to developing this provision.

Respondents were found to be generally positive towards more engagement or training, but report little experience in actually receiving queries and requests. Most respondents broadly recognise the Information Needs of this community, but few report that strategies are currently employed to address these Needs. Engagement with the LGBTIQ community’s needs is characterised as ‘reactive’ rather than proactive, with challenges to developing collections or hosting events posed by conservative communities and a lack of awareness of what young LGBTIQ people actually wish to derive from the service. Recommendations are made for further research and collection and policy development. The potential role of the public library in addressing the current needs of young LGBTIQ people is proposed as a unique opportunity not apparently considered by either the service or the LGBTIQ community yet.
A Helping Hand for Queer & Questioning Youth – Provision for Young LGBTIQ People in Irish Public Libraries

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Context for the Proposed Research
On Friday, 29th June 2018, the Irish Minister for Children and Youth Affairs launched the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2010, the culmination of a number of government and LGBTI-organisations’ activities, including school and health intervention strategies (DCYA, 2018, p. 6). The Strategy is intended to reflect and achieve the government’s “broader commitment to continue to strive for the full inclusion of LGBTI+ people in Irish society and to build a more inclusive Ireland” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2018). The first of three goals of this Strategy, to ‘Create a Safe, Supportive and Inclusive Environment for LGBTI+ young people’ (ibid.), should catch the attention of Irish public libraries, who already strive to create safe, supportive and inclusive spaces for all members of their local communities. Despite the shared goals of the National Strategy and the public library service, there appears to be a failure to proactively interlace these programmes.

Modern Ireland is renowned for being the first country to introduce same-sex marriage through popular referendum, however the country continues to bear the legacy of a fervent religious history. Among other points of tension, this religious history has potential to impact current beliefs and practices regarding sexuality and gender diversity. Such an impact may not always be conscious, so introspection is required to review practices and beliefs and determine whether these are appropriate. In similar cultural contexts where religious belief has resulted in society rejecting the identity and value of LGBTIQ people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer – see Glossary of terms p. 85), “major developmental [crises] can occur” for young people forming these identities (Vare & Norton, 2004, p. 190).

In a public library, this rejection of LGBTIQ identities and people may manifest in a lack of provision on LGBTIQ topics and information, or in providing information that continues to vilify and debase LGBTIQ identities and people. These practices not only restrict information for LGBTIQ patrons, but “also means that heterosexual library users are less likely to come into
contact with books that provide insights into the lives of homosexuals and/ or their families” (Clyde & Lobban, 2001, p. 24). This lack of provision is a failure to serve the community: it risks harming young LGBTIQ people during their development, and restricts their broader community, in failing to give them the means to deal with something that can be unfamiliar.

Public libraries aim to serve their communities by providing a range of services, which often extend beyond the books on the shelves. Initiatives can be managed nationally to improve communities’ wellbeing, such as the Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme (Libraries Ireland, n.d.). These libraries are frequently recognised as community centres, and spaces that foster learning and opportunities. In establishing their provision, “it is reasonable to expect public library collections to reflect the diversity of their communities” (Downey, 2005, p. 86). Within an increasingly progressive Ireland, instances of restricted or inappropriate provision of LGBTIQ resources could be considered unlikely, however almost no research exists into the current state of LGBTIQ provision in an Irish context, be it positive, neutral or problematic. Equivalent studies have been undertaken in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and South Africa, but this research aims to open the investigation in an Irish context, forming the basis from which the conversation can continue meaningfully.

Positionality & Terminology
In advance of delving further into the research discussion, an acknowledgement of positionality is required. Positionality requires critical reflection in the research process (Gormally & Coburn, 2014, p. 877), as social science research increasingly recognises that “there are no neutral observers and no research is completely unbiased” (Moser, 2008, p. 384). As a white, gay, middle-class cisgendered man, there were factors that drew me to the research topic, particularly regarding my own sexuality and experience of seeking out information from a variety of places to discover more about sexuality generally. Growing up in Zimbabwe produced an awareness of the potential difficulties that arise when there is a dearth of information available from traditional information sources (such as families and schools), and where fear about one’s ‘abnormal’ sexual or gender identity is a valid response in a society which rejects LGBTIQ identities, as Zimbabwe continues to do (Chikura-Mtwazi, 2018).
Where this positionality allows for some insights into the potential research areas of the topic, it does also pose some limitations, which the researcher can only minimise where possible. As white, male and cisgendered, there are experiences and perspectives I am unable to fully understand, regardless of how empathetic I can be, and should therefore hesitate to speak on behalf of. For this reason the research focussed on librarian experience, rather than that of LGBTIQ users. Conducting research into a national Irish service while being a foreign resident might also result in oversights regarding how the service operates and is engaged with by the community. To reduce this risk, ongoing discussion with public librarians and preliminary interviews before the launch of the main research questionnaire were held, to identify potential gaps in understanding.

A final preceding note pertains to the choice of terminology included in this research. The debate regarding the choice of inclusion into the acronym, to describe the group united by a shared experience as sexual and gender minorities, has continued with numerous iterations (Iovannone, 2017), and the various standpoints of each have valid grounds, and disadvantages. The full history and debate would constitute a dissertation in itself, and will not be discussed further in this research, but for the sake of this study the acronym LGBTIQ will be used to achieve inclusivity where possible. This presents the challenge of reacting to the variety of acronyms used in previous research and studies (LGB, LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTIQ*/+, etc.), and where relevant the acronym will be modified to reflect the usage expressed in the corresponding literature.

Aims for the Proposed Research
This research project seeks to address the existing gap in knowledge regarding the state of provision in Ireland for young LGBTIQ people. Once the existing provision is identified, it can be determined if Irish public libraries already serve their LGBTIQ patrons effectively, or whether action needs to be taken to support this minority. The research question is therefore:

‘What is the current service provision in Irish public libraries for LGBTIQ young people?’

In order to answer this question, a series of research objectives have been identified:

1. Identify the existing public library policies regarding provision for young LGBTIQ people;
2. Undertake a numeric count of LGBTIQ-identified resources by county, through the online national public library catalogue system;

3. Identify existing collection practices, collaboration activities and engagement with young LGBTIQ people or organisations by Irish public libraries;

4. Evaluate the recognition among Irish public librarians of the specific Information Needs of young LGBTIQ people;

5. Ascertaining public librarian experience with handling LGBTIQ patrons and queries;

6. Examine the challenges public librarians report to encounter in developing their provision for young LGBTIQ people.

Through these research objectives, the current service provision for young LGBTIQ people in Irish public libraries can be determined, extending from policy to practice, librarian experiences and the challenges they face. This will allow the research to make recommendations where necessary for improvement in service or development.

Dissertation Structure
The initial section of this dissertation will introduce the research context and question, and provide a rationale for its investigation. This will include noting limitations of the research, and the positionality of the researcher. Chapter Two will review the literature surrounding the topic. Given the lack of pre-existing research in an Irish context, this will rely on studies undertaken in English and American contexts, with supplementary studies from South Africa, Australia, and Canada, among other international contexts. The majority of these related studies arise in an English and American context, and although there are some cultural and historic differences that would impact the development of public library service and attitudes towards LGBTIQ people, these contexts have significant similarities to allow them to serve as contextual research for an Irish study.

Chapter Three will discuss the methodology employed, the research methods, and research paradigm exercised in this study. Chapter Four will proceed from methodology to a summary of findings from the research, while Chapter Five will undertake a discussion of these findings in relation to an Irish context, and against the findings of the international body of literature discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Six will close the dissertation with concluding remarks and
recommendations for future research and practice. A self-reflection piece will be included in the Appendices.

Scope & Parameters of Research
The potential body of work that could be undertaken to investigate the relationship, experience and development of public libraries and young LGBTIQ people could constitute a larger project, as a similar study has been undertaken at Doctorate level in the United Kingdom (Chapman, 2015). To remain within specific, measurable and achievable goals (Doran, 1981, p. 36), the current study is limited to the following parameters:

Young People will broadly follow the definition of the Department for Children and Youth Affairs’ definition as young people aged 13-17 (McGrath, et al., 2010, p. 4), albeit it must be acknowledged that younger children may also require provision, particularly with nearly six hundred LGBTIQ-headed families living in Ireland (Central Statistics Office, 2016, p. 41). The LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy extends this definition to people aged 10-24 (DCYA, 2018, p. 4). In the context of this research, ‘young people’ will be primarily considered as people aged 10-17, but with acknowledgement of younger readers who may not be LGBTIQ themselves, but who have LGBTIQ parents and may therefore share some of the information needs of the older children.

LGBTIQ will be the working acronym in this research for the community whose provision will be investigated. As noted in ‘Positionality & Terminology’, this choice of acronym is intended to be as inclusive as possible, while also intended to be recognisable among research respondents who may not be aware of the ongoing debate around terminology in this community.

Public Libraries were identified as the most appropriate library service to investigate, for their role in serving communities broadly. Academic and specialist libraries would be expected to provide resources on LGBTIQ issues according to the academic programmes or specialities of their related institutions or overall mission, while school libraries will be constrained by the ethos of the school in which they exist.
Ireland will refer specifically to the Republic of Ireland, as the public libraries of the counties of Northern Ireland would follow an entirely different national standard and process, and therefore would not offer consistency of context to compare findings. Additionally, Northern Ireland is itself exceptional in the British Isles, as being the only remaining part which does not recognise same-sex marriage (Halpin, 2018), so a different set of cultural experiences would further challenge comparability for this exploratory study. The only exception to this is one of the preliminary interviews held in Northern Ireland, which was deliberately selected to offer a ‘control’ comparison against which the Irish interviews could be compared.

Librarians will be the focus of this research, due both to the time constraint of the research period, and for accessibility of the population. Although library users, and non-library users, would provide valuable insights into their experience (or lack thereof) of the library, engaging with an appropriate number of this population was identified as beyond the time and capacity constraint of this research. Librarians, on the other hand, are a suitable focus for this exploratory research which is intended to act as a starting point for further research. Their role in mediating the relationship between the community and the library’s resources is a vital component in any strategy concerning engagement and development. The term ‘librarians’ will be applied to any member of library staff responding to patron queries or managing collections, regardless of classification, from branch or assistant librarian to County Librarian.

Rationale for the Research and Proposed Contributions
Although the 2015 marriage referendum was a landmark event in Irish LGBTIQ history, and the launch of the LGBTQ+ National Youth Strategy marks further government engagement with this group, legal affirmation in one area does not necessarily indicate acceptance and support in all other areas of community life. Indeed, the need for a specialised Strategy reflects ongoing challenges facing LGBTIQ young people (DCYA, 2018, p. 3). For LGBTIQ young people, finding a space where they can safely locate good information about their experiences and identity is important in developing a stable, healthy sense of self, and can prevent poor sexual health practices
As existing research in this area in an Irish context is limited, this research will open the topic to further scrutiny.

Equivalent studies from similar contexts offer valuable guidance in the likely topics of concern and challenges that may arise in LGBTIQ provision in an Irish public library context. The importance of provision for young LGBTIQ people derives from their double vulnerability, in that they are a ‘hidden minority’ (Mehra & Braquet, 2006), and they lack the ordinary community supports to form an identity, locate information and identify role models. Young LGBTIQ people constitute a ‘hidden minority’ as they are not identifiable as belonging to the LGBTIQ community through any visible characteristics, so the public librarian is challenged to identify members of their community requiring special supports. Young LGBTIQ people cannot necessarily rely on parents, teachers or peers to provide informed advice on what they are experiencing, nor can they identify role models within their community as easily as non-LGBTIQ young people can. Providing information and literary role models within library resources can go some way toward addressing these needs. Beyond providing directly for young LGBTIQ people, public libraries also have a duty to the families and communities of LGBTIQ people, to provide them with information to come to terms with the LGBTIQ people in their lives.

A potential limiting factor to satisfactory provision for young LGBTIQ people in Irish libraries would be the legacy of the country’s religious history. It is gross generalisation to assert that all religions or religious leaders express or hold anti-LGBTIQ sentiments, however “the notion of sexual deviance is so ingrained in many traditional denominations that religion as salvation is translated to religion as oppressor for many sexually questioning youth” (Stonefish & Lafreniere, 2015, pp. 4-5). A negative attitude derived from religious belief can translate into a general stigma even among those who are not ardent believers, and from this stigma can arise discriminatory practices. Such negative attitudes can also derive simply from an inherited sense of taboo regarding LGBTIQ identities and behaviours, a taboo which in many Western societies was conceived of as ‘unmentionable’, eliciting a ‘vague horror’ among members of these societies, “a horror necessarily unexamined, since its object could not, until the last few decades, be named or discussed” (Boswell, 1995, pp. xxiii-xxiv). From such a position of being ‘unmentionable’,
developing an appropriate and suitable provision for young LGBTIQ people is a challenge for Irish public libraries.

Stigma can harm the identity formation and self-esteem of LGBTIQ young people, and discrimination can limit their options of finding validating and supportive resources and spaces. Recent Irish history is progressive in its recognition of LGBTIQ people, from the 2015 referendum for same-sex marriage, and the accompanying legal protections of the same year (Employment Equality Amendment Bill 2015, Gender Recognition Bill 2015, Children and Family Relationships Act 2015), to the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 and the appointment of the first openly gay Taoiseach that same year. However, some challenges are still in effect, such as the blood ban for a twelve month period for men who have sex with men, and the lack of legal restrictions against conversion therapy (a Bill has recently been introduced for deliberation, the Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill 2018).

Similar studies in the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, and Australia have repeatedly found that provision for LGBTIQ library users can be limited or lacking, even as the specific needs and rights of young LGBTIQ people are recognised in law and other areas of society. The factors impacting provision range from cultural beliefs and budgetary constraints, to librarian attitudes and community values. With no previous research in Irish public libraries, strategies to improve provision can only ever be limited, and potential failures cannot be identified with certainty. If provision is found to match the recent progress in LGBTIQ recognition in Irish society, Irish public libraries may serve as a benchmark of good practice that other services could emulate, but such a role cannot be undertaken when the actual status of provision for young LGBTIQ people is unknown.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The literature review identifies several keys topics in the field of this research, which this study will consider in terms of applicability to an Irish context. As research on this topic in Ireland is very limited (one similar study is underway at the time of writing), the literature arises from a range of international contexts, primarily American, English, Canadian, Australian, and South African. These cultures, although possessing distinct qualities which make transferring findings a cautious enterprise to an Irish context, do share a number of similarities to Ireland. The literature arises from primarily English-speaking countries, with shared cultural heritage (a result of historic colonialism and ongoing international relations and popular culture). These countries have legal protections in place for LGBTIQ people and have seen progress in the development of LGBTIQ acceptance in general society, yet also all have portions of the population who remain anti-LGBTIQ, where violence still occurs against this group. Distinctions in context of research are acknowledged, and a goal of this dissertation is to identify where the experiences, opportunities and challenges for Irish public libraries may differ, but their findings remain pertinent to this study, and are outlined below.

Young LGBTIQ people are at a particularly important stage in identity formation, and this may result in particular information needs not shared by their peers, who may be able to resort to families, friends, or schools for their resolution. In American and English contexts, schools and public libraries have frequently been found to offer a very limited provision, if any, for young LGBTIQ people. Some libraries and schools in fact offer admirable provision, however these remain the exception. Where traditional information resources, like families, friends, schools, and libraries, fail to provide the information young LGBTIQ people seek, they may resort to online resources, particularly in an age where personal smartphones and internet access is almost universal.

Despite the ease of access, and privacy, offered by widespread internet access and personal devices, young LGBTIQ people constitute a vulnerable group if they lack the information- and digital-literacy to navigate online spaces and applications safely, and further, lack the traditional support networks their peers enjoy to be able to develop these skills further. For public libraries
designing provision and services for this group, their particular information needs must be taken into consideration. Public libraries in the United Kingdom and United States have seen some progress in developing their LGBTIQ provision, but they have also faced challenges from their communities, their users, and even internally by staff, where LGBTIQ-material is identified as inappropriate. In an Irish context, there is opportunity to develop provision and services for young LGBTIQ people, and the secondary research offers some issues to take into consideration to ensure the development is appropriate and allows young LGBTIQ people to engage with their services.

**LGBTIQ Identity Formation**

For this research, an LGBTIQ identity is recognised through a Social Constructionist lens, where identity is not limited to the experience of romantic, emotional or sexual attraction, but is constructed “by using social and cultural resources to make meaning from this experience” (Hamer, 2003, p. 74). LGBTIQ identities frequently develop during adolescence (GLEN, 2016, p. 13), at a time when significant changes are underway already in the body and psyche. Within the Irish context, the 2016 LGBTIreland Report found the mean age of ‘knowing’ one’s LGBTI identity was 15, with the most common age being 12 (Higgins, et al., 2016, p. 22). A significant finding related to this was the gap between this self-realisation, and admitting this fact to another person, which among Irish respondents took place on average at 19, most commonly at 15 (ibid.). This reflects an ongoing concern for young LGBTIQ people, even in a country with notable progress in acceptance of LGBTIQ people, that they commonly delay admitting their identity to others for three to four years on average. The Report’s survey was undertaken before the 2015 Marriage referendum, so a likely increase in confidence in public acceptance would have resulted at about the time of the Report’s publication, however ingrained beliefs and concerns do not simply disappear quickly.

For young LGBTIQ people developing and recognising these identities, like their peers, they are likely to seek out information about what exactly these maturing identities and changes might mean. A difficult process for any young person (Fullerton, et al., 2017, p. 31), young LGBTIQ people have the additional burden of trying to formulate an identity which is sometimes lacking in role models in their immediate community, or which can be poorly represented in popular media.
through simplistic stereotypes or generalisations. Lacking role models or positive representation in society and media, young LGBTIQ people face a ‘developmental crisis’, particularly if society is deemed to devalue their identity (Vare & Norton, 2004, p. 190). Not all young LGBTIQ people will struggle in their identity formation, nor lack positive role models or representation or information about their developing identities, but for those that do, locating accurate and positive information is fundamentally important. How this information is located, and what the information actually is, can have a significant impact on the formation of these identities and the wellbeing of the young person.

Young LGBTIQ people are a ‘hidden minority’, in contrast to other minority groups, as they are not readily identifiable as such, and may have “to disclose themselves each time as being ‘queer’ during different occasions” (Mehra & Braquet, 2006, p. 11). This ‘hidden minority’ status creates a dilemma for library services as they are confronted by a ‘hidden information need’, a need to provide a service for members of their community who may not be visible, or even willing to identify themselves for fear of censure (Downey, 2005, p. 89). For librarians who design provision and services for the needs of their community, this lack of visibility is a challenge when they attempt to assess the size of the LGBTIQ population in the community, and their potential needs (Rutledge & Lemire, 2016, p. 116).

The literature review itself is subject to the dangers of ‘hidden identities’ and experiences, in that it can only reflect upon research undertaken among LGBTIQ people who are confident and self-assured enough to be able to disclose their identity to researchers. Any study of young LGBTIQ people can only report findings from those young people who have self-identified as LGBTIQ, and choose to participate in the study. Those young people who are ‘closeted’ and do not participate for fear of being identified, or who themselves are not fully conscious of their identity, are therefore a missed demographic within these studies. This has resulted in studies depicting a potentially distorted perspective of the nature and needs of LGBTIQ people, such as an American study of students which finds young LGBT people to be generally ‘talented and gifted’ and characterised by ‘academic overachievement’ (Wexelbaum, 2018, pp. 4-6). These findings derive from young LGBT students who are willing to identify themselves to researchers, yet inevitably a
‘hidden’ group will exist who are not willing, or not yet able, to identify themselves, whose characteristics and needs are therefore not accurately captured.

This inherent bias in researching a group who undergo a period of self-discovery, and can delay for various reasons for a number of years in acknowledging this to others, means research and attendant strategies may misrepresent the LGBTIQ experience out of ‘success-stories’, instead of capturing the ‘hidden’ group within the ‘hidden’ group, who may require the most support. It must be acknowledged that if the research cannot fully engage with the LGBTIQ community and its needs, the librarians who undertake the provision and services face a significant challenge in meeting the needs of this matryoshka-doll community.

A further challenge is the very range of the LGBTIQ community. Although the various groups encompassed by the umbrella term ‘LGBTIQ’ may share some experiences, as outsiders to a perceived ‘normality’ of a ‘heterosexual, cisgendered default’, they each have different experiences and therefore, different information needs. Research into LGBTIQ identities and experience recognise that “not all people who are marginalized because of their sexual orientation or gender identity are marginalised in the same way, nor do they have the same history, or face the same problems” (Iovannone, 2017). American studies have noted that among services targeted for the LGBTIQ community, provision is not even and groups get marginalised, particularly bisexuals (Howard, 2011, p. 11), trans, and queer groups (Vincent, 2015, p. 291). This has been recognised in the LGBTIreland Report, as a ‘hierarchy of risk’, in which bisexuals, trans and intersex people experience less acceptance and face greater health and wellbeing risks compared to gay men and lesbians, and advocacy is primarily undertaken for these latter groups (Higgins, et al., 2016, p. 24). Librarians therefore face the challenge of addressing the needs of ‘hidden’ groups within ‘hidden’ groups, and ‘marginalised’ groups within ‘marginalised’ groups.

Difficulty Seeking Information from Family and Friends
In the process of forming a mature identity during adolescence, and experiencing the attendant changes of this period, young people are usually able to turn to family or friends to answer the
questions which inevitably arise. These sources, which can also serve as role models in forming health identities, relationships and behaviours, or as monitors of romantic and sexual activity, may not be as available for young LGBTIQ people (Mustanski, et al., 2015, p. 221). In terms of sexuality and health particularly, young LGBTIQ people “may have fewer offline resources to address these queries” (Mitchell, et al., 2014, p. 148). Simply seeking information from family or peers can be a fraught experience if there is fear or doubt about how the queries may be received, and some parents may be “unaware or unwilling to acknowledge the sexual minority status of their LGBT children” (Magee, et al., 2012, p. 277).

In communities with ongoing or historic discrimination or stigma, young LGBTIQ people “may not be comfortable discussing sexuality with friends or family” (Mitchell, et al., 2014, p. 148), especially before they have ‘come out’. Young LGBTIQ people with additional needs, such as having disabilities, have even fewer potential mentors or supports, “possibly leading to an increased risk of societal and emotional problems” (Dykes & Thomas, 2015, p. 180), while those in rural areas have even fewer offline sources available (Mitchell, et al., 2014, p. 153). Without the traditional supports and information resources offered by families and peers, young LGBTIQ people have information needs that they will seek to address through other avenues.

Schools may not provide LGBTIQ Information

If families and friends cannot address the information needs of LGBTIQ young people, this vulnerable group could be supported by their formal schooling system. However, along with families and peers, schools have also often been found to fail to offer suitable provision for young LGBTIQ people, particularly with regards to sexual health information (Magee, et al., 2012, p. 276). In contrast to an Irish context, the literature arising from American public and school libraries must grapple with the high proportion of young LGBQ people whose schools do not include information relevant to them within their curricula (69%), or portray it negatively (Mitchell, et al., 2014, p. 148), and where “anti-gay curriculum laws actually exist in twenty states” (Rosky, 2017, p. 1465), laws which require that teachers must either actively discredit LGBTIQ identities and relationships, or omit any sexual health education entirely. This research context requires caution in transferring findings to Irish experience.
Although Ireland lacks anti-gay curriculum, its education system is still marked by the legacy of the strong religious history of the country. This legacy is evident where legislators have proposed the *Provision of Objective Sex Education Bill 2018* to enforce ‘objective and factual’ information about relationships and sexuality regardless of the religious ethos of the school. The *National LGBTI Youth Strategy* consultation process found “little or no inclusive gender, sex and LGBTI+ education” (Fullerton, et al., 2017, p. vii), and at the time of writing, the Joint Committee on Education and Skills was holding an ongoing discussion on ‘Relationships and Sexuality Education’, which identifies school-level sexual health information as generally ‘haphazard’ or even ‘non-existent’ (Joint Committee on Education and Skills (A), 2018, p. 3), with particular concern for “inadequate, inconsistent and poor quality sexuality education, particularly in schools in Ireland” (Joint Committee on Education and Skills (B), 2018, p. 5). Recent programmes, created in partnership with LGBTIQ organisations to improve LGBT experience in Irish schools, had been implemented in some schools, but “[m]ore than three-quarters... reported that no member of staff had spoken about the campaign” while they were in school, and about 60% reported the programme’s posters had not been made visible in their schools (Higgins, et al., 2016, p. 141).

Failure to provide services and information to any minority group, including LGBTIQ young people, can take two forms, as overt and covert devaluation of their needs:

> “The overt form of this devaluation focuses on the denigration, defamamation, or vilification of minority groups that majority groups perceive as abnormal. The covert form of devaluation is silencing, the failure to acknowledge the existence of others who are different from the majority.”
>
> (Vare & Norton, 2004, p. 190)

Following the 2015 marriage referendum and accompanying legal recognitions and protections in Ireland, overt forms of devaluation are less publicly or officially acceptable, especially among professional educators or librarians. However, other young people may still resort to overt forms of devaluation, among other expressions of rebelliousness or anti-social behaviour. This may manifest in bullying fellow students perceived as LGBTIQ. To challenge these overt forms of
devaluation, research into the development of an LGBTIQ collection in school libraries suggests these collections “could discourage the teasing and bullying” (Whelan, 2006, p. 49), by developing a broader climate of understanding of LGBTIQ experience through representation. In some cases, schools are seen to undertake this positive function, where young Irish LGBTI people identified the school environment as a site for “raising awareness of LGBTI identities by displaying posters, running workshops and discussing sexual orientation” (Higgins, et al., 2016, p. 70).

A significant challenge facing schools and school libraries is addressing bullying, in all its aspects. In Irish schools, bullying remains a concern, particularly given the mental health impact and raised risk of self-harm among young LGBTIQ people who are bullied (Higgins, et al., 2016, p. 24). The literature suggests that some school librarians may neglect the provision of LGBTIQ-resources for fear of challenges by parents, and “objections from administrators, community members, and students” (Garry, 2015, p. 76). This neglect gives rise to the excuse that “no gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) students are at a given school, and, therefore, no need exists to court controversy and potential challenges by providing LGBTQ materials” (Altobelli, 2017, p. 10). Neglect in this manner has been identified as self-censorship, where librarians do not collect resources for fear of the potential reprisals that may arise.

Where resources are collected, some librarians admit to trying to avoid detection and subsequent challenges by limiting access to relevant resources or “removing references to ‘homosexuality’ and related identifiers in the catalog [sic] records” (Garry, 2015, p. 76), making them less visible to potential censors, but also to actual users who need them. This hiding of resources can result in the perception that the library offers nothing for young LGBTIQ users, and a lack of ‘visible resources’ suggested not only that these were absent entirely, but that the topic itself would not be acceptable (Walker & Bates, 2016, p. 272). A failure, or irregularity, in provision for LGBTIQ young people by schools sets a greater responsibility on public libraries to ensure that this provision exists.
Historic Lack of Library Provision

Public libraries are subject to similar social values and pressures as schools, and as exercised in the family context, therefore where families and schools overtly or covertly devalued LGBTIQ people, historic provision in public libraries has been limited. In the United Kingdom, provision of LGBTIQ resources declined following the 1988 ‘Section 28’, which prohibited local authorities from ‘promoting homosexuality’ (Vincent, 2015, pp. 287-8), and in environments where LGBTIQ protections or legal recognition were limited, the provision was limited (Hamer, 2003, p. 82). In some cases, libraries “appeared to conflate gay and lesbian material with sexually explicit material” (Chapman, 2015, p. 81), which resulted in deliberate rejection of resource acquisition. For young LGBTIQ people approaching library services to seek out the resources they needed, librarian responses could be discouraging (Hamer, 2003, p75; Martin, 2006, p.38), and even librarian discomfort using terminology, such as ‘queer’, could impact a user’s experience (Martin, 2006, p. 38). Computer and internet access in public libraries can be restricted by ‘appropriate use’ settings if these are not carefully set out (Hamer, 2003, p. 87), and even the fundamental subject headings and classification systems can be unhelpful, outdated (Nowak & Mitchell, 2016, p. 7), or even stigmatising (Walker & Bates, 2016, p. 271).

An early challenge for librarians to develop their provision for young LGBTIQ people was a lack of quality published resources, as “materials lacked relevance and were perceived as depressing or negative” (Hamer, 2003, pp. 74-5). This challenge has reduced over time, as more resources for LGBTIQ people are being published and made available. Despite this, recent studies in Australia and the United Kingdom found that public libraries did not maintain a correspondingly growing collection (Clyde & Lobban, 2001, p.24; Chapman, 2014, p.6). LGBTIQ materials may still appear only infrequently on major publication lists (Walker & Bates, 2016, p. 271), which public libraries may rely on for acquisitions, but a lack of awareness among and training for library staff in LGBTIQ-related services and supports may pose a significant factor in the continued limitations in LGBTIQ collections (ibid.; DCYA, 2018, p8). Some public libraries have not attempted to explicitly restrict resources, but have instead practiced self-censorship, which is a difficult practice to identify and quantify for researchers or auditors (Downey, 2005, p. 89), as neglected collections may be excused as the result of other factors, such as budgetary constraints or a lack of demand from a potentially ‘hidden’ user group (Walker & Bates, 2016, p. 277).
Instead of self-censorship, many libraries adopt a passive service for LGBTIQ users, rather than actively developing collections for them (Downey, 2005, p. 86; Berman, 2001; Chapman, 2014, p. 3). An Australian review of public libraries found them to be ‘reactive rather than proactive’; wherein resources were provided when requested, but otherwise “no services [were]... targeted specifically at them” (Clyde & Lobban, 2001, p. 26). This arises from a public library stance of democratic provision, a position of ‘neutrality’ in order to meet the needs of all members of the community without favouring one group over another, but this stance risks underserving LGBTIQ users. A critique of this neutral stance is that “neutrality is in fact an ideological position which implicitly supports established interests” (Chapman, 2015, p. 39). In contrast perhaps to the ‘equality’ of neutrality, libraries may need to consider ‘equity’, which “recognises that historic or current conditions may pose barriers to access for certain groups and additional efforts are thus needed to remedy this” (Chapman, 2015, p. 42).

Resorting to Information Online
Where families, friends, schools, or libraries were unavailable or unappealing options to resolve their particular information needs, or as community spaces for individuals with shared experiences, the near-ubiquitous internet provides an avenue to address these needs without a mediator (Mitchell, et al., 2014, p. 155). LGBT young people turn to the internet to answer their questions when they lack people offline (Wexelbaum, 2018, p. 10), and studies suggest that they may resort to online resources more than their non-LGBTIQ peers (Mitchell, et al., 2014, p. 153). General internet usage may already be higher than average among young LGBT people (Greenblatt, 2011, p. 42), and this comparatively higher usage is particularly evident with regards to sexual health information, as this may be lacking or fraught in traditional educational contexts like schools and university courses (Charest, et al., 2016, p. 82).

An advantage of the internet is the privacy it offers for seeking information (Robinson, 2016, p. 167), particularly when there is any doubt about how a query might be received (Hawkins, et al., 2017, p. 320). The anonymity of the internet can appeal to young users, regardless of orientation,
to engage in sex education (Marshall, 2016, p. 6), but where non-LGBTIQ young people may wish to avoid awkward discussions with parents or teachers, young LGBTIQ people may have additional fears about the consequences of trying to raise such questions in these contexts (Magee, et al., 2012, p. 277). While young LGBTIQ people can anonymously and conveniently resort to online information sources, the internet offers content that varies in quality and accuracy, and even sexual health information online can appear overwhelming (Magee, et al., 2012, p. 277). The consequences of incorrect information in this regard can be life changing. There is a risk in relying on the internet as a sufficient information resource for a user group who may lack information- and media-literacy skills (Altobelli, 2017, p. 15), and the increasing usage of internet resources by young people is a source of concern when there is a simultaneous lack of education programmes to teach digital literacy and safety (Joint Committee on Education and Skills (A), 2018, p. 9).

Magee’s American-based study (2012) indicates that although some young LGBTIQ people may resort to the internet for information, others choose not to for a number of reasons, “including fear of stigma, a sense of low personal relevance, disinterest, and mistrust of online information” (p.284). The internet hosts a vast amount of information, but this information can be difficult to navigate, overwhelming, or outright misleading (Morris & Hawkins, 2016, p. 21), and lacks a ‘moderator’ to ensure users locate accurate information (Hawkins, et al., 2017, p. 320). Libraries must contend with the competition posed by the internet in this, as in every other subject. Student LGBT resource centres and libraries can find usage dropping due to patrons finding safe spaces online to interact (Wexelbaum, 2018, p. 24), and as a result of the convenience of online resources (ibid., p.31). However, just as public libraries do not forfeit the responsibility to meet information needs in other subjects, it would be a failure in their mission if public libraries assumed the internet can relieve them of this responsibility. Public libraries need to meet the challenge offered by the internet to ensure their service is competitive, and a viable option for young LGBTIQ people who find the online information space confusing or unappealing. The library’s role in supporting community members access accurate information and safe spaces is particularly important for users who are at risk due to a lack of traditional supports, and who may be ill-equipped to manage this themselves online.
Information Needs of Young LGBTIQ People

Research into LGBTIQ provision in public libraries highlights the importance of recognising the needs of these users. This extends from their information needs (what they seek) to the way this service is delivered (the space in which they seek). Provision has been limited in some public libraries as a result of the assumption that there are no different information needs among young LGBTIQ people, therefore provision could be deemed unnecessary (Vincent, 2015, pp. 288-9). While LGBTIQ people will share many information needs with the general population, to fail to recognise their potential unique needs can lead to neglecting an important service. As early as the 2000’s, studies identified the kinds of information young gay men sought, which were primarily related to the ‘coming out’ process, in forming a gay identity, and what this meant in terms of consequences and to their sense of self (Hamer, 2003, p. 80). In the context of increasing recognition of LGBTIQ rights and legal protections, recent studies reflect that these information needs have expanded to community information, fiction representing gay characters, information around sexual health, politics, history and activism, and autobiographies, in addition to the ongoing questions about coming out (Chapman & Birdi, 2016, p. 4). These developments reflect progress in the opportunities for the LGBTIQ community to express and reflect upon itself, and young LGBTIQ people may seek these out in addition to the resources their non-LGBTIQ peers seek.

Young LGBTIQ people do not pursue distinct information and resources to simply fulfil an idle fancy. Their distinct needs arise from their minority status which, if lacking supports and services, make them vulnerable to mental and sexual health risks. Mitchell (2014) reports that LGBT youth searched for information about mental health issues more than their non-LGBT peers (p.152), and Magee et al. (2012) noted the elevated sexual health risk for young LGBT people, particularly where traditional resources like schools and families failed to provide information and support in this regard. With these risks, by improving the information seeking experience, even as early as the ‘coming out’ stage, librarians could consider “information provision as a form of AIDS prevention” (Hamer, 2003, pp. 73-4). This provision is especially important for those who have not yet ‘come out’ or are in the process of doing so (GLBTRT, 2016, p. 2), and must also be designed to meet the needs of the diverse groups within the LGBTIQ collective (Walker & Bates, 2016, p. 270). Beyond immediate mental and physical health, providing resources for and about LGBTIQ people allow young LGBTIQ people to develop a sense of shared history (Dykes &
Thomas, 2015, p. 180), and form healthy identities (Vare & Norton, 2004, p. 193), while also serving to offer non-LGBTIQ users a better understanding of LGBTIQ members of their community (Oltmann, 2016, p. 15).

The context of information seeking is just as important as the provision of resources, as resources are underutilised where the context is not appealing to young LGBTIQ people. Young LGBTIQ people, particularly if they have not ‘come out’ or have reason to fear the consequences of being identified as LGBTIQ (Magee, et al., 2012, p. 284), desire privacy in their information seeking (Mitchell, et al., 2014, p. 153). United Kingdom students who had never resorted to their school library for LGBTQ-related information identified ‘fear’ as the second most common reason (Walker & Bates, 2016, p. 273). Within the Irish context, improvements have been noted for young LGBTIQ people, who report “[l]ess discrimination and an increased sense of acceptance and social support” (Fullerton, et al., 2017, p. vii), however experiences of discrimination and stigma are still reported. Librarians may be perceived “as representatives of a monolithic mainstream culture that is a hegemonic space of power and oppressive authority for many minority groups” (Irvin, 2016, p. 153). This representative perception may be more acute in an American context among racial and cultural minorities, but a similar perception may arise among sexual minorities who feel otherwise excluded in other traditional contexts.

The internet has been identified as an alternative to libraries as a source of information, as it offers privacy and allows varying degrees of disclosure unavailable offline (Magee, et al., 2012, p. 277), however young LGBTIQ people may still seek information in an offline setting. Lacking the privacy and anonymity of the internet, this process could be delayed out of concerns for privacy and safety (Hamer, 2003, p. 81), and such delays can hinder the development of a healthy identity at a critical period. Young LGBTIQ people are more comfortable searching through and accessing resources in spaces which are perceived as supportive and accepting (Hamer, 2003, p. 76). By setting aside relevant resources, or restricting their access, even if it is intended to reduce the risk of complaints, a library can create a restrictive atmosphere (Downey, 2005, p. 89). Creating ‘safe spaces’ is a common strategy to encourage young LGBTIQ people to engage with a service (Dykes & Thomas, 2015, p. 181), but more than just creating these spaces is advertising their presence, as
“Perception, visibility, and awareness are as important as what the reality may be” (Mehra & Braquet, 2006, p. 19).

Some librarians have neglected developing an LGBTIQ collection, arguing that it may be perceived as “an endorsement of a GLBT lifestyle” (Downey, 2005, p. 88). Such an endorsement of LGBTIQ identities and experience is, in fact, necessary. The underlying issue in such cases is that the librarians did not endorse the ‘lifestyle’ and did not wish to create a collection that does. However, as a public service, to meet the needs of their community, for inclusivity and to be recognised as a ‘safe space’, the library actually does need to “endorse” the ‘lifestyle’. Failing to ‘endorse’ LGBTIQ identities and experiences, and excluding or neglecting the information needs of young LGBTIQ people, serves to denigrate these identities and experiences: “a clear message is sent: their search for self does not matter; they do not matter” (Robinson, 2016, p. 163).

Development & Challenges of LGBTIQ Provision

Although improvements in provision are noted in recent studies (Chapman, 2014; Wexelbaum, 2018), challenges remain for creating this provision. In a qualitative study of school librarians, a large proportion of those who were in favour of developing collections for LGBT students had personal reasons for doing so, as they knew or had experience with LGBT people (Oltmann, 2016, p. 15). This suggests that motivation to develop LGBTIQ provision may not arise out of professional consideration alone, but might require personal experience to even bring attention to this need in the first place. Provision of LGBTIQ resources may not be neglected out of malice, but simple lack of recognition that this group exists, or have information needs separate from the rest of their community (Chapman, 2014, p. 5).

There can be professional obligations, as well as legislation for Equality, that require provision be made for LGBTIQ users (Downey, 2005, p.88; Chapman, 2014, p.6; Garry, 2015, p.76; GLBTRT, 2016, p.2; Wexelbaum, 2018, p.36). Within legislation and professional ethics, a failure in this regard would be considered discrimination. In an Irish national study in 2010, only “a single library authority reported providing specific services to young gay and lesbian people” (McGrath, et al.,
2010, p. 25), while more libraries specifically catered for other minority groups, such as young people with low literacy or the Traveller community. Strategies employed by academic libraries to support LGBT students, such as expanding the LGBT collection, hosting displays, installing self-checkout machines and anonymous online chat systems, and establishing gender-neutral bathrooms (Wexelbaum, 2018, p. 3), could be considered for implementation by public libraries.

Studies have found that the size of the library or budget can factor into LGBTIQ provision, however these do not determine the level of provision (Chapman & Birdi, 2016, p. 16), if librarians choose to make an effort to ensure this service (Garry, 2015, p. 83). Budgets usually limit collections to “titles that will generate high circulation figures and provide ‘value for money’” (Chapman & Birdi, 2016, p. 19), but due to the privacy concerns for a significant proportion of this group, libraries’ reporting systems may reflect poor usage of LGBTIQ resources. Where few books are actually checked out (although for this group this does not necessarily equate to a lack of usage), low circulation risks these resources being ‘weeded out’ and removed from the collection (Hawkins, et al., 2017, p. 322).

A broader challenge facing public libraries in developing provision for young LGBTIQ people is the decline in library usage among most young people generally. Irish young people report a range of psychological barriers to using public libraries, such as an association with studying, silence, boredom, and stereotypes of unwelcoming librarians (McGrath, et al., 2010, p. 8). Although libraries report being a place of refuge for some young people, and narratives that ‘libraries save LGBTIQ students’ lives’ exists, some of these anecdotal accounts appear to have formed before the advent of the internet, and public libraries may find young people relying less on the physical resources of the library in favour of online resources and spaces (Wexelbaum, 2018, p. 31).

In an American context, a frequent concern for libraries providing LGBTIQ-themed resources are the challenges that arise from community members. Self-censorship frequently arises out of fear for the community’s response to texts or displays set out in the library (Garry, 2015, p. 76), and books with LGBTIQ themes remain prominent on the annual list of most-challenged texts in the
American library context (ALA, 2018). Even in an English context, librarians report concerns about receiving challenges, particularly with resources directed at young people (Chapman, 2014, p. 5). Such challenges or complaints in fact reinforce the reality that the provision is necessary, as the LGBTIQ members of the community are confronted by this same prejudice, directed at their very person and identity, and therefore need the support of their library services to ameliorate the challenges and restrictions they experience elsewhere.

**Literature Summation**
This literature review identified the importance of accurate information for young LGBTIQ people, for supporting the development of healthy relationships, behaviours and identities. This information may not be as readily available from traditional sources of information for young people, such as families, friends or schools. Historically, as a result of the marginalisation of LGBTIQ identities, school and public libraries have not established a provision for this group, and lacking these traditional avenues, young LGBTIQ people are more likely to resort to resolving their information needs online. These information needs extend from content, such as representation and accurate health information and advice, to the space in which they can seek and access these, which must offer anonymity and acceptance. Developing provision for this group can be challenging for libraries as a result of anti-LGBTIQ sentiments held by communities or fellow library staff and management, and the difficulty in ascertaining exactly what the members of the LGBTIQ community actually want from their service, as they may fear approaching the desk and making their identity and needs known. Derived from international research and studies, these findings will serve as the foundation for the current study, which undertakes to investigate the current state of provision for young LGBTIQ people in Irish public libraries.
Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

Research Strategy
This research falls under a Critical Realism paradigm, which recognizes that “objective social facts do exist independently of and externally to human beings, but these facts are subject to uncertainty and probability” (Pickard, 2013, p. 10). This paradigm lies between the two opposing paradigms of Interpretivism and Positivism. Interpretivism posits that “all knowledge we acquire is a product of the interaction between the known and the knower” (ibid.: p.12), and that the process of conducting research may impact the engagement by respondents, an engagement which is already mediated through socially constructed, subjective ‘realities’ (ibid.). Interpretivism on its own would be an insufficient paradigm in this research as there is a material element to the provision of a service in public libraries. Positivism, on the other hand, recognizes that a reality exists beyond individual subjective experiences, positing that this reality can be objectively observed by the researcher (Creswell, 2014, p. 7). Similarly to Interpretivism, Positivism alone would be a limited paradigm in this research, as socially constructed and mediated realities are a fundamental component within human interaction, particularly with regards to sexual identities, which are not limited to the experience of romantic, emotional or sexual attraction, but are constructed “by using social and cultural resources to make meaning from this experience” (Hamer, 2003, p. 74).

The topic of this research is best addressed through a Critical Realism lens as the emphasis lies in participants’ experiences and attitudes, which collectively form a ‘reality’ of service that may be encountered by young LGBTIQ people. Critical Realism aspires for Positivism’s objectivity while investigating realities which range from being independent of human experience (such as the number and range of resources available on the shelves), to being subjectively constructed (such as the interactions and anticipated attitudes and needs of patrons and library staff), as recognised by Interpretivism. Essentially, Critical Realism recognises that “social phenomena, be it actions, texts and institutions, exist regardless of interpretations of them; the social world is both socially constructed and real” (Parr, 2015, p. 195). Within a public library service, an institution encompassing actions and texts, the social phenomena encountered and experienced by young LGBTIQ people can be both real (such as posters affirming LGBTIQ identities on the walls of the library) and perceived subjectively (such as interpreting the librarian’s response to their query...
about accessing an LGBTIQ resource). These social phenomena are partly derived from the behaviour, beliefs and attitudes of the librarians within this service, who themselves create and experience the phenomena as ‘real’ and subjectively.

Positivism, with its ‘objective’ conception of reality, favours quantitative research methods, in order to empirically test hypotheses (Creswell, 2014, p. 8), while the subjectivity of Interpretivism expects that meaningful findings can only be derived from qualitative research (Pickard, 2013, p. 13). As a hybrid paradigm, Critical Realism allows for a mixed-methods approach, where prior knowledge (derived from secondary research) informs empirical data collection, which can be analysed with a ‘qualitative interpretative’ lens (ibid.: p.11). Mixed methods research involves “the collection, analysis, and integration of quantitative and qualitative data in a single or multiphase study” (Hanson, et al., 2005, p. 224), and within the current study, such an approach is intended to achieve complementarity, “by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data and not just the numerical or narrative explanation alone to understand the social story in its entirety” (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p. 4). This study employs a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014, p. 219), as the qualitative and purely quantitative components are conducted separately, and brought together to provide a holistic overview of the state of provision.

In this study, secondary research was used to provide a frame for a set of questions which were then applied to a series of highly structured interviews to verify the questions’ suitability, that they would enable the collection of the “precise data” required to address the research question (Saunders, et al., 2016, p. 439). Interviews were selected in favour of focus groups to accommodate a broad geographic range of library services, where arranging a focus group with these librarians would not have been feasible, and as the design of the questions within this research frame are more suited to individual responses rather than the shared discussion elicited from a focus group. Based on this secondary research and preliminary qualitative findings, a questionnaire was formed and disseminated to determine the key elements of the research question and objectives. An online questionnaire was chosen in favour of face-to-face questionnaires to allow for as great a sample group as possible, and to maintain respondents’ anonymity.
Population and Sample

The preliminary interviewees were identified through a simple ‘a priori’ criteria sampling, identifying senior librarians familiar with their services’ provision creation, or librarians specifically involved in LGBTIQ provision where available, as these types would be specifically capable of providing insights into the research topic (Pickard, 2013, p. 63). Five librarians working in the public library service were identified, with at least one from each of the traditional provinces of Ireland (Leinster, Connacht, Ulster and Munster), in order to reflect a broad range of regional perspectives. The librarian profiles reflect their suitability for engagement in the preliminary interviews:

- Leinster librarian assistant, engaged in LGBT content advocacy;
- Leinster senior librarian for a well-funded, innovative library service, involved in the service’s provision management;
- Munster librarian responsible for developing and maintaining LGBTIQ provision;
- Connacht senior librarian involved in managing the service’s collection;
- Ulster senior librarian involved in provision management, situated in a non-Irish service within the island, as a ‘control’ comparison to the Irish public library services, situated in a separate legal and national framework.

All five librarians (mostly due to their senior roles in the library service) are situated in major library services in their respective provinces. Although a small, rural librarian’s perspective may have served as a second ‘control’ or contrasting perspective to these major libraries’, the nature of the interview’s questions would not have been fully suitable where the librarian lacked much involvement in the regions’ collection development processes. The perspectives of librarians of small or rural libraries are instead captured in the broader online questionnaire.

These preliminary interviews supported the development of the online questionnaire, which extended as a census sample to all public librarians in Ireland. The sample population for this questionnaire was:

- Librarians who interact with users
• Within public libraries
• Within the Republic of Ireland
• During the research period of 4th – 20th July 2018

This expansive sample group has been selected to achieve as broad as possible a picture of the state of public library provision for young LGBTIQ people in the country at this time. The responses to this online questionnaire were limited to librarians willing to undertake a questionnaire on this topic, as a voluntary exercise. Some may have chosen not to undertake the questionnaire due to negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ people, but this demographic cannot be separated out from otherwise non-responsive librarians, and any findings must recognise this potential positive-bias in respondents.

Data Collection & Instrument Design
This research serves as a Descriptive Survey (Burns, 2000, p. 566), to investigate the current state of provision for young LGBTIQ people offered by public libraries. From the secondary research, variables such as budget, librarian attitudes, anticipation of LGBTIQ information needs, collaboration and training projects, and community values were identified as potential factors impacting this provision. The initial catalogue-check constitutes a numeric basis of provision offered, a material factor to allow comparison against the interview and questionnaire findings, which can only investigate librarian experience and perception. Utilising the national catalogue system employed by the public library service (Libraries Ireland, n.d.), a shortlist of ‘recommended’ texts set out in the secondary research (Chapman, 2015) and professional body reading lists (GLBTRT, 2018) were searched in the catalogue and tracked per county to develop a material measure of existing provision.

Where the catalogue checklist offers a general overview of material provision (within the Positivist paradigm), interviews and a questionnaire investigate the socially constructed, experiential aspects of provision for young LGBTIQ people (within the Interpretivist paradigm), to fulfil the holistic stance of Critical Realism. The interviews were structured through a series of 52 questions identified as pertinent through the secondary research, including a previous study undertaken in South Africa (Hart & Mfazo, 2010). Serving as a preliminary review for a questionnaire, the
interviews were designed to not be open-ended, and the qualitative data was limited. The sequence of questions commenced with basic introductory demographic identifiers, and then were arranged to move from the highest level of library policy and provision practice, to increasingly participant-specific experience and understanding of LGBTIQ issues. The concluding questions addressed the experience of complaints and potential for self-censorship, as factors impacting individual motivations to develop provision. Each interview was undertaken in person and subsequently transcribed (see Appendix D for interview protocol and questions), to allow analysis of the range of questions to determine suitability for inclusion in the questionnaire. Questions with poor phrasing were adjusted, or replaced entirely (see Appendix G, p. 99, for annotated Questionnaire questions), to best address the research question’s objectives.

The questionnaire itself was online, to ensure the greatest accessibility across the country’s public library services, and to facilitate dissemination. Identified as a viable survey tool, Google Forms was employed to construct a six-part questionnaire posing 44 questions. Google Forms possesses reasonable questionnaire functionality and quick-analysis features, and is accessible for respondents without requiring a log-in or possession of a Google account. Only after the commencement of the questionnaire could some services report being unable to access the link due to IT restrictions, however responses were still submitted by other librarians in some of these services who undertook the questionnaire from their personal accounts.

Following guidance from Pickard (2013), and developed from the preliminary interviews’ findings, these questions were a mixture of dichotomous, multiple dichotomous, and attitudinal measure questions. This range addresses the different types of research objectives and ensured that respondents remained engaged while completing the survey. The questionnaire included only two open-ended questions, as closed-ended questions were more suitable for the descriptive survey being undertaken. The two exceptional questions were identified as requiring an open-ended format to avoid leading the respondents in their answers, which would render the posing of the question futile. These were situated in the middle and at the end of the questionnaire, to break up the cycle of checklist, multiple choice and rating questions.
Data Analysis
Data derived from the catalogue checklist was analysed through basic Excel formulations to determine the total number of resources identified per county through the online catalogue, and this material measure was mapped onto a virtual heat map (DanielPinero.com, n.d.) to offer a general overview of this material provision. This total number was set against the number of library services within the county to provide an ‘average’ number of resources per library, to address the imbalance of library services available within each county, which risks distortion of the catalogue check findings.

Interview findings were reviewed to determine the suitability of each question and identify potential answers to be derived from the online questionnaire. Questions identified as not suitable, due to a lack of response, incongruity in the context of an Irish public library, or as leading potential participants’ responses, were removed or modified (see Appendix G for annotations regarding amendments). The online questionnaire’s results were collected automatically by Google Forms onto Google Sheets, which was exported into Microsoft Excel for statistical analysis. Quantitative data derived from the questionnaire was analysed to identify frequency distributions, compare variables that may impact provision through statistical measures of central tendency and standard deviation (Pickard, 2013, p. 112), and identify correlations or the lack thereof. Qualitative data collected through the online questionnaire were collated into categories according to type by theme or subject, to identify recurring expressions, and unique contributions were extracted for consideration against the previous findings or discussion in Chapters 4 and 5.

Ethical Issues and Procedure
The proposal for the current study was approved by the DBS Research Committee, adheres to college research policies regarding anonymity and confidentiality, and does not involve vulnerable groups. Although the research is concerned with young LGBTIQ people, the research did not seek young people to participate in the research itself, and respondents as professional librarians were deemed ‘competent’ to give consent (Pickard, 2013, p. 90). Future research would certainly benefit from engaging young people on this topic, however this was beyond the scope of this study. As the topic of LGBTIQ issues and experience can be controversial in some contexts (partly a basis
for the very research question itself), sensitivity is required in question formulation and engaging with respondents. Engagement with respondents was preceded by introductory explanations regarding the nature of the research, to ensure the librarians were able to give informed consent before they engaged with the study. This informed consent was to be supplemented with opt-out options during the interview (no interviewee availed of this option) and the questionnaire. Google Forms does not collect responses if the respondent chooses to quit before completing the questionnaire, which does pose a risk of loss of data if a respondent does not ensure they complete the questionnaire entirely, however it prevents inappropriate inclusion of responses once a respondent chooses to withdraw.

The questionnaire was designed to be anonymous, with nothing more than the library service’s county to be identified. Although participation was encouraged between the introduction notice, the launch and subsequent two reminders, it remained voluntary and uncoerced (Creswell, 2014, p. 97), with County Librarians giving authorisation in some cases to undertake the questionnaire, but not obliging library staff to engage. A disadvantage of this anonymity was that when the some services identified a restriction by their IT systems in accessing the link, no alternative version could be sent to allow them to complete the questionnaire without losing this anonymity. The structured interviews lacked this anonymity, but participation was sought only from librarians who were willing to participate, and participant information and consent forms were provided and completed before the interviews commenced. Interview data was subsequently anonymised, and discussion below will maintain this anonymity. The Participant Information Sheets for interviews and the online questionnaire (see Appendices B and F) outline the conditions of anonymity, confidentiality, and data retention for participants’ responses.

Limitations to the Research
This study is limited to librarians, and provision for young people, and future research would prove valuable to expand to engaging library patrons and the LGBTIQ community generally to reflect the other side of the experience of provision. An inevitable limitation is also the response bias inherent in such a study, in which librarians may only undertake the questionnaire if they are already favourably predisposed to LGBTIQ provision. A noted concern in other studies, the
potentially controversial subject matter must be acknowledged in any analysis, as “staff members with homophobic, bi-phobic and/ or transphobic attitudes may have avoided taking part in such research, or respondents may have given the answers they felt were ‘politically correct’, leading to a bias in the results” (Chapman, 2015, p. 80). Although a direct refusal to engage with this research would be in itself a significant finding, there is no opportunity to distinguish this refusal from oversight or simple lack of time to undertake the questionnaire. Similarly, ‘politically correct’ responses are not readily distinguishable from ‘genuine’ responses, but further research through case studies and further qualitative interviews may provide the depth that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The lack of pre-existing research in this topic in an Irish context limits the scope of this study to the parameters set out by related but nevertheless distinct settings, such as the United Kingdom, America, South Africa, and elsewhere. Although this may result in omissions in factors unique to Ireland, this thesis aims to serve as a foundation from which further study can be undertaken. The catalogue checklist is an additional constraint to be recognised. Although the checklist is intended to serve as a material counterpoint to the librarians’ responses, the checklist derives from previous studies in American or English contexts, and even within these studies, there is a fundamental challenge because “frequently no indication is given of what could constitute a ‘good’ or ‘adequate’ collection of LBTQ* fiction” (Chapman & Birdi, 2016, p. 18). Any catalogue check can only serve as a general material overview, rather than a definitive status standard.
Chapter 4 – Findings

Catalogue Count

From the recommended reading lists (Chapman, 2015; GLBTRT, 2018), a shortlist of 475 titles were identified to review against Irish public library stock holdings. Of these, only 250 titles were held by one or more public library service. As the supply of material is centralised through a nationally tendered system, any titles not held by any service is presumed to be not included within the tendered contract, and therefore unavailable for any library to acquire, and are therefore excluded from the review. Some exceptions where only a single service holds a copy of a title might arise from donations, but as the shortlist cannot be entirely comprehensive or authoritative, these exceptions can remain within the margin of error of this review. The titles included on the recommended reading lists do not include all LGBTIQ-interest or themed resources, but provide a broad sample of positive LGBTIQ-material for children and young adults, and recent award-winning titles, which a public library service could provide.

Of the shortlisted titles, every county stocked at least 49, which would likely be spread among the various libraries within the county. Fig.1 shows the geographic breakdown of provision of titles by county, where the highest number of titles held being Co. Dublin, as a combination of the Dublin City, Fingal, South Dublin, and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown authorities, with 199 titles between them. The number of copies held per library service might vary, but were not included within this analysis. Of the 250 titles identified within the Irish public library service, only 88 (35.2%) were linked to an LGBTIQ-related tag, such as ‘gay men’ or ‘lgbt’. This tagging convention was not consistent even within these titles, where duplicate records between services might not share the same tagged information.
Although Fig. 1 reflects the number of titles held across a county, the number of libraries within a county varies significantly, from 4 in Carlow and Sligo, to 32 (including mobile libraries) in Co. Cork (excluding Cork City libraries, as these are separated out within the national online catalogue system). The average number of titles held by each county, per library, therefore offers a distinct comparison (Fig. 2), in which Sligo carries a greater number of titles per library on average than any other service.
Interviews
The preliminary interviews (C29, D15, D21, G23 and H19) were primarily designed in order to establish the suitability of the questionnaire’s questions, but also as a qualitative context against which the quantitative data could be set. As such, the findings of these interviews do not provide as comprehensive a range as the questionnaire, however its findings beyond modifying the questionnaire elaborate some of the data analysis to follow. Irish public library acquisition policies
do not explicitly include LGBTIQ content, but they do aim to be as generally inclusive as possible. No particular group or information need is specifically identified for provision, as the services endorse a ‘democratic’ view of provision (C29; D21; G23; H19). Similarly, the LGBTIQ resources are not distinguished on the shelves, and are interfiled within the general collection. One interviewee expressed a concern at ‘hiding’ some material if it were separated out, making them harder to find if they were subdivided (D21), and preventing the opportunity to discover new material readers may not otherwise have encountered. Generally there was agreement that provision for LGBTIQ resources was necessary, regardless of the size of the community (C29; D15; G23; H19).

Just as there are no explicit policies regarding LGBTIQ collections, there are no specific policies setting out dedicated provision or advising practice for LGBTIQ patrons. LGBTIQ users are part of the general community, welcomed broadly and indiscriminately (C29; D21; G23; H19). The library services do not usually identify LGBTIQ users as a minority group in the same way as visually challenged users might be, requiring specific provision and engagement due to their particular information needs (C29; D21; G23; H19). One interviewee made the distinction between highlighting the needs of a group, and ghettoising them (D21). As they are generally not identified as a minority group in the same way as other groups might be, no specific training around providing services for LGBTIQ patrons is offered for public library staff in the Republic as it is regarding other minority groups (D21). Unlike other minority groups who have national strategies and initiatives in place to improve their status, for example, Travellers, or people with low literacy, such strategies and initiatives have not extended to LGBTIQ service provision. Their ‘invisibility’ within a public library service was cited as a possible reason for this omission (D15). The only exceptions to the general lack of LGBTIQ-dedicated provision or exhibitions are the result of staff-led initiatives, but there is no broader, national standard for public libraries to adhere to, such as there is for ‘Healthy Ireland’ (D15).

General sexual health provision varies between library services, but LGBTIQ sexual health provision falls within this general sexual health provision (C29; D21; G23; H19). One interviewee noted that the scope of a public library to provide sexual health information was debatable (D15),
and even if there was more support to provide this information, a source of concern for the library service would be the challenge of ‘pitching it’ to young users (D15). Within the context of sexual health information, another interviewee noted the politically neutral stance public libraries are obliged to maintain (D21). As a community space for members of all ages, the public library is also obliged to ensure it remains a safe, appropriate space for all users, which therefore results in some cases in filters being applied to internet services offered. Internet filters are often in effect to some degree in public libraries, but these may be limited in some services to only restrict children’s access (C29; H19). Some services have no filters at all, in which case children’s access may be supervised by an adult (G23). Even when filters are in place, general librarian observation is in effect to ensure the ‘appropriateness’ of content accessed on library computers (D21).

Addressing the possibility that internet filters were a potential obstacle in accessing information online, an interviewee noted that the pervasiveness of personal smart phones might counter this restriction, as users could nevertheless access filtered sites from their own devices (D21). These filters are usually managed by the library service’s IT teams, and no formal review process was noted unless a failure of the filter had occurred.

The internet was generally cited as a useful resource alongside libraries, but not as a sufficient alternative, as it lacked the social engagement offered by a library (C29), although the anonymity and greater accessibility in rural areas was acknowledged (C29). Risks were identified for young LGBTIQ people relying on the internet for information, as a lack of digital and information literacy was cited as a broader problem for communities rather than specifically among young LGBTIQ people (C29; D21; G23; H19). An interviewee expressed the belief that public librarians would not be as engaged in teaching information literacy as academic librarians, however, the importance of developing information literacy generally was identified (D15). Just as young LGBTIQ people were not identified as having different information literacy levels than non-LGBTIQ people, their information needs were not identified as being particularly distinct either. There was recognition that relevance to young LGBTIQ people may be an important information need, such as “fiction about, and by, LGBTIQ people” (C29), with fiction being as important as non-fiction in some cases. Young LGBTIQ people were not thought to have distinct genre preferences (C29; D21; G23; H19), but the importance of representation within these genres was expressed (D15; D21).
The only interviewee who was a self-identified member of the LGBTIQ community noted that young LGBTIQ people did need a range of resources, from fiction to non-fiction, for every age group, which also reflected diversity (D15). This representation needed to include diversity within the LGBTIQ community, such as race, in order to reflect the diversity of the community itself (D15). Information about community groups and events was recommended, and it was advised that LGBTIQ resources be integrated into the larger collections and events to offer representation within all facets of community life. Bibliographies were identified as potentially useful, but more important was the need for a space to be welcoming, for young LGBTIQ people to “see themselves” and feel comfortable talking to staff about LGBTIQ information (D15). As a result of this, it was recommended that staff should therefore be equipped with the knowledge to address these queries.

For developing an LGBTIQ collection, public libraries are restricted to what is available through the nationally tendered suppliers (C29), though they welcome suggestions for new acquisitions, within budget, from staff and patrons. The significance of funding was alluded to (D21; G23), which might allow a ‘vibrant service’, but might also result in requests being loaned from another library service rather than purchased. There was general agreement that more emphasis should be placed on provision for young LGBTIQ people in public libraries, with specific inclusion in a national strategy suggested (C29; D15). Although there was similar agreement that more emphasis should be placed on provision for young LGBTIQ people in schools, especially due to the significance of this period in young people’s lives in forming an LGBTIQ identity (D21), the interviewees were generally hesitant to take a firm stance due to their lack of familiarity with the levels of provision already in place. Public libraries would be able to support the inclusion of LGBTIQ issues in the schools’ curricula (C29), but engagement outside of this avenue would be difficult to establish. Provision for young LGBTIQ people on a national scale was also viewed positively, with factors in current politics like the marriage referendum, openly pro-LGBTIQ representatives and an openly gay Taoiseach, cited as signs that progress can and should be made. One interviewee noted that services tend to be more available in cities, particularly Dublin, and that services needed to be extended across the country (D15).
Young LGBTIQ people were not anticipated to view public libraries any more or less appealing than their non-LGBTIQ peers (C29; G23; H19), generally no discouraging factors were identified for young LGBTIQ people approaching a public library service, and no distinction in library usage was perceived between the two groups. One interviewee suggested that public libraries may not be included in consideration as sources for LGBTIQ resources, as young people would resort to the internet instead (D15). The library services were generally expected to be viewed as welcoming and accepting for all users, regardless of sexuality or identity, and the opportunity to browse anonymously, utilise self-checkout stations, or borrow material online meant that no stage in the ‘coming out’ process would elicit different engagement with the library service (C29; G23; H19), if there was any concern about dealing with a librarian face to face (D21). This concern, arising out of fear of identification as LGBTIQ, or judgement, might result in lower perceived circulation of LGBTIQ resources, which makes it difficult for librarians to determine the needs of this group (D15). Additionally, low circulation would also be generally grounds for removing resources from the collection (H19).

Where discouraging factors might be identified, interviewees suggested bibliographies of resources could be provided, with general signage and posters reflecting LGBTIQ acceptance, online advertising, and carefully designed spine labelling to identify LGBTIQ resources, without making them so explicit that young LGBTIQ people would have reason to fear that utilising them would result in being ‘outed’ (D15). Since the marriage referendum, some increase in LGBTIQ-themed or -related events was evident, but it appeared to correspond to a general increase in LGBTIQ visibility, such as Pride celebrations (D15). One interviewee noted the importance of having a pro-LGBTIQ council in place, making engagement with events and organisations easier (C29). Despite attempts to offer LGBTIQ events, some interviewees reported a lack of engagement by the LGBTIQ community, which could result in the events being discontinued (D15; H19). Many events were identified as being LGBTIQ-themed or -interest, but the trend among the services was away from marketing them as specifically an LGBTIQ-event or -group, to ensure inclusivity (D15; G23; H19).
The visibility of young LGBTIQ users varied between services, partially as a result of the difficulty in identifying any individual as LGBTIQ (some interviewees deliberately noted that they would not wish to stereotype anyone), and the lack of designation of resources as LGBTIQ-themed to track circulation. Visibility was greater where activity and engagement with users was more active, such as book clubs that had LGBTIQ members. Engagement with the LGBTIQ community or organisations similarly varied, depending on the engagement from the community or organisations themselves. Reading groups and events were more common where organisations or groups were already active, and developed a relationship with their library service to run new groups or events (C29; G23).

As a result of their roles, most of the interviewees had limited recent experience in dealing with patron queries, however one did have experience receiving queries from young LGBTIQ people, or people seeking information around young LGBTIQ people (D15). These queries or requests were also notably infrequent, and patron confidence in approaching the library desk to make these requests was identified as a possible factor in this, or a lack of awareness among non-LGBTIQ patrons for the kind of information they could seek (D15). Interfiling LGBTIQ material within the general collection was cited as a possible solution to this general lack of knowledge, such that patrons could ‘stumble’ upon what they needed (D15; D21). Despite the infrequency of queries, all interviewees identified themselves as comfortable discussing LGBTIQ topics and issues with various groups, such as family, friends, patrons and colleagues. There was some caution expressed in using specific terminology, due to their awareness that terminology changes, and where one word might have been acceptable before, it might quickly be deemed inappropriate, and they did not wish to inadvertently cause offence (C29; D21; G23; H19).

No complaints or challenges to LGBTIQ resources or events had been received by the interviewees, although they reported having received complaints for religious or political resources or symbols previously. Positive responses and praise were reported from hosting LGBTIQ displays or events (D15; H19), and the frequency of complaints against LGBTIQ resources was suggested to be more of an American phenomenon (D15). ‘Self-censorship’ was not a concept most were specifically aware of, at least not as a labelled term, but all interviewees expressed a belief that
librarians in Ireland would be conscious of the importance of not censoring information within their service and roles. The only factor that might undermine this is a lack of knowledge about what resources to collect, rather than a deliberate choice not to include resources (D15; G23). One interviewee suggested that factors reducing the possibility of self-censorship was a lack of complaints against the material, and by being incorporated within the general collection, these resources would not be raised to critical attention (G23).

**Questionnaire**

Following the interviews, the questionnaire was modified to suit a larger range of respondents within the Irish public library service. The Google Forms questionnaire was sent to all public libraries where contact email addresses were available through their respective websites, unless specific authorities within a service requested to be the dissemination point within that service. A number of respondents returned to advise that due to IT restrictions against file sharing services, such as Google Drive and DropBox, the questionnaire was inaccessible, and there was no alternative version to enable them to undertake the questionnaire without marring the data collected or losing the confidentiality of the questionnaire. Some respondents affected opted to undertake the questionnaire from their personal email addresses outside of their library service. This factor likely reduced the number of responses received but given the positive bias inherent in such a questionnaire, the exact impact is difficult to gauge. Of 366 public libraries reflected on the national public library website, 348 individual services were not closed and had a listed email address (some services shared a centralised email address, but are included in this count). From these recipients, 106 respondents undertook the questionnaire, one of whom was not eligible to complete the questionnaire and was therefore redirected out of the online form. There is no directory of the number of staff working in public libraries across the country, but at an estimate of an average of three per service, 105 respondents constitutes 10.06% of librarians working across the 348 accessible services.

Respondents were from all but four counties in the Republic of Ireland, with a heatmap of responses represented in Fig.3:
Although the lack of response from four counties necessarily limits the generalisability of the findings, the respondents represent a broad range across the Irish public library service. The greatest proportion of responses arose from Co. Dublin and the four council authorities within this, which is to be expected given this region bears the greatest population density of the country.

Of the 105 respondents, most were library assistants (35), with equivalent numbers of branch librarians, senior library assistants, and librarians (15, 15 and 16 respectively), and a higher number of senior librarians (20). Fewer senior professional classifications undertook the questionnaire, however, it is the engagement with library patrons that was the core focus of the study and therefore the responses from the branch to senior librarians are most relevant for analysis.
The gender and age demographics of respondents suggests a strong tendency for women rather than men to enter the profession (81% : 18% respectively), with most respondents identifying as female, while 62% fell between the ages of 36 and 55. Only one non-binary respondent undertook the questionnaire, with no responses from trans men or women received. 19% of respondents were over the age of 55, with the same percentage being under 36. The bell-curve of age demographic peaks within the 36-45 age band, and slowly decreases again, reflecting an aging demographic. Sexual orientation reflects a greater proportion of heterosexual respondents (84.76%), with 14.94% identifying as non-heterosexual (LGBQ or other), as depicted in Fig.3. This breakdown is similar to a study of young adults with 89% identifying as heterosexual, and the remaining 11% as gay, lesbian, bisexual or ‘not sure’ (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012, p. 59), with a slightly higher LGBQ proportion. This may be a result of the average age of respondents in this study being higher, or reflect a slightly higher than average number of LGBQ people being drawn to the library environment, or be a result of the inherent positive bias among potential respondents to a questionnaire regarding LGBTIQ issues.
Figure 5 Proportion of Respondents by Sexuality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>84.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other...</td>
<td>3.81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within the LGBTIQ respondents, the demographic shifts to include a greater proportion of male respondents, with 20% of male respondents overall identifying as gay, but 12.8% of female respondents identifying as either lesbian, bisexual, queer or asexual. The total number of respondents within this category is too limited to make generalisations from, and the positive bias in responses inherent in this study may impact the findings, but the demographic is nevertheless notable.

![Breakdown of LGBTQ Respondents by Gender within Age-Bands](image)

While nearly 15% of respondents identified as LGBQ*, the proportion who knew an LGBTIQ person was significantly higher, with 71% reporting having an LGBTIQ friend or family member (see Fig.7). A further 11% were unsure if they knew an LGBTIQ person. 78% were familiar with what the term LGBTIQ* stood for, with all but one of those remaining expressing familiarity with some but not all elements of the acronym. Every respondent was familiar with what the phrase ‘being out’ or ‘coming out’ meant, regardless of whether they knew an LGBTIQ person personally.
From the demographics of the respondents, the questionnaire turned to policy and practice of the library service they were employed in. From the interviews it was indicated that the libraries’ acquisition or collection policies did not specify their strategies for minority groups specifically, but rather emphasised an all-inclusive strategy. Sample policies were reviewed to identify how this inclusiveness was envisioned. The Dublin City Public Library Collection Development Policy (2014) notes that it is “underpinned by philosophies of sustainability, social inclusion, accessibility, well-being and quality of life” (p.3), such that individuals and communities are respected and valued, as the service seeks “to promote equality and diversity” (ibid.). The policy notes that the service “does not endorse or promote any particular political, social or religious ideology” (DCPL, 2014, p. 6), a point raised by one interviewee. One of the factors considered in withdrawing material from the collection is the usage of the resource (DCPL, 2014, p. 10). The Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Library Service’s Collection Development Policy notes that “community demographics” are taken into consideration in the selection of material to be made available, as well as “representation of diverse points of view” (Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Library Service, 2010, p. 5). Usage is similarly a factor in reviewing material for disposal (ibid., p.11), a reasonable factor considered by the South Dublin Library Service as well (South Dublin County Council, 2016, p. 6).

Following the breakdown of minority provision outlined in Young People and Public Libraries (McGrath, et al., 2010, pp. 25-6), respondents rated the perceived state of provision for various
minority groups in their service, ranging from Very Limited to Very Advanced. The eleven minority types are set out in Fig.6, with Limited to Reasonable Provision being most commonly cited. Very Limited Provision is cited for LGBTIQ, Travellers, Young Offenders and Children in Care groups, while Very Advanced Provision is not commonly cited for any minority group. This provision-rating is both subject to errors in self-evaluation and a lack of a fixed framework against which to measure provision levels, but does pose a relative scale of perceived provision across the services.

By taking the collective rating for the eleven minority provision types, an overall average ‘minority provision rating’ can be calculated, against which a particular minority type can be compared to determine whether this provision corresponds to the average, or is perceived to be above or below average. Calculating this ‘minority provision rating’ average for each respondent, a rating between 0.5 and 5.0 was assigned, against which the LGBTIQ rating was compared. The comparison is represented in Fig.9, where the state of provision of LGBTIQ resources is usually below the ‘average’, with 19 respondents reflecting that the LGBTIQ provision was above average for minority provision. 11 respondents separately indicated that there was no LGBTIQ provision in their service, although this too must be considered against the possibility that respondents might not be aware of LGBTIQ resources within their collection.
Figure 9 Comparison of Average Evaluated Rate of Minority Provision Against LGBTIQ Provision

'0' Scores identified from related question, 'In your opinion, is the provision of LGBTIQ resources in your library adequate?'. With a response 'N/A - there is no provision'.
The comparison against the average ‘minority provision rating’ suggests that LGBTIQ provision is usually identified as lower than the average. Respondents’ view of the adequacy of the existing provision reflects a tendency to view the provision as limited, with 73.4% expressing this limitation, and only 17% identifying the provision is adequate. The breakdown of this perception is fairly evenly split across the seven professional classifications (as reflected in Fig. 10). Notably, the librarians citing a lack of provision of LGBTIQ resources predominantly belong to the lower professional classifications, which does not necessarily neatly match their respective representation, as a higher number of librarians and senior librarians engaged with the questionnaire than either senior library assistants or branch librarians, but fewer identified a lack of provision. All eleven respondents indicating a lack of provision were heterosexual, but otherwise represent a range of ages, education levels, and location across the country.

In contrast to the adequacy perceived by professional classification, the majority of LGBTIQ respondents reported their provision to be limited (87.5%), however none report a complete lack of provision. A greater proportion of heterosexual respondents (17.98%) report the level of provision of LGBTIQ resources to be adequate, while 12.5% of LGBTIQ respondents gauged the provision as adequacy.
As a subdivision of LGBTIQ provision, the provision of LGBTIQ sexual health information is primarily indicated to be limited (Very Limited 35.2%, Limited 29.5%), or lacking entirely (5.7%). Compared in Fig.12, the provision of LGBTIQ sexual health information mimics the general LGBTIQ provision, except in the more advanced provision ratings. Sexual health information is not provided by all public library services, with 38.1% of respondents citing no provision for young people being made, at least within the ‘Healthy Ireland’ national initiative.
In considering the types of topics respondents might expect young LGBTIQ people, or friends or family of young LGBTIQ people, may seek out in the public library, twenty-one possibilities were raised, depicted according to the number of times these topics were cited in Fig.13. A significant proportion noted no specific topics might be sought or had never been received (‘N/A’), with some clarifying that these types of queries are not made at the reader desk (‘Don’t Ask at the Desk’). Some respondents noted that the topics sought would be no different to those sought by non-LGBTIQ people (‘Non-Distinct’; ‘Fiction (General)’; ‘Study Material (general)’). These topics, or lack thereof, reflect the 25.7% of respondents who cited young LGBTIQ people having ‘no distinct reading interests’.

Beyond these non-particular topics, the major topics identified were ‘Fiction (LGBTIQ)’ for representation of other young LGBTIQ people, ‘LGBTIQ Community Information’ to seek support groups or a community, ‘Coming Out’ advice and ‘Sexual Health Information’. 71.4% of
respondents identified young LGBTIQ people having ‘some distinct reading interests’, with the remaining 2.86% citing ‘very distinct reading interests’.

Although 43.8% of respondents could not specify or did not identify a particular topic young LGBTIQ people might seek out from their library, 60% did anticipate that a lack of dedicated resources for them might discourage young LGBTIQ people from using a public library service (Fig.14). Other discouraging factors such as fear of being identified as LGBTIQ (55.24%) and not yet being ‘out’ (54.29%) were commonly acknowledged as possibly impacting usership. Anticipated judgement from librarians (45.71%) exceeded anticipated judgement from fellow library users (39.05%), although the broader factor likely discouraging young people generally, that libraries are ‘not cool’, was cited by almost 45% of respondents. A small proportion indicated that young LGBTIQ people have no reason to feel discouraged against using their public library service (17.14%).

![Anticipated Discouraging Factors for Young LGBTIQ People](image)

Given the potentially discouraging factors identified in Fig.14, most respondents reported limited strategies being employed to reduce these factors and actively encourage young LGBTIQ people to engage with the public library. Self-checkout stations were most commonly reported (60%),
with posters, signs and book displays reflecting acceptance of LGBTIQ patrons as the second highest strategy at 18% (Fig.15). 15% of respondents reported no proposed strategy being exercised, while a further 17% reiterated that there were no discouraging factors in effect. The checklist range was not, and could not, be exhaustive of a library services’ opportunities to engage with young LGBTIQ people, but relatively few respondents indicated the seven strategies were employed, with 39% citing only one actual strategy in place.

Since the 2015 recognition of same-sex marriage following the national referendum, there appears to be little increase in LGBTIQ events or requests in public libraries, with 52.38% of respondents reporting no evident increase. Although LGBTIQ-related information, such as posters and leaflets, have been seen to increase by 18.1% of respondents, less than 10% of respondents have seen events, requests and collections increase. Where an increase in LGBTIQ events, requests or collections is not reported to be greatly visible since the referendum, the resources and collection are much more visibly in use. 41.9% of respondents report being aware of young LGBTIQ people using the public library service, while 46.67% report being uncertain of this usage or presence. 1.9% report no use of LGBTIQ resources provided, and 9.5% indicate that there appear to be no
young LGBTIQ patrons using their service. Other than a lack of requests received by or about LGBTIQ people, there is little to distinguish this 9.5% from the other respondents.

While 10.5% of respondents believe the internet may be a sufficient alternative for young LGBTIQ people to use instead of a public library service, 50.5% rated the potential risk faced by this group as either High or Extreme Risk. With internet access available in most public library services, young LGBTIQ people may be able to seek information through this service within the library. 69.52% of respondents report that internet filters are in effect within this provision, with a further 18.1% uncertain whether there are filters in place (Fig.16).

Only three respondents reported training being available to help raise awareness regarding LGBTIQ issues, of which only one had this provided internally by management or colleagues. 84.76% are in favour of receiving this training if it were made available. Similarly, although only 7.6% of respondents report hosting collaborative events with LGBTIQ-support or -interest groups, and 12.4% report hosting LGBTIQ-interest events or projects, 63.6% would be interested in hosting collaborative events, and 50.5% would be interested in hosting their own events or projects.

A portion of respondents report receiving LGBTIQ-related queries, with 34 reporting requests from young LGBTIQ people for resources within the library, and 22 receiving requests to acquire
a resource for the library’s collection. A smaller number, 14, have received requests to locate LGBTIQ-related information or contacts beyond the library, by young LGBTIQ people, and while some have received the same request from friends or family of LGBTIQ people, these numbers do not overlap. Fewer respondents report receiving these requests from friends or family of young LGBTIQ people, but 25 have received this request for resources held by the library, and 13 to acquire these resources. Only one respondent reports receiving a request from a school to access LGBTIQ resources.

While some respondents have received requests for resources within the library, or for new resources to be acquired or for information beyond the library, both from young LGBTIQ users or their friends or family, a much greater proportion have never received such requests (Fig. 18). 80% of respondents have never received a request from a young LGBTIQ person, 85% report never having received a request about LGBTIQ resources from friends or family of young LGBTIQ people, and only one respondent reports receiving such a request from a school.
For library staff responding to queries from young LGBTIQ people, the terminology patrons might use receive varying degrees of comfort from respondents (Fig. 17). ‘Queer’ received the most ambiguous rating from respondents, with only 21% usually comfortable using the term, and 36.2% comfortable depending on the person or context in which the term is being used. ‘Queer’ received the highest proportion of respondents not comfortable to use the term, at 34.3%. ‘Gay’ scored the highest for respondents’ comfort in usage, declining slowly to ‘Lesbian’, ‘Bisexual’, and ‘Trans’. Fewer respondents report being comfortable using the terms ‘Intersex’ and ‘Cisgender’, and both terms received the highest proportions of respondents reporting being uncomfortable due to uncertainty of the terms’ exact meaning. No respondents report this uncertainty or being uncomfortable with the terms ‘Gay’ and ‘Lesbian’, while one reports being uncertain about the meaning of ‘Bisexual’, and three uncertain about ‘Trans’.

Figure 18 Percentage of Librarians who have Not received an LGBTIQ-Related Request
Comfort using terminology varies, but less variance is evident in whom respondents are comfortable discussing LGBTIQ issues and topics with. More than 80% of respondents report being comfortable discussing these topics with Friends, Family and Library Colleagues (Fig.20), falling to around 70% with Library Patrons and Young People. 36.2% report their comfort in discussing these topics depending on the person and context, with only 1.9% being not at all comfortable discussing these issues or topics.
Taking the reported comfort for each group, a Relative Comfort Level discussing LGBTIQ issues and topics can be determined, with 50.5% being comfortable with all five groups, reflecting a high Relative Comfort score. This scale declines to the almost 1% who are not comfortable discussing these topics and issues with any group at all (Fig. 21). A mid-score for Relative Comfort, given five groups, is the category ‘Three groups, and depends on person and context’. 81.91% of respondents fall between this mid-score and being fully comfortable with all groups, with 18.09% falling below this mid-score, reporting to be relatively uncomfortable discussing LGBTIQ issues and topics, depending on the person or context of the conversation.
Only nine respondents report receiving a complaint about an LGBTIQ resource in the library, of which three also received a complaint regarding an LGBTIQ event held or advertised in the library. Of these complaints, the basis for the complaints appear to have been perceived inappropriateness for a public space (6), inappropriate content for children (7), and inappropriate use of public library funding or resources (3). Two of these respondents additionally report homophobia being evident among library staff. One respondent reported a particularly unpleasant confrontation with the father of a young person who had sought out LGBTIQ information. The conflict between the library’s ethos of intellectual freedom and access to information, and a perception of ‘encouraging a choice of sexual orientation’, escalated to verbal abuse against the respondent in question. Another respondent, who had not received complaints or challenges against resources or events held by the library, reports patrons’ negative comments about young LGBTIQ people showing affection within the library, and a concern that these comments might impact how the young LGBTIQ people feel about their welcome in the community space.
For material management within the library service, only 6 respondents report removing an LGBTIQ resource, with two for insufficient usage, one for a concern at the risk of a complaint being received, and three due to the content being deemed inappropriate for being explicit. 35.2% of respondents report not having the authority to make this decision, while the remaining 61.9% cite an LGBTIQ resource never having been removed. One respondent does report exercising self-censorship by choosing not to host annual LGBTIQ exhibitions due to ‘negative and aggressive’ comments they had received. Similarly, another respondent reported being discouraged from hosting an LGBTIQ event in the same year as the referendum for same-sex marriage, in this case by their manager. The impact of the community is noted in these decisions, with small rural communities or religious communities being perceived as less accepting of LGBTIQ resources or events.

The final findings derive from a concluding opportunity to offer any additional comments respondents may have wished to make that had not been addressed by the questionnaire, or to elaborate on earlier questions. A recommendation for further study is around LGBTIQ library staff. A separate issue not addressed by the questionnaire was the lack of LGBTIQ resources available in Irish, which restricts the opportunity for Irish speakers to access material that does not carry a language or culture difference. The predominance of an Anglo-American culture in existing LGBTIQ resources might exacerbate this disconnect with the Irish-speaking community. For the collections and events that are made available, the suitability of some resources being held in the children’s section is a recurring discussion. Respondents report positive engagement with Pride displays, and a willingness to maintain and develop an LGBTIQ collection, even if the way this collection is set out in the library is subject to debate.
Chapter 5 – Discussion

This research focussed on the experiences of Irish public librarians, and the findings must acknowledge the limitations implicit in self-reporting by respondents, which may not perfectly reflect actual practice and provision. Respondents may tend towards providing answers perceived to be more socially acceptable, and even among respondents who chose to engage with the study, they may already be pre-disposed to positively view LGBTIQ people and be sympathetic to their needs, while those who are not comfortable with LGBTIQ issues may have abstained from undertaking the research. Recognising these potential biases, the findings cannot be assumed to be generalisable over the full population of public librarians in the Republic of Ireland. However, they do provide some initial insights into the current state of provision for young LGBTIQ people, from which future research can investigate further.

Existing Public Library Policies Regarding Provision for Young LGBTIQ People

Within formal policies, most public library services adhere to the over-arching policies set out by their respective County Library, which in turn follows the standards set out by national strategies. The libraries maintain a broadly welcoming and inclusive ethos, encouraging diversity (DCPL, 2014, p. 3) and seeking to serve the range of interests within the community (Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Library Service, 2010, p. 5). Meeting the needs of diverse community groups is a common goal of the libraries’ services, but the specific nature of this provision is not set out in the collection or acquisition policies, although 71.4% of respondents believe these policies should explicitly include provision for minority community members. The sheer range of potential minority groups and their respective needs does pose a challenge to the library that wishes to make these policies explicit.

From the interviews, a recurring comment was that LGBTIQ people may not be considered a minority group in the same way that certain disabilities might be, that require particular services to be laid out, such as accessibility features. Although the LGBTIQ community is recognised as a minority group in other national frameworks (DCYA, 2018, p. vi), and even within earlier studies into public libraries (McGrath, et al., 2010, p. 26), this potential to not recognise the LGBTIQ community as a minority group requiring particular supports limits libraries’ ability to engage with
this demographic. The democratic stance of equality is identified as the motivation to not develop a specialised provision for young LGBTIQ people, however the literature review indicates this may constitute a passive response to a minority’s needs (Downey, 2005, p.86; Berman, 2001; Chapman, 2014, p.3). By implicitly reinforcing the status quo (Chapman, 2015, p. 39) of hegemonic cisgendered heterosexism, in which public libraries and their staff can be perceived as representatives of a traditional, monolithic culture (Irvin, 2016, p. 153), formal policy may fail to appeal to young LGBTIQ people who see themselves as non-conforming, and therefore are less willing to seek resources and assistance from the service.

Existing Provision of Recommended LGBTIQ-interest Titles
The shortlist of 250 titles currently provided within the Irish public library service are distributed unevenly between counties, however the shortlist employed was neither comprehensive nor exhaustive of potential titles available, and therefore some services might offer greater provision than these numbers indicate. The availability of LGBTIQ-interest titles does vary between services, with the greatest availability in Co. Dublin, which is to be expected for the most heavily populated region, which is also home to the greatest number of LGBTIQ support services and groups, a factor noted in one of the interviews. Comparing the number of titles held within a county against the average number of titles per library within each county, it is significant to note that the picture of provision changes. Although Sligo carries relatively few titles, between its four services it carries the highest number of titles on average, suggesting that although it cannot offer as wide a reading range as other counties, it is delivering a considerable provision within its capacity. Similarly, although Monaghan hosts the fewest number of titles, it falls fairly mid-range in terms of average provision, while Dublin City carries nearly three times the number of titles Monaghan carries, but offers a much lower provision on average.

The shared library catalogue allows interlibrary loans free of charge within the national network, a factor raised by respondents, however the concern for young LGBTIQ people at being identified as such is an obstacle this provision does not mitigate. The titles available elsewhere must still be collected by the patron from the local library once ordered, losing the advantage of the anonymity offered by the self-checkout stations or simply utilising the resource within the library without
checking it out. This interlibrary loan option was cited by respondents as an alternative where resources were lacking within a particular service, however this contradicts another ethos repeatedly identified, that of the ‘happy accident’ or ‘serendipitous discovery’ through browsing the shelves, particularly important for “heterosexual users or those who have not yet become aware of their sexuality” (Chapman, 2015, p. 78). Relying on the patrons to identify the resources they require before turning to their service, to order them online or seek them out on the shelves where they are available, the opportunity for these patrons to discover a new resource while browsing is lost. Although respondents expressed concern at the loss of this opportunity as a result of separating out LGBTIQ resources into a distinct section, this is not the only solution to assisting patrons locate these resources. Simply offering a subtle marker on the cover of a text, such as a small sticker recognisable as an LGBTIQ symbol, could assist young LGBTIQ patrons in locating relevant resources, allow for the ‘happy accident’ of discovery while browsing, avoid ‘outing’ patrons who do access the resource, and should not easily dissuade non-LGBTIQ patrons from accessing the resource if they would otherwise hesitate to engage in LGBTIQ material.

The tags linked to some titles in the online catalogue assist the search for resources that may be of interest to young LGBTIQ people, but the proportion of titles carrying these tags is too low to be reliable, and inconsistencies in tags do not assist the search process. Some resources do carry tags that supplement the information available about the resource, but do not specify their LGBTIQ content, which rather suggests the tagging process was undertaken by people not comfortable with acknowledging this content. An example is Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* which is only tagged under ‘male friendship’, despite the deliberate depiction by the author of the homosexual relationship between the two major characters. The function of these tags, if managed carefully, would assist library staff in curating their collection for LGBTIQ users and hosting displays, and assist the search process for young LGBTIQ people, and their friends and families, who are not already aware of what might be available to borrow.

**Existing Collection Practices and LGBTIQ Provision**

As a result of LGBTIQ resources not generally being identified as minority provision, and not being particularly sought out for inclusion in the collection, the acquisition of these resources risks
being incidental to the general collection development, included because they were popular rather than because they contained LGBTIQ content. A tendency away from identifying resources as LGBTIQ-themed or -interest would make developing such a collection difficult. This tendency may arise out of a fear for the “risk of ghettoization” (Chapman, 2015, p. 78), as explicitly identified during an interview (D21), and the awareness that such subdivision might discourage young LGBTIQ users from accessing the resources, as simply being seen browsing in this section risks the user being identified as possibly being LGBTIQ:

“I would worry that young LGBTIQ people would be hesitant about using the resources in a public library that were in a specific collection marked as LGBTIQ. Young patrons are often self-conscious when they come into the library and we want them to feel comfortable using the services we provide. I would hate for patrons to be afraid of judgement in a public setting if such resources were marked out specifically. This might stop them for seeking out what they need from the collection.” (Questionnaire respondent)

This fear accurately captures concerns identified in the literature review, however the process of identifying resources within the collection which may be LGBTIQ-themed or -interest does not necessitate separating them out into a distinct section.

Interfiling within the general collection, preferred by librarians as it allows for the ‘happy accident’ of discovering new material and creating insights where separate sections might have prevented this, has its advantages, but does not preclude identifying resources as relevant to the young LGBTIQ patrons who might seek them out deliberately. This ‘happy accident’ appears to have been defended more with non-LGBTIQ people in mind for respondents, as people who would otherwise not have utilised the resource if it were separated out, and can thereby be gently introduced to the topic and issues. When reflecting on young LGBTIQ users, this ‘happy accident’ option was less evident, with respondents suggesting if they knew what they wanted, they could seek it out online and then access it from the catalogue or the shelves. The onus shifts to the minority group in such an instance to locate the resources they need, and burdens them with the task of identifying what these might be in the first place. If young LGBTIQ people need to take this additional action before they use the library service, they might choose to complete the information search process externally as well.
Few respondents report collaboration activities with LGBTIQ groups or organisations, although a greater proportion have hosted their own events or displays to coincide with broader community events, such as Pride weeks. As an interesting counterpoint, the non-Republican Northern Irish public library service, operating in the region with the least LGBTIQ-legal protections in the Irish and United Kingdom combined, hosts a drag-queen story telling event for children during Belfast Pride. The libraries’ ability to engage with the LGBTIQ community does depend heavily on the LGBTIQ community’s willingness to engage in return, such that an LGBTIQ reading group in one library service thrives because the group was community-started and library-supported, while other services report trying to host such groups, and found no engagement or members joined. This challenge remains fundamental for any public library service trying to engage with any community group.

The ‘young people’ demographic is broadly recognised to be a group who fall away from public libraries (McGrath, et al., 2010, p. 6). Public libraries may need to determine how to foster this engagement, which may need to go as far as back as ensuring they are on the collective radar of national strategies for young people and the LGBTIQ community, as the recent *National LGBTI Youth Strategy* (2018), GLEN’s *Being LGBT in School* (2016) and *LGBTIreland Report* (2016) all lack mention of the role or opportunities public libraries may play in supporting or engaging with this demographic. Within their mission to serve their communities, and offer safe spaces and information, public libraries are perfectly suited to play the community centre for the young LGBTIQ people who report needing “spaces and places” that they can meet, and feel safe and welcomed (Fullerton, et al., 2017, p. ix).

**Recognition of the Information Needs of Young LGBTIQ People**

Identified in the literature review, the key information needs of young LGBTIQ people are privacy, acceptance of the information they seek and the space they seek it in, and representation and relevant information, as this may be lacking in other areas of their lives. These information needs can be addressed by public library provision, but any action must be advertised to ensure patrons are aware of the resources available (Mehra & Braquet, 2006, p. 19). Among respondents, many noted the importance of allowing young LGBTIQ people to browse and access material without
being monitored or identified. This is notably a concern in small communities, “where everyone
knows everyone else” as two respondents express it, but even in larger communities and services,
respondents were hesitant to separate out an LGBTIQ collection where any browsing could quickly
be identified by other patrons or staff, and young LGBTIQ people would not approach a publicly
‘outing’ space.

Despite several respondents expressing awareness of the importance of privacy, relatively few
identified strategies employed by their library to mitigate any discouraging factors, such as
patrons’ fear of being ‘outed’, or anticipated judgement from library staff or fellow users. Most
respondents report their library having self-checkout stations, but these are likely to be a result of
general technological developments of library services, rather than specifically with young
LGBTIQ patrons in mind. A majority recognised that a perception of a lack of dedicated resources
might discourage young LGBTIQ people from using their public library service, a factor
exacerbated by the lack of identification of what LGBTIQ-interest resources the services do carry.
Many respondents believe their existing LGBTIQ provision to be limited, and compared to other
minority provision, perceived LGBTIQ provision is generally rated lower than average. This may
arise out of the lack of recognition of LGBTIQ patrons as a minority group, requiring a particular
provision, as many respondents report a belief that young LGBTIQ people lack distinct reading
interests or sought-out topics. Such a lack of confidence in the provision available may belie the
expectation that their patrons perceive a lack of resources available or relevant for them to access.

A common sentiment expressed is the belief that the library should be perceived as welcoming and
accepting to all, including young LGBTIQ people. Respondents report their library service as
striving to be ‘open’ and ‘supportive’, even as many remark that few LGBTIQ requests are
received, and that some staff or other library patrons express negative sentiments. Some spaces
employ posters and host displays to reflect and emphasise their acceptance of LGBTIQ issues and
people, but as one respondent describes it, ‘most involvement is reactive’. For young LGBTIQ
people, who constitute a ‘hidden minority’, relying on reactive responses may not meet their needs.
The catalogue check indicates that every county carries a number of resources that can offer
representation, as well as the particular information young LGBTIQ people need, which they may
not be able to access elsewhere due to a heterosexist assumption in families and schools. The risk of only being ‘reactive’ is that this existing provision is not advertised to the ‘hidden minority’, and will therefore be underutilised, as young LGBTIQ people turn to the internet or other services to resolve their information needs.

Experience with LGBTIQ Users and Queries
In line with the literature review, very few respondents report receiving LGBTIQ-related queries, whether from LGBTIQ patrons or their friends or family seeking information. A number did advise that although they were aware of young LGBTIQ patrons within their service, they admitted that few were expected to stop by the desk and ask for assistance. This validates the research identifying LGBTIQ people as a ‘hidden minority’, less likely to make their needs known, and therefore more difficult to resolve these needs. Some respondents report negative comments being made by colleagues or library users, potentially reinforcing the perception of the library and its staff as representatives of traditional, hegemonic culture, and therefore discouraging young LGBTIQ patrons from approaching the desk for help.

For the instances where a young LGBTIQ person did approach the library staff for assistance, their confidence using the terminology and answering their queries is significant to reassure the patron that they were right to trust their information needs and this facet of their identity to the library. The debate about terminology continues within the LGBTIQ community, so the respondents’ mixed comfort with using the various terms is not unreasonable. This could be mitigated with training and more frequent engagement with the LGBTIQ community generally. This engagement is not entirely lacking, with collaborations already in place with some local LGBTIQ groups, and Pride displays and reading groups already hosted by some libraries. A significant proportion of respondents express a willingness to develop these collaborations and events further, suggesting that the currently ‘reactive’ involvement could, if managed carefully, become more proactive.
Challenges to Developing LGBTIQ Provision

The literature suggests public library provision may be limited out of either a lack of awareness of what young LGBTIQ people require, or a self-censoring fear of challenge or complaint against the provision. In an Irish context, a lack of awareness of what the information needs of young LGBTIQ people might be, or how to address these, may be a greater factor than self-censorship, although one respondent admitted to not hosting displays following ‘negative and aggressive’ comments. The young Irish LGBTIQ people may be as much a ‘hidden minority’ as their American or English counterparts, and this remains a challenge for librarians to meet their needs. Although respondents generally expressed a welcoming attitude to young LGBTIQ people, the lack of distinction of existing LGBTIQ resources online and on the shelves makes responding to queries difficult, reduces librarian and patron ability to locate relevant resources quickly, and hampers opportunities to host displays.

A very small number of respondents reported receiving complaints against existing LGBTIQ provision, but a few more remarked that their libraries served a religious community, or had parents who were conservative regarding their children’s reading material. Although these negative responses are much less common than in an American context, it may still result in less active development of this provision. Where some respondents noted anti-LGBTIQ attitudes were held by colleagues, opportunities to host events, displays, or grow an LGBTIQ collection could be restricted. Budgets and supply may play significant factors in developing the collection, where libraries can only add to their collection from a tendered supplier who may not offer certain titles. Similarly, although the interlibrary loan system is a valuable development for the service in spreading collection costs between libraries, it may not be as ready a solution for young LGBTIQ people as it is for their peers. Engagement from the LGBTIQ community is another challenge for some services, where events have been hosted which experienced limited participation. Such unsuccessful attempts at greater collaboration or engagement can reasonably discourage library staff from trying to host similar events or displays in the future.
Chapter 6 – Recommendations & Conclusion

From the Critical Realist investigation into provision for young LGBTIQ people in Irish public libraries, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses of material resources and librarian experience, a number of key findings can be identified, which may allow for recommendations to be made regarding future policy, practice and research. Existing public library policies do not specifically identify LGBTIQ people as a minority group requiring particular provision, and as a result, little staff training is available, and LGBTIQ collections develop more as a result of individual librarian efforts or as a consequence of general collection development. Although the existing policies aim to be democratically non-partisan and broadly inclusive, it would be recommended that future policy takes into account the unique position of young LGBTIQ people as a ‘hidden minority’ with information needs that might not be met by such a broad but vague inclusive stance.

Following from policies which do not identify LGBTIQ-needs, the catalogue collection reflects a mixed range of resources being made available. Without guidance on what resources should be made available, or even which titles constitute LGBTIQ-interest, public library staff cannot be certain what the state of their provision for this group is, and would be relatively restricted in their ability to answer queries from young LGBTIQ people. Developing a more comprehensive and consistent tagging scheme for these resources through the national online catalogue would allow library staff to identify the resources they already carry, and those they might wish to acquire, develop reading lists or bibliographies, and direct patrons accordingly. Adopting a simple identifier on LGBTIQ resources, such as a small rainbow or pink sticker, could be a non-obtrusive mechanism to allow young LGBTIQ people to locate resources within the collection without resorting to external information sources first, and facilitates the ‘happy accident’ of the ‘serendipitous discovery’ by non-LGBTIQ patrons.

Where policies do not distinguish LGBTIQ information needs, and this community is not recognised as a minority group, collaborations and events, and collection development, can only ever be sporadic and irregular. Although some respondents report hosting events which received little engagement from the LGBTIQ community, discouraging future endeavours, the historic
perception of public libraries as representatives of an unwelcoming, even hostile, culture must be recognised. Relationships with LGBTIQ groups and organisations appear healthy where they already exist, and responses to some LGBTIQ-interest events and displays have been overwhelmingly positive, but some services may need to actively work at developing this relationship, rather than wait to ‘reactively’ involve themselves in these events. One such opportunity would be to liaise with the only service in Ireland to identify itself as an LGBT library, Outhouse in Dublin (Outhouse, n.d.). Developing and actively advertising their identity as a welcoming space carrying relevant resources may encourage these relationships to develop, and ensure that public libraries are included in the ongoing discussions about services and national policies for LGBTIQ people. Further study into the needs of this group would also be valuable for future researchers, to ensure future developments are suitable and meet these needs appropriately.

Respondents appear to recognise some of the information needs of young LGBTIQ people, particularly around privacy and acceptance, but many also do not identify distinct reading interests or needs. This is likely a result of this group being a ‘hidden minority’. However, even if the information need is ‘hidden’, it is present, and it requires that librarians make an active effort to engage with these users. This active effort can be incorporated into broader strategies of extending provision to minority groups in the community, for which the Diversity Wheel, developed by John Hopkins University (John Hopkins University, n.d.), may be helpful:
The Diversity Wheel allows institutions to review and consider the kinds of diversity that may exist, and how services or policies may need to be shaped to meet these appropriately. A significant factor to be considered by these service providers is that an LGBTIQ identity is only one of a number of potential identities their young community members may have. Considering the full range of diversity that may exist within the community may allow public librarians to establish provision even for otherwise ‘invisible’ minorities. Once identified, engagement with community members belonging to these groups would allow librarians to learn what provision they require, and can then develop these accordingly. A particularly intriguing area of potential research is the relationship between the LGBTIQ community and the Irish-speaking community, an intersectional node identified by one respondent as lacking LGBTIQ provision entirely and marginalised by an Anglo-American cultural hegemony.

Actual experience with LGBTIQ patrons and queries are reportedly limited, likely a consequence of the ‘hidden minority’ status of this group, their perception of the library as not carrying relevant resources for them, or a fear of being identified and subject to judgement if they did approach the desk. When queries are received, the librarian’s ability to comfortably and confidently engage with
the patron plays a significant role in reassuring or discouraging the patron from engaging with the service further. While collaboration with LGBTIQ groups, and actively advertising their service as welcoming and carrying relevant resources can encourage young LGBTIQ people to engage more with the library, training would be beneficial for all staff to feel more confident addressing these queries. This training should be consistent across the national service, and would be a natural extension of any policies accounting for LGBTIQ provision the public library service might develop.

The key challenge public librarians face in developing their provision for young LGBTIQ people is becoming aware of what this group actually require. Current practice is mostly ‘reactive’, a similar feature of services in American and English contexts, however this fails to address the unique needs of this group. As other sources of information and support, such as families, friends and schools, may fail to provide these to young LGBTIQ people, public libraries should recognise their potential role in ensuring these exist and are available within their capacity. This requires an active engagement with developing provision and making the acceptance of this community known, because “[s]ome groups, being more vulnerable to active or careless abuse should have resources more explicitly available where possible” (Walker & Bates, 2016, p. 276).

This provision is more than simply responding to idle reading interests, but can contribute to healthy identity formation and behaviours, and it is more vital in communities where challenges or complaints against LGBTIQ resources and events arise, as the young people in these communities are more likely to feel isolated and undervalued. Representation is important in this regard, and although this does not mean young LGBTIQ people seek entirely different genres from their peers, ensuring representation for all groups within this community is available should be considered a necessary part of any library service:

“Seeing yourself reflected in a book is one way to believe you matter, you are worthy, and you belong. It is one of the easiest ways to feel connected to others and to see you are not alone.”

(Lifshitz, 2016, p. 25)
The Role of the Public Library

The public library has the potential to meet the information needs of young LGBTIQ people, and be identified as a welcoming, accepting space to locate resources and information not available in other areas of society. At the moment, however, public libraries do not seem to be even considered in this light. The LGBTIreland Report’s participants suggested “that a better informed public would lead to more positive attitudes to, and greater acceptance of LGBTI people... [and] a greater existence of support services and resources, including information, would make it easier for LGBTI people to come out” (Higgins, et al., 2016, pp. 75-6), particularly in schools and rural areas. The LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy found young LGBTI people sought “alcohol-free and quiet LGBTI+ social spaces and alternative safe spaces for young people to meet rather than at night clubs or online” (Fullerton, et al., 2017, p. 23). Such services are particularly important in rural areas, where few LGBTIQ spaces or resources are identified (ibid., p.22). Despite the readily recognisable role of the public library in providing such spaces, libraries do not appear in any part of these reports or government consultations, nor are they suggested by their participants. This suggests their potential is not even recognised among young LGBTIQ people, and this needs to be addressed.

This would be a good time for public libraries to make their potential known, both to the LGBTIQ community, and to the government, as the recent LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy acknowledges the community’s call for “[m]ore awareness training and education across society” and “[e]ducation of the wider community on gender, sexuality and non-binary issues and use of pronouns” (DCYA, 2018, p. 11), and “More daytime and alcohol-free LGBTI+ social spaces” (ibid.). Public libraries can take advantage of this government-backed movement to develop their own provision and training, and facilitate the broader education of their communities, while offering safe spaces for young LGBTIQ people. Engaging with the LGBTIQ community, with support from the government, allows public libraries to exhibit yet again their value to society generally, and deliver on the optimism engendered by the 2015 marriage referendum and the improved legal and social recognition of this community in Ireland.
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Appendix

A. Glossary of Terms

A challenge to any research into areas related to sexuality and gender identity is the ongoing development of the terminology and group membership. The following terms are derived from the national LGBTI Consultation Strategy Report (2017: pp47-8), the National LGBTI Youth Strategy (2018: p36), and the LGBT Ireland Report (2016: pp17-20).

Bisexual – A term used to describe people who are sexually, emotionally and/ or romantically attracted to more than one gender.

Cisgender – A term used to describe people whose gender experience corresponds to the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Gay – A term used to describe people who are exclusively sexually, emotionally and romantically attracted to members of the same gender. In the context of this research, ‘gay’ refers primarily to gay men, however some gay women prefer to identify as such rather than lesbian.

Heterosexual – A term used to describe people who are exclusively sexually, emotionally and romantically attracted to a person of the ‘opposite’ sex.

Intersex – A term used to describe someone with both male and female sex characteristics. An intersex person may identify as a man, as a woman, or as something else, and this identification does not necessarily affect their gender identity.

Lesbian – A term to describe women who are exclusively sexually, emotionally and romantically attracted to other women. Although some women exclusively attracted to other women may prefer to identify as ‘gay’, in the context of this research the term lesbian is preferred, to distinguish the two groups who may have distinct experiences and needs.

LGBTIQ – The acronym applied to the collective group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and/ or queer people. Variants include ‘LGB’, ‘LGBT’, ‘LGBTI’, ‘LGBT+’, ‘LGBTIQ*’, ‘LGBTIQQA’, and these are applied differently according to the context in which they are used. ‘Q’ can also be used for ‘questioning’ in place of or in addition to ‘queer’, for non-heterosexual or non-cisgendered people who have not determined their orientation or identity yet.
**Queer** – An umbrella term used to describe people who do not fall into a traditional gender role or sexual orientation, and can be used to describe anyone who is not heterosexual and cisgender. The term has varying levels of adoption as an identity descriptor within the LGBT community.

**Trans** – A common shorthand term for ‘transgender’:

**Transgender** – An umbrella term for a person whose gender identity and/or gender expression is different from the biological sex they were assigned at birth, or is different from conventional expectations based on the gender they were assigned at birth.

Additional terms used in this research, derived from the *Young People and Public Libraries in Ireland* Report (2010).

**Provision** – Within library service, this primarily refers to stock and resource collections (books, texts, DVDs, etc), but can extend to groups hosted and supported by the library, specialised training of library staff, spaces, and collaborative or hosted events.

**Young People** – Young people primarily refers to those aged 10-17 years old, but can extend to younger people, such as children of LGBTIQ-headed families.
B. Participant Information Sheet

‘A Helping Hand for Queer & Questioning Youth – Irish Public Library Supports & Services for LGBTIQ Young People’

You are being asked to take part in a research study on the current status of Irish public library provision and services for LGBTIQ young people. This study intends to investigate public librarian experiences and attitudes regarding provision of services for LGBTIQ young people through preliminary interviews, and a subsequent anonymous online questionnaire formulated in part from the findings of these interviews.

My name is Grant Goodwin and I am conducting this research in Dublin Business School’s Department of Business & Law, for the MSc in Library and Information Management programme. This project has been approved by the college’s Research Ethics Committee.

What Will Happen

In this study, you will be asked to undertake a structured interview. The interview questions address the topic of LGBTIQ people, and their information needs, within the service provision of Irish public libraries. Little research in this area within an Irish context currently exists, and frank engagement is appreciated to provide accurate insight into the status of provision for LGBTIQ young people at this time. The interview questions will range from formal policies to personal experience of responding to queries regarding LGBTIQ materials within your role in the public library.

Time Commitment

The study typically takes an hour to complete, and will only require a single session. A subsequent questionnaire will be sent to all public library services for completion, but interviewees are requested not to complete the online questionnaire, as the questions will broadly be similar, and this will avoid duplication of responses.

Participant’s Rights

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed.

There will be no audio recording of responses to the interview questions.
You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study’s outcome. A full de-briefing will be given after the study). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

Confidentiality/ Anonymity

The data collected does not contain any personal information about you except the county to which the public library belongs. This research is being conducted as part of a tertiary-level programme and will be submitted for examination. Following the interviews, hard-copy notes will be transcribed into digital format, and scanned, and shredded. The primary research obtained through interviews and the questionnaire will be securely stored in password protected format, for a year after the successful completion of the examination process, to fulfil the requirements of potential appeal or review. The findings of this research may be subsequently developed into articles for publication, but the original anonymity will be maintained, and the schedule for destruction of responses will be adhered to.

Participation in the interview will be treated as anonymous and confidential, wherein details of the interviewee (such as names, title, the library they work in) will be anonymised in the subsequent transcription of notes into coded references for each interview (such as Interview D15, for [qualifier redacted]). This coding means responses cannot be attributed to any one participant or public library. If an interviewee wishes to withdraw their responses from the research, this can be accommodated up to two weeks before the final submission of the research (as of 6th August) to allow a thorough and appropriate review of the submission to remove all references from this interview.

For Further Information

I and/or my supervisor, Donagh Farrell, will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at [email redacted] or [number redacted].
C. Informed Consent Form

(For Participant’s Records)

‘A Helping Hand for Queer & Questioning Youth – Irish Public Library Supports & Services for LGBTIQ Young People’

An investigation into the current service provision for LGBTIQ young people in Irish public libraries, extending from policy to practice, librarian experiences and challenges they face. This will allow the research to make recommendations where necessary for improvement in service or development.

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

____________________________                             ____________________________
Participant’s Name (Printed)                             Participant’s Signature

Date:

____________________________                             ____________________________
Student’s Name (Printed)                             Student’s Signature

Date:
D. Interview Questions

The interview protocol for each session entailed an introduction with the participant, and a review of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B), before signing two copies of the Consent Form (Appendix C), one for the Participant’s records, and one for the Researcher’s. The structured interview followed the sequence of questions below, with limited elaboration offered where the participant was not clear on the question’s focus. Notes of the responses offered were made following each question, and the whole interview was transcribed later the same day. The interview concluded with a debrief (Appendix E).

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<th>Demographics not required – Interview code:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is your professional classification?</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Branch Librarian</td>
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<td>b. Library Assistant</td>
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<td>c. Senior Library Assistant</td>
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<td>d. Librarian</td>
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<td>e. Executive Librarian/ Senior Librarian</td>
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<td>f. Executive Librarian/ Divisional Librarian</td>
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<td>g. County/ City Librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Which county does your public library belong to?</td>
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<td>3. What type of library service do you work in?</td>
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<td>a. Rural library</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Suburban library</td>
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<td>c. City library</td>
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<td>4. Are you familiar with what the term LGBTIQ stands for? YES NO</td>
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<td>L – Lesbian, women who are exclusively sexually attracted to other women</td>
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<td>G – Gay, men who are exclusively sexually attracted to other men</td>
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<td>B – Bisexual, people who are, to varying degrees, sexually attracted to both men and women</td>
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<td>T – Trans (previously transgender or transsexual), people who do not identify with the sex (male or female) they were assigned at birth. Some may choose medical treatment to change to the sex they identify with more.</td>
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<td>I – Intersex, people who have no sexual attraction to either men or women (but may still develop romantic relationships)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q – Queer, people who do not identify as strictly heterosexual or as the sex they are assigned at birth, but who do not identify as LGBTI either [Q – Questioning, people who are uncertain about how they identify, and are still in the process of determining this]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terminology and language are constantly evolving, and identities can mean different things to different people at different times, but these are the main categories generally identified in research and to which social development projects design their work.</td>
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<td>5. Are you familiar with what the phrase ‘being out’ means? YES NO</td>
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<td>Being ‘out’ is when an LGBTIQ person has made their identity explicit to others (friends, family, colleagues, etc), through directly disclosing this identity – this process can be iterative and vary depending on the circumstances and the people involved. Someone can be ‘out’ to close friends but not their family, etc. A person can identify as being LGBTIQ without being ‘out’.</td>
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<td>6. Do you have a friend or family member who identifies as LGBTIQ?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes – they have told me they are LGBTI or Q</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes – but they have not told me outright</td>
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I think so, but am not sure, they have not explicitly identified themselves as such
No – I have no friends or family members who identify as LGBTI or Q
OTHER?

7. Do you think having a friend or family member identify as LGBTIQ might impact how a librarian might view provision for LGBTIQ people? Why/ Why not?

8. Does your library Acquisition Policy include LGBTIQ material? If so, what challenges to this has the library faced, if any? [If there have been challenges, from whom, and what were their stated reasons, if any?]

9. Does your library have policies regarding LGBTIQ collections?
   YES                    NO                  Not Sure
   If yes, what factors does your library’s policy regarding LGBTIQ collections consider?

10. Does your library have policies regarding LGBTIQ patrons?
     YES                    NO                  Not Sure
     If yes, what factors does your library’s policy regarding LGBTIQ patrons consider?

11. Is provision for LGBTIQ patrons considered a minority-provision service? (on a par with visual and hearing challenges, racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, language diversity, immigrants, low literacy, travellers, children in care?).
     YES                    NO      Not Sure
     If YES, how does it compare to the provision for these other minority groups?
       Visually challenged
       Hearing challenges
       Racial diversity
       Ethnic diversity
       Cultural diversity
       Language diversity
       Immigrants
       Low literacy
       Travellers
       Children in care

12. Does provision for minority groups vary between libraries? YES         NO       Not Sure
     If yes, why? What factors do libraries take into account to determine which minorities to focus on?

13. Does your library service include sexual health information within its provision?
     YES                    NO                  Not sure
     If yes, is a portion of this dedicated to sexual health information for LGBTIQ young people? (If no, why not?)
     If yes, how do these provisions compare? (Are they relatively balanced, or does provision vary? Why?)

14. Does your service offer internet access? YES         NO
     If yes, are filters in place to limit what sites can be accessed on library computers? YES     NO
     If yes, do you think these filters might impact accessibility of LGBTIQ resources?
       How/ why not?
     Is there an audit of these filters to ensure they are appropriate and not excessive?

15. In your opinion, what might the Information Needs of young LGBTIQ people be?

16. In your opinion, what types of genres might young LGBTIQ people be interested in?

17. Is there provision of LGBTIQ resources in your public library? YES.   NO.    Not sure
     If yes, do you believe this provision to be adequate? Why/ why not?
     If there is provision, is there an audit process where this level of provision is reviewed? If yes, who manages this, and how do they evaluate it?

18. How are LGBTIQ resources identified for inclusion into your collection?
       a. Professional body recommendation
       b. Reading lists (from schools? Elsewhere?)
       c. Blogs/ online reading lists and recommendations
       d. Recommendations from other librarians
       e. Recommendations from patrons/ requests
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<td><strong>19.</strong> In your opinion, should more emphasis be placed on provision for LGBTIQ young people in <strong>public libraries</strong>?</td>
<td><strong>YES.</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
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<td>If yes, how might this be achieved?</td>
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<td><strong>20.</strong> In your opinion, should more emphasis be placed on provision for LGBTIQ young people in <strong>schools</strong>?</td>
<td><strong>YES.</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
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<td>If yes, how might this be achieved?</td>
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<td><strong>21.</strong> In your opinion, should more emphasis be placed on provision for LGBTIQ young people nationally?</td>
<td><strong>YES.</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO</strong></td>
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<td>If yes, how might this be achieved?</td>
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<td><strong>22.</strong> In your opinion, what factors might discourage young LGBTIQ patrons from using a public library service?</td>
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<td>a. Lack of dedicated resources for them</td>
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<td>b. Lack of interest in offline resources/ preference for internet</td>
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<td>c. Anticipated judgement from librarians (<em>judgement instead of homophobia, but might homophobia be a concern?</em>)</td>
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<td>d. Anticipated judgment from fellow library patrons</td>
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<td>e. Not being ‘out’</td>
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<td>f. Fear of identification as LGBTIQ</td>
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<td>g. <strong>OTHER?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>23.</strong> In relation to being ‘out’ versus being concerned about being identified as LGBTIQ, do you think these might result in different ways in how LGBTIQ young people approach a public library service?</td>
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<td><strong>24.</strong> What strategies might be employed to reduce these discouraging factors?</td>
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<td>a. Targeted advertising (offline and online) about LGBTIQ resources in the library</td>
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<td>b. Posters/ signs reflecting acceptance of LGBTIQ patrons (safe space)</td>
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<td>c. Rainbow icons eg badges, lanyards (allies)</td>
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<td>d. Reading lists/ bibliographies of LGBTIQ resources in the library</td>
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<td>e. Stickers/ labels on book spines identifying them as LGBTIQ themed</td>
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<td>f. Self-checkout stations</td>
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<td>g. <strong>OTHER?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>25.</strong> Following the 2015 same-sex marriage referendum, has there been any increase evident in library provision in any of the following? If so, how has this been reflected/ evident?</td>
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<td>a. LGBTIQ themed collections</td>
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<td>b. LGBTIQ themed requests</td>
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<td>c. LGBTIQ related events</td>
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<td>d. LGBTIQ related information (posters, leaflets)</td>
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<td>e. <strong>OTHER?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>26.</strong> From your experience and in your opinion, are there <strong>enough</strong> members of the LGBTIQ community in the library’s catchment area to make provision necessary for them?</td>
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<td>a. Provision is necessary regardless of size of community</td>
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<td>b. There is sufficiently large community to offer this provision</td>
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<td>c. Community is too small (and diverse?) to offer this provision</td>
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<td>d. We would not specifically provide this provision, regardless of the size of the community</td>
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<td>e. <strong>OTHER?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>27.</strong> Are young LGBTIQ patrons visible in the public library community, and using the services offered? How is this evident?</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Some are visible</td>
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<td>b. Although not visible per se, the resources are evidently in use within the library (books taken off shelves, even if not checked out, or some checked out without using the library check out desk if there is self-checkout available)</td>
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<td>c. Appears to be no LGBTIQ resources used</td>
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<td>d. Appears to be no LGBTIQ people in the community</td>
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28. Might the internet be considered a sufficient alternative for young LGBTIQ people to use instead of public library services? Why/ why not?  **YES. NO. Depends**

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29. In your opinion, are there significant risks young LGBTIQ people may face in resorting to the internet instead? If yes, what might these be?  **YES. NO.**

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30. Is training offered to library staff to help raise awareness regarding LGBTIQ issues?  **YES. NO**

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a) If yes, internally provided, or managed by external organisations (eg BeLong)?

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31. Are collaborative projects or events held with LGBTIQ-support or -interest groups? (eg BeLong, OUTHouse)

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a. If yes, how often? Frequently, occasionally? Examples?

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b. No, though we would be interested (any reasons why not yet?)

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c. No, no interest in this

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32. Do your libraries hold LGBTIQ-interest events?

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a. If yes, how often? Frequently, occasionally? Examples?

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b. No, though we would be interested (any reasons why not yet?)

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c. No, no interest in this

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33. How does your library offer information about LGBTIQ-interest events or groups (if at all)?

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a. Newsletters/ mailing lists

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b. Magazines

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c. Posters on community boards

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d. Leaflets from LGBTIQ-interest events or groups

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e. Through the library website

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f. OTHER?

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g. N/A – none provided

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34. Do you deal with library user queries and requests?  **YES (continue questionnaire) NO (if no, end of questionnaire)**

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If yes, the following will be regarding your experience in responding to library user queries and requests:

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35. Has a young LGBTIQ user requested assistance to access or locate an LGBTIQ resource? (locate existing provision).  **YES. NO.**

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c. Were you able to assist them?

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36. Has a young LGBTIQ user requested an LGBTIQ resource be made available or added to the collection? (interlibrary loan, new acquisition, etc).  **YES. NO.**

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c. Were you able to assist them?

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37. Has a young LGBTIQ user requested assistance to locate information on LGBTIQ issues or events outside of the library? (redirection to further resources, external from library).  **YES. NO.**

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c. Were you able to assist them?

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38. Has a friend or family member of an LGBTIQ person (someone who did not apparently identify as LGBTIQ themselves) requested assistance to access or locate an LGBTIQ resource?  **YES. NO.**

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c. Were you able to assist them?

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39. Has a friend or family member of an LGBTIQ person (someone who did not apparently identify as LGBTIQ themselves) requested an LGBTIQ resource be made available or added to the collection?  **YES. NO.**

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<tr>
<td>40. Has a friend or family member of an LGBTIQ person (someone who did not apparently identify as LGBTIQ themselves) requested assistance to locate information on LGBTIQ issues or events outside of the library?</td>
<td>YES. NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Online?</td>
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<td>b. In person?</td>
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<td>c. Were you able to assist them?</td>
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<td>41. Has a school requested assistance to access or locate an LGBTIQ resource?</td>
<td>YES. NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Were you able to assist them?</td>
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<td>42. Has a school requested an LGBTIQ resource be made available or added to the collection?</td>
<td>YES. NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Were you able to assist them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>43. Has a school requested assistance to locate information on LGBTIQ issues or events outside of the library?</td>
<td>YES. NO</td>
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<td>a. Were you able to assist them?</td>
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<td>44. How comfortable are you discussing LGBTIQ issues or topics among:</td>
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<td>(suggested rate: Very Comfortable to Varies to Very Uncomfortable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Family</td>
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<td>d. Library patrons</td>
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<td>e. Young people</td>
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<td>f. OTHER? (eg parents of young people?)</td>
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<td>45. Are you comfortable using words like:</td>
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<td>a. ‘Queer’</td>
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<td>b. ‘Gay’</td>
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<td>c. ‘Lesbian’</td>
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<td>d. ‘Bisexual’</td>
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<td>e. ‘Trans’</td>
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<td>f. ‘Intersex’</td>
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<td>YES NO DEPENDS - what might make you feel more comfortable to use these words?</td>
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<td>46. How confident are you in responding to queries about these (such as what each of these mean, and don’t mean)?</td>
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<td>47. When (or if) an LGBTIQ resource has been added to the collection, has a challenge or complaint been lodged?</td>
<td>YES. NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. If yes, were these submitted in person or in writing?</td>
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<td>b. If yes, what was the resource?</td>
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<td>c. If a resource was challenged, was this upheld and the resource removed, or was this rejected?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(example of either/ both?)</td>
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<td>48. When or if LGBTIQ events have been held or advertised, has a challenge or complaint been lodged?</td>
<td>YES. NO</td>
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<td>a. If yes, were these submitted in person or in writing?</td>
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<td>b. If yes, what was the event/ advertisement?</td>
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<td>c. If a resource was challenged, was this upheld and the resource removed, or was this rejected?</td>
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<td>(example of either/ both?)</td>
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<td>49. If a complaint or challenge has been received, what were the stated grounds of their complaint/ challenge?</td>
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<td>a. Inappropriate content for a public space</td>
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<td>b. Inappropriate content for children</td>
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<td>c. Inappropriate use of public library funding or resources</td>
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### 50. Have you ever chosen not to include an LGBTIQ-related resource in your collection? If so, why?

- **a.** Yes, budget constraints
- **b.** Yes, concern that the inclusion may result in a challenge or complaint
- **c.** Yes, the content was deemed inappropriate (explicit content)
- **d.** Yes, the content was deemed inappropriate (moral content)
- **e.** Yes, the quality/standard of the resource was not deemed sufficient for the library’s collection
- **f.** Yes, OTHER?
- **g.** N/A – never received

### 51. Have you heard the term ‘self-censorship’, and do you know what it refers to?

**Self-censorship is where librarians choose not to develop a collection or obtain a resource out of a pre-emptive concern that it will result in challenges or complaints**, and so set a barrier on their own practices without an external influence actively impacting their behaviour.  

- [YES]  
- [NO]  
- [UNSURE]

**a) To what degree in your opinion might Irish librarians practice this?**

### 52. Are there any improvements in your service you would consider implementing in terms of provision for LGBTIQ young people?

### 53. [AOB]
E. Interview Debrief

This interview session will be coded according to the following schema:

[qualifier table redacted]

Accordingly, this interview code is: ____________

The responses from this interview will be reviewed in conjunction with the literature review behind this research. As there has been little research on this topic in an Irish context, most of the literature available is derived from American, British, Australian, New Zealand, and South African studies. These interviews therefore play an important part in contextualising the broader questionnaire within an Irish context, before it is released to all public libraries.

An introductory email will be sent in the week before the questionnaire is to be sent out, to advise public libraries of the imminent questionnaire, and to request they be prepared to disseminate this among their staff when it is available. The online questionnaire will then be sent to the same address (unless another was provided following the introductory email). Respondents to the interview are requested not to complete the questionnaire, as their responses will, to a degree, have been captured already, and this risks duplicating results.

Interviewee responses will not be included in the quantitative data analysis along with the online questionnaire responses, as the conditions of responding will differ and risk inconsistencies in the data analysis. However, these findings will be used to modify the questionnaire to suit an Irish public library context, and any significant findings in the interviews themselves may be discussed in the research, as applicable. Anonymity will be maintained in any discussion regarding responses to the interview questions.

Thank you again for participating in the research, I hope it has been as interesting an experience for you as much as it has been for myself. If you are interested in the outcome of this research upon its completion, do not hesitate to contact me. If this research is of a sufficiently high standard, it shall be available on the college’s online database through the library, as open access.
F. Online Questionnaire Participant Information Brief

My name is Grant Goodwin and I am conducting research in the Department of Business & Law, for the MSc in Library and Information Management programme, that investigates the current status of Irish public library provision and services for LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and/or queer) young people. This research is being conducted as part of my studies and will be submitted for examination.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves completing the anonymous questionnaire below. The questionnaire addresses the topic of LGBTIQ people, and their information needs. Little research in this area within an Irish context currently exists, and frank engagement is appreciated to provide accurate insight into the status of provision for LGBTIQ young people at this time.

For this research, 'young people' refers to 10-17 year olds, but with the understanding that some resources are for younger readers who live in LGBTIQ-headed households. 'Provision' primarily refers to resources such as books and texts, but can also extend to services such as information (leaflets, posters), specifically trained staff, exhibits, displays and events.

The questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. Participants can choose to close the questionnaire at any time, and their responses to that point will *not* be retained by the online form. If you do wish to ensure your responses are captured, please ensure you select 'Submit' at the end of the questionnaire.
Participation is anonymous and confidential. Thus responses cannot be attributed to any one participant or public library. For this reason, it will not be possible to withdraw from participation after the questionnaire has been completed.

The questionnaire responses will be securely stored in password protected format, for a year after the successful completion of the examination process, to fulfill the requirements of potential appeal or review. The findings of this research may be subsequently developed into articles for publication, but the original anonymity will be maintained, and the schedule for destruction of responses will be adhered to.

**It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the questionnaire that you are consenting to participate in the study.**

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact Grant Goodwin at [email redacted] or [phone number redacted]. My supervisor, Donagh Farrell can be contacted at [email redacted]

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
G. Questionnaire

The following questions were posed through an online Google Forms questionnaire. As the interviews preceded the questionnaire to ensure appropriateness of questions and terminology, annotations included [highlighted in yellow], to reflect changes.

Do you work in a Republic of Ireland Public Library in a patron-facing capacity, and consent to undertake the enclosed questionnaire?
Yes – continue with questionnaire
No – exit questionnaire

‘A bit more about you:’
To which age band do you belong?
18-25
26-35
36-45
46-55
56-65
65+

Which gender do you identify with? [dropped Intersex, as not a ‘gender’ category]
Female
Male
Trans Man
Trans Woman
Nonbinary
Prefer not to say
Other...

Which sexual orientation do you identify as at this time?
Heterosexual
Gay
Lesbian
Bisexual
Queer
Other...

What is your highest educational attainment?
Leaving certificate
Undergraduate Degree (BA or BA Hons) or Certificate
Postgraduate Degree (Masters or PhD) or Diploma

What is your professional grade classification?
Branch librarian
Library assistant
Senior library assistant
Librarian
Senior librarian
Divisional librarian
County/ City Librarian
Which county does your library service belong to?
Dublin city
South Dublin
Dun Laighaire-Rathdown Co.
Fingal County
Co. Carlow
Co. Cavan
Co. Clare
Co. Cork
Co. Donegal
Co. Galway
Co. Kerry
Co. Kildare
Co. Kilkenny
Co. Laois
Co. Leitrim
Co. Limerick
Co. Longford
Co. Louth
Co. Mayo
Co. Meath
Co. Monaghan
Co. Offaly
Co. Roscommon
Co. Sligo
Co. Tipperary
Co. Waterford
Co. Westmeath
Co. Wexford
Co. Wicklow

Are you familiar with what the term LGBTIQ* stands for?
Yes
No
Some elements, but not all

Are you familiar with what the phrase ‘being out’ or ‘coming out’ means?
Yes
No
Unsure, but I think I understand its meaning

Do you have a friend or family member who identifies as LGBTIQ?
Yes
No
Unsure

Policies Around Minority Provision
Had two questions, ‘Do you know your library’s policies regarding creating and maintaining a collection of LGBTIQ resources’, and ‘Do you know your library’s policy regarding LGBTIQ patrons?’, but through interviews, became apparent that these policies do not exist. Adjusted to:
Do you think a library Acquisition Policy or Collection Development Policy should explicitly include provision for minority community members?
Yes – minority provision should be included
No – minority provision does not need to be included specifically, the Policy is sufficiently inclusive already
No – the Acquisition Policy/ Collection Development Policy is not an appropriate place for this

How would you rate the collection of resources for minority patrons in your library? (rate between ‘very limited’ to ‘very advanced’ collection)
Large text (visual impairment provision)
Audio books (hearing impairment provision)
Collections reflecting racial, ethnic or cultural diversity
Irish language collections
Diverse language (non-Irish) collections
LGBTIQ-themed collections
Collections for Immigrants and/ or Refugees
Collections for people with low literacy
Collections for Travellers
Collections for young offenders
Collections for children in care

Does your library provide resources about sexual health information for young patrons? [Interviews suggested the national ‘Healthy Ireland’ initiative might make this an obvious ‘yes’, but actually the most pro-LGBT librarian indicated that they did not include sexual health info within this programme]
Yes
No

How would you rate the provision of sexual health information resources for LGBTIQ young people? (rate between ‘very limited’ to ‘very advanced’ provision)
Very limited provision
Limited provision
Reasonably provision
Advanced provision
Very advanced provision
N/A – my library does not offer LGBTIQ provision
N/A – my library does not offer sexual health information resources at all

If your library service offers internet access, are there filters in effect which restrict which sites patrons can access?
Yes, filters are in effect
Not sure if there are filters in effect
No, there are no filters in effect
N/A – internet is not available

When they come to your library, what topics might young LGBTIQ patrons (or friends or family of LGBTIQ young people) seek resources on? Originally offered a range for selection, but likely to direct respondent answers, so updated to remove options, and allow respondents to propose what they believe might be relevant.

(select any that may apply)
Fiction depicting young people (regardless of sexuality)
Fiction depicting young LGBTIQ people
Fiction depicting LGBTIQ families
Information about puberty
Information for parents of LGBTIQ people
Information about same-sex marriage
Information about Transitioning (gender re-assignment)
Study guides
Information about legal issues for LGBTIQ people
Information about sexual health
Other...

Originally included question: ‘What types of genres do you anticipate young LGBTIQ patrons might seek from your library? (select all that may apply)
Fiction
Sexual Health information
History
Biography
N/A – LGBTIQ patrons have no distinct reading interests’

But from interviews it is apparent this is duplicating the previous question and is also leading respondents in their answers. Rather changed to:
Do you think young LGBTIQ patrons would have any distinct reading interests compared to their non-LGBTIQ peers?
Yes – very distinct reading interests
Yes – some distinct reading interests
No – there would be no distinct reading interests

LGBTIQ Provision in the Library
In your opinion, is the provision of LGBTIQ resources in your library adequate?
Yes – our provision is adequate
No – our provision is limited
No – there is no provision

Originally included question: ‘If LGBTIQ resources are included in your library’s collection, how are they identified for inclusion?
Professional body recommendation
Reading lists from schools
Blogs/online reading lists and recommendations
Recommendations from users/Requests
N/A – we do not include LGBTIQ resources
Other...

However, from interviews it is apparent that resources are sourced from tendered suppliers, and although librarian recommendations are possible, patron recommendations are queried later in the questionnaire. Rather replace question with the two as follows:
If LGBTIQ resources are included in your library’s collection, are they kept in a specifically LGBTIQ section, or interfiled within the general collection?
LGBTIQ resources are kept in a specifically LGBTIQ section
LGBTIQ non-fiction are separated according to our general classification system (e.g. Dewey), but LGBTIQ fiction are interfiled within the general collection
LGBTIQ resources are entirely interfiled within the general collection
N/A – we do not include LGBTIQ resources

If LGBTIQ resources are interfiled with the rest of the collection (fiction only, or entirely), are there any markers (e.g. stickers, labels) to identify these as being LGBTIQ-interest?
Yes – markers such as stickers or labels identify LGBTIQ-interest resources
No – there are no markers to identify LGBTIQ-interest resources
N/A – LGBTIQ resources are not interfiled with the general collection
N/A – we do not include LGBTIQ resources
In your opinion, should more emphasis be placed on provision for LGBTIQ young people in public libraries?
Yes
No

In your opinion, should more emphasis be placed on provision for LGBTIQ young people in schools?
Yes
No

In your opinion, should more emphasis be placed on provision for LGBTIQ young people nationally?
Yes
No

In your opinion, what factors may discourage a young LGBTIQ person from using a public library service? (select any which may apply)
Lack of dedicated resources for them (perceived or actual)
Lack of interest in offline resources
Anticipated judgement from librarians
Anticipated judgement from fellow library users
Not being ‘out’
Fear of identification as LGBTIQ
Perceptions of libraries as ‘not cool’
N/A – young LGBTIQ people have no reason to feel discouraged against using their public library service

Does your library employ any of the following strategies to reduce these discouraging factors? (select all that may apply)
Targeted advertising online about LGBTIQ resources in the library
Targeted advertising offline about LGBTIQ resources in the library
Posters/ signs/ book displays reflecting acceptance of LGBTIQ patrons
Rainbow icons (e.g. badges, lanyards, etc)
Reading lists/ bibliographies of LGBTIQ resources in the library
Stickers/ labels on book spines identifying them as LGBTIQ-interest
Self-checkout stations
None of the above
N/A – there are no discouraging factors for young people against using their public library service

Following the 2015 same-sex marriage referendum, has an increase been evident in the library of any of the following? (select any which may apply)
LGBTIQ-themed collections
LGBTIQ-content requests
LGBTIQ-related events
LGBTIQ-related information (eg posters, leaflets, etc)
N/A – no increase has been evident
N/A – I have not been with the library long enough (pre-2015) to notice any change

Engagement with the LGBTIQ Community
In your opinion, are there enough members of the LGBTIQ community in your catchment area to make provision for them necessary in your library?
Yes – provision is necessary regardless of the size of the community
Yes – there is a sufficiently large community present to offer this provision
No – the community is too small or entirely absent to offer provision for
No – our library would not offer this provision, regardless of the size of the community
Are you aware of young LGBTIQ patrons of your public library service?
Yes – young LGBTIQ patrons are visibly using our services
Yes – although the patrons are not ‘visible’ per se, the resources are evidently in use within the library
Could not say for certain
No – there appears to be no use of LGBTIQ resources provided
No – there appear to be no young LGBTIQ patrons of our library service

In your opinion, is the internet a sufficient alternative for young LGBTIQ people to use instead of public library services?
Yes
No

In your opinion, how would you rate the potential risk young LGBTIQ people may face in an online environment? (where 1 is ‘no risk’ and 5 is ‘extreme risk’)
No risk.  1.   2.   3.   4.   5.  Extreme risk

Does your library offer training to help raise awareness regarding LGBTIQ issues? [interviews suggest this will be a resounding ‘no’, as no training was evident, but included given individual branches might have been proactive in seeking their own training, or at least to distinguish training would be welcome vs not needed]
Yes – training is provided internally by management or colleagues
Yes – training is provided by LGBTIQ-organisations
No – no training is provided (but would be welcome if offered)
No – no training is provided or needed

Are collaborative projects or events held with LGBTIQ-support or LGBTIQ-interest groups? (eg BeLonG To, OUTHouse) [dropped GLEN, as apparently this disbanded a year ago. Also, included time frame in ‘Yes’ as it could be perceived as too vague to answer accurately]
Yes, more than once a year
Yes, once a year or less
No, though we would be interested in holding collaborative projects or events
No, no collaborative projects or events are held

Does your library hold LGBTIQ-interest events or projects? (non-collaborative events or projects) [included time frame in ‘Yes’ as it could be perceived as too vague to answer accurately]
Yes, more than once a year
Yes, once a year or less
No, though we would be interested in holding these
No, no specifically LGBTIQ-interest events or projects are held

How does your library offer information about LGBTIQ-interest events or groups (whether hosted by the library itself, through collaboration, or externally)? (select any which may apply)
Newsletters/ mailing lists
Magazines
Posters on community boards
Leaflets from LGBTIQ-interest events or groups
Through the library website or social media [interviews made it evident social media was a popular means of advertising and reaching out to users]
N/A – this information is not offered
Other...

Face to Face with Patrons
In your experience dealing with patrons’ queries, has a young LGBTIQ patron requested assistance to do the following? (select any which may apply) [options as Online; In Person; Never Received]
Access or locate an LGBTIQ resource (already in the collection)
Request an LGBTIQ resource be made available or added to the collection
Locate information on LGBTIQ issues or contacts beyond the library

In your experience dealing with patrons’ queries, have friends or family of LGBTIQ people (people who do not apparently identify as LGBTIQ themselves) requested assistance to do the following? (select any which may apply) [options as Online; In Person; Never Received]
Access or locate an LGBTIQ resource (already in the collection)
Request an LGBTIQ resource be made available or added to the collection
Locate information on LGBTIQ issues or contacts beyond the library

In your experience dealing with patrons’ queries, have schools requested assistance to do the following? (select any which may apply)
Access or locate an LGBTIQ resource (already in the collection)
Request an LGBTIQ resource be made available or added to the collection
Locate information on LGBTIQ issues or contacts beyond the library
No requests by schools have been received regarding LGBTIQ resources or information

Are you comfortable discussing LGBTIQ issues or topics with the following? (select all that may apply)
Friends
Family
Library colleagues
Library patrons
Young people
It depends on the person and context
N/A – I am not comfortable discussing LGBTIQ topics or issues

How comfortable are you when using the following words? [options: Usually comfortable; Depends on context/ person; Not comfortable, uncertain of exact meaning; Not comfortable at all]
Queer
Gay
Lesbian
Bisexual
Trans
Intersex
Cisgender [addition from previous, to prevent ‘normalising’ straight, cisgendered position, and as it could be used in a conversation and might be met with uncertainty]

Has a complaint or challenge been received (either in writing or in person) in response to an LGBTIQ resource in the collection? [Wording adjusted from ‘addition to collection’ from interview responses]
Yes – a challenge or complaint has been made about an LGBTIQ resource
No – no challenge of complaint has been made about an LGBTIQ resource
N/A – there are no LGBTIQ resources in the collection

Has a complaint or challenged been received (either in writing or in person) in response to an LGBTIQ event that has been held or advertised in the library?
Yes – a challenge or complaint has been made due to the holding or advertisement of LGBTIQ events
No – no challenge or complaint has been made due to the holding or advertisement of LGBTIQ events
N/A – no LGBTIQ events have been held or advertised
If a complaint or challenge has been received due to an LGBTIQ resource in the collection, or to holding or advertising LGBTIQ-themed events, what were the grounds of the complaint or challenge? (select any which may apply)

- Inappropriate content for a public space
- Inappropriate content for children
- Inappropriate use of public library funding or resources
- Unsure – no explicit grounds were stated or provided
- N/A – no complaints or challenges have been received related to LGBTIQ resources or events
- N/A – no LGBTIQ resources or events have been available which could result in complaints or challenges

Have you ever chosen not to include an LGBTIQ-related resource in your collection, or chosen to remove one from the collection? If so, what was the basis of this decision? (select any which may apply)

[Addition of ‘removal’ clause and option, as most librarians would not actively decide on inclusion, but can assist ‘clearing up’ a collection]

- Yes – budget constraints
- Yes – there was insufficient usage of the resource to continue inclusion in the collection
- Yes – concern that the inclusion may result in a challenge of complaint
- Yes – the content was deemed inappropriate (explicit content)
- Yes – the content was deemed inappropriate (moral content)
- No – LGBTIQ resources have never been excluded or removed from the collection
- N/A – I do not have the authority to make this decision in my library
H. Research Self-Reflection

This Dissertation was originally conceived partly out of simple curiosity regarding LGBTIQ provision in libraries, as a result of my own lack of consideration of the library as a space to locate these resources. This broad topic was helpfully conceived of early in the Masters programme, allowing some research to be undertaken during the taught component where it could be incorporated into other assessments, such as a lesson plan for LGBTIQ-training within the Teaching Librarian module. The lack of previous Irish-based research on this topic was both challenging and exciting, as it allowed for scope to establish new research while also limiting the guidance available in the literature.

At the early stages of consideration, the research would have only considered actual material provision, rather than librarian or patron experience or perceptions. This material focus was the result of a concern that any findings regarding librarian or patron perceptions would be relatively disjointed from reality if the actual provision available was unknown while being evaluated as ‘limited’, ‘adequate’ or ‘advanced’. This material investigation would have limited merit on its own, and following guidance from members of the DBS library team and lecturers, the scope was expanded to librarian experience and perception of provision for LGBTIQ people. Although further research into patron and the general LGBTIQ communities’ perceptions of public libraries would be valuable, this was deemed beyond the scope of this thesis, especially due to the challenge of accessing these groups to engage in research.

The extent of this proposed research would have been limited to Dublin, but as part of the Research Methods II module, in reaching out to potential interviewees, it was discovered that Dublin-centred research on this topic was already underway. This required a recalibration of the topic, which was therefore limited to provision for young LGBTIQ people in particular, and then expanded to all Irish public library services. The secondary research accommodated these changes, and only required some modification of the original proposed set of questions. Due to a number of personal and academic factors, extensions to the proposal submission were welcome, albeit with the recognition that they reduced the opportunity to continue developing the literature review further. Once authorised to proceed to Dissertation, progress was steady if not as extensive as the proposal
had originally anticipated, and the development of the literature review had to be curtailed to allow the commencement of the primary research, although saturation in the literature review was becoming apparent.

Choosing to conduct interviews in person, rather than over the phone or online conferencing, did pose a financial and energy burden, particularly in a period when non-academic employment was undergoing an acute crisis, however the opportunity to visit the separate sites and hold the interviews in person did feed positively into the research, offering some clarity to responses through body language and context that may have been lost if mediated digitally. The online questionnaire was unexpectedly hampered by an IT restriction in some services against file-sharing sites, such as Google Drive. Although some participants actively engaged by completing the questionnaire from their personal accounts, this restriction likely impacted the number of responses received, where no alternative that could merge data seamlessly, and maintain anonymity, was available. The catalogue check was originally anticipated to be conducted between proposal submission and authorisation to proceed to Dissertation, but due to personal time constraints, this eventually could only be conducted in the final weeks of the Dissertation cycle, although its inclusion does offer some of the grounding originally considered for the early research conception.

The findings broadly fell within what I expected would arise before commencing the research, where librarians are generally very positive and well-meaning, but a lack of active consideration means the provision has not developed as it could have. Lacking a standard for what might constitute a ‘good’ provision makes any meaningful value judgements tenuous, and has therefore been avoided where possible. Other than a few particular insights, such as the lack of LGBTIQ material in Irish, and acute cases of anti-LGBTIQ sentiment experienced in libraries, the findings reasonably mimicked those found in other contexts. A bigger consideration was the absence of the public library service within the mindset of the LGBTIQ community and national strategies, a factor remarkable given the sector’s determination to innovate and make their value evident at local and national levels.
I was not confident expanding the findings to be broadly generalisable to all public libraries, as
the number of participants and positive bias inherent in the research would be considerable factors
to acknowledge, and phrasing has accordingly tried to carefully reflect this. A final concern arising
out of this research was that potentially it was too ambitious, and some of the valuable material
elicited out of the interviews and questionnaire could not be meaningfully included for analysis
and discussion within the space allotted. However, the completion of the research, by incorporating
a number of research methods and data sources, does offer reassurance that the findings and
conclusions are reasonable, and overall this thesis offers a sturdy point from which future research
can develop and improvements in services for LGBTIQ people can be created.