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## A Door Half Open: Young People's Access to Fiction Related to Homosexuality

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*How, and how well, do libraries meet the needs of lesbian, gay, and bisexual young people? This article considers the fiction resources of school and public libraries, specifically fiction written for young people that has themes related to homosexuality and/or contains gay and lesbian characters. Our work in compiling the annotated bibliography *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* (1996) is described, highlighting the mechanisms used to identify and locate relevant novels and picture books. Comment is made on the role gay and lesbian characters play in the novels, the sex of the characters, and how gays and lesbians are represented in the books. Finally, the article considers how young people may gain access to these novels and picture books. Research into patterns of fiction holdings is discussed, and the effects of censorship and legislative pressures in some countries on the inclusion of such titles in public collections. In conclusion, the article points to the many factors that may impinge on access. It finally indicates possible areas for future research, such as the role of the catalog in facilitating access and investigation of collection development policies and holdings in school libraries. Relevant books may exist in significant numbers, but the evidence suggests that the door of the closet is still only half open.*

### Introduction

Sarah, the young lesbian character in Jenny Pausacker's *How to Tell Your Parents That You're Straight*, observes, "I've read heaps of books about this stuff—libraries don't get freaked by tough questions the way people do." It's a great endorsement for libraries, but how far do school and other libraries really go in providing collections, services, and programs for gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people? There are many novels, short stories, and picture books for children and adolescents that feature gay and lesbian young people and adults or that feature discussions of homosexuality (Lobban & Clyde, 1996). It is much less certain how systematically these books are acquired, promoted, and used in school and public library collections aimed at young people.

This article focuses on three aspects of these questions. First, on the basis of work we have carried out over a number of years for the publication *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom: Homosexuality in Books for Young People*, the fiction books related to homosexuality that are available for children and

young people are discussed. Then follows an analysis of various characteristics of these books in order to highlight trends in writing and publishing. Finally, we discuss the evidence available for the inclusion of these books in library collections where they might be available to children and young people. Before considering these questions, however, some background information is provided to explain the context in which the discussion is presented.

### Background

In the late 1980s, we had each separately created small bibliographies of books for young people with gay/lesbian characters and/or themes. Marjorie Lobban, then working in the Library Services Branch of the New South Wales Department of Education in Sydney, had compiled (in response to a request) a list of picture books and other books for young children. Meanwhile, working on the opposite side of the country at the then Western Australian College of Advanced Education in Perth, Anne Clyde had compiled a short list of teen novels as a result of a group project in a teacher librarianship course that she was coordinating. In 1988, after discussions in Sydney, we combined these two lists, with the aim of creating a more comprehensive annotated bibliography. Early interest and involvement on the part of a Sydney publisher dictated the format used for the bibliography, although this publisher later withdrew from the project. The first edition of *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom: Homosexuality in Books for Young People* (Clyde & Lobban, 1992) was published by D.W. Thorpe and ALIA Press; the second edition, updated with additional titles, appeared in 1996 (Lobban & Clyde). Since then, although working in different countries, we have continued to collect new titles published after 1995, as well as older titles that were unavailable to us when the second edition was published, with the aim of producing a much expanded and updated third edition. However, Reed International (Australia) Limited, who have since taken over the D.W. Thorpe list, have indicated that they do not wish to publish a third edition, and so we are looking for a new publisher.

*Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* lists and describes books for young people that have been published in English (including books such as *Jenny Lives With Eric* and *Martin* by Susanne Bosche and *Brothers* by Ted van Lieshout that have been translated from another language into English). The aim is to include all books in which there is a homosexual character, or references to homosexuality, or in which homosexual terms are used. Only books written for children or young adults, or books specifically published for children or young adults, or books that have been cited in standard bibliographies or reviewed in standard review sources as works for the young have been included. Books for adults about homosexual behavior among young people are omitted, as are books of pornography (whether written for young people or adults). The Introduction to the first edition of

*Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* (Clyde & Lobban, 1992) provides further information about the criteria used to select books for inclusion.

Resources and strategies that have been used to identify and locate books have been varied. National and trade bibliographies have been searched on a regular basis. They include *Books in Print*, *Children's Books in Print*, and national sources such as national library catalogues. The Australian Schools Curriculum Information Service (SCIS) database has proved to be a useful source, as have the databases created by Internet-based bookstores such as Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble on the Web. The catalogues of libraries that specialize in children's literature (whether available on the Web or searched during site visits) are another source of information. Specialist bookshops in three continents have been visited and continue to be sources of relevant books; they include The Bookshop in Sydney (Australia), Little Sisters and Vancouver Kidsbooks in Vancouver (Canada), Gay's the Word and Silver Moon Women's Books in London, and Out in Brighton (United Kingdom), and various bookshops in the United States (such as Giovanni's Room in Philadelphia). Review sources consulted on a regular basis include *Lambda Book Report*, *VOYA*, *School Library Journal*, *Books for Keeps*, *Scan*, *Magpies*, and *Reading Time*.

Despite this, in many cases, the older books, and some newer ones, have proved difficult to purchase or to locate through inter-library loan. Some were not even listed in the standard national and trade bibliographies, or in the catalogues of libraries that specialize in the collection of children's literature. It was almost as if a conspiracy existed to keep the books from readers. Despite our contacts around the world, our access to libraries via the Internet, and the best efforts of the second-hand dealers at Amazon.com, some known titles have not been located. The difficulties are exacerbated by what one reviewer has called the "ghettoisation" of the books: they may be available only as a trade paperback or through relatively small feminist or gay presses (*Books for Keeps*, 112, September 1998, p. 26).

### Books Listed in the Bibliography

Throughout the 20th century, the number of adult books that portrayed homosexual characters and described homosexual relationships increased (Young, 1982; Grier, 1981). From the late 1960s and early 1970s, there has been a similar development in literature for young people. Apart from early books such as *Tom Brown's School-Days* by Thomas Hughes (1857) and *The Lass of the Silver Sword* by Mary Constance Dubois (1910), there are only two books for young people that predate 1970. They are *The Chinese Garden* by Rosemary Manning (1962) and *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* by John Donovan (1969). Since then, and particularly from the 1980s, the number of titles has continued to increase, with no sign of any falling off. The first edition of *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* listed 120 titles to the end of 1991; the second edition listed an additional 73 titles to the end of 1994 (with

a further four titles from 1995), bringing the total to 193, an increase of around 60%. Since 1995, another 110 titles have already been identified for inclusion in a third edition. However, because the process of identification and location of books for the third edition is still in progress, the tables below and in the next section are based on the titles listed in the second edition of *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* (which incorporates first edition titles).

Just as adult books dealing with homosexuality have been available for much longer than books for adolescents that deal with this topic, so books for young children appeared rather later than books for teenagers. The first picture book for young children, Susanne Bosche's *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin* did not appear (in English translation) until 1983. The first edition of *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* listed 10 picture books, among them *Asha's Mums* (Rosamund Elwin & Michele Paulse), *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Leslea Newman), and *Daddy's Roommate* (Michael Willhoite). The second edition included 27 in all. Many of these titles appear to be aimed particularly, although not exclusively, at children growing up as part of gay or lesbian families; examples are *Gloria Goes to Gay Pride* (Leslea Newman), *Anna Day and the O-Ring* (Elaine Wickens), and *A Beach Party With Alexis* (Sarita Johnson-Calvo). Since 1996, however, the number of new picture books appears to have declined. The small size of this particular sector of the publishing industry, coupled with the dominance of one publisher (Alyson Press in the US), means that just one event can make a real difference. As of early 1999, the total number of picture books that depicted gay or lesbian characters or contained references to homosexuality was 32; of these, 17 (53%) were published by Alyson (see Table 1). With Alyson changing direction from the last years of the 1990s, we might expect a corresponding change in the availability of new titles for young children. Indeed, based on the books collected for the third edition of *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*, this does seem to be happening: although eight picture books have been identified that were not included in the second edition, only one of these has a publication date after 1998.

### *Characteristics of the Books*

Most, but not all, of the books listed in *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* have at least one homosexual character. In order to facilitate analyses, books

Table 1  
Picture Books for Young Children: *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*,  
All Picture Books

<i>As of 1996</i>	<i>As of 1999</i>
Total number of picture books: 27	Total number of picture books: 32
Number of picture books published by Alyson: 15 (55.5%)	Number of picture books published by Alyson: 17(53%)

were categorized according to whether the gay or lesbian character was the main character, a supporting character, or a background character. Table 2 shows the number of books in each category. In books in the first category, the main character (usually a teenager) is homosexual, has homosexual tendencies, or discovers that he or she is homosexual. Some of these, such as *Out of the Shadows* (Sue Hines), might be described as "coming out" novels. In books in the second category, the homosexual character is a secondary or supporting character or there is a homosexual incident that involves a supporting character. In each case, this has an influence on the main character and on the plot of the book. The secondary characters might be parents or guardians; uncles or aunts, or brothers or sisters, or other close relatives; teachers, friends, or neighbors. The third category relates to those books in which a background character is homosexual or where a homosexual incident involves a background character. Again, this usually has some influence on the development of the plot.

In the Introduction to the first edition of *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*, it was observed that during the period to 1991, there had been a trend away from the treatment of homosexuality as a major issue toward acceptance of homosexuality as a part of the normal social environment. One effect of this was fewer main characters being portrayed as homosexual, but more homosexual secondary characters, the proportions being 12:34 in the books added for the second edition. Although this trend appears to continue in the books already identified for inclusion in the third edition, it is less marked (with the proportions being 14:26 as at April 2001). Related to this is an increase over the period in the number of books with homosexual adults as characters.

Christine A. Jenkins (1993) has commented that "one of the most noticeable patterns in the young adult novelistic portrayal of gay/lesbian people is the predominance of males, both as teens and as adults" (p. 46). In the Introduction to the first edition of *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*, we

Table 2

The Books Categorized by Type of Homosexual Character: *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*, 1st and 2nd Editions

<i>Type of Homosexual Character</i>	<i>Number of Books</i>
Stories with homosexual main characters	46
Stories with homosexual supporting characters	71
Stories with homosexual background characters	31
Stories that mention homosexuality or use homosexual terms	15

Only books sighted by us in the period of time covered by the first and second editions are included.

noted that, in terms of homosexual main and supporting characters only, there were more males than females portrayed in the books that were listed. This continued to hold true for the books listed in the second edition; again, there were more males than females portrayed, and the ratio remained unchanged from the first edition at approximately 2:1. Table 3 illustrates this. It is also clear in both editions that female authors are prepared to write about homosexual men and boys, although male authors seldom write about lesbians. In the books listed in the second edition, significant male homosexual characters had been created by 21 female writers, but just one novel written by a male writer had a significant lesbian character. In the picture books *Who's in a Family?* (Robert Skutch) and *The Daddy Machine* (Johnny Valentine) male creators have included both gay and lesbian families. Only two of the books that have so far been identified for the third edition have lesbian characters created by male authors, whereas there are 10 books with male characters created by female authors.

What do the books tell young people about being homosexual? In novels or short stories for teenagers, being gay or lesbian and young is almost universally shown to be hard. Sometimes the difficulty lies in the young gay or lesbian not wanting to accept his or her own sexuality. For example, Marco in William Taylor's *Jerome* only confronts his own homosexuality when his friend Jerome commits suicide—apparently because of his unrequited love for Marco. In B.A. Ecker's *Independence Day*, the whole story revolves around 16-year-old Mike's increasing acceptance of his own homosexuality. More often, it is the real or imagined reactions of friends or family that fill the young gay or lesbian with apprehension. In Marilyn Levy's *Rumors and Whispers*, Doug is thrown out of home when he begins a homosexual relationship with Terry; in M.E. Kerr's *I'll Love You When You're More Like Me*, Charlie becomes the town outcast after telling his friends that he prefers boys to girls.

Table 3

Proportion of Male to Female Homosexual Characters: *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*, 1st and 2nd Editions

<i>Character</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Main	32	18
Supporting	38	14
Background	21	11
Totals	91	43

Picture books are not included.  
Short stories in collections are not included.

Table 4  
 Characters by Sex of Author: *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*,  
 1st and 2nd Editions

<i>Author</i>	<i>Male Characters</i>	<i>Female Characters</i>
Male	40	2
Female	57	46
Totals	97	47

Only books for which the sex of the author is known are included.

In two picture books *Who's in a Family* and *The Daddy Machine*, both lesbian and gay families are mentioned. Both these titles have male authors, and both are published by Alyson. Short stories in collections are not included.

Gay and lesbian adults, however, fare much better. They are often idealized individuals, loving, perceptive, sensitive, and supportive. Lesbians tend to be depicted in warm, stable relationships or as well-adjusted individuals, nurturing children, for example, the couples in Peggy Durbin's *And Featuring Bailey Wellcom as the Biscuit* and Leslea Newman's *Heather Has Two Mommies*, and the incredibly wise and tolerant Deb in Sue Hines's *Out of the Shadows*. Gay men (such as Trent in A.M. Jenkins's *Breaking Boxes* and the uncle in Mary Kate Jordan's *Losing Uncle Tim*) are mentors and role models. In two of Sarah Walker's books for teens, *Water Colours* and *Camphor Laurel*, an adult lesbian relationship is examined and compared favorably with the disastrous heterosexual relationships of other adults; in *Jack* by A.M. Homes, the eponymous hero comes to appreciate his gay father more after he witnesses the domestic violence in his best friend's all-American family. Dusty in Norma Klein's *Learning How to Fall* tells his friend, "My mother's gay, and she's about the only adult I know who has a decent relationship with another adult." Nevertheless, problems faced by the adults are not always glossed over: in the above-mentioned *And Featuring Bailey Wellcom as the Biscuit*, the loving and secure lesbian relationship becomes the focus for community gossip and finally violence, and exposure of the long-term lesbian relationship of two teachers in Nancy Garden's *Annie on My Mind* means that they have to find new jobs.

If novels and picture books suggest ways of being to readers, then generally speaking, these books present a conservative picture of "being gay or lesbian." In children's and young adult books, the gay man or youth is usually a very "straight" gay, not effeminate, just a "regular guy" who happens to love guys. Even those teenage boys who are taunted for being a "fag" or a "poofter" (as in *Suffer Dogs* by Frank Willmott and *The Truth About Alex* by Anne Snyder & Louis Pelletier) are far from being outrageous in their behavior, and Jumbo in Timothy Ireland's *Who Lies Inside* appears to be the

ultimate jock. Gay men are not presented as "screaming queens"; an exception is Troy in Jacqueline Woodson's *Autobiography of a Family Photo*, who prances around in high heels that he has sneaked from his mother's closet and promises that he will "do himself up right" in "fly clothes" and "step out" in them when he can (p. 18). Among the lesbians, there are no "diesel dykes" or super-butches. Evie in M.E. Kerr's *Deliver Us From Evie* is almost alone in wearing "masculine" clothes and adopting some "masculine" behavior patterns, although these are not completely inconsistent with the hard outdoor work that she does on the family farm.

### *Young People's Access to the Books*

For more than a decade, through our work for the *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* editions, we have been identifying and listing books for children and young adults that deal with homosexuality or have gay or lesbian characters. This has sometimes been a difficult task, as we indicate above. To what extent, then, do young people themselves have access to these books, for example, through their local libraries? Writing about collection development in libraries of all kinds, Cal Cough and Ellen Greenblatt (1998) note that:

The abundance and variety of books written by, for, and about lesbians and gay men has increased enormously within the past 30 years. Neither this abundance nor this variety is reflected in most library collections, however. Recent studies show this to be the case regardless of the type of library collection examined or the availability of reviews for the materials, (p. 151)

They further suggest that a "persistent, widespread resistance to routinely collecting materials of interest or usefulness to lesbian and gay library users" (pp. 151-152) disadvantages those users. It 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.

James H. Sweetland and Peter G. Christensen (1995) compared the 1992 gay/lesbian oriented Lambda Book Award titles (plus a sample of titles reviewed in *Lambda Book Report*) with a control group of titles listed in *Publishers Weekly* and found that although the Lambda-listed titles were reviewed as often as the control group, they were held in significantly fewer OCLC libraries (as shown in the OCLC library catalog databases). In a study of 250 US public and college libraries, Eric Bryant (1995) found that half had fewer than 30 books with lesbigay characters or themes, and whereas 10% of the libraries had at least 500 such books, a greater number (14%) had no books at all that had lesbigay characters or themes. In a paper presented at the 1998 IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) general conference (with the title "Homosexuality and United States Libraries: Land of the Free but not Home to the Gay"), James V. Carmichael Jr. confirmed that "lesbigay collections in small and medium sized public libraries are under representative, if they exist at all" (p. 142).

The US is not alone in this regard. Even in those places where collections were considered to be better than the norm, the services based on them often come in for some criticism. A survey by Steven Joyce and Alvin M. Schrader (1997) of gay male users of the Edmonton Public Library in Alberta, Canada, supported the results of an earlier central Canadian study by Janet A.E. Creelman and Roma M. Harris (1990) of lesbian library users. They found that although libraries were seen as an important source of coming out information and a significant ongoing information resource, there was nevertheless "a general lack of satisfaction with the library in terms of providing services concerning homosexuality" (Joyce & Schrader, 1997, p.35). Ann Curry's (2000) British research has shown that throughout the 1990s, Section 28 of the local authorities legislation of 1988 (which prohibits the "promotion" of homosexuality) has in fact "promoted increasing self censorship" among librarians (p. 17) and an unwillingness to stock "material that alludes positively to lesbians and gays and their lifestyle" (Hendry, 1997, quoted by Curry, 2000, p. 18). One of the British public libraries that has continued to provide a special lesbian, gay, and bisexual collection, despite Section 28, is Brighton and Hove Libraries. Yet even here, although Mark Norman's (1999) study showed that the special collection was well used and appreciated by the city's diverse lesbian, gay, and bisexual community, and there was a core of satisfied users, nevertheless a significant minority of users (close to 40% in some instances) was dissatisfied with aspects of the collection and service—and this among people who do use the library.

Our work for *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom* indicates that, just as there has been an increase in the total number of books with lesbian/gay characters and themes over the last three decades, so there has also been a corresponding increase in the number of such books for young people, although the trend in relation to books for young people started later. In addition, the professional and research literature indicates that, just as public library collections in general fail to provide sufficient books to meet the needs of gay/lesbian users of all ages or to provide representative coverage of gay/lesbian lifestyles and issues, so collections developed specifically for young users also generally fail in this regard. In 1999, Alex Spence reported on a study of "Gay young adult fiction in the public library," in which he took Christine Jenkins' (1998) list of 99 young adult novels with "gay/lesbian/queer content" and checked the titles against the holdings of 10 US and nine Canadian urban public library system catalogs. The holdings varied a great deal among the libraries (whether expressed as total holdings or copies per capita), with some libraries having "substantial" collections and others holding few copies of few of the titles. Spence's work here is generally supported by the results of a study by Paulette M. Rothbauer and Lynne E.F. McKechnie (1999), which was also based on Jenkins' 1998 list of titles and which investigated holdings of 40 large- and medium-sized Canadian public libraries. In 2000, Spence published the results of another study in this field,

this time looking at the children's picture books with gay or lesbian characters or gay- or lesbian-related contents held by 101 public library systems in the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the UK. For this study, the main source of titles for the checklist was the second edition of our *Out of the Closet and Into the Classroom*. Again, the libraries varied a great deal both in their holdings of the titles and the number of copies of the titles, with the number of titles held ranging from zero to 24 and the average number of copies per 100,000 population ranging from zero to 520. Even the best of these collections represents a limited availability of lesbian- and gay-related picture books for the population served, a finding that partly reflects the relatively small number of relevant English-language picture book titles from among which the libraries could select in the first place (30 titles verified by Spence), but does not excuse the number of copies of the titles held. In a check at the State Library of New South Wales (2001), no special public library services were identified. It was noted that the public libraries will always try to meet the expressed information needs of gay and lesbian young people, but no services were targeted specifically at them. Similarly, the information officer at the AIDS Council of New South Wales will supply teachers with resources such as pamphlets and contact points about gay and lesbian issues, but does not target the young people with particular services. These organizations seem to be reactive rather than proactive in the area.

Although some reports (Bott, 2000; Woog, 2000) indicate that some school librarians have been supportive and even proactive in developing collections that include gay/lesbian-related material and materials that reflect different sexual orientations, other school librarians have reportedly given in to the widespread "pressure to censor materials" in school libraries (Schrader, 1996, p. 71). A check of the situation in Australia suggested some reasons for a conservative approach to collections and services for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. Although there are exceptions (e.g., in Queensland), Australian schools are fairly small (1,000 students would be a very large school; 700-800 students in years 7-12 would be more typical) and intimate communities. There is little anonymity for individuals, and students would be unlikely to identify with an openly gay group or service if it existed. Identification and support are much more likely to be informal and ad hoc, based on relationships between individual teachers and students, rather than formalized.

As Alvin Schrader (1996) has suggested, censorship and challenges to library materials can affect young people's access to books with homosexual content or themes. The American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom, which monitors and records attempts to censor library materials, produces an annual list of the books that are the "most challenged" in libraries around the country. In 1991, 40 of the challenges were related to books with homosexual characters or content; by 1993, the number had risen to 111, and it continued to remain high through the 1990s. The list of *100 Most*

*Frequently Banned Books of the Decade* (released by the American Library Association in September 2000) included both *Daddy's Roommate* (Michael Willhoite) and *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Leslea Newman) in the top 10, with the former accused of "promoting homosexuality as a normal lifestyle." Both these books were also included in Herbert N. Foerstel's list of "the most frequently banned books in the 1990s" along with Nancy Garden's teen novel *Annie on My Mind*.

The catalogue can be a powerful tool in bringing together readers and books. But equally, the failure to assign a subject heading such as Homosexuality—Fiction may mean that a book never connects with a potential reader. We are not aware of any research study that investigates the subject headings assigned to books with gay/lesbian/bisexual themes and characters and the influence of these subject headings on the accessibility of the books to potential readers. The Internet bookstore Amazon.com does assign relevant subject headings to fiction titles with gay/lesbian content and/or characters, but whether young people use these to locate relevant reading material is not known.

Why should books with gay/lesbian/bisexual content and/or themes be available in school library collections, and available in such a way that students can readily identify the books? One argument is that the collection and services should support gay, lesbian, and bisexual students as they begin to explore their sexual identity. Another justification is to support children of gay or lesbian parents or with other gay/lesbian relatives. Still another argument in favor is that it is important to have these titles represented in school library collections to broaden straight students' view of the world and of sexuality and so to inform their interactions with lesbian/gay students or students with lesbian/gay parents. It would be interesting and useful to see a large-scale research study that investigated school library holdings of relevant titles.

### Conclusion

For young people and their books, is it really the case that they have come "out of the closet and into the classroom"? At present, it seems that the closet door is no more than about half open. Certainly, since the late 1960s, we have seen the publication of a large number of books for young people in which homosexuality is the theme or in which gay or lesbian characters appear. However, these books often prove difficult to identify through reviewing sources, bookshops, and other standard sources of information, and this situation does not seem to be changing. There are comparatively few picture books or other books for young children and no books targeted at slow or reluctant readers. The images of gays and lesbians that are presented in the books are generally conservative. Although a positive aspect of the presentation of homosexual adults is that negative stereotypes are usually avoided, it is nevertheless unrealistic that all these adults should be responsible, sensi-

tive, caring, and good at relating to children. More of the books deal with male homosexuality than with female, even when written by women. Regardless of their literary value or the images of gays and lesbians that they present, young people may not have easy access to these books, even if they are available in their local public or school libraries. School library catalogues may not identify the books with appropriate subject headings, and there seem to be few libraries that are providing any special services based on the books. Censorship attempts and challenges have resulted in further restrictions on access.

Although this article cites a number of research projects that have investigated aspects of this topic, more research is needed. We know something of the inclusion of these books in public library collections, but little about this aspect of collection development in school libraries. The relationship between the coverage of the books in standard review sources and their inclusion in school libraries is unclear. Almost nothing is known about school librarians' knowledge of these books or about how they make purchase decisions related to the books. Do teacher-librarians and teachers have opportunities to explore and discuss these books as part of their professional education? Although there seems to be a relationship between censorship and access to these books in libraries, how strong is this relationship, how does it work, and does it affect some places and people more than others? How are these books catalogued in school libraries and how does the cataloguing affect access to them? To what extent are very young children exposed to the picture books through the adults who care for them, and what factors influence this? What influence do publishers, reviewers, and booksellers really have on ensuring that children and young adults have access to books with homosexual themes or with gay or lesbian characters? And finally, what strategies can be used to improve the situation described in the paragraph above so that homosexuality in books for young people *does* move "out of the closet and into the classroom"?

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