

# FORBIDDEN FRUIT



# **FORBIDDEN FRUIT**

## **The Censorship of Literature and Information for Young People**

### **CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

Edited by

**Sarah McNicol**



BrownWalker Press  
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*Forbidden Fruit:  
The Censorship of Literature and Information for Young People*

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# INTRODUCTION

Sarah McNicol  
Conference Convenor

Forbidden Fruit: The Censorship of Literature and Information for Young People was a two day conference held in Southport, UK in June 2008. It was attended by delegates from around the world; among the countries represented were the United States, South Africa, Greece, Malta, Norway, Australia and the Republic of Ireland, in addition to the UK and Northern Ireland.

Participants came from many different professional backgrounds and included authors, publishers and librarians, as well as researchers from a range of disciplines including education, librarianship, literature and linguistics.

There were thirteen presentations during the conference examining the issues from a variety of perspectives; nine of these are presented here as written papers.

Lucy Pearson takes a historical perspective, considering the differences in the way in which two titles, *Young Mother* in the 1960s and *Forever* in the 1970s, handle the theme of teenage sexuality. She considers changes which occurred during this period in both external interventions and 'pro-active censorship' by which authors and commissioning editors typically operate within perceived parameters of what is 'suitable' for children's literature, avoiding material which potentially transgresses these boundaries.

Both John Harer and Elizabeth Chapman and Caroline Wright write about the censorship of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans materials for young people, especially referring to issues faced by librarians in dealing with such resources. Chapman and Wright report on the findings of two MA dissertations carried out at the

University of Sheffield, UK in 2007 which found that a combination of Internet filtering, low availability of materials from suppliers, and lack of staff awareness is leading to censorship by omission in both public and school libraries. Comparing this paper with John Harer's highlights important differences in this area between the UK and the US, where many more people hold deeply felt, religious views about gays and morality. This can be a major challenge for school and children's librarians, especially in rural areas where the influence of conservative religious faiths is strongest.

Cherie Givens examines the often neglected issue of pre-censorship, that is, restrictions which take place before materials reach the library shelves. This might take the form of formal pre-censorship by editors, publishers and so forth as well as voluntary pre-censorship carried out by authors or illustrators themselves. Through a series of interviews with authors and illustrators, Cherie Givens found that some children's and young adult authors in Canada have indeed experienced both formal and informal pre-censorship in areas as diverse as Americanisation, portrayal of the Olympic Games, gender stereotypes and negative adult behaviour to name just some examples.

It is too often the case that only adults' voices are acknowledged in debates about the censorship of young adult literature. However, Wendy Stephens reports on her action research into students' reactions to book banning and censorship in the context of a twelfth-grade English literature research project. The themes discussed include age restrictions; the bibliotherapeutic qualities of literature; and metacognition, specifically of not having previously known about the attempted suppression of books prior to the unit of study.

The geographical spread of presenters was one of the strengths of the Forbidden Fruit conference and two papers describe attitudes towards censorship in Greece. Ioanna Kaliakatsou examines some typical examples of young adult fiction by Greek authors in which sexual desire is presented as an act of conflict with social institutions such as marriage, family and heterosexual relations. Through a comparative analysis of novels written in the first decades of the twentieth century and contemporary novels, she suggests that the intent of adult authors is not so much to remove sexual content from novels in order to protect adolescents, but rather to control the narrative concerning this issue, thus applying a form of self-censorship. In contrast, Evangelia Moula focuses on adaptations of classic Greek

## Introduction

tragedies. She argues that such works have been censored, so as to adjust to the implied innocence of their audience; they expurgate the classical texts from their morally ambiguous points and turn them into pedagogically correct and didactic instruments.

Christopher Gruppetta writes from the perspective of a publisher in Malta, a country where young adult literacy is still in its infancy. In fact, *Sfidi*, published in 2005, is generally acknowledged as being Malta's first fully-fledged young adult novel. His article demonstrates the huge strides which can take place in a relatively short period of time, even in a religiously conservative country. He also draws attention to the differences in terms of what is considered acceptable in the two languages spoken: Maltese and English.

Following on from this, Helen T Frank examines Australian children's fiction translated into French to highlight the process of 'purification' or 'sanitization' that can occur in translations if the values or the image of the child projected in the source work do not comply with those values and images in the target culture, pointing out how this can lead to the risk that translations can be subject to distortion, inadequacy, mistranslation, and cultural misappropriation.



**FROM *YOUNG MOTHER* TO *FOREVER*:  
CHANGING ATTITUDES TO CENSORSHIP  
IN THE 1960S AND 1970S**

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The censorship of books is typically associated with intervention from external forces; the word evokes images of editors striking out offensive material or books being removed from shelves. Where such censorship occurs, it is frequently directed at children's literature: eight of the ten titles on the ALA list of most-challenged books during 2007 were titles aimed at children and young people (American Library Association 2008). Such instances of censorship are easy to identify; ironically, however, the fact that they deal with books which have attained publication arguably indicates that they highlight *less* restrictive standards on the part of publishing houses. Less evident, but more pervasive, is what might be termed 'pro-active censorship'; authors and commissioning editors typically operate within perceived parameters of what is 'suitable' for children's literature, avoiding material which potentially transgresses these boundaries. Such self-censorship is more difficult to identify, since it is not possible to point to the redaction or removal of existing material. Nevertheless, by examining published works and the critical reactions to them, it is possible to identify some of the implicit censorship at work within the text, manifested both through the omission of certain elements, and through adherence to a contextual framework which renders some controversial topics permissible. This paper examines the manifestation of both strategies in two texts about teenage sexuality: Josephine Kamm's *Young Mother*

(1965) and Judy Blume's *Forever* (1975). These novels, both of which were perceived as groundbreaking on first publication, illustrate a more general shift in attitudes towards censorship which took place in children's literature during the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1960s and the 1970s are associated with a shift towards more liberal social values in the West, exemplified by phenomena such as the American civil rights movement, the rise of second-wave feminism, and the changes in popular culture associated with 'flower power' and the sexual revolution. In the literary realm, the landmark *Lady Chatterley* obscenity trial (1960) heralded a relaxation of censorship in Britain. These social and artistic changes are certainly reflected in the children's literature of the period: both Britain and America saw a rapid increase in the number of children's books published in the years 1960 to 1979. The social demographic of child readers was significantly broadened, resulting in a demand for books which reflected the lives of working-class, ethnically diverse child readers. Another significant factor in the establishment of a more liberal set of standards was the emergence of teenage literature, which catered for a much broader age demographic and consequently addressed a range of topics previously considered 'too adult' for children's literature. As a result, by the 1970s children's literature frequently covered such topics as family breakdown, social deprivation and teenage sexuality, which had previously been subject to tacit censorship. It would however be misleading to represent this period as one which eradicated censorship in children's literature. In 1965, the writer and critic Gillian Avery complained that, despite the fashion for realism, contemporary children's writers had augmented those strictures which had governed their predecessors with a new set of taboos, so that it was 'impossible to talk without embarrassment of religion or to allude to class differences', concluding disgustedly 'truly, we are a mealy-mouthed lot' (Avery 1965, p. 227). While topics such as sex did become more acceptable, increasing critical concern about the ideological impact of children's books resulted in many books being revised or removed from sale on the grounds that they conveyed socially undesirable ideologies such as racism. The shift in attitudes towards censorship, then, involved the creation of a new set of standards for children's literature, rather than the erosion of all boundaries. There was also a change in the way these standards were manifested in the literature itself: while during the early 1960s taboo elements were omitted or

presented in negative terms, by the 1970s the emphasis was upon presenting positive models. This shift is evident in the differences between the ways in which *Young Mother* and *Forever* handle the issue of teenage sexuality.

The trend towards more social realism in children's literature during this period was championed by critics such as John Rowe Townsend, Elaine Moss and Aidan Chambers, who saw a need for more books which reflected the lives of their child readers and engaged with real social concerns. Josephine Kamm's *Young Mother* was among the first titles which sought to meet this need. As the title implies, the book deals with teenage pregnancy, following sixteen-year-old Pat from early in her pregnancy through to her decision to give her son up for adoption. This brief plot summary is enough to indicate the didactic nature of the text; although it is an undoubtedly courageous depiction of a taboo social issue, it is certainly not an attempt to engage honestly with teenage sexuality. Indeed, it is difficult to escape the feeling that the book fails to convincingly engage with *any* aspect of its subject: while it faithfully records the facts of the case, the characterisation is decidedly wooden, and the book has faded into obscurity. Nevertheless, on its first publication the librarian and critic Elaine Moss commented 'Mrs Kamm's courageous book is remarkable in many ways: it is clear; it is unsentimental; it is sympathetic; it is factual' (Moss 1986 [1964], p. 23). It was also popular with its intended readership: Aidan Chambers, in his book on encouraging reluctant teenage readers, commented that it was 'read avidly and with obvious involvement by most girls and some boys' (Chambers 1969, p. 53). The fact that the book was considered to be ground-breaking - it was in fact banned in some quarters - is extremely revealing of the boundaries of children's literature during the mid-1960s (Chambers 1969, p. 97).

*Young Mother* functions primarily as a cautionary tale about the perils of underage sex; a feature which it arguably has in common with many books on the same topic published today. The sex itself takes place prior to the opening of the novel and is presented to the reader second-hand, when Pat confesses her pregnancy to her older sister. The details of the encounter betray Kamm's struggle to remain within the bounds of what could be considered appropriate for her readership. Since Pat is the protagonist, she must evoke sympathy in the reader, but the controversy of the subject matter made it imperative for Kamm to avoid appearing to glamorise teenage sex.

In an uneasy reconciliation of these potentially conflicting aims, Kamm makes Pat's pregnancy the result of an unhappy one-night-stand, which happens at a party where Pat has been drinking strong cider. The man with whom she has sex is a stranger, and there is a suggestion that he may have spiked her drink. Recounting the experience to her sister, Pat says:

After that I felt sort of muzzy and not caring. I wanted to go to sleep when Cynthia put out all the lights, but the men all started chasing after the girls and he - this man - made a sort of grab at me. After that it all happened, and I don't know how long it went on.' Pat gasped and shuddered. 'It was dreadful, Chris, you can't imagine.' (Kamm 1968 [1965], p. 18)

Since from a modern perspective this experience might more accurately be described as rape, Pat's horror is little to be wondered at. This is not, however, the view taken by her putatively understanding social worker, whose promise to believe Pat's version of events is followed with the comment 'it wouldn't shock me too much if you were to tell me that you had not been quite as innocent as you think', eliciting Pat's confession that she 'didn't really hate it, not after the start' (p. 45). The line drawn here is very clear: while it may be possible to allude to teenage sex, portraying it as enjoyable is unacceptable. Even Pat's admission that it was not an entirely unpleasant experience is quickly tempered by the sobering realisation 'that she was herself in some way responsible for what had occurred' (p. 45). The rest of the book makes it clear that Pat is obliged to pay for her moment of dubious pleasure in every way possible. Having endured this quasi-rape, she is not only obliged to give her child up for adoption, but is ostracised by both her younger brother and her childhood sweetheart. (There is little indication in the book that the father of her child deserves to suffer similar repercussions.) The counterpoint to Pat's story is that of her sister, Chris, four years older and engaged to be married. The book closes with Chris' wedding day, upon which Pat receives a letter from the adoptive mother of her son, wishing that 'one day she will find happiness in marriage' (p. 160). The intent of the book is clearly that its teenage audience should achieve this aim without the unfortunate interlude of a pregnancy out-of-wedlock.

The portrayal of teenage sex in *Young Mother* is dramatically different to Judy Blume's treatment of the subject in *Forever*,

*From Young Mother to Forever*

published ten years later. Blume wrote *Forever* after her teenage daughter asked for 'a story about two nice kids who have sex without either of them having to die' (Blume 2007), and it is thus a direct riposte to cautionary novels like *Young Mother*, which typically punished their characters for having sex. Unlike Pat, who is coerced into sex and barely seems to understand what has happened to her, Blume's heroine Katherine makes an active decision to have sex, and does so only when she is sure she is 'ready', resisting her boyfriend's attempts to hurry her decision. Although their first few attempts at sex are realistically unsatisfactory, ultimately sex is portrayed as both pleasurable and meaningful. Like Kamm, Blume suggests that responsibility for resisting sex lies primarily with the female partner - Katherine's boyfriend Michael is presented as more experienced and more driven by his libido - but in Blume's text this is given a more positive slant. Whereas Pat's passivity is the only element which mitigates her transgression and the fact that she 'didn't hate it' is a guilty confession, in *Forever* fulfilling sex for the couple is closely connected with Katherine's sense of agency. She initiates sex, and recounts joyfully:

I came before he did. But I kept moving until he groaned and as he finished I came again, not caring about anything - anything but how good it felt. [...] After, we lay in each other's arms and I thought, there are so many ways to love a person. This is how it should be - forever. (Blume 2005 [1975], p. 149)

The explicit depictions of sex and mutual masturbation in *Forever* are a world away from the oblique references to the act in *Young Mother*. Kamm's book conveys the impression that abstinence is the only means of avoiding unwanted pregnancy; by contrast, contraception is a central concern in *Forever*, which includes several frank discussions between Katherine and her family, along with a visit to Planned Parenthood to obtain birth control. Despite these potentially controversial elements, a 1976 review by Nicholas Tucker summed up the book as 'a dull novel about two very dull young people' (Tucker 1976). Other reviewers, however, were less blasé about the book's content: a review in the *Junior Bookshelf* (Bott 1977) raised the concern that the book would 'help to impose another imprimatur on casual sex', and the book continues to be the subject

of frequent attempts at censorship, appearing regularly on lists of banned or challenged books.

*Forever* remains a controversial book today; however, as Roberta Seelinger Trites has argued, its unusually frank depiction of teenage sex is accompanied by a strong didactic message (Seelinger Trites 2002). Whereas Josephine Kamm justified her discussion of a taboo topic by framing it in cautionary terms, Blume did so by offering a positive model of behaviour. Early in the book, Katherine summarises what she sees as the important points of an article on sex, saying 'A person shouldn't ever feel pushed into sex... or that she has to do it to please someone else' (p. 95); a summary which could equally well be applied to *Forever* itself. Within the context of the book, Blume makes it clear that Katherine's experience of sex is the 'right' one: it takes place within a committed relationship, when both parties are sure of their decision, and only when adequate contraception is used. Despite her criticism of books which punished their teenage protagonists, Blume penalises those characters who transgress the boundaries she has established. Katherine's friend Erika, who claims to see sex 'as a physical thing' (p. 26), eventually falls in love, but her boyfriend is struggling with depression and ultimately attempts suicide. Similarly, their friend Sybil, who - we are informed in the opening lines of the book - 'has a genius I.Q. and has been laid by at least six different guys' (p. 1) eventually falls pregnant and gives the baby up for adoption, an experience which turns out to be 'more than she bargained for' (p. 157). Even Katherine's own experience conveys a note of caution: her relationship with Michael does not survive a summer of separation. If 'forever' is 'how it should be', then Blume subtly indicates that it is an ideal which teenagers are ill-qualified to judge.

The differences in the way in which *Young Mother* and *Forever* handle the theme of teenage sexuality indicate that the intervening decade had seen a marked shift in the levels of censorship applied to this topic. Writing in 1969, Aidan Chambers commented on the constraints within which Josephine Kamm was writing, arguing that 'had she given the story [...] the imaginatively presented living truth [...] there would have been a much bigger outcry than there was' (Chambers 1969, p. 53). Ten years later, Blume was able not only to show teenage sex in graphic detail, but to present it as enjoyable and even desirable. These developments undoubtedly reflect a change in social as well as literary attitudes towards sexuality; in both areas,

markedly more liberal standards prevailed. As this brief discussion of the novels indicates, however, the widening of boundaries in terms of content should not be mistaken for their *removal*; while Blume's moral stance is more palatable to a modern audience than Kamm's, this does not negate the didacticism of the text. Nevertheless, the radically broader and more positive discourse within which *Forever* is situated demonstrates a significant move away from an ideological model predicated on the censoring of potentially harmful material, towards one which delivered its didactic message through a portrayal of positive scenarios. In attempting to address teenage sexuality outside a punitive context, Blume adopted techniques which had become prevalent among writers who attempted to promote positive ideologies about issues such as gender and race. The differences between the two books, then, are representative of a changing trend throughout children's and young adult literature as a whole. The continued popularity of *Forever* indicates the success of this approach; that it is still subject to regular challenges demonstrates the extent to which positive portrayals of sex remain one of children's literature's strongest taboos.

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# PROVISION OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANS (LGBT) MATERIALS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN UK PUBLIC AND SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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## Introduction

This paper is based on the findings of two MA dissertations carried out at the University of Sheffield in 2007. The dissertations addressed, respectively, the provision of LGBT fiction to children and young people in public libraries (Chapman, 2007a, hereafter described as ‘Study 1’); and the provision of LGBT materials in secondary school libraries (Wright, 2007, hereafter described as ‘Study 2’). Both studies were exploratory pieces of research which used mixed-method approaches to investigate levels of provision, factors affecting provision, and the attitudes of library staff towards LGBT materials for young people.

The acronym ‘LGBT’ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans; ‘trans’ is the all-encompassing term used by Press for Change, a major campaigner for trans people, to cover transsexual, transgender, transvestite and other gender identities (Press for Change, 2007).

Prior to these studies, little research attention had been paid to LGBT provision for children and young people in either school or public libraries, although there is a greater body of work from the US and Canada (see for example Boon and Howard, 2004; Hellenius, 2001; Howard, 2005; Jenkins, 1990; Mehra and Braquet, 2006; Rothbauer and McKechnie, 1999; Spence, 1999).

## **Aims and objectives of the research**

### *Study 1*

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the quality of provision of LGBT-related fiction to children and young people, within and beyond two public library authorities. More specifically, the study aimed to assess holdings of LGBT-related fiction for children and young people in the case study authorities, and to evaluate the opinions of library employees within and beyond the case study authorities regarding this material. A further objective was to gather opinions from young LGBT people and LGBT parents on the same material, and to compare and contrast these with the opinions of the staff members. Finally, the study intended to make recommendations for practice.

### *Study 2*

This study aimed to investigate the current state of LGBT provision in secondary school libraries, and discover the factors that may influence this provision. Specifically, the study intended to assess the provision and promotion of different types of LGBT resources in secondary school libraries across the UK, and to examine the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of school library staff members regarding LGBT provision. It also aimed to explore factors affecting this provision, and to develop a set of recommendations.

## **Background information**

### *User population*

It can be assumed that there is a sizeable potential user population for LGBT materials for young people. It is difficult to calculate this figure exactly, as the most recent census did not include a question on sexual orientation (ONS, 2006). Moreover, people become aware of their sexuality and gender identity at different ages, and may be 'questioning' for some time. However, the UK government estimates that 5-7% of the population are lesbian, gay or bisexual, a figure supported by LGBT rights organisation Stonewall (2007b). To date there are no reliable figures on the number of trans people in the UK, although Press for Change has estimated that there are around 5,000 transsexual people, based on the number of people who have changed their passports (Whittle et al., 2007). This does not include figures for the number of people who identify as transgender, transvestite or any other gender identity.

### *Provision of LGBT Materials*

Many LGBT people report that they knew of their sexuality or gender identity from a young age. For example, the ‘Gay Life and Style Millennium Survey’ found that 1 in 3 respondents (of 283) knew they were gay by age 12 (Stormbreak, 2000). The number of LGBT-headed families is also likely to be rising as same-sex couples have been able to jointly adopt since the Adoption and Children Act came into force on 30 December 2005 (Stonewall, 2007a). Also, MPs recently voted to scrap the laws requiring IVF clinics to consider the ‘need for a father’ when deciding whether to provide treatment to women (BBC, 2008).

In summary, there is a sizeable potential user population which is not restricted to those young people who are LGBT themselves: US researcher Greenblatt estimated that 27% of a typical classroom, “will be either lesbian, gay or bisexual themselves, have one or more lesbian, gay or bisexual siblings, or one or more lesbian, gay or bisexual parents” (2001). Of course, the materials may also be of interest or use to ‘straight’ library users.

#### *Homophobia and heterosexism in schools*

Data on the current situation in schools suggest there is a need to tackle homophobia and to provide positive information for young people who are LGBT or questioning their sexuality. A recent survey of 1145 young LGB people in British secondary schools found that 65% of respondents experienced homophobic bullying at school. Of these, 92% experienced verbal abuse, 58% were ignored and isolated, 41% were physically assaulted, and 17% received death threats (Hunt and Jensen, 2007). Anecdotal evidence from parents suggests that homophobic bullying starts very young: for example, the use of the word ‘gay’ as an insult (Bloom, 2007).

Savin-Williams’ review of the literature suggested that the stress of homophobic bullying is often correlated with “school-related problems, substance abuse, criminal activity, prostitution, running away from home, and suicide” (1994:267). Although controversial, a number of researchers have found this correlation between sexual orientation and suicide (Garafalo, 1999; Bridget, 2001). It should also be remembered that LGBT young people are probably the only minority who are regularly rejected by their own families (Mehra and Braquet, 2006).

Heterosexism in schools is another problem. This term refers to the assumption that everybody is heterosexual, which can serve to

further exclude those who are not. Hunt and Jensen found that 7 out of 10 pupils in secondary schools had never been taught about lesbian and gay people or seen lesbian and gay issues addressed in class (2007:11).

### *Legislative background*

Legislation and professional guidelines support the provision of materials with LGBT content to young people. Under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act, libraries have a statutory duty to meet “any special requirements of both adults and children” (DCMS, 2001a:5). The DCMS report *Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All* (2001b) recommends that services and stock should reflect our diverse society, and CILIP bases its *Equal Opportunities Briefing on Sexual Orientation and Libraries* on this report. The Briefing specifically mentions the need to provide children’s books to the LGBT community (CILIP, 2004). The DCSF and the National Union of Teachers have both recently published guidelines recommending that a ‘whole-school’ approach should be taken to tackling homophobic bullying, including the provision of appropriate resources in the school library (DCSF, 2007; National Union of Teachers, 2004).

Finally, it should be remembered that “discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services” is now illegal under the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 (IDeA, 2007:8). To coincide with this change in the law, IDeA has produced an updated version of *Sexuality – the New Agenda* (2007), which gives guidance to local authorities on engaging with LGB communities. It recommends that libraries provide a range of LGB titles, and exhorts councils to work with LGB communities.

### *A need for provision?*

We have seen that there is a significant potential user group; does it then follow that libraries need to provide materials with LGBT content? Research exists both within and outside librarianship which suggests that provision of books and other materials can have positive effects.

Ross et al. have argued that books can provide practical information and identity affirmation for young people who are LGBT or questioning their sexuality (2006:115-7) and this theory is supported by other writers and practitioners (Alexander and Miselis, 2006; Levithan, 2004; Whelan, 2006). It is also corroborated by postcolo-

nial theory, which posits that, “identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence” (Taylor, 1992:25). We would argue that this applies to sexuality just as much as to race.

Researchers and librarians have also suggested that books and other materials can serve “to broaden straight students’ view of the world and of sexuality” (Clyde and Lobban, 2001:27), which could hopefully promote understanding and reduce homophobic bullying. This is supported by social psychology research on ‘parasocial interaction’, which has shown that exposure to different groups through media such as TV shows or books can reduce anxiety and thus prejudice (Schiappa et al., 2006). Research with children has demonstrated that children’s attitudes towards refugees and people with disabilities can become more positive through reading and discussing stories about members of these groups (Cameron et al., 2006; Cameron and Rutland, 2006). The University of Sunderland’s ‘No Outsiders’ project is based on a similar principle. It investigates ways of promoting sexualities equality in the primary school classroom (such as using picture books with LGBT content) and encourages schools to create an environment where ‘no-one is an outsider’ (University of Sunderland, 2007).

## **Methodologies**

### *Study 1*

As so little research had previously been carried out on provision of LGBT-related fiction to young people in public libraries, this study was exploratory in nature and should be viewed as a preliminary investigation forming the basis for future research. A mixed-method approach was used, combining focus groups, a questionnaire and a checklist survey of stock. The research focused on two case study library authorities, chosen for pragmatic reasons as the researcher already had contacts within these authorities. The two authorities – a large northern city and a large, mostly rural, county – had similar numbers of libraries and population figures (between 500,000 and 600,000 residents: Nomis, 2006).

First, a checklist of LGBT fiction for children and young people was compiled, and checked against the library catalogues of the two case study authorities. In order to place the data in context, a similar catalogue check was carried out for the Brighton & Hove Library Service, which has a reputation for providing a high-quality LGBT service, including a parenting collection (Brighton & Hove City Li-

brary Service, undated; Norman, 1999). It was found that the fiction fell into two categories: picture books for young children, and young adult novels. This paper focuses on the latter.

Next, a questionnaire was distributed to staff in the case study authorities, and to library staff across the UK via the LIS-PUBLIBS@JISCMAIL.AC.UK and YLG-LIST@JISCMAIL.AC.UK lists. In addition to demographic questions, the questionnaire asked respondents to give their opinions on a series of statements, selecting responses from a 5-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Text boxes were provided for respondents to further explain their answers. Respondents with responsibility for children's stock selection were additionally asked a series of questions relating to this area.

Finally, focus groups were held with staff from the two case study authorities, with young LGBT people (over 18, due to ethical constraints) and with LGBT parents. Discussions revolved around a selection of picture books and YA novels with LGBT content.

### *Study 2*

Like Study 1, this research was exploratory in nature and used a mixed-method approach. It combined a questionnaire, questions by email for prominent persons, and three case studies, including interviews with school librarians. Two were big comprehensive schools in a large northern city; both volunteered to participate in the research. The third was a boys' school in London, which self-identified as an example of excellent LGBT provision. Including this third case study provided a point of comparison, and contributed to the development of recommendations for good practice.

As the first stage, a questionnaire was distributed through the School Librarians' Network mailing list. The questionnaire consisted of twenty quantitative questions, with text boxes for respondents to further explain their answers. The questionnaire was divided into seven themes:

- Type of school and attributes of the librarian;
- Total size of LGBT collection;
- Promotion of LGBT materials;
- LGBT provision and the Internet;
- Interaction with LGBT organisations;

### *Provision of LGBT Materials*

- Type of LGBT items within the collection;
- Opinions of librarians and parents.

Next, the case study research was carried out. This involved examining documentation, such as library collection documents and equal opportunities and anti-bullying policies; informal observation of environmental conditions; and semi-structured interviews with the three school librarians, plus one teacher. The interview questions investigated knowledge, opinions and attitudes regarding LGBT materials, and factors influencing provision.

Finally, questions relating to LGBT provision in secondary school libraries, and the role of the library in combating homophobic bullying, were sent by email to prominent persons in related fields. Responses were received from four individuals: a representative of a professional school librarianship association; a school libraries consultant; the Chair of a campaign against homophobia in education; and a consultant in equalities and diversity.

### **Results**

The scope of this conference paper does not permit a full examination of the results; instead, it will focus on the findings with greatest relevance to the issue of censorship. Full results can be found in the dissertations (Chapman, 2007a; Wright, 2007).

#### *Levels of provision*

The findings of the checklist survey in Study 1 showed that a number of young adult novels with LGBT content were provided in the two case study authorities, but there was nevertheless room for improvement. Of 140 titles on the list, the case study authorities had 32 and 28 titles respectively, compared with 58 in Brighton and Hove – and this despite the fact that Brighton and Hove has less than half the population of either of the case study authorities, according to recent labour market data (Nomis, 2006). Moreover, the questionnaire results for Study 1 suggested that low levels of provision may be a national phenomenon. Many respondents were unable to estimate how many items were purchased each year, but where a figure had been calculated or estimated, the results were depressing, with figures such as 0.01% of the budget, and £8 out of a £125,000 budget.