

Effects of the Gay Publishing Boom on Classes of Titles Retrieved Under the Subject Headings “Homosexuality,” “Gay Men,” and “Gays” in the OCLC WorldCat Database*

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Abstract:

What do searchers find when they look for literature on homosexuality? This question has profound implications for older as well as younger gays in their coming out, as well as in their subsequent identity development. Library records provide credible data to answer the question, since they represent relatively free sources of information, unlike data from bookstores, publishers, and some World Wide Web sites. The records of WorldCat, the world’s largest union database of library records, comprise over 30 million records listed in the Online Computer Library Center. For the purposes of the study, 18,757 records listed under “Homosexuality,” “Gay Men,” and “Gays” were downloaded; records for “Lesbian” and “Lesbians” were not examined. Findings of the study suggest that while there has indeed been considerable growth in terms of the quantity of gay literature produced since 1969, such gains maybe offset by the deteriorating quality of cataloging copy, which makes the experience of browsing records a discouraging and confusing one.

KEYWORDS. Gay literature, gay publishing, libraries, gay subject headings, search terms, databases, gay nomenclature, OCLC

Article:

INTRODUCTION

Library and Publishing Contexts

Gay and lesbian writers have often expressed their indebtedness to lesbigay literature in establishing and developing their identity. Actor Stephen Fry points to the “pansy path of freedom” which, at least in the Victorian era, constituted the only legal if nevertheless clandestine means of communication between those Uranians who traced their genealogy from the Socratic Dialogues to the veiled sensibilities of Swinburne’s poetry, and the ambiguity of Tennyson’s (Fry, 1997). Well into the post-Stonewall Era, literature has provided confirmation, if not sanction, of homosexual identity, whether that literature was indeed “literary fiction” or more graphically inclined “pornography.”

Lesbian activist Barbara Gittings, who for sixteen years headed the Task Force for Gay Liberation of the American Library Association (known soon after its founding as the Gay Task Force; after 1986, the Gay and Lesbian Task Force; after 1995, The Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Task Force; and after 1999, the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Round Table—hereinafter referred to as GLBTRT), explained the importance of reading and libraries to activist lesbians and gays of the 1960s and 1970s, many of whom grew up in the oppressive atmosphere, social distortions, and censorship of the McCarthy Era:

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working in the movement kept reminding me that the written word has such long-range effect, that the literature on homosexuality is so crucial in shaping the images we and others have of ourselves, that these distorted images we were forced to live with must not be allowed to continue. I knew that the lies in libraries had to be changed, but I didn't have a clear sense that we gay people could do it. (Gittings, 1978, 108)

Other gay voices raised specific complaints about library practices that obscured the availability of gay information, or made the search for it perilous for those whose self-image was already fragile: pejorative Library of Congress Subject Headings ("Sexual Perversions") and Dewey Classifications ("Criminal Sexual Activity"); homophobia and ignorance among the professorate of library schools; and the marginality of alternative and radical press publications and the failure of libraries to collect them (*Revolting Librarians*, 1972).

Particularly in the past decade, spurred by a promising Democratic administration, gay writers have flourished, relatively speaking, but not without a cost. The gay publishing boom, which reached its peak in 1993, when the biggest concern seemed to be the blurring of lines between gay/lesbian publishing and publishing in gender fields whose outlines were less distinct and more bizarre (Summer, 1993), quickly became a bubble that popped in the publishing realities of the decade. Mainstream publishers became loathe to promote mid-market gay books (those selling 6,000 copies as opposed to 20,000 copies expected of a best-seller), and gradually these were left to independent presses, university presses with specialized lists, and newer small publishers who aimed for mid-market titles with long back lists—an essential for the gay market (Mann, 1995; Bronski, 1999; Warren, 1999). Although the market for gay titles has not abated, the blurring of lines between creative fiction and gay literature, as in the case of Michael Cunningham's 1999 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Hours* and Gore Vidal's (1999) collection of essays, *Sexually Speaking*, both marketed as mainstream literary titles by Barnes and Noble's and Border's bookstores, makes their ready identification with gay content difficult for novice gay book buyers. Moreover, industry officials readily admit that promotion of gay titles by the mainstream press is ultimately dependent upon the support of a gay editorial administrator in the face of conscious or unconscious lack of support from others in the firm or in bookstores who may be squeamish about promoting a gay list.

The Problem of Definition

An academic industry has grown around the definition, delineation, and application of "queer theory" and "queer studies" (e.g., Browning, 1998; Mohr, 1992; Queer Representations, 1996; AQueer World, 1996; Sinfield, 1994) based loosely upon the supposition that discrete elements of homosexual identity and influence can be discerned. There is no agreement on the extent to which same-sex desire permeates society (Vidal, 1999 and cultural conservatives represented in *Beyond Queer*, 1996, often take great issue with homosexual identity, as opposed to homosexual acts) but same-sex desire, either explicit or implied, is frequently the measure by which themes of gay literature (Woods, 1998), art, and culture (Mohr, 1992, 129-218; Ortiz, 1999; Shillinglaw, 1999) are defined. Certainly homosexual pornography, the most prevalent and explicit expression of same-sex desire, has become as ubiquitous as its heterosexual equivalent, although it may signify more to gay men who equate gay liberation with a freewheeling sexual lifestyle, the AIDS era notwithstanding, than those interested in other aspects of gay identity/issues (see, for example, O'Toole, 1998, and particularly Bergman, 1999, who blurs the line between gay pulp fiction of the sixties and pornography of the same period). At present, gay men freely acquire the bulk of their pornography in video, magazine, or Internet format, but this was not so when legal penalties were more severe. However quaintly historical the value of these publications may now seem to younger gays weaned on the videos of Joe Stryker and Rick Donovan, one must understand their function as pornography when they were published, particularly when access to raunchier pornography was extremely limited. At any rate, while such pornographic titles suffice as evidence of a genealogy of queerness, they usually do not represent holdings of public libraries except for historical or scholarly purposes, and they are discounted as gay literature in the present study.

What constitutes gay literature at any given time naturally reflects societal attitudes, as even a cursory glance at the ornamented euphemism of nineteenth-century examples will attest (White, 1999, particularly 289-309, in which Simeon Solomon sublimates expression of same sex-desire beneath the prolix ooze of an idealized, mystical Christianity). The question, therefore, of exactly what constitutes gay literature in any given period leads the researcher through a serpentine quest of definition that defies easy resolution, even among the coterie of specialists professionally preoccupied with such issues, particularly when those concerns are conflated with those of the gay movement (an adequate though muted example of the spectrum of ideological divergence among a sample of writers can be gleaned from *State of the Struggle*, 1999).

The library profession has made strides in improving access to gay information through the formation of the first professional gay organization in the world. For nearly thirty years, GLBTRT has published bibliographies of gay-positive literature, worked to end discrimination based on sexual orientation in The American Library Association, and sponsored a Gay Book Award to encourage and promote the development of quality gay fiction and nonfiction. Task Force programs over the years have explored various aspects of library practice that impede access to gay materials in libraries—failure to acquire gay materials, censorship by sequestration, the use of pejorative subject headings, and caving in to parental or religious pressure to ban such materials from collections (Gittings, 1998). In some of these areas, great progress seems to have been made within and without the library community, although there are many smaller communities and even municipalities where homosexuality is a hotly-contested issue, especially where expenditure of public funds is concerned. Moreover, the rise of the Religious Right, particularly during the Reagan presidency (1980-88), had a profound counterbalancing effect on the support for gay issues.

Communication Theory and Database Searching

Reference work in libraries during the past fifty years has been greatly influenced by communications theory and particularly the Shannon-Weaver model of communication that posits the necessity of feedback and the distraction of noise in any communications transaction, from asking a question of a reference librarian to typing in a request at the computer (Eichman, 1978). While the applicability of feedback to the reference situation is easily envisioned—the necessity for clarification for vague information requests—noise is more insidious, and may range from cultural differences, prejudice, and personal antipathies on the interpersonal level to system incompatibilities, downtime, and too many choices in the electronic environment. Richardson (1995, 138) defines noise as “interference, distortion, or errors” in the reference process. Where librarians may send out noise in the form of discouraging messages to gay users in the form of implied disapproval or indifference, the computer registers a different kind of noise in the form of false hits, duplicate entries, and the inappropriate categorization of information. For example, the term “homosexuality” brings up homophobic works as well as gay-positive ones unless the searcher possesses relatively sophisticated search skills and can refine an electronic search accordingly. Obviously, in an age when access to information, and particularly electronic information, is equivalent to power, these problems assume greater proportions for those whose information needs are sensitive, and subject to social proscription and prejudice. Even the serendipitous delight of stack browsing may be abbreviated for the gay searcher when remote storage becomes an option for overcrowded areas of the stacks, and controversial items are routinely vandalized and stolen.

THE STUDY

Pertinent Subject Headings, Chronological Periods, and the OCLC WorldCat Database

What information do people actually find when they search for information on homosexuality? It is not the purpose of this study to propose a definition for gay literature, only to examine what is found when one explores prescribed Library of Congress subject headings utilized by libraries for information about homosexuality and gay men (*LCSH*, 1998, Vol. II, 2236-38, 2596-97). The present study consists of an examination of 18,757 WorldCat records retrieved (known as “hits”) using the subject headings “Homosexuality,” “Gay Men,” and “Gays” for the time periods: (1) up to the Stonewall Rebellion (1969), a commonly recognized marker for the beginning of the current struggle for gay rights; (2) the period 1970-1981, from the Stonewall Rebellion to the beginning of the AIDS crisis, which for the purposes of this study, begins in 1982 with the

publication of the (N.Y.) Men's Health Crisis Newsletter; and (3) 1985 and 1995, to compare quantitative and qualitative features of types of works represented by these cataloging records.

WorldCat, a bibliographic utility owned and operated by the Online Library Catalog Center (OCLC) through its FirstSearch service, maybe envisioned as an online database of shared cataloging records from around the world. Now consisting of over thirty million records, it represents the closest approximation to a universal bibliography that the world has ever known. Records may be searched by author, title, subject, or keyword, and records may be delimited by date, language, and form.

The author downloaded all English-language records found in the WorldCat database for the subject heading terms "Homosexuality," "Gay Men," and "Gays." Items under "Lesbian" subject headings were not examined in the interests of expediency, although some similarities should be expected for the more than six thousand records concerned primarily with lesbians. The investigator possesses rudimentary working knowledge of "gay" (i.e., written by, for, or about gay males) literature and culture in the United States. Some literature retrieved under the pertinent subject headings addresses gays and lesbians collectively, and is considered a part of this study. The WorldCat database theoretically provides a relatively comprehensive record of gay literature, for while many specialized bibliographies have been published over the years (Dynes, 1990, is one of the most comprehensive, although it is perhaps most useful in the area of scholarly journal literature), few even pretend to cover the entire field; most address only one subject field like Theology. On the other hand, the OCLC database provides a rich, internationally based collection of records. Since records represent input from member libraries, the database provides a fair representation of what all types of libraries actually hold—and what, therefore, an inquirer might be able to retrieve under the rubric of "gay information" in libraries.

Type Material Classifications

Downloaded hits were printed out for analysis by year. Analysis proceeded in the following order: homosexuality, Gay Men, and Gays. Duplicate titles, excluding revised editions, both within a single subject heading and between subject headings, as well as AV materials (recordings, films, and videotapes), erroneous retrievals ("false drops") and pornographic works were subtracted to yield the total number of print titles. Resulting titles were then classified according to a schemata suggested by the type of the materials themselves, to wit:

- **ARCHIVES:** Personal and organizational archives and special collections, excluding collective series entries for pornographic fiction (counted separately).
- **NONFICTION:** Fifty pages or over, regardless of subject matter or form (e.g., history, memoir, directory, manual, study, etc.).
- **FICTION:** Novels, short stories, drama, poetry, anthologies and juvenile fiction.
- **POLEMIC:** Religious/spiritual aspects of homosexuality, whether pro-gay or anti-gay.
- **THESES:** Dissertations and theses; also includes papers submitted for completion of bachelor's-, master's-, honor's-level courses or degrees, and several course papers not defined in this way.
- **REPORTS, LEGAL PROCEEDINGS, ETC.:** Official governmental, legal, or professional proceedings or reports.
- **JOURNAL REPRINTS:** Articles or books reprinted or Xerox copied for the purpose of greater availability. Also counted are monographs consisting of reprints of single journal issues on a single theme (e.g., The Haworth Press, Inc.), and analytic entries for single journal articles.
- **MISCELLANEA:** Works of any kind 50 pages or less in length.
- **SERIALS:** Newsletters, journals, magazines, newspapers, bulletins, and some directories or travel guides.
- **EPHEMERA:** Items created for a temporary purpose (ex: resource packets, posters, some exhibition guides, programs, etc.).
- **PERIPHERA:** Works which concern topics of which homosexuality is only a part (e.g., gender roles, masculinities, the nature of sexuality, the sociology of deviance, and social issues facing the church, variously defined).
- **PORNOGRAPHY:** Either fiction, pseudo-humor (e.g., Tom of Finland's Kake series) or serial-pictorial (including early predecessors to hard-core pictorial porn of the 1980s such as beefcake magazines of the

1960s). May also include some early pseudo-medical texts of the 1960s profusely and explicitly illustrated with photographs. This category excludes mainstream sex manuals (e.g., *The Joy of Gay Sex*, *The Gay Kama-Sutra*), which are counted with nonfiction.

Problems of Analysis

Early in the analysis, certain problems emerged which demanded resolution. For pornographic titles, the old Library of Congress qualifier “pornographic works” has been replaced by “erotic works,” not only for newer fiction, but also for older titles cataloged retrospectively. Although, beginning in 1957, the courts went to great pains to distinguish between pornography and erotica, such shadings of meaning have been obliterated by what some feel is the less pejorative tone of “erotica.”¹ The use of the classification “Pornography” by the investigator does not indicate a value judgment, but rather explicitly identifies works intended to sexually excite the reader, or in the case of pictorial works, viewer. Such distinctions are harder to make in more recent works, such as coffee table photographic works or deluxe anthologies of the 1950s pictorial output of the Athletic Model Guild, which may have lost some of their sexual appeal and acquired a veneer of camp in light of the more explicit works of later years. The investigator has labeled works pornographic only if, as the courts phrased it, artistic, literary or social value was secondary to prurience.

The second major problem area is serials, the cataloging of which has undergone major changes in the past decade. Libraries no longer always provide the date of first publication of a serial, and catalogers may use an open-ended date (“19uu”) to accommodate holdings. This feature makes chronological placement difficult for older serials that may not have been cataloged online until quite recently. Added to the tendency of journal titles, and particularly organizational newsletters and bulletins, to change titles frequently, a tremendous number of duplicate entries result. Although the focus of the present study was not on serial publications—that genre of gay publications having received masterful treatment (Streitmatter, 1995)—an effort was exerted to count each publication only once, and to count as duplicate entries representing title changes.

Finally, in the area of gay spirituality, and to a lesser degree psychology, it was increasingly impossible to separate works affirmative of gay sexuality (such as the publications of the Metropolitan Community Church) from doctrinal debates of organized churches that either defended, offered qualified support, patronized, or attacked homosexuality. Particularly after the Anita Bryant anti-gay crusade of 1977 and the rise to national prominence of Reverend Jerry Falwell, more specifically anti-gay works from the Religious Right are cataloged under “Homosexuality.” In this study, all works dealing with religious aspects of homosexuality are included under “Polemic,” as well as a few general psychological or social studies intended as attacks upon the normalization of homosexuality.

FINDINGS

Hits vs. Unique Titles

Superficially, there does seem to have been a tremendous growth in the number of items published, particularly in the last decade, where there are two and a half times as many hits for items published during the twelve years following Stonewall than in all the years preceding it, and over three and a half times as many hits in 1995 as in the average annual hits for the 1970-81 period (see Table 1). Yet when duplicates, non-print, and pornographic titles are subtracted from the totals, the results are not nearly so impressive: While the ratio of growth remains about the same (1 to 3.3 average for 1970-81, 1 to 4.37 for 1995), the raw numbers shrink to only 1067 items in the pre-1969 era, 3361 items from 1970 to 1981, and 779 titles (as opposed to 1250 uncorrected hits) for 1995, the high-water mark to date of gay publishing (see Table 2).

Duplicates

Duplication rate among WorldCat entries varies from a high of over 37 per cent to a low of just over 15 per cent for individual subject head-

TABLE 1. Hits on OCLC WorldCat Database for “Homosexuality,” “Gay Men,” and “Gays”

Year	Homosexuality	Gay Men	Gays
-1969	931	821	529
1970	217	148	94
1971	118	77	30
1972	147	60	22
1973	120	57	32
1974	143	55	40
1975	178	44	41
1976	156	50	47
1977	229	71	71
1978	222	78	82
1979	216	98	91
1980	289	155	152
1981	174	101	82
1982	193	108	88
1983	195	118	79
1984	192	120	82
1985	174	125	95
1986	173	145	96
1987	194	133	104
1988	213	160	132
1989	233	170	141
1990	309	271	251
1991	305	248	196
1992	338	291	259
1993	436	358	352
1994	413	419	320
1995	443	461	360
1996	363	400	323
1997	386	400	282
1998	291	334	217
Total	7991	6076	4690

Note: Hits for Homosexuality, -1998 and Gay Men and Gays, -1982 as of 2/19/99; hits for Gay Men and Gays, 1982-98, as of 5/23/99; hits for Homosexuality, 1998, 7/29/99.

ings by year. Overall, the duplication rate runs from one-fourth to one-fifth of the total number of hits in any given year for the three subject headings. While some of the duplication results from definitions set out in the present study, e.g., the decision to count each serial only once, regardless of variant titles, while others represent the decision to count pornographic fiction series either as a collective entity (series) or individually as separate titles, but not both (in the present study, the collective entry is preferred, since the records indicate that at least one collection of gay pornographic fiction—the International Gay and Lesbian Archives—is used primarily for historical research) (see Appendix I) in many more cases, catalogers have entered duplicate entries for new printings, duplicate entries for author pseudonyms, or apparently created their own records with no regard for existing records in the database. This practice is contrary to OCLC cataloging protocol which predicates that libraries merely add their library symbol to the holdings record on existing Library of Congress cataloging copy. Incases where unique records need to be created, the library receives credit from OCLC against their outstanding bill. Whatever the cause, the implication of so much duplication in terms of browsing is noise, multiple and unnecessary duplication, and wasted time and effort in searching.

AV and False Drops

Since this study is concerned with gay publishing, AV materials, important as they are from an informational standpoint, are also subtracted from the total of hits. As one might expect, not all libraries are equipped to handle AV materials, and others catalog AV items separately from print materials using in-house classifications/adaptations. At any rate, the number of AV titles constitute just two per cent of records up to 1969, 10 per cent of records from 1970 to 1981, and 11 per cent of records for 1995.

False drops, those idiosyncratic errors that occur because words in a given record match those of the subject heading although they may mean something entirely different, also account for a small but significant part of the hits one retrieves. They are a bit more troublesome to resolve since they require knowledge of the literature to understand how they occurred, or indeed, that they are, in fact, errors. These account for 8 percent of hits up to 1969, 4 per cent of hits from 1970 to 1981, and less than 1 per cent of hits in 1995. The majority occur under the awkward subject heading “Gays,” which is seemingly being revived again after a couple of decades of relative somnolence. The latest edition of the *LCSH*, in fact, prefers the ambiguous “Gays” over “Gay people,” “Gay persons,” or “Homosexuals,” although the “Lesbian” and “Gay Men” subject headings are still used, leaving the user to wonder if “Gays” is the new collective term, or if indeed, homosexual men alone are intended—no scope note clarifies the usage. Worse, “Gays” as a subject heading retrieves every record in which the eighteenth-century heterosexual playwright John Gay’s name is used in the possessive form,

TABLE 2. Hits Under Subject Headings “Homosexuality,” “Gays,” and “Gay Men,” Through 1981, in English, on WorldCat Database as of February 18, 1999

Year	Homosexuality			Gay Men			Gays			
	Hits	AV Dups. Errors	Porn ¹ Print Titles	Hits	AV D. E.	Porn (S)	Hits	AV D. E.	Porn (S)	Print Titles
-1969	931	44 281 2	23 581	821	13 248 38	103 168	529	1 126 187	0 0	215
1970	217	33 41 0	9 134	148	5 67 1	12 6	94	7 10 7	1 0	69
1971	118	10 35 0	4 69	77	0 45 0	16 0	30	- 10 1	0 0	19
1972	147	13 22 0	3 109	60	1 41 0	4 2	22	- 3 3	0 0	16
1973	120	15 29 0	2 74	57	0 32 1	10 1	32	2 8 1	0 0	21
1974	143	38 32 0	2 71	55	3 27 1	3 1	40	2 8 7	0 1	22
1975	178	36 36 0	5 101	44	4 16 1	4 0	41	6 11 4	0 0	20
1976	156	26 26 0	2 102	50	5 20 0	4 0	47	1 16 3	0 0	27

1977	229	38 46 0	0	145	71	1 35 0	6 1	28	71	7 15 4	0 0	45
1978	222	30 39 0	3	150	78	1 39 0	5 0	33	82	9 23 1	0 0	49
1979	216	24 31 0	2	159	98	8 33 0	5 1	49	91	6 32 2	0 0	51
1980	289	57 30 0	1	201	155	17 50 1	19 5	63	152	6 46 1	0 2	97
1981	174	21 30 0	0	123	101	17 29 1	3 1	50	82	7 15 1	0 0	59
Total	3140	385 678 2	56	2019	1815	75 682 44	194 186	632	1313	54 301 222	1 3	710
Avg. 1970- 1981 ²	184	28 33 <1	3	120	83	5 36 <1	8 2	32	65	4 15 3	~1 ~1	41
1985	174	15 25 0	0	134	125	9 26 1	13	76	95	11 36 3	<1 <1	45
1995	437	51 45 0	1	340	461	42 121 6	28	270	352	46 136 1	<1 <1	169

¹Represents a total of 918 titles due to the inclusion of fiction collective series entries counted as a single hit. The title represented by these series entries are entered individually under "Gay Males" in most cases. For the purposes of this study, collective entries are counted as a single hit, while duplicated single titles are counted as duplicates under "Gay Males" and "Gays." A complete list of these series and number of titles included in each series are included in Table 5.

²Rounded to nearest whole number.

and even "gay men," yields similarly bizarre results—children's and adult books with gay used in its non-homosexual sense (although more numerous among false drops are editions of Mrs. Frank Leslie's play, "The Gay Deceivers," and most ironic is a collection of sheet music by homosexual composer Cole Porter, retrieved not because of his sexual orientation, but because of an analytic entry for the movie *The Gay Divorcee*. Ditto Ivor Novello).

Qualitative Distinctions: Subject Headings

At least three systems of modifications to gay subject-headings in *LCSH* have been proposed (see, for example, Michel, 1985; Berman, 1982, 110-12; ALA GLBTF, 1999). The Library of Congress has made some modifications to terms over the years, although in practice, there is some inconsistency in the way the headings are applied. There is little guidance given in *LCSH* for their correct use. The three main subject headings and their applications appear to be:

Homosexuality. The general term homosexuality is the catch-all term used for all works concerned with homosexuality, either pro- or anti-, particularly in the nonfiction genres (see Table 3). Fiction comprises only 2.6 per cent of print titles under “homosexuality” before 1982, whereas nonfiction monographs constitute 23 per cent, and nonfiction of all types—including polemic, legal reports, journal reprints, miscellanea, ephemera, and periphera, make up nearly 57 per cent of total print titles. The bulk (38 per cent) of the remaining titles consist of serials and theses. Generally, whatever the context, homosexuality provides the most information about the subject from an objective point of view, but it also includes the bulk of religious publications (5.5 per cent) debating the issue, particularly those with a negative slant.

Gay Men. For literature by gay males, one must turn to the subject heading “Gay Men” (see Table 4). Here, there are nearly twice as many novels as monographs. Only in recent years has the Library of Congress routinely added subject analytics to fiction, so there are some anomalies in the records. For example, the first edition of Gore Vidal’s *The City and the Pillar* (1948) is not retrieved in the pre-1969 records, since the original edition was not identified by content, and only the revised editions of the novel receive subject coverage. (The assignment of subject headings to fiction represents a recent revival of turn-of-the-century cataloging practice). Thirty-two novels turn up under “Homosexuality” in the pre-1969 records, and 126 under “Gay Men.” The unwary user may mistakenly assume that the sparse number of novels under “Homo-

TABLE 3. Breakdown of Literature Type Among Unique English-Language Titles Up to and Including 1981 Retrieved Under Subject Heading "Homosexuality" in WorldCat Database

Year	Archives	Non-Fiction						Fiction	Theses	Serials	Total	
		Monograph	Polemics	Legal Reports	Journal Reprints	Misc.	Ephemera					Periphera
1969	16	209	22	22	18	17	15	16	32	54	161	582
1970	15	25	4	3	2	16	5	6	0	10	48	134
1971	2	17	4	3	1	10	1	6	1	16	8	69
1972	2	23	3	5	0	31	0	6	0	27	12	109
1973	3	10	1	5	2	17	1	5	0	20	10	74
1974	1	14	0	5	1	16	1	3	2	14	14	71
1975	0	23	13	7	7	7	0	3	4	20	17	101
1976	0	12	5	6	3	16	3	3	0	32	22	102
1977	2	28	14	7	1	37	0	5	3	28	20	145
1978	1	29	16	7	6	36	1	4	1	27	22	150
1979	5	24	10	9	3	40	4	7	3	29	25	159
1980	3	32	8	4	7	45	1	10	2	44	45	201
1981	0	25	12	8	3	22	1	5	5	32	10	123
Total	50	471	112	91	54	310	33	79	53	353	414	2020
Avg. 1970-1981	3	22	8	6	3	24	1	5	2	25	21	120
1985	5	33	10	5	10	19	1	10	6	23	12	134
1995	0	124	34	13	6	34	1	16	18	71	23	340

TABLE 4. Breakdown of Literature Type Among Unique English-Language Titles Up to and Including 1981 Retrieved Under Subject Heading "Gay Men" in WorldCat Database

Year	Archives	Non-Fiction			Novels	Fiction			Theses			Serials	Total	
		Non-Fiction	Misc.& Periph.	Humor		Total Non-Fiction	Short Stories	Poetry	Drama	Anthologies	Total Fiction			PhD
-1969	13	19	6	3	28	126	3	0	4	0	0	0	77	251
1970	33	1	8	0	9	6	0	0	0	1	0	1	7	57
1971	0	2	2	0	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	16
1972	1	3	3	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12
1973	0	2	2	1	5	3	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	13
1974	0	2	2	1	5	4	0	2	1	1	2	1	4	20
1975	0	4	1	0	5	5	0	4	0	1	1	1	2	19
1976	0	3	2	0	5	5	0	5	0	0	0	1	5	21
1977	0	7	3	0	10	4	0	3	1	2	0	2	3	28
1978	0	5	4	0	9	15	0	3	1	0	0	0	3	33
1979	2	7	7	0	14	10	1	3	4	2	3	4	6	49
1980	4	6	9	0	15	12	0	2	1	3	5	7	14	63
1981	1	5	2	0	7	15	2	2	1	5	3	7	7	50
Total	54	44	51	5	122	215	6	26	14	16	20	24	135	632
Avg. 1970-1981	3	4	4	<1	8	7	~1	2	~1	1	~2	2	5	32
1985	2	10	10	1	17	21	5	2	2	2	9	3	6	73
1995	2	74	33	1	110	55	3	7	8	6	12	24	24	251

TABLE 5. Breakdown of Literature Type Among Unique English-Language Titles Up to and Including 1981 Retrieved Under Subject Heading "Gays" in WorldCat Database

Year	Archives	Non-Fiction		Fiction	Theses		Serials	Total
		Monographs	Miscellany		PhD	M		
-1969	21	4	0	6	1	1	182	215
1970	25	1	4	1	0	0	38	69
1971	3	1	2	0	0	0	13	19
1972	1	1	1	0	1	0	12	16
1973	5	1	5	0	0	2	8	21
1974	3	3	4	0	3	0	9	22
1975	1	2	12	1	0	1	4	20
1976	2	3	8	2	3	2	8	27
1977	4	6	16	1	2	4	11	45
1978	3	13	14	1	4	5	9	49
1979	8	10	11	0	7	2	12	51
1980	4	8	30	4	7	9	39	97
1981	4	6	16	16	12	3	14	59
Total	84	59	123	~1	40	29	359	710
Avg. '70-'81	5	5	10	1	3	2	15	41
1985	1	4	14	12	5	10	10	45
1995	1	43	62	106	9	25	24	176

sexuality” after 1969 (21 in all) represents an actual dearth of gay fiction, whereas in reality they represent a shift to “gay men,” the more current term for items dealing exclusively with gay males. (Here one finds an additional 89 novels published from 1970 to 1981.) Also, the fact that the pre-1969 records exist at all attests to the growth in retrospective cataloging and the growth of gay studies as a respectable academic specialty. Ironically, archival collections—although some might be more properly identified as vertical files of newspaper clippings and other ephemera—are fairly evenly split between “Homosexuality” and “Gay Men,” about 50 records each, while “Gays” contains over 80 records for the same period.

Gays. There seems to be no rationale for the new use of the term “Gays” in cataloging applications (see Table 5). Although reason would dictate a collective term for gay men and lesbians, many titles in the nonfiction and serials category apply primarily to male homosexuals, and many lesbians prefer separate nomenclature. One of the ironic benefits of the emergence of the Religious Right was the rapprochement between gay men and lesbians, particularly where their political and legal interests coincided, which means that the separatist tendencies of the 1970-1981 period have been partially although by no means completely allayed (Streitmatter,

1995, 211-242). The AIDS crisis has created more common bonds, particularly as both gay men and lesbians have an interest in challenging the stereotype of the disease as gay. It remains to be seen whether new material will be consistently cataloged under “gays.”

DISCUSSION

The first impression received when the analysis of the records began, that there was much missing information, dissipated only after all of the records for all subject headings had been analyzed. There is indeed an abundance of information by and about gay men in library holdings, and it has grown tremendously, particularly in the past decade, a growth of 589 records per year between the 1970-81 period and 1995, an increase of over 400 per cent, all errors and duplications notwithstanding.

More significantly, the number of creative fictional, poetical, and dramatic works appearing under the selected subject headings has increased annually from 1.75 to 18 for “homosexuality,” from 12 to 24 for “gay men,” and from .83 to 12 for “gays”—in other words, from fewer than two titles a year average to 54 titles annually. This growth is impressive, and reflects not only self-consciously progressive (if intermittent) tapping of the gay market from mainstream publishers, but also the growth of the gay press and gay series published by academic and university presses.

The growth in fictional or creative works is paralleled by the growth of gay nonfiction, particularly in the areas of history and sociology. Until 1972, when the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental illness, discussion of homosexuality was dominated by psychiatrists and sexologists. This is no longer true, for in 1995 there were as many historical monographs and biographies as there were total nonfiction titles in 1981. In 1995, 241 nonfiction gay monographs appear in the WorldCat database, whereas in the twelve years from 1970-1981, the average number of print titles represented is only 31 per annum. The growth represents a rate of nearly 775 per cent.

On the other hand, the figures for nonfiction may be under-representative considering the great amount of miscellany retrieved, a category arbitrarily created for the purposes of this study. Miscellany of all types, fiction and nonfiction, accounts for almost 17 per cent of 1995 publications, and some researchers might consider these to be as important as longer works that bear a prestigious imprint. Certainly pamphlets such as the “Gay Flames” series of political tracts published in San Francisco in the heyday of gay liberation, poetry chapbooks, or AIDS brochures distributed often at no charge at libraries, schools and health centers, and even speeches and position papers delivered at conferences and later distributed by the author may have an impact not reflected in later re-publication by an established press. Whitt (1993) also points to the importance of the “grapevine” in disseminating information among oppressed minorities, not all of whose members are literate, or readers. The tendency, particularly since the early years of gay liberation, for some academic libraries to collect everything of importance in whatever form, means that several significant items cataloged as books but actually representing archival material are included under miscellany, as well—for example, a bound two-page statement by gay Civil Rights leader Bayard Rustin.

Similarly, the importance of the gay press and scholarly journal literature is under-weighted in the present study. *Journal of Homosexuality*, for example, which has grown from a journal with medical/psychiatric emphasis to a comprehensive interdisciplinary journal built around social and professional issue themes since its inception in 1974, cannot be underestimated. A single reprint edition of a journal issue by Haworth Press probably has an impact for specialists in gay studies that most mainstream publications fail to provide (Joyce and Schrader, 1999).

One undeniable trend is the growth of academic papers in gay studies, as reflected in the number of theses and dissertations from the seventies to 1995, from about 34 to 141 per year. Some of these, of course, are written for theology or divinity degrees, and not all are gay-positive. At the same time, the growth of scholarship in any field translates into the number of creative fiction and nonfiction works eventually available for wider consumption to the public.

The considerable number of polemic works (4 per cent of 1970-81 titles in homosexuality, 10 per cent of 1995 titles), some of which are counted in with miscellany due to their length, indicates a great deal of soul-searching and self-examination by religious denominations on the subject of homosexuality, and more recently, same-sex marriages, as well as frankly negative diatribes by religionists who take exception to homosexuality as well as Darwinism and the ordination of women. The gay community has countered this trend with a prodigious amount of affirmative literature, from daily meditation missals to the more substantive position statements by organized groups like the Metropolitan Community Church, Beth Chaim Synagogue, and Dignity (an organization now officially banned from holding its meetings in the Catholic Church). Unfortunately, the subject heading "Homophobia," if used at all, applies only to works that discuss homophobia rather than those that exemplify it. The *LCSH* provides a scope note for this term whose casuistry is matched only by its obscurity:

Here are entered works on active discrimination against, or aversion to, homosexuals by heterosexuals. Works on prejudicial attitudes or assumptions held by heterosexuals concerning homosexuals or homosexuality are entered under Heterosexism. (Vol. II, 2596)

The emphasis in the above note seems to be on action versus attitude, although it is hard to imagine "active aversion" except in the practice of shunning. The example, although perhaps extreme, illustrates the problem of accurate naming in a climate of political correctness when common sense might dictate simplicity even if less fine distinctions might make some users squeamish. The American Library Association is committed, under the rubric of its "Statement on Intellectual Freedom," to providing all points of view on a controversial topic such as homosexuality. One can only hope that the young user of today gets past the negative information on homosexuality when searching WorldCat to find the great deal of positive information that now exists.

One of the greatest dilemmas of the library profession is resolution of the dilemma of how works can be clearly identified by subject in such a way as to not offend the tenets of intellectual freedom, one interpretation of which would consider a subdivision of "Homosexuality" such as "homophobic works" a form of labeling that would constitute censorship.

CONCLUSION

While the present report does not attempt a detailed analysis of gay literature, it presents a cautionary view of the progress made in the creation and dissemination of gay literature throughout libraries. Future studies should examine the holdings patterns for various works to see how extensively these works are distributed, since a recent study by the American Library Association seems to indicate sizable gaps in the collections of major urban U.S. libraries (Bryant, 1995). They should also examine the growth of particular genres, the ratio of mainstream to gay press publications, and of course, patterns of growth in literature listed under lesbian subject headings.

More importantly, the library profession should take note of the condition of the WorldCat database and the OCLC records on which it is based. Given the 1990s gospel of technological literacy, it hardly behooves librarians to emphasize the intricacies of refinements in Boolean search techniques when the database created by input from their own cataloging departments is increasingly flawed. This paper only suggests the extent to which errors, oversights, and ignorance of publication history and practice have worked their way into the records of what is supposedly an authoritative database. These faults are occurring at a time when cataloging theory has been demoted from a required course to an elective in some library programs (e.g., University of Pittsburgh), and it is accelerated by increasing reliance on search engines and the belief that the medium (electronic format) is more important than the message—the message being the accuracy of the information that the cataloging record conveys. While such errors are doubtlessly to be found in other subject areas of WorldCat, one would be hard pressed to think of another subject area in which the practical consequences of noise are more damaging.

Whether their quests for identity ever take gay people into a library for information, the library remains the one place where such information is theoretically dispensed as a democratic right—relatively free of direct costs, discounting taxes and tuition fees. The WorldCat database indicates that gay information is available in some libraries in quantities and varieties unimaginable just thirty years ago. How easily such information can be accessed, whether all libraries acquire representative collections of such information, and whether the Internet environment provides increased access to such information are questions with profound implications for the future of gay people not only in metropolitan centers, but in the heartland as well.

NOTE

1. *Roth vs. United States*: The book in question was D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and it was the first time a defense of "redeeming social importance" was allowed.

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APPENDIX 1

Pornographic Fiction Series Included Under Collective Entries in WorldCat Records

- 101 Enterprises. 1967-69. 30 vols. Adonis Classics. 1976-82. 43 vols. Barclay House. 1969-70. 6 vols. Big Boy/Backdoor. 1970-76. 7 vols.
- Black Knight Classics. 1969-70. 22 vols. Blueboy Library. 1976-78. 52 vols. Brandon House. 1968-1970. 11 vols. Companion Books. 1968. 9 vols.
- Eros. 1973-78. 7 vols.
- Finland Books. 1980-82. 21 vols. French Line. 1967-69. 12 vols.
- Frenchy's Gay line. 1969-71. 7 vols.
- Gay Way. 1969-72. 11 vols.
- Gay Parisian press. 1970-71. 5 vols. Golden Boy Books. 1978-79. 13 vols. Grand Prix Classics. 1970-75. 5 vols. Greenleaf Classics. 1969-70. 29 vols. Guild Press. 1966-67. 7 vols.
- Hardboy. 1974-77. 18 vols.
- His Collection I. 1971-75. 70 vols. Impact Library. 1967-68. 12 vols.
- Male Color Illustrated. 1970-79. 6 vols. Manhard. 1973-79. 53 vols.
- Midwood. 1969-76. 16 vols.
- Monkey Publication. 1969-70. 7 vols. Numbers Paperback Library. 1978. 5 vols. Olympia Press. 1970-72. 9 vols.
- Original Adult Books. 1968. 10 vols. Parisian Press. 1971-72. 10 vols. Pleasure Reader. 1969-73. 68 vols.
- Proctor File Illustrated. 1970-79. 10 vols. Ram. 1974-75. 14 vols.
- Roadhouse Classics. n.d. 12 vols. Rough Trade. 1975-82. 63 vols. Sean Johnson. n.d. 5 vols.
- Spade. 1968-74. 23 vols.
- Spartan Collection. 1972-74. 5 vols. Stud Series. 1976-79. 20 vols. Surrey Stud. 1975-82. 42 vols. Timely Books. 1971. 5 vols.
- Travelers Companion. 1968-72. 16 vols. Trojan Classic. 1968-73. 21 vols. Twilight Classics. 1968-69. 7 vols.
- Wildboys. 1975-76. 16 vols.