"Dear Diary, I Think I'm Gay...LGBTQ Youth and Information Access Across the Decades"

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Dear Diary, I think I’m gay...

LIBRARY ACTIVITY 2—RGPL Exercise
- Group students, give each group RGPL volume.
- Students use worksheet ?s to explore RGPLs.
- Regroup and share insights from discussion.

LIBRARY ACTIVITY 3—LibGuide
- Include prompts challenging students to reflect on their research process & information access issues teens/YAs likely faced in their decades.

WORKSHEET:
Place yourself in the mindset of a teen/YA during this decade who has just started researching an LGBTQ identity using the RGPL and respond to the worksheet questions. And for all of the things you find, continually ask yourself:

Do they present a diverse/positive representation of the LGBTQ community (do they challenge heteronormative culture)? Or do they seem to reinforce heteronormativity?

- What subject term did you try looking up first? Did you find it, or do you have to try something else? Were the subject terms the same words we use today? Did you get referred to "See Also" for some other subject terms? What were the "See Also" terms, and how many were there?
- If there were subsections under your subject term, how many were there?
- How many article entries were listed under the subject term you decided to focus on?
- Would anything about your experience using the RGPL have created barriers (literal, psychological, and/or emotional) to your finding and/or using information? How would the experience influence you?

THE ASSIGNMENT—Queer Identities “Decades Paper”
Imagine you are a teen/YA “coming out” into an LGBTQ identity during your assigned decade (from the 1950s to the present). Seek out sources a teen/YA could access to explore your identity and write a four-page Diary as your teen/YA identity and a one-page Reflection as yourself re: the experience.

LIBRARY ACTIVITY 1—Mini Lecture
- Discuss concepts of heteronormativity, hegemony, critical information literacy, & intersectionality.
- Present how these concepts, when combined, lead to the questions to consider when the students are writing and researching for the Decades Paper (see PPT slides below).

LIBRARY ACTIVITY 4—RGPL Research

HETERO-NORMATIVITY + HEGEMONY + CRIT INFO LIT + INTERSECTIONALITY =

How is heteronormativity as a hegemonic, hierarchical social system:

- historically situated?
- influenced by intersectionality?

And how does it exert power and influence over information production, dissemination, access, and consumption?

WE CHALLENGE YOU TO CONSIDER...

- how the sociohistorical and heteronormative context of your decade influences the overall accessibility of information
- how the "credibility" of such information (i.e., how credible is the info if it is biased by the dominant heteronormative culture?)
- your identity as a teen/YA in this decade
- how the research process itself would have created barriers (literal, psychological, and/or emotional) in LGBTQ youth’s access to information within your decades, and what challenges persist in present day.

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RGPL Research - Kickin’ It Old School

- Include prompts challenging students to reflect on their research process & information access issues teens/YAs likely faced in their decades.

Some things to think about...

- Some things to think about...
- Some things to think about...
- Some things to think about...

Some things to think about...

Would you as a teen in your decade have known what words were being used to describe what you are experiencing —would you have been comfortable asking for help from a librarian, and would they have known either? Would they be the same words we use today? LGBTQ-focused publications existed as early as the 1950s —but was the RGPL even indexing those publications, and, even if it was, what are the chances your library would’ve had them?

Would your local library have carried these “Stonewall Book Award” LGBTQ-focused young adult books during your decade? Would all of them even today?

We tend to assume that scientists, doctors, and scholars are “objective” and “neutral” —but how might the dominant heteronormative culture have influenced their perspectives, and perhaps biased their judgment in researching and writing these books?

Would your library have had these educational films in school or on a news program, how would their coming from “authority” figures like teachers, reporters, scientists, etc., influenced your likelihood of questioning the credibility of the information?

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