THE PROVISION OF LESBIAN FICTION IN PULIC LIBRARIES IN SCOTLAND

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This dissertation was submitted in part fulfilment of requirements for the degree of MSc
Information and Library Studies

DEPT. OF COMPUTER AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

SEPTEMBER 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Ian Ruthven, for his guidance throughout the dissertation, and my parents, Laura and Calum, for their support.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to investigate the provision of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries and to make recommendations for improvements that were informed and justified by the value of providing lesbian fiction for lesbian women. Collection development policies and supplier selection practices were analysed to determine the level of consideration of LGBT materials and users in collection development while a quantitative checklist survey assessed holdings of recently published lesbian fiction. A survey questionnaire was also used to explore the value of reading lesbian fiction in the lives of lesbian women in order to justify its provision in public libraries. It was found that lesbian fiction is not always actively considered in collection development, and ineffective and inconsistent cataloguing practices are used. Recommendations include that approaches to collection development, including selection practices and cataloguing, need to become proactive in order to provide lesbian women with access to lesbian fiction, the value of which is suggested to be an improved reading experience, the sense of community and support the coming out process of lesbian women.

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INTRODUCTION

The borrowing of fiction continues to be a core use of public libraries in Scotland (Carnegie UK Trust and SLIC, 2015, p.8) yet there is little research on the provision of lesbian fiction. Lesbian fiction can be defined as a novel that represents the lesbian experience, by featuring a central lesbian character or being authored by a lesbian woman, or both (Liming, 2011; Miller, 2006, xxix; Faderman, 1995, xii; Zimmerman, 1981). That the lesbian identity is explored, recorded and represented is arguably what connects all lesbian fiction together (Liming, 2011). Lesbian fiction is not an exclusive label however, as it can be found in every genre:

> I have a bewildering choice of fictional lesbians… clothed in whatever genre best suits my mood – science fiction, family saga, historical novel, murder mystery, Mills and Boon, *Bildungsroman*[1], school story, a little gentle porn (Hennegan, 1988, p.188).

The term lesbian fiction encompasses both lesbian genre fiction, such as romance or mystery, usually written for a lesbian audience, as well as contemporary and literary fiction with lesbian characters and themes (Bindel, 2008); for example, many contemporary lesbian authors explore the construction of a lesbian identity with the intersection of gender, sex class, race, ethnicity and nationality (Miller, 2006, xli; Faderman, 1995, p.692-693). Many lesbian authors have found mainstream, often global, publishing success with openly lesbian novels (Miller, 2006, xlix), and are appreciated by a wide audience, not just by lesbian women (McDermid, 2010). It is the mainstreaming of lesbian fiction that makes it harder to identify (Thomas, 2007), as it is often not categorised as such.

Despite the increasing amount and visibility of lesbian fiction, Goldthorp (2007) finds that it is still largely inaccess ible in Scottish public libraries, due to the failure to address lesbian fiction and consider lesbian women, as its main audience, in collection development policies, selection practices and promotion. Preceding research has long identified the same issues, indicating that improvements to the provision of lesbian fiction, if any, are insubstantial and tardy (Vincent, 2013 p.94).

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[1] A novel that deals with the development of a person's character, especially during that person's youth

While the provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries is important for equity of access and social inclusion, public libraries may be able to improve the provision of lesbian fiction if the nature of lesbian fiction and its value to lesbian women is explored, established and advocated. Reading literature for women in particular is a way to learn, explore the world and discover themselves, while writing literature is an opportunity for women to voice and share their interpretations and experiences of the world (Daniel, 2000); however there is little existing research into the benefits of reading lesbian fiction for lesbian women.

By evaluating current consideration and provision of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries, recommendations for improvements can be made. An exploration of why public libraries should provide access to lesbian fiction, going beyond reasons of equality and social inclusion, and instead focusing on its value in the individual reading experiences of lesbian women, can both inform and justify such recommendations.

1.1. Aims and objectives

The examination of the provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries in Scotland will answer the three following research questions:

- How do public libraries in Scotland address lesbian fiction in collection development?
- Why should public libraries provide access to lesbian fiction?
- How can public libraries in Scotland best develop collections to include lesbian fiction so that the needs of lesbian women are met?

The research objectives are:

- To examine the consideration of lesbian fiction in the collection development policies of public libraries in Scotland.
- To examine the consideration of lesbian fiction in selection practices in public libraries.
- To asses holdings of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries.

- To explore the value of reading lesbian fiction in the lives of lesbian women, including during the coming out process.
- To justify the provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries.
- To make recommendations regarding collection development for the provision of lesbian fiction.

1.2.   Research methods

In order to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives, a quantitative approach was used. Content analysis was carried out on collection development policies and suppler selection stock profiles, obtained from Scottish public library services through Freedom of Information requests. A quantitative assessment of lesbian fiction holdings was also conducted. A questionnaire was used to obtain and analyse the opinions of lesbian fiction readers on the value and significance of lesbian fiction in their lives, culture and communities. The findings inform a discussion on how the provision of lesbian fiction in Scottish public library services can be improved, based on an increased understanding of the importance and value of providing access to lesbian fiction. Given the scarcity of scholarly literature on this topic, it is hoped that this research will advocate for and improve awareness of both lesbian women and lesbian fiction in public libraries.

1.3.   Terms used

The term 'LGBT' is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and is the umbrella term most commonly used in Scotland to talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and communities (Equality Network, no date).

It is recognised that not all women who are emotionally and sexually attracted to other women identify as 'lesbian', as how individuals see themselves and experience life is unique. The use of the term 'lesbian' in this research is intended to include such women and is used merely for brevity. The use of the term 'lesbian' is also not intended to exclude women who identify as bisexual,   however it is recognised that bisexual women have different needs

from lesbian women and deserve individual attention in both research and the delivery of services (Rankin *et al*, 2015).

The term 'queer' is used by some questionnaire respondents to refer to their sexual orientation. 'Queer' is an umbrella term that includes all LGBT people (Equality Network, no date) and is also used to refer to a sexual orientation that is non-normative but which is not straight or gay/lesbian (Vincent, 2013, p.135; Chase and Ressler, 2009).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries is under-researched in the library and information science field, with existing literature mainly focusing on the provision of LGBT services in general. A small amount of existing research has focused on the reading experiences of lesbian women, which contributes to an understanding of the value of lesbian fiction. While Scotland is focused on as far as possible, the lack of literature focusing on the UK necessitated the inclusion of international research.

2.1.   Reading experiences of lesbian women

Recreational reading can help develop an understanding of who we are and what our place in the world is and might become (Ross *et al*, 2006, p.114-115) and the little research that exists regarding the recreational reading of adult lesbian women finds that lesbian fiction can have a valuable role both in the coming out process and in contributing to a reader's sense of identity and community.

Lesbian fiction can provide lesbian readers with role models and allows the exploration of future possibilities (Rothbauer, 2005). For this, characters whose experiences are as complex as the reader's own are needed (Rothbauer, 2005). Lesbian women can understand themselves and their place within wider social communities through reading fiction that relates to, and represents, their identities and experiences (Pecoskie, 2012). Reading also provides a way to participate in LGBT culture and community through the connection it can create with other readers (Rothbauer, 2005).

Stonewall Scotland reports that 76% of LGBT people think that broadcast and newspaper media "rely heavily on clichéd stereotypes" of LGBT people and almost a quarter think that LGBT people are portrayed negatively on TV (Stonewall Scotland, 2012, p.12-13). Lesbian fiction may then be valuable as one of the most authentic sources of the lesbian experience (Liming, 2011).

Lesbian fiction can support the construction of identity during the coming out process, by providing proof and recognition of other lesbian women, a sense of belonging to a wider community, and a safe, private way for women to explore and understand lesbian identities, culture and communities (Liming, 2011; Pecoskie, 2005). Given that the realisation of one's sexual orientation can occur at any age, the coming-of-age or coming out story within a young adult LGBT fiction novel can be useful to lesbian women older than its target audience (Liming, 2011).

With regards to LGBT teenagers, reading is a private leisure activity that allows the exploration and formation of personal identities, as reading about characters they can identify with, both generally and in terms of sexual orientation, can help them to understand and define themselves, while reading about others who have overcome some form of adversity can give hope for the future, in terms of living as a person with a LGBT sexual orientation (Kivel and Kleiber, 2000).

2.2.   Information needs of lesbian women

Lesbian women have a wide range of information needs, which include "legal, financial, social, cultural, interpersonal and religious" topics (Greenblatt and Gough, 1992); the main focus in previous research however has been related to those of the coming out process.

Creelman and Harris (1989) and Stenback and Schrader (1999) both investigate the information needs of lesbian women during the coming out process, identifying that women seek information on understanding and accepting their sexuality, coming out to others, and learning about and finding the lesbian community. Although both studies focus on "information" and do not mention fiction as a resource, recreational reading of literature with lesbian characters can be a source of information for lesbian women. Ross (1999) discusses how readers can unintentionally gain information from recreational reading by using their own life experiences to make sense of and take meaning from texts and also by finding insights that relate to themselves within texts and using this to make sense of situations in their lives. Reading can make a difference to a reader's life by providing a

model for identity and offering examples or rules to live by, as well as inspiration, reassurance and even courage to make a change (Ross, 1999). Reading can also provide an awareness of not being alone or a connection with others, and new perspectives and understandings of the world (Ross, 1999). The information needs of lesbian women when coming out in particular can therefore potentially be met from the recreational reading of lesbian fiction, which can provide information and perspectives that are crucial to the understanding and acceptance of a sexual identity and to understanding and connecting with the wider LGBT community.

The studies of both Creelman and Harris (1989) and Stenback and Schrader (1999) find the most common resources for finding information to support the coming out process are the LGBT community, printed resources and public libraries. Finding information from these sources can be especially difficult for women in rural areas, given that the lesbian community is already small and can be hard to locate, and that in small communities, the public library is often not seen as a private place due to a lack of anonymity (Stenback and Schrader, 1999). In Scotland, the Equality Network reports that almost half (46%) of lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents living in rural areas feel isolated and 66% of lesbian respondents living in rural areas feel that local services do not meet their needs (French *et al*, 2015). Public libraries can be a local resource for lesbians by developing collections that are representative and that provide information in different mediums. The studies by Creelman and Harris (1989) and Stenback and Schrader (1999) however were conducted prior to the development of the World Wide Web, and therefore could not consider the information and support that can now be accessed through websites and social networking platforms. No recent studies were identified that investigate the information needs of lesbian women either during their coming out process, at other stages in their lives or in regards to reading materials.

2.3. LGBT fiction in public libraries

The existing research into service delivery and professional practices surrounding LGBT collections has focused on collection development policies, the availability and accessibility

of LGBT literature through online catalogues, and the attitudes of staff (Hart & Mfazo, 2010). There is a concurrence that proactive approaches are essential to the development of collections that include materials that meet LGBT patrons' recreational and information needs (Downey, 2005), and these are discussed below. There is also agreement that LGBT collections are important for social inclusion, to reflect diversity and to uphold the library and information profession's commitment to equity of access (Goldthorp, 2007; Downey, 2005; Ritchie, 2001) as well as to provide a source from which LGBT people can find validation (Schneider, 1998).

2.3.1. Lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries

The only existing research into the provision of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries finds that discrimination and inequity of both provision and access are masked by "a false front of neutrality and a 'one service fits all' approach" (Goldthorp, 2007, p.241). Goldthorp (2007) finds an absence of collection development policies addressing sexual orientation, ineffective selection practices that rely on mainstream stock suppliers, and poor holdings of lesbian fiction, which are inadequately catalogued for accessibility, while staff attitudes seem uninterested in making improvements.

2.3.2. Professional policies in Scotland

A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020 sets out the vision, strategic aims and recommendations for public library services in Scotland (Carnegie UK Trust and SLIC, 2015). While specific users groups are not identified or targeted, the Strategy's aims are intended to be encompassing and inclusive of all demographics; these aims include the promotion of social wellbeing, responding to the social needs of both individuals and communities, and the promotion of reading, culture and creativity, inspiring people through books and literature (Carnegie UK Trust and SLIC, 2015).

CILIP's professional ethical principles include having "respect for diversity within society", and "the promoting of equal opportunities and human rights" (CILIP, 2012). CILIP also issued

an 'Equal Opportunities Briefing on Sexual Orientation and Libraries' that provides guidance for librarians on the provision of library services to LGBT people. The Briefing advises that collection development policies should include the need for materials that are relevant to the information, lifelong learning and leisure needs of LGBT people of all ages and including intersectional LGBT people (CILIP, 2004). It also highlights that mainstream stock suppliers will hold a limited amount of relevant LGBT materials and that alternative, specialist sources should be used (CILIP, 2004). Now out-of-date, the Briefing has been removed from the CILIP website and has not been replaced or updated, leaving no current CILIP guidelines on the provision of LGBT services (Morris, 2015).

While both the *Strategy for Public Libraries* and CILIP's ethical principles imply that public libraries need to address the needs of LGBT individuals and communities, there is the risk that without direct guidelines, the LGBT user group will be overlooked.

2.4.   Collection development policies

Collection development policies are documents of how libraries build and manage collections and can include details of selection criteria and methods, acquisition processes and weeding and preservation policies (Roberts and Rowley, 2004, p.189-190). While 'collection development policy' is the preferred term in academic and professional literature, 'stock management policy' is the title most used by Scottish public libraries (Scanlon, 2012).

Chapman (2007), noting that the lack of a collection development policy referring explicitly to LGBT materials may lead to inadequate provision, finds that 18.75% of a sample of 32 public library services in England mention LGBT materials in their collection development policies. Goldthorp (2007) finds that only two public library services in Scotland of a sample of nine had a collection development policy but neither mention LGBT users nor materials. Both of these studies show that the advice within the CILIP Equal Opportunities Briefing, current at the time of the research, was not being implemented as widely or effectively as it

could be in practice, and that despite it, LGBT people were still overlooked in collection development policies.

Further suggestion that professional ethics are not always actively applied in practice is found in Hart and Mfazo's (2010) research into the city of Cape Town's public libraries' services to gay men and lesbian women. While 91.5% of the librarians surveyed agree that public libraries should include gay and lesbian materials, opinion was evenly divided on whether there is enough gay and lesbian information and reading materials in Cape Town public libraries (Hart and Mfazo, 2010). With no explicit mention of the gay and lesbian user group in the collection development policy, only 55% of the librarians consciously consider LGBT needs when selecting titles for collections, which results in "very little" LGBT titles being acquired, for example, the number of LGBT-related books, including fiction, bought in the preceding year amounts to less than one per library (Hart and Mfazo, 2010).

Ritchie (2001), in researching LGBT collection development issues in Illinois public libraries, discusses that while the profession's ethical principle of intellectual freedom underpins collection development, and the collection development policy may make reference to this, there is still a need for policies to explicitly specify LGBT people. Policies filter down into everyday practice and can ensure that a standard of provision for LGBT literature is established and that the needs of LGBT people are actively considered (Ritchie, 2001). It can also, in theory, guard against self-censorship, which can arise in everyday practice from a librarian's uncomfortableness with their ability to select LGBT literature, or with including such materials in a collection at all (Ritchie and McNeill, 2011; Downey, 2005).

2.5.   Selection practices

The CILIP Equal Opportunity Briefing advises that mainstream suppliers should not be solely relied upon for developing collections to include LGBT materials (CILIP, 2004). While LGBT visibility within mainstream publishing has been increasing (Ritchie and McNeill, 2011) the majority of LGBT-themed fiction is published by niche or independent publishers, which are often based in the United States (Goldthorp, 2012). Both Goldthorp (2007) and Chapman

(2007;2015) however suggest that despite mainstream stock suppliers not providing an adequate range of LGBT materials, librarians in charge of purchasing stock tend to rely on them and do not seek out alternative sources.

The range of fiction bought for a library's collections may be limited if mainstream stock suppliers are relied upon through supplier selection; this is the selection practice whereby the stock supplier selects new materials for public libraries, based on community profiles and stock requirement specifications outlining volume, genre categories and format (Goulding, 2006, p.314). Supplier selection takes direct control away from professional librarians who know the needs of their local community and there is the potential for stock to be unbalanced in favour of newer and mainstream materials (Goulding, 2006, p.315). Lesbian, and LGBT, fiction is therefore at more risk of being overlooked. The intended benefits of supplier selection are to save the amount of time librarians spend on selecting and ordering materials and to take advantage of supplier knowledge of publishers and titles (Goulding, 2006, p.314). It was recommended in the *Museums, Libraries, Archives* (MLA) (now *Arts Council England*) publication, *Better Stock Better Libraries,* that public libraries adopt supplier selection to take advantage of such benefits (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2006). Subsequently, the *National Acquisitions Group* (NAG) released best practice guidelines for public libraries' use of supplier selection, which includes a stock specification profile listing genres or categories for adult fiction which includes a gay/lesbian category (NAG, 2007). Placing a book in one category however can be problematic, as a crime, historical or general fiction book may be of gay/lesbian interest due to, for example, the sexual orientation of the fictional characters or author. Given this, the effects of supplier selection on LGBT materials are worth investigating.

2.6.   Barriers to LGBT collection development

An awareness of LGBT information needs is necessary for the selection of LGBT materials (Creelman and Harris, 1989). As noted previously, there is little research on the recreational reading or information needs of lesbian women; this does not assist with distinguishing the information needs of lesbian women from those of gay men, as the stereotypical

misconception that all LGBT information needs are identical can be a further barrier to collection development (Gough and Greenblatt, 2011; 1992).

Norman (1999) researches the needs of users of Brighton and Hove City Libraries' Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) Collection, finding that its use by gay men and lesbian women is different, and so, therefore, are their information needs. The LGB Collection is predominantly used by the survey respondents for recreational fiction reading; however, while gay men mainly borrow gay fiction, lesbian and bisexual women have wider fiction interests, borrowing both lesbian and general novels, plays and poetry (Norman, 1999).

LGBT library users can often be invisible. They may be unwilling to discuss their information needs and reading preferences with library staff, particularly if they are of a private or personal nature (Gough and Greenblatt, 2011; Downey, 2005). Furthermore, to approach staff for assistance may involve or feel like "coming out" for some LGBT users, with fears of negative consequences or reactions from staff discouraging this (Downey, 2005). Passive approaches to collection development that rely on users to seek LGBT titles by book suggestion or inter-library loan, as well as a lack of finding aids such as bibliographies or 'pink lists', fail to consider the needs of such users and deliver adequate service provision (Goldthorp, 2007; Downey, 2005; Ritchie, 2001; Gough and Greenblatt, 1992).

2.7.   Stock holdings

Checklist studies are a research tool used to evaluate a library's collections and can also be used to determine how effectively libraries have implemented recommendations of improving collections to include LGBT materials (Schneider, 1998).

Goldthorp (2007) conducts a checklist study of lesbian fiction titles held in Scottish public libraries. The checklist was compiled using *Diva* magazine book reviews, Amazon.co.uk and the finalists of the 17th annual Lambda Literary Awards. It is concluded that holdings of lesbian fiction are poor, with 16 of the 26 library services (the number with online

catalogues at the time of research) having 20% or less of the checklist of 25 titles, with no correlation between the number of holdings and the rural or urban location of the library service (Goldthorp, 2007). Similarly, Rothbauer and McKechnie (1999) find no relationship between the size of the library and the number of young adult LGBT novels held in a survey of the holdings of a sample of medium and large public libraries in Canada. This study however does not appear to take account of weeding policies that remove out-of-date and low issuing books from circulation, as the novels randomly selected for this stock check were published between 1972 and 1997.

Both the compilation of the titles on a checklist and the analysis of the findings must be regarded as subjective, as there is often no indication given of how many of the titles on the checklist a library should hold (Schneider, 1998). Checklists are also of limited comparative use because of differences in when the research was conducted, the locations of the sample libraries and the titles on the checklists.

2.8.   Cataloguing

The cataloguing of LGBT fiction raises important issues of accessibility; in light of the possibility that LGBT users may be reluctant to seek assistance from staff, the library catalogue will be a way for users to identify and find the materials they need. Fiction, however, is not always catalogued with subject headings (Schneider, 1998) and librarians are often found to be reluctant to adjust catalogue entries and traditional subject access headings to better reflect LGBT terminology so as to improve the accessibility and discoverability of LGBT materials (Goldthorp, 2007; Ritchie, 2001).

In comparison with traditional subject access headings, folksonomies – user-generated tagging systems – can better reflect the everyday language that catalogue users tend to use as search terms, particularly for the discoverability of LGBT resources (Bates and Rowley, 2011). For example, plural nouns in subject access headings, such as "lesbians", retrieve more results than the adjective "lesbian", despite users being more likely to search the latter, if a catalogue does not have a suffix-removal algorithm (Bates and Rowley, 2011). A

folksonomy can offer flexibility and relevancy for keyword searches for LGBT materials, by the assignment of multiple, natural words to individual catalogue entries (Bates and Rowley, 2011).

2.9. Publishing industry

The perception, and perhaps unfortunately often, the reality, of low quality standards can prevent libraries from purchasing lesbian fiction. Goldthorp (2012) however suggests that by purchasing lesbian fiction, public libraries can support and encourage the writing and publication of LGBT-themed books and give authors visibility to both new and existing audiences; also suggested is that a national LGBT literary award can encourage the standards of lesbian fiction to be raised (Goldthorp, 2012), which would also help identity mainstream fiction with lesbian characters. The annual Lambda Literary Awards in the United States, now in its 27th year, celebrates and gives national visibility to the best of LGBT fiction believing that "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer [LGBTQ] literature is fundamental to the preservation of our culture, and that LGBTQ lives are affirmed when our stories are written, published and read" (Lambda Literary Foundation,2015a; 2015b). There is no equivalent to this award in the UK; while the Green Carnation Award is a literary award for LGBT writers in the UK, at only four years old, it lacks the longevity, reputation and range of categories of the Lambda Literary Awards, as does the annual *Polari First Book Prize*, launched in 2011, and awarded to a first book of poetry, prose, fiction or non-fiction by a UK resident writer that explores the LGBT experience (Polari Literary Salon, 2015).

2.10. Research problem

The literature agrees that in order to provide a broad selection of LGBT literature public libraries should use clear, explicit collection development policies, accessible cataloguing practices, and proactive selection practices. The use of supplier selection however and its impact on LGBT collection development is unexplored. Very few studies focus specifically on lesbian fiction (Stenback and Schrader, 1999; Creelman and Harris, 1989). Goldthorp's (2007) conclusions on the collection development of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries are based on survey responses from only 9 of 32 library services and so further

research would be beneficial to determine the current state of collection development issues relating to lesbian users and fiction. The literature agrees that reflection of the LGBT community in library collections is important for equality and social inclusion; however the reading practices and experiences of lesbian women in regards to lesbian fiction has again been researched by only a few studies on a small scale (Pecoskie, 2012; Liming, 2011; Rothbauer, 2005). As there is a prominent absence of UK-based research, an exploration of the wider benefits of providing access to lesbian fiction and understanding why lesbian women read lesbian fiction can allow public libraries to potentially improve its provision, as lesbian women are unlikely to use a library that serves them poorly (Goldthorp, 2007; Rothbauer, 2005).

3. METHODOLOGY

A survey methodology was used to investigate the provision of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries and answer the research questions. Collection development policies and supplier selection practices were analysed to determine the level of consideration of LGBT materials and users in collection development while a quantitative checklist survey assessed holdings of recently published lesbian fiction. This was intended to answer the first research question, by testing the hypothesis that public libraries in Scotland do not sufficiently consider LGBT users or literature in collection development and have poor holdings of lesbian fiction, which is further limited by a reliance on mainstream stock suppliers. A survey questionnaire was also used to explore the value of reading lesbian fiction in the lives of lesbian women in order to justify its provision in public libraries.

3.1. Collection development

A survey design was used to quantitatively assess the level of consideration of LGBT fiction in collection development by carrying out content analysis on collection development policies and supplier selection information, obtained through Freedom of Information requests.

3.1.1. Research sample

Scotland was chosen as the geographic location for the research because there has been only one identifiable study on library service provision to LGBT users in Scotland, based on a sample of only nine library services (Goldthorp, 2007); a larger sample would produce a wider and more reliable indication of the extent of consideration of LGBT fiction. There are 32 local councils in Scotland, covering a range of urban and rural communities, and each has a statutory responsibility to provide an adequate library service for the people in their area (CILIP, 2014a), with some library services now being delivered by charitable trusts on behalf of local councils. The individual operation of each library service gives scope for varying policies and procedures in the acquisition of LGBT materials across Scotland.

The research sample of all 32 library services in Scotland, which are listed by local council and if applicable with the name of the operating charitable trust in Table 1, was realistically achievable, as recent research establishes that at least 28 of Scottish public library services have a collection development policy (Scanlon, 2012), and also manageable given the time frame of the research.

Table 1	
Public library services in Scotland by local council and operating charitable trust	
Local council (n=32)	Name of operating charitable trust (n=9)
Aberdeen City	
Aberdeenshire	
Angus	
Argyll & Bute	
Clackmannanshire	
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	
Dumfries and Galloway	
Dundee	Leisure and Culture Dundee
East Ayrshire	East Ayrshire Leisure
East Dunbartonshire	East Dunbartonshire Leisure and Culture Trust
East Lothian	
East Renfrewshire	
Edinburgh	
Falkirk	Falkirk Community Trust
Fife	Fife Cultural Trust
Glasgow	Glasgow Life
Highland	High Life Highland
Inverclyde	
Midlothian	
Moray	
North Ayrshire	
North Lanarkshire	Culture NL
Orkney	
Perth & Kinross	
Renfrewshire	
Scottish Borders	
Shetland Islands	
South Ayrshire	
South Lanarkshire	South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture
Stirling	
West Dunbartonshire	
West Lothian	

3.1.2. Freedom of Information requests

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were used to obtain the documents and information needed for the content analysis of collection development policies and supplier selection practices. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 grants members of the public the right to request any recorded information held by a local authority. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (Designation of Persons as Scottish Public Authorities) Order 2013, made under section 5 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, extended this right to include requests for information from bodies established solely and financed, wholly or in part, by local councils to deliver recreational, sporting, cultural or social facilities and activities – such as charitable trusts delivering library services. FOI requests could thereby be made to all 32 library services in Scotland, whether delivered as part of a local council's services or on its behalf through a charitable trust. Also, as FOI requests must be responded to within 20 working days, a high response rate within the time frame of the research was reasonable to expect. As only recorded information can be requested by FOI, this was a suitable data collection technique as documented proof of the consideration of LGBT materials and users by public library services was sought, in the form of collection development policies, supplier selection stock profiles and Equality Impact Assessments

Attempts to find the information online were made before the FOI requests were submitted. Each library service's website was browsed and then searched for a collection management policy. The keywords and combinations used in the search were informed by the titles of Scottish public libraries' collection management policies that is reported by Scanlon (2012), for example, collection, development, library, management, policy, stock. A last attempt to find the policy online was made by searching the Google search engine.

Once the online search was completed, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were sent either by email to the appropriate email address for FOI requests or by way of an online form, both identified from the FOI webpages for each local council or charitable trust. In one case, the text of the request exceeded the character limit of the FOI online form. The FOI

request was submitted through the charitable trust's general enquiry form instead and confirmation was received that it had been successfully passed to the appropriate FOI officer.

The FOI request consisted of three parts; a template can be seen in Appendix 1. The FOI request firstly sought to either obtain the most up-to-date copy of the library service's collection management policy or confirm if the policy that had been found online was the most current. The FOI request also sought to determine if supplier selection is used for purchasing adult fiction and whether LGBT fiction is considered in the stock requirement profiles given to suppliers. Copies of the stock profiles were requested. Lastly, the FOI request sought to establish whether an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) had been carried out on the collection development policy; this request was included after two examples of such were found during the online search for collection development policies. EIAs are a way for local councils to demonstrate active consideration, and if necessary, accommodation of the needs of users with the protected characteristic of sexual orientation, which is part of the public sector equality duty to consider how policies affect people who are protected under the Equality Act (Stonewall Scotland, 2011).

3.1.3. Collection development measurement tool

In order to produce data from which the level of consideration of LGBT fiction in collection development could be quantitatively analysed, a coding scheme was created, which is provided in Appendix 2. This coded the content of the collection development policies, the supplier selection stock profiles and the text of the FOI responses. The variables of the coding scheme were identified from the existing research and theory (Wildemuth, 2009, p.300) on the best practice for LGBT collection development, discussed in the literature review. The variables and indicator categories were also identified from and checked against a small sample of the first returned FOI responses (Wildemuth, 2009, p.301). For each library service, the existence and currency of a collection development policy, the use of supplier selection for adult fiction and the existence of an Equalities Impact Assessment were determined from the FOI response. The consideration of LGBT users and/or materials in the collection development policy was indicated from a range of terms, sexual orientation, LGBT, gay/lesbian, etc. The consideration of the need for stock to reflect

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cultural diversity was indicated from the mention of such in the aims or criteria for the selection of adult fiction within the collection development policy. The consideration of LGBT fiction within the supplier selection was elicited from the text of the FOI response and inferred from the inclusion of LGBT fiction requirements within the copies of stock profiles that were provided.

A further FOI request was sent to Brighton and Hove City Council. This library service is held up as a best practice example in the literature (Chapman, 2007; Albright, 2006) and so its collection development policy was initially thought to be capable of informing the coding scheme variables and indicators. The FOI response however confirmed that the collection development policy has not been updated since 2005, and for this reason was not used.

The coding scheme also coded the characteristics of each library service. An urban/rural variable was sought to distinguish the varying types of communities served by Scottish library services and allow a comparative analysis, especially as lesbian women in remoter communities are more likely to experience isolation in comparison with urban areas (French *et al,* 2015) which tend to be more culturally diverse.

All 32 local councils were coded as *Urban*, *Towns*, *Mixed* or *Rural* using the classification scheme designed by Scanlon (2012) for the evaluation of Scottish public library services' collection development policies. Scanlon's classification is in turn based on the *Scottish Government Urban/Rural Classification 2013-2014* (Scottish Government, 2014), which uses six classifications to define different urban and rural areas based upon population and accessibility in terms of driving time between accessible and remote areas in Scotland. 'Large Urban Areas' have settlements of 125,000 people and over while 'Other Urban Areas' have 10,000 to 124,999 people (Scottish Government, 2014, p.5). Small towns have settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people and are classified either as 'Accessible' if within 30 minutes of driving time to a town of 10,000 or more, or as 'Remote' if the drive time is over 30 minutes (Scottish Government, 2014, p.5). 'Rural Areas' have a population of less than 3,000 people, and again are classified as either 'Accessible' if within 30 minutes of driving

time to a settlement of 10,000 or more, or as 'Remote' if over 30 minutes (Scottish Government, 2014, p.5).

Scanlon alters the Scottish Government's six classifications to four classifications (Scanlon, 2012, p.28), which is illustrated in Table 2. 'Large Urban Areas' are classified as *Urban*; 'Other Urban Areas' and 'Accessible Small Towns' are combined as *Towns*, while 'Remote Rural Areas', 'Accessible Rural Areas' and 'Remote Small Towns' are combined as *Rural*. Along with these four classifications, Scanlon's method for determining the classification of each local council was also followed. The *Scottish Government Urban/Rural Classification* gives the percentages of the population of each local council living in each of the six classifications (Scottish Government, 2014, p.16). If over 70% of the population inhabits one of Scanlon's categories (combined of the Scottish Government categories), then the local council is coded as that category; if there is no population of 70% or over living in one of Scanlon's categories, the local council is classified as *Mixed* (Scanlon, 2012, p.28-29).

Scanlon's (2012) classification categories and method were applied using the most recent version of the *Scottish Government Urban/ Classification* (Scottish Government, 2014, p.16). The only classification differing from that of Scanlon is North Lanarkshire; with 78.8% living in 'other urban areas' it was classified as *Towns,* whereas it was classified as *Mixed* by Scanlon (2012, p.29). The classification of each local council as *Urban, Towns, Rural* or *Mixed* is also shown in Table 2. A code, indicating the type classification (UR for *Urban,* TW for *Towns,* RU for *Rural,* and MX for *Mixed*) combined with a random number, was assigned to each library service to provide anonymity in the analysis, findings and discussion.

Table 2
Scottish library services organised by local council type, based on Scanlon's (2012) classification

Scottish Government (2014) Classification	Large Urban Areas	Other Urban Areas	Accessible Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Accessible Rural Areas	Remote Rural Areas	
Scanlon (2012) classification	Urban	Towns		Rural			Mixed
	Aberdeen City Dundee Edinburgh East Renfrewshire Glasgow Renfrewshire	Clackmannanshire Falkirk Fife Inverclyde Midlothian North Ayrshire North Lanarkshire South Ayrshire West Lothian		Argyll & Bute Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Orkney Shetland Islands			Aberdeenshire Angus East Dunbartonshire Dumfries & Galloway East Ayrshire East Lothian Highland Moray Perth & Kinross Scottish Borders South Lanarkshire Stirling West Dunbartonshire
Total number	6	9		4			13

3.1.4. Collection development content analysis

In order for the content analysis to be carried out, the responses of each FOI response were recorded textually in a table and copies of the collection development policies, either provided as part of the FOI request or found online and confirmed as the up-to-date version, and suppler selection profiles were securely stored. The collection development policies and FOI request responses for each library service were coded using the coding scheme, which produced a set of quantitatively analysable data. In the case of a collection development policy being found online but the FOI response claiming it was unavailable due to being updated, the policy was nevertheless included for completeness of analysis and coded as the most current version available. *Microsoft Excel* and *SPSS* were used to report the frequencies of the coding scheme variables in order to determine the level of consideration of LGBT fiction in collection development policies and practices.

Several responses to the FOI request question regarding the use of supplier selection included textual replies with brief overviews of alternative or complementary practices to supplier selection. The interest and support showed by the responses, in providing information beyond that which was asked, was encouraging and appreciated, however this data could not be used for direct comparison as not all library services were asked about other selection methods used. Instead, the responses were qualitatively analysed for emergent themes or patterns, and included as illustrative examples of practice in the analysis of the findings.

3.1.5. Limitations of collection development research methods

Collection development policies and the use of supplier selection do not represent a full account of the collection development processes of Scottish public libraries; for example, the nature of the data analysed does not give information on the practices of librarians involved in stock selection on a day-to-day basis.

The questions of the FOI request could be revised in order to improve both the quality of information received and assist local authorities in providing clear answers. One revision would be to remove the mention of non-fiction from the FOI request. While initially included to provide data to analyse if fiction was not mentioned or included in supplier selection, the data was not needed and overcomplicated both responses and analysis, with one response only mentioning non-fiction materials. Rewording the question "Can copies of these be provided?" to "Can copies of stock requirement profiles/specifications used be provided?" and presenting it clearly as a separate question for emphasis, could improve the clarity of the information request, as in some instances, stock profiles were supplied only when LGBT fiction was in fact mentioned as a category; stock profiles that do not mention LGBT fiction should be included in the analysis for a fuller comparison. A further revision would be the inclusion of a request for information on the proportion of the book purchasing budget spent on supplier selection. Some FOI responses included this information voluntarily and such a request in future could be used to determine the extent to which supplier selection is relied upon as a selection method for every library service.

3.2. Catalogue survey

A checklist survey was used to quantitatively assess holdings of lesbian fiction in Scottish public library services. A definitive list of fiction recently published in the UK with lesbian characters or content could not be found and therefore a checklist of lesbian fiction was created, with content, quality, currency and availability criteria being applied. The online catalogues for all 32 library services were searched for the titles on the checklist and holdings were analysed to investigate current provision, availability and accessibility of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries. This was then compared with the results returned by each catalogue when searched for lesbian fiction.

3.2.1. Lesbian fiction checklist

The compilation of the checklist was firstly hindered due to the ambiguity of the definition and concept of lesbian fiction, as mentioned in the introduction and literature review. The intention was to source quality fiction, both mainstream titles that may not normally be

categorised as LGBT but which contain central lesbian characters or related themes, as well as titles traditionally seen as "lesbian fiction", such as lesbian romances. The content criterion was that each title must have a central lesbian character or theme. While supporting LGBT authors is important, the difficulty of ascertaining the sexuality of authors was outweighed by the need for representations of lesbian women in fiction, given the hypothesis that this is valuable to lesbian women. Titles written by a lesbian author are however included incidentally to the presence of a lesbian character or theme.

The nominees for LGBT literary awards were used to identify recently published, high-quality fiction to include in the checklist. The finalists of the annual Lambda Literary Awards in 2014 and 2015 for the general Lesbian Fiction, Lesbian Romance and Lesbian Mystery categories were included; the entries for these categories met the content criterion as they had to "feature a prominent lesbian character or contain content of strong significance to lesbian lives" (Lambda Literary Foundation, 2015c). The longlists for the 2014 Green Carnation Prize for LGBT writers and the 2014 and 2015 Polari First Book Award, both discussed in the literature review, were also consulted, as were book reviews of fiction in monthly issues of *Diva*, a mainstream UK lesbian magazine, covering the period July 2014 to July 2015, as the titles reviewed can be considered both mainstream and of relevance to LGBT culture. The presence of a central lesbian character or theme in each title was ascertained using online synopsises and reviews.

Lesbian fiction titles recommended as "crucial" to a lesbian and gay collection (Thomas, 2007, p.40) were cross-referenced with other online lists of the best of lesbian fiction to confirm their longevity and reputation as 'classics' before being added to the checklist.

Further criteria were then applied to the initial checklist. The publisher and year of publication of each title was confirmed using Worldcat.org, an online catalogue of library collections worldwide. All titles had to have been published between 2013 and June 2015, with the exception of those identified as 'classics'. If awaiting release or published before 2013, the title was removed from the checklist, the latter of which was intended to take into

account any weeding policies, for example, removing from circulation books that have not been issued in the preceding 12 months. Any titles that were only published in e-book format were also removed from the checklist, as the range of e-books that public libraries are able to lend is limited (CILIP, 2014b) and not everyone has access to e-readers and internet access the same way they do to physical copies in libraries. Titles that were self-published were also excluded as they could not be guaranteed to meet the quality criteria of public library selection principles.

As many titles were published either initially or exclusively by a US-based publisher, the availability of each title to purchase in the UK was verified using Amazon.co.uk. Titles had to be available to purchase in hardcover or paperback at the time the checklist was compiled and directly from Amazon.co.uk, with any titles only available to purchase from a marketplace seller or only as an e-book removed from the checklist.

The checklist was lastly narrowed so that no author had more than one title included. The finalists of the Lambda Literary Award for both 2014 and 2015 in the Lesbian Romance and Lesbian Mystery were predominantly published by lesbian fiction specialist publisher, *Bella Books* and LGBT specialist publisher *Bold Strokes Books*; to maintain a balanced mix of publishers, limits were applied so that the checklist contained no more than four titles from each of these two publishers.

The finalised checklist of 37 titles is included in Appendix 3, which contains details of title, author, publisher, year of publication, awards won, and the source that recommended its inclusion. The final checklist is comprised of titles written by Scottish, UK and international mainstream and non-mainstream authors and published by large, independent and niche publishers. A range of genres is covered, including contemporary and literary fiction, romance, mystery, crime and historical fiction. A genre was assigned to each title, based upon synopsises, Amazon.co.uk labels and Worldcat.org subject access headings. The genre labels however are not exclusive, giving instead a general indication of genre and are relied upon for ease of comparison. 'Crime' titles are part of a series featuring the same character,

as are most of the 'Mystery' titles, which encompass thriller and suspense themed novels. The 'Classics' retained this label to distinguish them as having been first published pre-2013, however three of these titles have had editions published in the UK between 2013 and 2015. The genre assigned to each title is also detailed in Appendix 3 and the frequency of checklist titles by genre is illustrated in Figure 1. The sources that the titles of the final checklist were obtained from are shown in Figure 2, demonstrating that the checklist titles are of high-quality and therefore likely to meet public libraries' selection criteria standards; one title included was found when reviewing synopsises online. All titles in the checklist can be described as lesbian fiction, from featuring a central lesbian character or exploring the lesbian experience, and many are also written by a lesbian woman.

Figure 1. *Frequency checklist titles by genre*
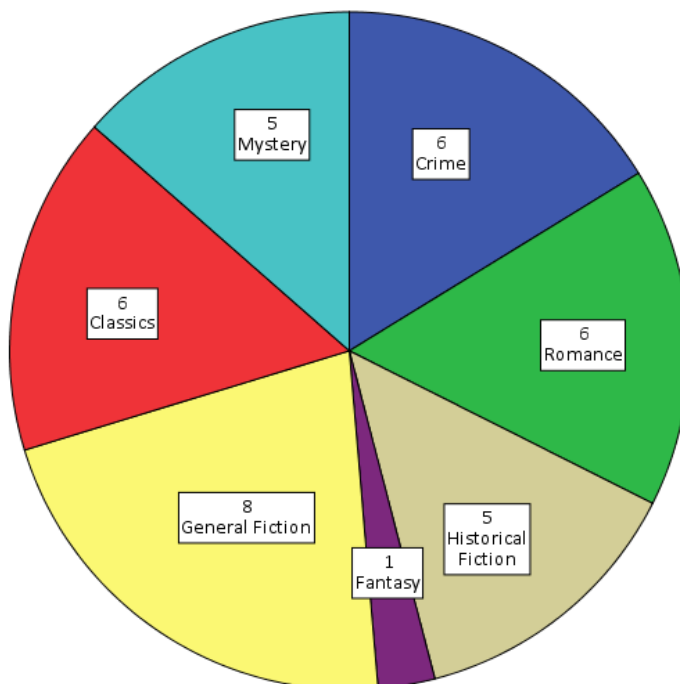
Figure 2. *Frequency of checklist titles by source*
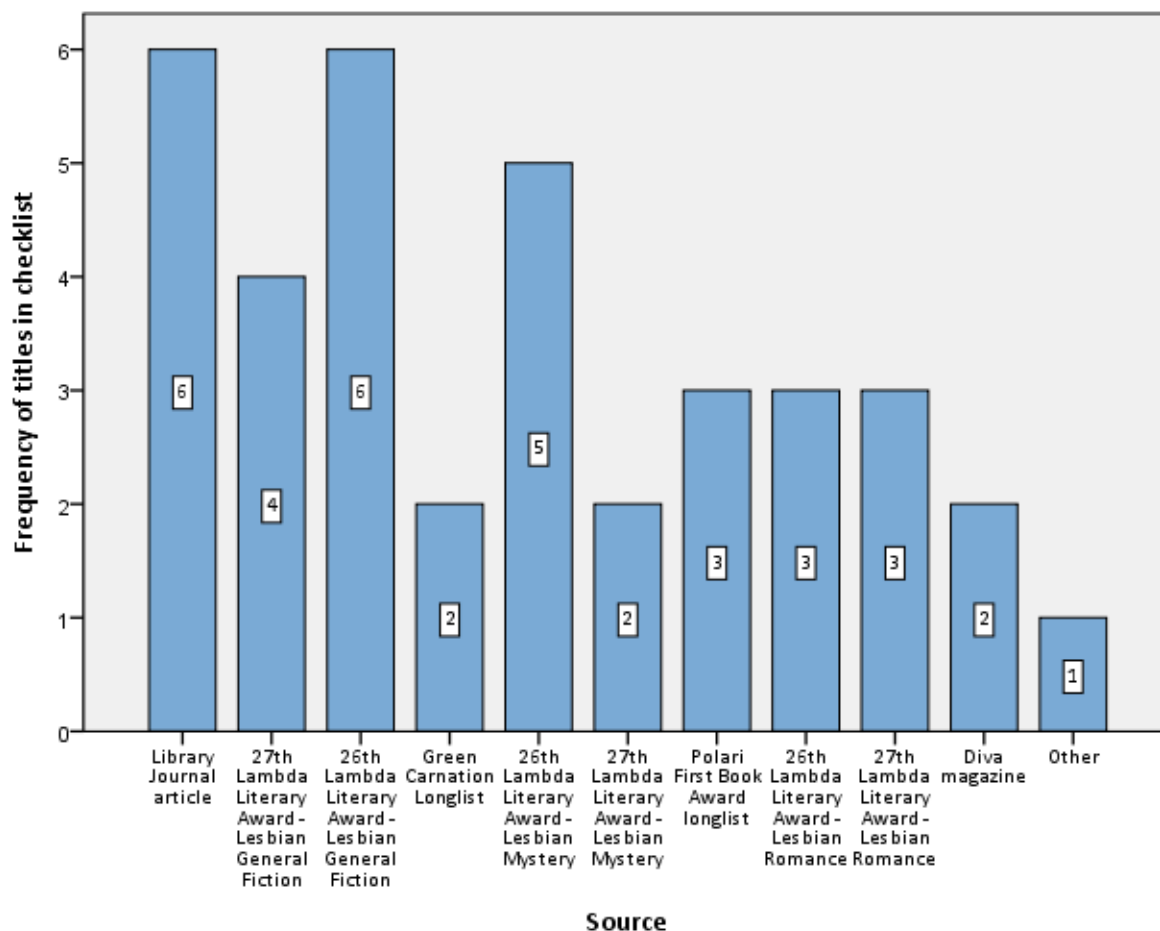
3.2.2. Catalogue check

Each library service's catalogue was accessible through the library website. Each title on the checklist was searched for by title and by author, to take account of any potential cataloguing errors. A chart, which can be seen in Appendix 4, was constructed in order to note the availability of at least one copy of a title held in one of the service's libraries, irrelevant of whether it was on loan or not. School library copies and e-books were not counted, neither were titles counted if on order rather than in stock. As all five 'Crime' titles and three 'Mystery' titles on the checklist were part of a series and featured a recurring character, an additional note was made if it was found when the author was searched that other titles in the series were held instead

In order to investigate the accessibility of lesbian fiction, the presence of a subject access heading, tag or label identifying the title as lesbian fiction was also noted on the chart. In order to provide a comparison on the availability of lesbian fiction, the catalogue was also searched for "lesbians fiction", either as a subject search, using 'subject:(lesbians fiction)' if possible, or alternatively as a keyword search. The plurality of the search term was chosen after finding that "lesbian fiction" brought up titles spanning the broad LGBT spectrum, which is beyond the scope of this research.

The same searches were also carried out on Brighton and Hove Libraries' catalogue. Given its reputation of providing a high quality LGBT collection (Chapman, 2007; Albright, 2000; Norman, 1999), the results of this search give an indication of what can be "realistically achieved" (Chapman, 2007, p.20). It is not an appropriate measure to use as a standard however given that there is an extensive LGBT collection for a large LGBT community, which is estimated to be 11-15% of the population of Brighton and Hove City Council (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2014) and therefore it is unrealistic for the same level of LGBT service provision to be expected in other local council areas.

3.2.3. Catalogue survey analysis

The findings of the catalogue search were analysed using were *Microsoft Excel* and *SPSS*. The frequencies of checklist titles held by each library service were used to determine the availability, accessibility and range of lesbian fiction titles, by comparing and contrasting frequencies by genre, by lesbian subject access headings and by type of library service. Statistical tests were also conducted to determine correlations and significant differences in the results between types of library services and between their use of supplier selection.

3.2.4. Limitations of the catalogue survey

The compilation of the checklist was restricted by the necessity of a manageable number of titles and is in no way definitive of recently published lesbian fiction. All award-nominated titles were not included in order to maintain a balance in the number of titles per genre,

however there is only one fantasy title and there are no science fiction titles included. The compilation of checklists for an assessment of stock holdings can be inadvertently and subjectively influenced by the researcher (Schneider, 2000). In particular, the researcher's own definition of lesbian fiction may have been applied, however the sources of the titles and the criteria for inclusion were applied as stringently as possible, and are explained and justified above. A potential weakness that may impact the findings is that the majority of the checklist titles may not be considered lesbian or LGBT fiction by publishers or stock suppliers, which may affect whether the title is catalogued as lesbian fiction. Also, the results of the catalogue search for "lesbians fiction" are not verified for accuracy and the range, quality and currency of the titles returned are not evaluated.

3.3.   Survey on reading lesbian fiction

The initial plan was to conduct interviews or focus groups in order to collect data from lesbian women on their experiences of reading lesbian fiction. Interviews can collect rich, in-depth information specific to an individual's understanding of the world, including opinions, behaviours, values and feelings about the present as well as past events (Pickard, 2013, p.196; Gorman and Clayton, 2003, p.408), such as the coming out experience and any role lesbian fiction played. On the other hand, the interaction of multiple participants in a focus group discussion can generate a wide variety of views and attitudes (Bryman, 2012, p.503; Wildemuth, 2009, p.242; Gorman and Clayton, 2003, p.147). The choice between these two methods was to be determined by the number of participants that volunteered.

Potential participants were contacted indirectly to ensure that individuals did not feel threatened, obligated or singled out and to ensure participation was entirely voluntary. Two LGBT book groups in Scotland were identified from a list of community groups compiled by *LGBT Health and Wellbeing*, a charity that promotes the health, wellbeing and equality of LGBT people in Scotland (LGBT Health and Wellbeing, no date). Emails were sent to both book groups, enquiring about interest in participating in interviews or a focus group. One book group responded, and circulated the original email to book group members. Contact was also made to three university student union LGBT societies based in Edinburgh and

Glasgow. Information about the research and seeking participants were circulated on the societies' email list in one case and through social media accounts in two cases. Unfortunately, there was not a high level of interest overall, with only two women expressing an initial interest in participating in interviews; one factor for this may be that undergraduate students were on summer vacation at the time. As there would not be sufficient data to draw from only two interviews, a questionnaire was instead used to gather data on lesbian women's experiences of and opinions on reading lesbian fiction to answer the second research question.

3.3.1. Rationale for questionnaire

An online questionnaire was chosen as it can be used to identify trends and patterns in the experiences and preferences of lesbian fiction readers (Pickard, 2013, p.112) and has the potential to reach partipants from a wide geographic area (Pickard, 2013, p.207). Online questionnaires offer participants flexibility, in that they can answer the questions at their own convenience (Bryman, 2012, p.234), and anonymity (Alasuutari *et al*, 2008, p.322) which may allow participants to feel comfortable answering questions relating to their sexual orientation honestly.

3.3.2. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed to be simple and easy for participants to complete in order to encourage responses (Wildemuth, 2009, p.123), and was hosted on the online survey software, *Qualtrics*, to which the University was has a subscription that students can access. The questionnaire was divided into four sections and used a combination of question types: multiple-choice questions, scale measures, such as attitudinal scales, which were suitable for obtaining data on attitudes and individual perceptions (Wildemuth, 2009, p.256), and open-ended questions, which provided the opportunity for perspectives not considered in the research thus far to be obtained from answers (Pickard, 2013, p.219). A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix 5.

The first section covers reading in general, using an attitudinal scale to measure the importance of reading to participants and a multiple choice question on genres of fiction sought to determine reading interests. The second section focuses on reading lesbian fiction. Recognising that the term "lesbian fiction" is ambiguous, participants were asked to provide a definition of lesbian fiction. This was followed by an instruction for participants to use their own definition when interpreting the subsequent questions, so as not to restrict participants' answers on reading what they personally considered to be lesbian fiction. An open-ended question was used to gather reasons for reading lesbian fiction, allowing participants to explain this in their own words. The experiences and value of reading of lesbian fiction were also explored through a series of scale measurements, with statements relating to habit and preferences of lesbian fiction readers, the importance of visibility of lesbian women in literature, and the sense of belonging and connection to the LGBT community that reading lesbian fiction may bring. Scale measurements were also used in the third section to explore the usefulness and usability of reading lesbian fiction during the coming out process. The statements focused on the understanding and acceptance of sexual orientation, and the sense of community and personal wellbeing during the coming out process.

Lastly, background questions on gender and sexual orientation were asked to establish the validity of the participants' answers, and those on country of residence and age to put the answers into context and explore trends and patterns in demographics. A final opportunity was also given for respondents to express any additional thoughts on reading and lesbian fiction.

3.3.3. Questionnaire ethics

The questionnaire was designed and conducted in line with the ethical guidelines of the Departmental and University Ethics Committees. Ethics approval was sought and granted from the University's Computer and Information Sciences department.

Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary and this was made clear in the introduction page of the questionnaire which informed participants of the purpose of the research, the questionnaire's role and what was expected of them. Consent was expressed and obtained from participants when they selected a box with a statement confirming their consent and followed the link to continue. Participants were informed that they were under no obligation to answer the questionnaire, which was formatted to reflect this, with the 'force response' option deselected for every question. For sensitive questions requiring personal information on age and sexual orientation and country of residence, "Prefer not to say" was an available option. In recognition that not every participant would be comfortable using or identifying with traditional labels when specifying their sexual orientation, the question included a text box option for participants to express their sexual orientation in their own terms if they wished.

The data from the surveys was collected and stored on *Qualtrics*, accessible only through the researcher's password-protected profile. Answers to open-ended questions were transferred to password-protected Word document for analysis. This document was stored on a personal University computer drive and accessed on-campus and remotely through the University's portal framework, PEGASUS, on a personal laptop with up-to-date anti-virus software. After the research has been graded, survey responses stored on *Qualtrics* will be deleted from the account and all data downloaded from *Qualtrics* onto external documents will be deleted from the computer drive on which it is stored.

3.3.4. Questionnaire sample and procedure

Respondents to the questionnaire had to be female and either read or have read lesbian fiction. Women who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or another non-heterosexual sexual orientation were eligible to complete the questionnaire, in recognition that lesbian fiction is not solely read by lesbian women and to gather data on the value of reading lesbian fiction to women within the LGBT community.

Non-probability sampling, namely convenience sampling, was employed by promoting the questionnaire through email contacts and online through social networking platforms. Idenitfying and contacting lesbian and LGBT services and organisations for assistance in promoting the questionnaire was considered a crucial step to gathering a substantial sample, by giving the questionnaire legitimacy (Wildemuth, 2009, p.261). The LGBT book group and student societies that were contacted during the initial attempts to source interview participants were emailed once again to request promotion of the questionnaire. One of the women who initially volunteered to be interviewed passed the questionnaire on to her network of friends via email, resulting in a snowballing approach. Posts were made on Gingerbeer.co.uk, a UK-based lesbian message board and on the lesbian-related message board of *Reddit*, an entertainment, social networking, and news website. The social media platform *Twitter* was also utilised. Posts about the questionnaire were "tweeted" from the researcher's personal account, which contained details of university of study and the research interest, to the accounts of various lesbian or LGBT-related organisations, judged likely to be interested in promoting the research. An independent lesbian book review website, DIVA magazine, the Lambda Literary Foundation and Glasgow Women's Library all "re-tweeted" posts, which allowed their subscribers to see the post. These posts were then "re-tweeted" a further 14 times by various individuals and LGBT-related organisations.

The use of an online questionnaire limited the sample to include only those who have access to the internet (Wildemuth, 2009, p.260). The sampling techniques used also limited the sample as participants had to use the social networking platforms to discover the questionnaire, and in the case of *Twitter*, also subscribe or view the accounts of the organisations and indiviudals who "re-tweeted" the questionnaire information.

3.3.5. Questionnaire analysis

The questionnaire results were reviewed to remove responses that were incomplete and then analysed using *Qualtrics*. The answers to the open-ended questions were analysed qualitatively and coded before quantitative analysis using *SPSS*. The findings from the questionnaire responses are reported and discussed to justify improvements in the

consideration of lesbian fiction in collection development and to contribute to furthering the understanding of the importance of reading lesbian fiction to lesbian women.

3.3.6. Limitations of questionnaire

As discussed above, interviews were intended to inform the questions of the questionnaire, and in turn the questionnaire would validate and lend credibility to the interview findings (Gorman and Clayton, 2003, pp.12-13). The questions within the questionnaire were instead informed by the literature review and the meaning within the answers provided cannot be verified. As non-probability sampling was used and participants were self-selecting, the sample was not representative of the population and the questionnaire findings are therefore not generalizable.

4. FINDINGS: COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND CATALOGUE CHECK

The consideration given to lesbian fiction in collection development of Scottish public libraries was evaluated through the presence of LGBT fiction in collection development policies and supplier selection specifications. Of the 32 local councils and charitable trusts, 29 responded to the FOI requests within the 20 working days, giving a high response rate of 91%. The assessment of lesbian fiction holdings, including the checklist titles, in all 32 library services in Scotland gives an indication of the extent to which collection development policies and practices are effective in making lesbian fiction available and accessible.

4.1. Collection development policies

A total of 26 collection development policies were collected for analysis. Responses to the FOI requests confirmed that 10 collection development policies found online were the most up-to-date versions available and supplied a further 15 collection development policies. One FOI response stated that its library service did not have a collection development policy in place at that time however a draft copy was provided to be of assistance to the research. One *Rural* library service did not respond and another did not have a collection development policy in place, meaning only two of the four *Rural* library services were analysed. One *Towns* library service did not respond and another's collection development policy was not available as it was in the process of being reviewed. Lastly, the response from one *Mixed* library service indicated that a collection development policy did exist but did not provide a copy nor could a copy be found online.

The consideration of LGBT users and fiction within collection development policies was analysed for 81% of the sample population. Of these 26 collection development policies, 5 were in the process of being updated at the time of the FOI response, and a further 3 were scheduled to be revised in the near future, potentially limiting the longevity of the analysis.

4.1.1. LGBT consideration in collection development policies

There was no mention of the provision of LGBT materials or for LGBT users in any of the 26 collection development policies. One collection development policy however did include a selection criteria component stating that:

> Every attempt will be made to select items which reflect positive
> attitudes to gender, race, sexual orientation, personal beliefs and
> disability in both fiction and non-fiction materials (TW2).

This statement however does not address a need for collections to include LGBT materials or to meet the needs and interests of LGBT users and is instead concerned with the positive portrayal of LGBT people in items within the collections, for example, not containing homophobic attitudes or negative stereotypes.

While a low level of consideration of LGBT materials and users was expected given Goldthorp's (2007) research, there was a significant difference from Chapman's findings that 18.75% of a sample of 32 library services in England mentioned LGBT materials in their collection development policies (Chapman, 2007, pp.38-39).

4.1.2. Cultural diversity in collection development policies

Seven collection development policies had selection criteria for fiction relating to the inclusion of works that reflect cultural diversity or respond to the needs of culturally diverse communities. Two collection development policies had selection criteria for fiction to recognise and promote a positive awareness of the multicultural nature of society. A further five collection development policies contained an aim or objective to reflect cultural diversity within the collections. Two collection development policies aimed to include stock for socially excluded groups and one aimed to ensure that the collection included stock that responded to specialised, non-mainstream needs. While fourteen of the 26 collection development policies considered diversity in the selection of stock and development of collections, it was not clear in any case which users groups were being considered in practice.

4.2.   Supplier selection

Of the 29 FOI responses received, 28 answers to the question regarding the use of supplier selection were provided. One library service, TW9, answered with regard to non-fiction materials, leaving the use of supplier selection for fiction unclear.

Supplier selection was used to acquire some or all of adult fiction stock by 14 of the responding library services (50%). Supplier selection was used by 4 of the 6 *Urban* library services (66.6%), by 8 of the 12 *Mixed* library services (66.6%) and by 2 of the 8 *Towns* library services (25%). Supplier selection was not used by any of the 3 *Rural* library services.

Of the 14 library services that used supplier selection, one library service's FOI response was unclear in that it did not answer whether or not LGBT fiction was included in the stock profiles used for supplier selection (MX9). Six of the 13 library services (46%) considered LGBT fiction in their stock requirements profiles and from the examination of these and the explanations given by FOI responses, it emerged that there were various ways to do so. Three library services used the star rating system, stating the number of copies of titles rated at particular stars that were to be provided. Two library services required copies of LGBT fiction rated at 1 to 5 stars (TW2, MX8) and a further library service specified the number of copies required of LGBT fiction that had a rating of 5, 4 or 3 stars (MX11). One library service set LGBT fiction as "low interest" (MX3) and another as a low priority, with copies to be stocked in three particular libraries (UR4). Another library service stated the preference for LGBT fiction to be stocked in their five busiest libraries (UR2). All six of these library services' stock profiles specified the quantities and formats of titles for each listed genre; some also contained a list of authors whose titles were to be supplied.

An indication of the use of passive approaches was identified from the responses from the seven library services that did not include LGBT fiction in the stock requirement profiles. This appeared to be based on a misunderstanding of the range of LGBT fiction that is available, with LGBT fiction not considered as a distinct genre of fiction:

LGBT related fiction… titles are not included in the stock profiles

given to stock suppliers but are included as general fiction (TW7).

LGBT - titles would be purchased [only] in response to requests. LGBT

titles by authors on the supplier selection fiction inclusion list are

automatically supplied (MX5).

The consideration of LGBT fiction only as a part of general fiction could result in LGBT fiction being included in the library's stock incidentally to the mainstream popularity of the author. In the case of MX5, which used both genre and author lists, as well as library service MX12, there were no requirements for LGBT fiction specified in the stock profiles, despite the option to do so and requirements for all other genre categories being specified. Library service MX5 also used the passive approach of only purchasing LGBT fiction when it was requested by users, which does not take into account that the information and recreational needs of LGBT users may not always be vocalised. The use of stock profiles that consisted of an author list only can also be considered a passive approach:

LGBT related fiction is included in the fiction stock profiles [which]

consist of a master list of fiction authors compiled from professional

knowledge, publisher's information and bestseller listings… (MX13).

The reliance on the popularity of authors is more likely to result in the exclusion of LGBT authors and titles from supplier selection, limiting the breadth of LGBT titles stocked in library services' collections. Two further library services, UR1 and MX1, did not specify LGBT fiction in their supplier selection profiles because there was not an option to do so; however copies of the stock profiles were not provided in either case to confirm this.

4.3.   Further LGBT consideration in collection development

Supplier selection is not solely relied upon to acquire stock by every public library that uses. As an example, two FOI responses gave the percentage of their book purchasing budget that was spent on supplier selection, 25% for one case and 55% for another, with the remaining

percentages spent on developing certain aspects of the collection, which for both examples included LGBT collections.

Three FOI responses from library services that do not use supplier selection stated that the collection development policy is used to guide the selection of stock:

> We select for all communities in [our] area based on our stock
> management policy (MX11).

> All stock including LGBT is selected by professional staff with regard
> to the general standards of the stock policy (RL2).

> The need for the service to ensure spend on books and other lending
> resources reflects cultural diversity is reflected in the current Stock
> Management Policy and will be retained in the revised version
> (MX13).

Given that the collection development policies of these library services do not specify that LGBT fiction should be included in collections or that the needs of LGBT users should be met, the effectiveness of relying on collection development policies for the inclusion of LGBT fiction within collections is uncertain. Further research into the extent of Scottish public librarians' reference to a collection development policy when selecting fiction could determine this.

Consideration of the LGBT community within the collection development policy, as discussed above, can be demonstrated through EIAs. The third question of the FOI request regarding an EIA of the collection development policy was answered by 28 of the 29 responses. EIAs have been carried out on collection development policies by two library services, 7% overall, one *Mixed* (MX13) and one *Urban* (UR4), both of which use supplier selection. Two additional library services were updating their collection development

policies at the time of the FOI response and stated that an EIA would be carried out the revision was completed (MX8 and TW3).

4.4.   Catalogue survey

The online catalogues for all 32 Scottish public libraries were searched for the checklist titles. The results of the checklist are presented by type of library service, by frequency per genre and by use of subject access headings. The results of the lesbian fiction subject search are also presented and discussed.

4.4.1.   Checklist findings by library service

Tables 3 to 6 report the number and corresponding percentage of checklist titles held by each library service, organised by type of local authority. The overall average of checklist titles held was 12 (32%). *Urban* library services had the highest average of titles at 15, however there was a significant variation, with the lowest number held being 8 and the highest 24 (Table 3). *Rural* libraries had the lowest average of checklist titles at 8.5 holdings, with a low variation between 7 and 11 (Table 4). The average number of titles held by both *Towns* and *Mixed* library services was 12 (Tables 5 and 6 respectively).

Only one library service, UR2, held over half of the checklist titles with 65%, however UR6 held 49% of the checklist titles. Over 25% of the checklist titles were held by 24 of the 32 library services.

Table 3

Frequency of checklist titles held by Urban *library services*

	UR1	UR2	UR3	UR4	UR5	UR6	Average
f	16	24	12	14	8	18	15
%	43	65	32	38	22	49	41

Table 4

Frequency of checklist titles held by Rural *library services*

	RL1	RL2	RL3	RL4	Average
f	7	9	11	7	8.5
%	19	24	30	19	23

Table 5

Frequency of checklist titles held by Towns *library services*

	TW1	TW2	TW3	TW4	TW5	TW6	TW7	TW8	TW9	Average
f	14	13	9	8	16	15	13	13	9	12
%	38	35	24	22	43	41	35	35	24	33

Table 6

Frequency of checklist titles held by Mixed *library services*

	MX1	MX2	MX3	MX4	MX5	MX6	MX7	MX8	MX9	MX10	MX11	MX12	MX13	Average
f	9	10	10	15	15	8	9	11	10	14	15	13	12	12
%	24	27	27	41	41	22	24	30	27	38	41	35	32	31

The library services that used supplier selection had a higher average of checklist titles (13) than library services that did not (11). An independent-samples t-test found that there was not a significant difference in the number of checklist titles held by library services that used supplier selection (M=13.07, SD=3.951) and by those that did not (M=11.29, SD=3.429); t(26)=1.277, p = .213. Of the library services that used supplier selection, those that made

specific provision for the inclusion of LGBT fiction held a higher average of checklist titles (14.5) in comparison with those that did not (12.3) (see Tables 7 and 8 respectively). A t-test confirmed that there was also no statistically significant difference between library services that considered LGBT fiction in their stock profiles (M=14.50, SD=5.010) and those that did not (M=12.29, SD=2.928); t(11)=.992, p = .342. The number of checklist titles held therefore does not depend on the use of supplier selection or on whether LGBT fiction is included in supplier selection stock profiles.

Table 7 Frequency of checklist titles for library services that consider LGBT fiction in supplier selection	
Library service	f
UR2	24
UR4	14
TW2	13
MX3	10
MX8	11
MX11	15
Average	14.5

Table 8 Frequency of checklist titles for library services that do not consider LGBT fiction in supplier selection	
Library service	f
UR1	16
UR5	8
TW7	13
MX1	9
MX5	15
MX12	13
MX13	12
Average	12.3

4.4.2. Checklist findings by genre

The number of library services that held each title is presented in Table 9. The 'Historical' titles were the most frequently held genre from the checklist. All 32 library services held the 'Historical' titles by Jeanette Winterson and Sarah Waters, both popular, bestselling and award-winning British authors. The other two 'Historical' titles were held by 23 and 20 library services. In contrast, the 'Romance' titles, all published by either lesbian fiction specialist publisher *Bella Books* or LGBT specialist publisher *Bold Strokes Books* were the least frequently held. No library services held any of 'Romance' titles apart from *Urban* libraries UR2, which held three titles, and UR6, which held one. Both of these library services held the highest number of checklist titles overall, as mentioned above, at 65% and 49% respectively.

The 'Crime' title written by popular Scottish crime writer, Val McDermid, was held in all 32 library services. Two other 'Crime' titles were held by 29 and 27 library services. The 'Crime' title published by *Bella Books* was however held by only library service UR2, while no library services held the title published by one of its imprints, *Spinsters Ink*, despite it winning the 26th Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Mystery.

The three titles that were longlisted for a Polari First Book Award were all assigned the 'Mystery' genre category; one was held by 16 library services and another by 17, while one title was not held by any. The winner of the 27th Lambda Literary Award Lesbian Mystery Fiction was also not held at all. The fifth 'Mystery' title was held by only one library service.

All 'Crime' titles and three 'Mystery' titles were an instalment in a series featuring the same character or characters. There were sixty-one occurrences across all 32 library services of a checklist title not being held but another in the series being held. This indicates that the most recent instalments of a series are not being acquired; however this could be due to decisions not to stock further titles due to a lack of popularity or issues in individual library services.

One 'Classics' title was held by a total of 25 library services, with the frequency of the rest of the titles being 18, 15, three, two and one. Of note is that library service UR2 held five of the six 'Classics' titles and another, TW2, held four (TW2). Two library services held none of the six 'Classics' titles and 11 library services held only one.

Of the seven 'General fiction' titles, four were not held by any library services. The winner of the 26th Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction was held in only five library services and the other titles were held by 16, 14 and four library services.

Genre	Genre Code	Name / Author of checklist title	*f*
Table 9 *Frequency of checklist titles held in Scottish public library services*			
Classics	CLASSICS1	Jane Rule/ Desert of the Heart	3
	CLASSICS2	Fannie Flagg/ Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe	25
	CLASSICS3	Isabel Miller/ Patience and Sarah	1
	CLASSICS4	Rita Mae Brown/ Rubyfruit Jungle	2
	CLASSICS5	Patricia Highsmith/ The Price of Salt *or* Price of Salt	15
	CLASSICS6	Radclyffe Hall/ The Well of Loneliness	18
Crime	CRIME1	Val McDermid/ Cross and Burn*	32
	CRIME2	Anne Holt/ Death of the Demon*	29
	CRIME3	Charles Atkins/ Done to Death*	8
	CRIME4	Katherine V. Forrest/ High Desert*	0
	CRIME5	Mari Hannah/ Killing for Keeps*	27
	CRIME6	Ann Roberts/ Point of Betrayal*	1
General Fiction	GEN1	Ariel Schrag/ Adam	0
	GEN2	Ann-Marie McDonald/ Adult Onset	14
	GEN3	T. Greenwood/ Bodies of Water	4
	GEN4	Ali Liebegott/ Cha-Ching!	0
	GEN5	Chinel Okparanta/ Happiness, Like Water: Stories	5
	GEN6	Qiu Miaojin/ Last Words From Montmartre	0
	GEN7	Fracine Prose/ Lovers at the Chameleon Club, Paris 1932	0
	GEN8	Wally Lamb/ We Are Water	16
Historical	HIS1	Kate Worsley/ She Rises: A Novel	23
	HIS2	Jeanette Winterson/ The Daylight Gate	32
	HIST3	Anna Freeman/ The Fair Fight	20
	HIST4	Sarah Waters/ The Paying Guests	32
	HIST5	Rosie Garland/ Vixen	21
Mystery	MYS1	Beatrice Hitchman/ Petite Mort	16
	MYS2	V.A. Fearon/ The Girl with the Treasure Chest	0
	MYS3	Susan Wilkins/ The Informant*	17
	MYS4	Ellen Hart/ The Old Deep and Dark*	0
	MYS5	Ian Hamilton/ The Wild Beasts of Wuhan: An Ava Lee Novel*	1
Romance	ROMANCE1	Andrea Bramhall/ Clean Slate	0
	ROMANCE2	Robbi McCoy/ Farmer's Daughter	1
	ROMANCE3	Karin Kallmaker/ Love by the Numbers	0
	ROMANCE4	Jesse J. Thoma/ Seneca Falls	2
	ROMANCE5	Nell Stark/ The Princess Affair	0
	ROMANCE6	Kris Bryant/ Jolt	1
Fantasy	FANTASY1	Kirsty Logan/ The Gracekeepers	21
Note. * indicates part of a series. Details of awards won for each title can be found in Appendix 3.			

4.4.3. Checklist subject access headings analysis

Subject access headings related to lesbian fiction were used for only eight of the checklist titles; this use however was inconsistent across library services. All catalogue entries for the three 'Romance' titles held had a *Lesbians – Fiction* subject access heading. One 'Crime' title (CRIME3), was catalogued as *Older lesbians – Fiction* by seven catalogues of the eight library services that held it. 'Classics' titles were frequently yet inconsistently catalogued as *Lesbians – Fiction*, as shown in Figure 3. Two titles were catalogued as lesbian fiction by all catalogues holding them (CLASSICS2, CLASSICS3) and another was catalogued for six of 15 holdings (CLASSICS5). No holdings of two titles were catalogued as lesbian fiction (CLASSICS1, CLASSICS4) while one title was catalogued as *Lesbians -- England -- Social conditions – Fiction* by eight of 18 library services (CLASSICS6, *Well of Loneliness).*

Figure 3. *Frequency of 'Classics' checklist titles*
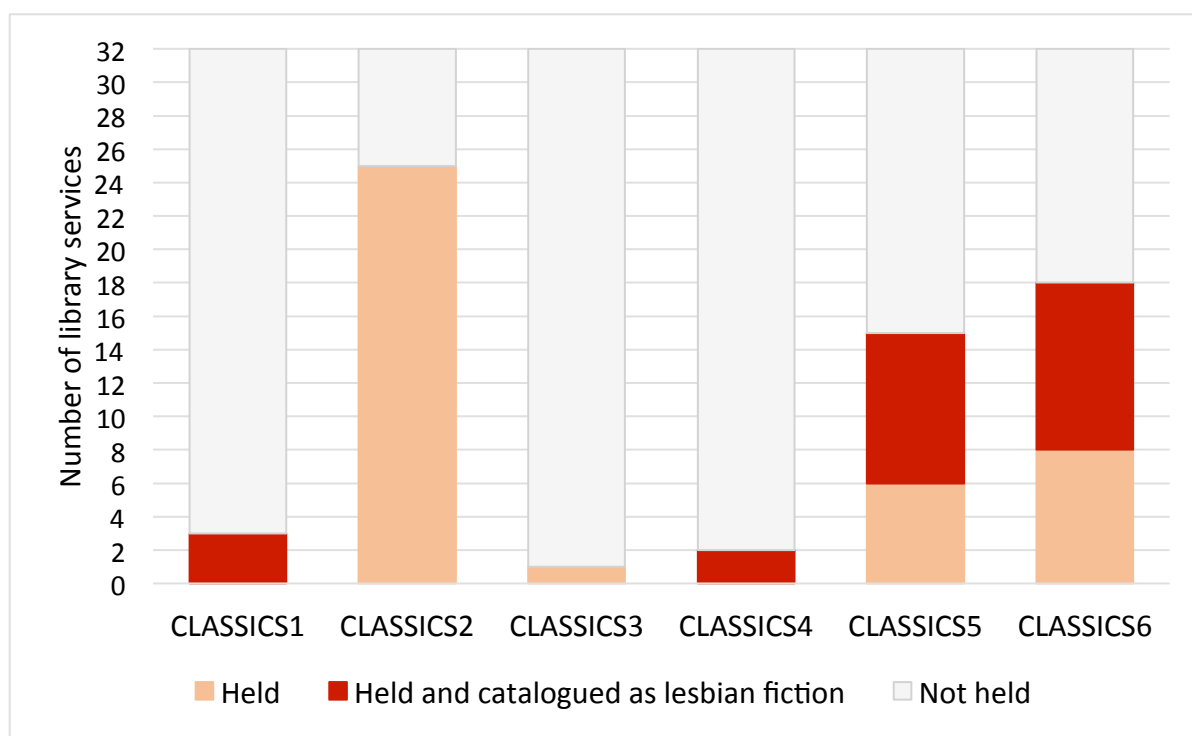
The use of lesbian fiction subject access headings for checklist titles was low overall and therefore the majority of the checklist titles would be difficult to be identified as lesbian fiction or as containing a lesbian character by catalogue users. Lesbian fiction subject access

headings were not used for any of the checklist titles that were held by 14 library catalogues. Seven library services had only one title catalogued as lesbian fiction, and another seven had only two catalogued.

One of the library services, TW9, which did not have any of the nine checklist titles it held catalogued with lesbian fiction subject access headings, had the *LibraryThing* folksonomy feature incorporated into its catalogue. Multiple tags, assigned to titles by *LibraryThing* users, were imported into the catalogue entries. With these tags, as opposed to its subject access headings, this library service had the highest number of titles labelled lesbian fiction for the overall number of checklist titles, with four of the nine checklist titles held tagged as "lesbian" or "lesbians". With one 'General fiction', one 'Historical', one 'Mystery' and one 'Crime' tagged, it also had the greatest range of checklist genres identifiable as lesbian fiction. These tags however were not searchable via the standard search options and were therefore not included within the subject search results. Instead the tags could be searched on the 'Tag Browser' which could only be accessed by selecting a tag link within individual catalogue records. This particular library service's catalogue also listed literary awards that a title was associated with on individual catalogue records. For example, the catalogue record for *Adult Onset* (GEN2) listed the title's Lambda Literary Award nomination; selecting the award link gives access to an 'Awards Browser', where other nominations of the literary award are listed.

4.4.4. Lesbian fiction subject search

The results returned when each catalogue was searched by subject or keyword for "lesbians fiction" varied. In three cases, no results were returned for this search; while this does not definitively prove that there are no lesbian fiction titles held by these libraries, it demonstrates the inaccessibility of any titles that are actually held, as searching exclusively for lesbian fiction does not produce any results. Indeed, one of the three library services is TW9, mentioned above, whose catalogue incorporates the *LibraryThing* folksonomy; while no results were returned for a subject search, 43 titles were identified using the tag browser.

The average number of results returned from the catalogue search for lesbian fiction was 21.5. The number of titles held, excluding the instances of where no titles were held, ranged from two to 49, with library service, UR2, holding 162 lesbian fiction titles - the same library service that held the highest number of checklist titles. The full results of the subject search by library service can be found in Appendix 6.

Table 10 presents the average of the results for each type of library service. *Urban* library services held on average more than six times the average number held by *Rural* library services, however no results were returned for one *Urban* library service ("lesbian fiction", and "lesbian" did also not return results). While *Towns* library services held on average less checklist titles than *Mixed* library services, *Towns* held on average more lesbian fiction titles overall.

Table 10	
Average of lesbians fiction subject search results by type of library service	
Type of library service	Mean
Urban	39
Towns	21
Mixed	18
Rural	6
Mean	21.5

Library services that used supplier selection had a higher average of lesbian fiction titles held (27.5) than the library services that did not use supplier selection (17.9). An independent-samples t-test found that there was not a significant difference in the number of lesbian fiction titles held for library services that used supplier selection (M=27.50, SD=340.942) and those that did not (M=17.86, SD=13.026); t(26)=.840, p = .409. Of the library services that used supplier selection, those that made specific provision for the inclusion of LGBT fiction, and considered it as an individual genre, held a higher average of titles catalogued as lesbian fiction (37.67) in comparison with those that do not (15.71). The range of subject search results can be found in Tables 11 and 12. An independent-samples t-

test compared the number of subject search results for library services that did and did not consider LGBT fiction within the supplier selection stock profiles and did not use supplier selection. There was not a significant difference in the scores for library services that did consider LGBT fiction (M=37.67, SD=61.879) and those that did not (M=15.71, SD=9.928); t(11)=.932, p =.372.

Table 11
Subject search results for library services that consider LGBT fiction in supplier selection

Library service	f
UR2	162
UR4	0
TW2	9
MX3	33
MX8	12
MX11	10
Average	37.7

Table 12
Subject search results for library services that do not consider LGBT fiction in supplier selection

Library service	f
UR1	20
UR5	7
TW7	25
MX1	5
MX5	31
MX12	14
MX13	8
Average	15.7

Figure 4 illustrates the moderate positive correlation between the number of checklist titles a library holds and the number of titles catalogued as lesbian fiction, which is statistically significant (r = .598, n =32, p < .001).

Figure 4. *Correlation of number of checklist titles and number subject search results.*
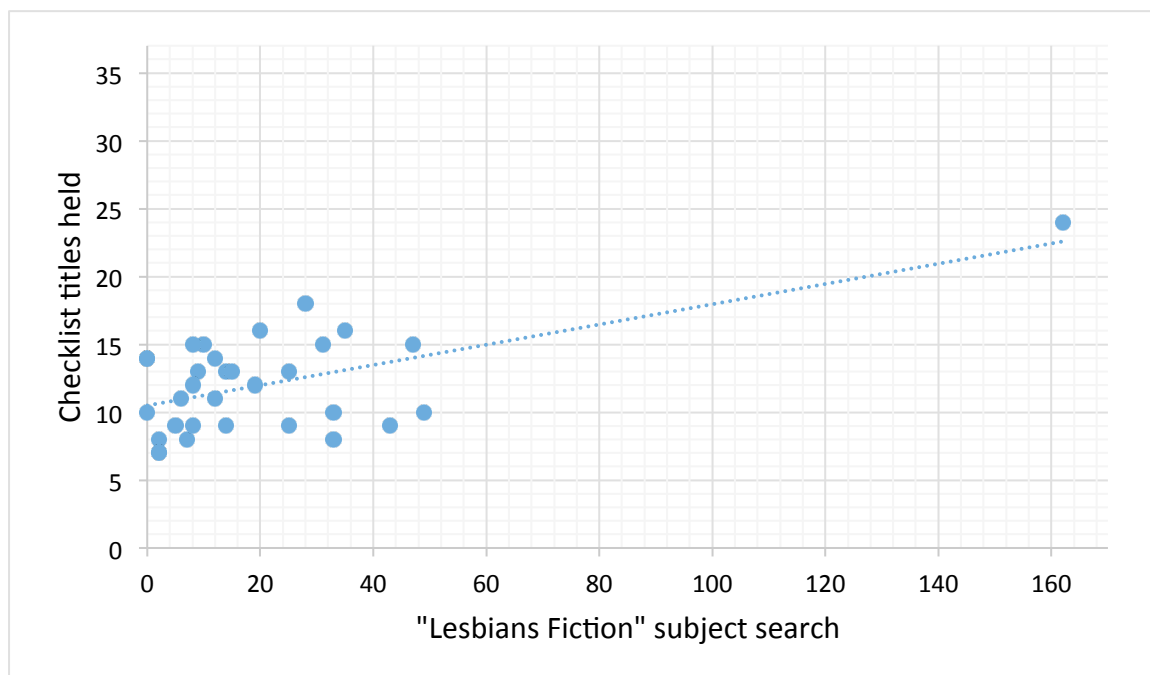
4.4.5. Brighton and Hove Libraries comparison

The results of the catalogue check can be placed in context by comparing them with the holdings of Brighton and Hove Libraries, the catalogue for which held 18 of the checklist titles, equal to 49%. This was the same as library service UR6, which had the second number of checklist titles held, but was less than that of UR2, which held 65%. All six 'Classics' titles were held and five of these were catalogued with some form of lesbian fiction subject access heading. One other 'Classics' title and Jeanette Winterson's *The Daylight Gate* were classified with a LGBT call number, which could be searched for on the catalogue. The "lesbians fiction" subject search returned 139 results; again, library service UR2 had more results for the same search.

4.5. Collection development and catalogue check summary

Neither lesbian fiction nor LGBT fiction was explicitly included in the collection development policies of Scottish public libraries; the needs of LGBT users were also not mentioned. Half of the library services that used supplier selection did not specify any requirements for LGBT

fiction, with evidence found that passive approaches were taken instead, by only requesting mainstream general fiction, where the LGBT content is incidental rather than acquiring it for its merit as an individual genre or for representing the LGBT community and meeting the recreational reading interests; and in one instance by relying on users to request LGBT titles.

The assessment of holdings of lesbian fiction, including the checklist titles, in all 32 library services in Scotland gives an indication of the extent to which collection development policies and practices are effective in making lesbian fiction available and accessible. While all 32 library services stocked some of the checklist titles, the lesbian-related content of the majority of these titles was not identifiable from the catalogue. Holdings of recently-published lesbian romance fiction and of titles published by specialist publishers were extremely low.

5. FINDINGS: QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire investigated the value of reading lesbian fiction to lesbian women by exploring the reading experiences and preferences of the respondents, as well as the importance of lesbian fiction in their lives. The usefulness of reading lesbian fiction during the coming out process in contributing to a sense of identity and community was also explored.

5.1.   Demographics of sample

The questionnaire was completed by a total of 96 women. The sexual orientation of the respondents is presented in Table 13. The majority of respondents identified as lesbian while small minorities identified as gay and as queer. There were 14 respondents who identified as bisexual, and one respondent stated that she was "in a long term same-sex relationship", while 2 respondents preferred not to disclose their sexual orientation and 1 did not answer. The responses were international, as shown in Table 14; of the 96 respondents, 7 resided in Scotland and 37 elsewhere in the UK; 35 lived in the United States, 11 in Canada, and 4 in European countries. As detailed in Table 15, a third of respondents were between the ages of 18-25, while just over a third were aged 35-44. Almost two-fifths were between the ages of 26-34 and there were small minorities of respondents aged 13-17, 55-64 and 65 and over.

Table 13		
Frequency of sexual orientation of respondents		
Sexual orientation	*f*	%
Lesbian	71	74.7
Bisexual	14	14.7
Gay	3	3.3
Prefer not to say	2	2.1
Queer	2	2.1
Pansexual/bisexual	1	1.1
In a long –term same-sex relationship	1	1.1
Other (did not specify)	1	1.1
Total	95	100.0
Note. Sexual orientation was not disclosed for one case		

Table 14

Distribution of respondents' country of residence

Country	*f*	%
Scotland	7	7.3
Elsewhere in the UK	37	38.5
United States	35	36.5
Canada	11	11.5
Norway	1	1.0
Slovenia	1	1.0
France	1	1.0
Austria	1	1.0
Prefer not to say	1	1.0
Outside the UK (not specified)	1	1.0
Total	96	100.0

Table 15

Distribution of age of respondents

Age	*f*	%
13-17	4	4.2
18-25	32	33.3
26-34	19	19.8
35-54	36	37.5
55-64	3	3.1
65 or over	2	2.1
Total	96	100.0

5.2. Importance of reading

Reading was very important to almost two thirds of respondents (63), important to over one third (28) and neither important nor unimportant to a small minority (5). No respondents answered that reading was not important or somewhat unimportant, however this could be due to the topic of the questionnaire being more likely to attract women who enjoyed reading and for whom reading played some significant role in their lives.

Table 16		
How important is reading to you?		
Rating	*f*	*%*
Very important	63	65.6
Important	28	29.2
Neither important nor unimportant	5	5.2
Somewhat unimportant	0	0
Not important	0	0
Total	96	100

5.2.1. Genres of reading

Respondents reported that they read a wide range of genres of fiction, as shown in Table 17. Almost 90% of respondents read LGBT fiction, making it the most commonly read genre of fiction. General fiction was also popular, read by two thirds of respondents.

Table 17		
Frequency of genre of fiction read by respondents		
	F	*%*
LGBT	86	89.6
General fiction	64	66.7
Crime	45	46.9
Classics	43	44.8
Fantasy	40	41.7
Short stories	38	39.6
Romance	38	39.6
Historical fiction	35	36.5
Science fiction	31	32.3
Bestsellers	29	30.2
New releases	24	25.0
Horror	16	16.7
Family saga	11	11.5
Young Adult	4	4.2
Erotica	2	2.1
Manga/Comics/Graphic novels	2	2.1
Drama	1	1.0
Humour	1	1.0

5.3.   Definitions of lesbian fiction

Respondents were asked to select from a multiple-choice list the definitions of lesbian fiction that, in their opinion, applied. Table 18 details the number and corresponding percentages of the 96 respondents who selected each definition of lesbian fiction. Fifteen respondents also provided a definition of lesbian fiction in their own words or explained their choice of definitions.

The most frequently chosen definition, by 76% of respondents, was 'fiction with a central character who identities as a lesbian'. 'Fiction written for a lesbian audience' was chosen by 68.8%, however the determination of such an intended audience is likely to rely on the author being a lesbian woman or a lesbian character or experience being portrayed within the text. With only 39.6% of respondents selecting the definition 'fiction written by a lesbian woman', the sexual orientation of the author can therefore be considered less influential in labelling fiction as lesbian fiction compared with the content of the book, in terms of the character's identify, experiences and perspective.

As respondents chose all definitions that, in their opinion, applied, lesbian fiction could be considered to be one of several definitions or have to fulfil the criteria of more than one definition, for example, "fiction by a lesbian author can be considered lesbian fiction if it is about or for lesbians".

Table 18		
Frequency of definitions of lesbian fiction		
	f	*%*
Fiction with a central character who identifies as a lesbian	73	76.0
Fiction written for a lesbian audience	66	68.8
Fiction that explores the lesbian experience	59	61.5
Fiction with a central character who identifies as a lesbian or bisexual	58	60.4
Fiction with a lesbian theme	53	55.2
Fiction written by a lesbian woman	38	39.6
Fiction with a lesbian-themed sub-plot	30	31.3

Lesbian fiction can potentially include women from the LGBT community who do not identify with the term lesbian as a label for their sexual orientation. The definition 'fiction with a central character who identifies as a lesbian *or* bisexual' was selected by 60.4% of respondents. Definitions provided by respondents expanded the sexual orientation of characters, audience and authors from lesbian to include fiction with and about "queer" women, with LGBT characters and themes, and by an LGBT author for an LGBT audience and about an LGBT character. One respondent noted that transgender characters and themes can also be relevant in lesbian fiction. These responses reflect the sexual orientation of the respondents, as not all identified as lesbian. Lesbian fiction was therefore considered by some respondents to be part of wider LGBT fiction or as a shorthand term for fiction that is for or is about women from the LGBT community.

Two respondents were of the opinion that a book's depiction of lesbian characters must be "honest" and the experiences realistic to be considered lesbian fiction. A further respondent felt that a lesbian author, while not a prerequisite for the definition of lesbian fiction to be applicable, lends a degree of trust and authority to portray lesbian characters and experiences realistically.

The responses to the question that attempts to establish a definition of lesbian fiction illustrate that what is considered lesbian fiction is often subjective, as different readers can have different criteria and concepts for what makes a work of fiction lesbian fiction. An exact definition of lesbian fiction therefore remains elusive.

5.4. Reading lesbian fiction

Reading lesbian fiction was important to the majority of respondents, as shown in Table 19, however this may be due, again, to the self-selecting nature of the sample. The relationship between the importance of reading in general and the importance of reading lesbian fiction is illustrated in Table 20. Reading in general was more important to the majority of respondents in comparison with reading lesbian fiction; for example, reading lesbian fiction

was very important to less than half of the 63 respondents to whom reading in general was very important, and somewhat unimportant to 5.

Table 19
How important is reading lesbian fiction to you?

Rating	*ƒ*	%
Very important	36	37.5
Important	38	39.6
Neither important nor unimportant	16	16.7
Somewhat unimportant	5	5.2
Not important	1	1.0
Total	96	100

Table 20
Cross tabulation of importance of reading and importance of reading lesbian fiction

		How important is reading to you?					
		Not important	Somewhat unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Very important	Total
How important is reading lesbian fiction to you?	Not important	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Somewhat unimportant	0	0	0	0	5	5
	Neither important nor unimportant	0	0	2	7	7	16
	Important	0	0	3	14	21	38
	Very important	0	0	0	6	30	36
	Total	0	0	5	28	63	96

5.4.1. Reasons for reading lesbian fiction

Lesbian fiction was most often read because of the connection that respondents felt to the lesbian characters and their experiences. Respondents reported that it was "easier" to identify with lesbian characters and that lesbian fiction offered more of an "emotional connection" and could be related to "on a different level" compared with other fiction. One respondent explained that the experiences of and relationships between lesbian women are "different to the heterosexual world" and the plot and characters can be fully identified with because of this shared experience, in comparison to non-lesbian fiction. One respondent elaborated that they benefited from relating to the "certain struggles [that] are unique to the LGBT experience". Four respondents reported that they related or identified more closely to lesbian romance and lesbian erotica, as it focused on relationships that they could understand and relate to from their own personal experiences.

Respondents also read lesbian fiction to escape, or as an alternative to, the heteronormativity of general fiction and other mediums such as television and film, where lesbian women were considered under-represented. The recognition and representation of lesbian women and their experiences within lesbian fiction was affirming and validating, for example, one respondent in particular said that lesbian fiction allowed her to "feel at home" and another enjoyed being able to "see "people like me" in the things I read and watch".

Three respondents read lesbian fiction for recognition of themselves and their experiences, in particular when they were younger, and for validation of their current relationships; however just over half of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that lesbian fiction was an authentic representation of lesbian women and experiences (see Table 21).

In response to the statement regarding lesbian fiction providing a sense of connection to the wider lesbian community, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it did (see Table 21). In the open-ended question, three respondents stated that lesbian fiction reduced the isolation they experienced, while two other respondents reported feeling less or not alone by reading about other lesbian women. Lesbian fiction also allowed some

respondents to learn about the LGBT community and understand the experiences of other women. It also provided insights into romantic relationships between lesbian women, which one respondent used to make sense of situations in her life.

Slightly more than half of respondents agreed that a reason for reading lesbian fiction was to support LGBT authors (see Table 21) and two respondents who were authors read lesbian fiction to research how other authors have represented the lesbian experience.

Table 21						
Frequency of scale measurement responses: reasons for reading lesbian fiction						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Reading lesbian fiction makes me feel connected to the wider lesbian community.	1	10	18	33	33	95[*]
Lesbian fiction is an authentic representation of lesbian women and experiences.	1	7	46	18	17	89[†]
I read lesbian fiction to support LGBT authors.	2	6	36	27	25	96
Note. *one value missing. †seven values missing.						

5.4.2. Habits, preferences and experiences

The responses to the statements that explored the respondents' habits, preferences and experiences relating to reading lesbian fiction are shown in Table 22. While a majority of respondents reported that they enjoyed reading fiction with both lesbian characters and characters with the same or similar sexual orientation to themselves, this was not always a preference. A majority of respondents reported that they actively tried to find lesbian fiction to read, yet a majority also felt that it was difficult to find.

The social aspects of reading, discussing and sharing lesbian fiction were also explored. Most respondents had been recommended lesbian fiction by other lesbian women, while the responses towards the habit of talking about lesbian fiction with friends were mixed; a majority of 45 agreed that they did, 22 neither agreed nor disagreed and 27 disagreed. While a majority also agreed that they read lesbian fiction that they considered to be popular with other lesbians, 38 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and 9 disagreed to some extent. Overall, the responses support the idea that lesbian fiction can facilitate connections with others by being discussed and shared amongst lesbian women, as well as with their wider social circles. An anecdote provided in response to one of the open-ended questions told of how the respondent purchased lesbian fiction e-books from Amazon for her mother to read in order to learn about and understand her relationships. This gives an example that reading lesbian fiction can also be of interest to those within lesbian women's social connections, and others, who wish to learn about lesbian women and their experiences.

Table 22
Frequency of scale measurement responses: habits, preferences and experiences

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I enjoy reading books with lesbian characters.	0	0	3	28	64	95[*]
I enjoy reading about characters with the same/similar sexuality to myself.	0	1	4	33	57	95[*]
I prefer to read books with lesbian/gay characters.	1	7	34	23	29	94[†]
I actively seek out books with lesbian/gay characters.	0	4	14	22	54	94[†]
I would like books with lesbian characters to be easier to find.	0	1	6	22	64	93[§]
Other lesbian women have recommended lesbian fiction to me.	4	19	13	40	19	95[*]
I talk about lesbian fiction I have read with my friends.	8	19	22	32	13	94[†]
I read lesbian fiction that is popular with other lesbians.	3	6	38	34	14	95[*]
Note. *one value missing. † two values missing. § three values missing.						

5.4.3. Visibility of lesbian fiction

The respondents unanimously agreed that it is important for lesbian women to be represented in fiction, albeit with one exception who neither agreed nor disagreed; a majority also disagreed that lesbian women are currently widely represented in fiction (see Table 22). This suggests that lesbian and other LGBT women do not find themselves adequately represented within fiction, compared with how important it is to them.

Responses to the open-ended question seeking opinions on lesbian fiction were concerned with both the quality and quantity of lesbian fiction that is available. Five respondents commented on the poor quality of lesbian fiction; particular descriptions of traditional

lesbian romance fiction included "predictable" and "immature". One respondent noted the distinction between the quality of lesbian romance fiction and that of contemporary fiction which features lesbian characters:

> Most lesbian fiction comes under [the] category of 'romance' and lots
> of it is pretty bad. There are a number of excellent writers [for
> example] Sarah Waters, Emma Donoghue, Jeanette Winterson who
> write decent stuff.

Four respondents commented on the quantity of lesbian fiction available, that they would like more lesbian fiction which is well-written, where the plot is not lesbian-centric but contains a lesbian element, and within contemporary and literary fiction. While three respondents commented on the difficulty they had finding lesbian fiction, two respondents, both aged between 35 and 54, pointed out that e-books and the availability of lesbian fiction from websites such as Amazon made it easier to find and access lesbian fiction compared to over thirty years ago. Fanfiction posted online was mentioned twice as a source of lesbian fiction which was culturally relevant and that often explored coming-out and other issues concerning sexuality.

Table 23						
Frequency of scale measurement responses: visibility of lesbian fiction						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
It is important for lesbian women to be represented in fiction.	0	0	1	23	70	94[†]
Lesbian women are widely represented in fiction.	28	60	3	3	0	94[†]
Note. † two values missing.						

5.4.4. Lesbian fiction in public libraries

The responses to the two questions regarding the provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries (see Table 24) suggests that there is an expectation on public libraries to represent and support the LGBT community through the LGBT fiction within their collection. All but 2 respondents agreed that to be socially inclusive, public libraries must provide access to lesbian and LGBT fiction and that it is important for public libraries to support LGBT authors. Moreover, over 90% of respondents felt that lesbian fiction was an important contribution to LGBT culture, which suggests that it should be better provided in public libraries striving to be culturally representative. In the open-ended questions, 2 respondents commented that more lesbian fiction was needed in public libraries.

Table 24 Frequency of scale measurement responses: lesbian fiction in public libraries						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
To be socially inclusive, public libraries must provide access to lesbian/LGBT fiction.	0	0	2	19	74	95[*]
It is important for public libraries to support LGBT authors.	0	0	2	25	66	93[§]
Lesbian fiction is an important contribution to LGBT culture.	0	0	6	39	50	95[*]
Note. * one value missing. § three values missing						

5.5.   Coming out and lesbian fiction

Of the 96 questionnaire respondents, 85 read lesbian fiction when they were coming out, detailed in Table 25. The impact of reading lesbian fiction on the respondents in terms of the process of realising, understanding and accepting sexual orientation and providing a sense of community was explored.

Table 25
Frequency of respondents reading lesbian fiction when coming out

	f	%	Cumulative %
A lot	27	28.1	28.1
Some	39	40.6	68.7
A little	19	19.8	88.5
None	11	11.5	100
Total	96	100.0	

5.5.1. Personal development

The series of statements that sought to establish an indication of the effects of reading lesbian fiction on personal identity and development during the coming out experience were answered by the respondents who read at least a little lesbian fiction during this time (see Table 26).

Less than half of the 85 respondents felt that lesbian fiction had made them aware of their sexual orientation, with 28 disagreeing and a neutral response given by 20 respondents. On the other hand, most respondents agreed that reading lesbian fiction helped them to understand and also accept their sexual orientation.

A majority of 61% of the respondents agreed that lesbian fiction provided positive role models, and more than half also felt that lesbian fiction made them optimistic about their futures. Comments from the open-ended questions suggest that the responses that disagreed or were neutral with these two statements could be a result of the quality and the content of lesbian fiction that was read, which, in the experiences of three respondents, portrayed negative stereotypes and worst case scenarios.

While reading lesbian fiction was not always involved in the initial realisation of sexual orientation, for a significant majority of the respondents it was helpful in the understanding

and acceptance of their sexual identity, with additional benefits for most of positive examples of lesbian women and future possibilities.

Table 26 Frequency of scale measurement responses: personal development when coming out						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses
Reading lesbian fiction made me aware of my sexual orientation.	7	21	20	23	14	85
Reading lesbian fiction helped me to understand my sexual orientation better.	0	4	13	39	28	84[*]
Lesbian fiction helped me to accept my sexual orientation.	0	5	14	39	25	83[†]
Lesbian fiction gave me positive role models.	1	8	24	34	18	85
Lesbian fiction made me optimistic about my future, in terms of my sexuality.	2	5	20	41	17	85
Note. *one value missing. † 2 values missing.						

5.5.2. Sense of community

The frequency of responses to the second series of statements, which were asked in order to establish an indication of how reading lesbian fiction provided a sense of community during the coming out process, can be seen in Table 27.

Most respondents felt that reading lesbian fiction had provided reassurance that there were others like them and made them feel less alone when they were coming out, demonstrating that lesbian fiction can give readers a sense that they are part of a wider community. More than half of the respondents felt that they had been able to learn about the lesbian community from reading lesbian fiction; however just over 15% disagreed. Just over half of

respondents agreed that lesbian fiction provided examples to deal with the reactions of others when coming out.

Table 27
Frequency of scale measurement responses: sense of community when coming out

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Responses
By reading lesbian fiction, I felt less alone.	0	6	11	30	38	85
Lesbian fiction made me aware that there were others like me.	2	6	10	33	34	85
I was able to learn about the lesbian community when reading lesbian fiction.	1	13	20	31	19	84[*]
Lesbian fiction gave me examples to deal with the reactions of others when I came out.	2	13	26	31	11	83[†]
Note. * one value missing. † two values missing.						

5.6. Questionnaire summary

Lesbian fiction was important to a majority of the questionnaire respondents. The respondents read lesbian fiction because they enjoyed being able to better relate to characters and feel that they and their community were represented. Some respondents however expressed disappointment with the difficulty of finding quality lesbian fiction. For the respondents who read lesbian fiction when coming out, the majority reported that it had helped them to feel less alone, by letting them know that they were part of a community, and could be hopeful about their futures. Lesbian fiction was also valuable for understanding and accepting their sexual orientation.

6. DISCUSSION

The research questions are answered by comparing the examination of how public libraries in Scotland address lesbian fiction in collection development with the existing theory and best practice discussed in the literature review; from this, recommendations are made on how public libraries can best develop collections to include lesbian fiction, informed and justified by the questionnaire findings on the value of lesbian fiction.

6.1. How do public libraries in Scotland address lesbian fiction in collection development?

The collection development policies and practices of public library services in Scotland do not adequately address the provision of lesbian fiction. The findings revealed that no public library services in Scotland had a collection development policy that addressed the need for LGBT fiction or materials for LGBT users, concurring with Goldthorp's (2007) findings eight years previously and demonstrating that no improvements in this regard have been made.

LGBT fiction was also found to be often overlooked also in the use of supplier selection. Only half of the library services that relied upon supplier selection used a stock profile similar to that recommended by the National Acquisitions Group (NAG), with requirements specified for each category of fiction, including LGBT fiction. Two library services did not specify any requirement for LGBT fiction despite there being the option to do so within the stock profile. To ignore LGBT fiction in this way is arguably a form of discrimination, as all LGBT fiction is excluded as a category rather than on the merit of the titles, for example by using the star-rating system. Other library services considered LGBT fiction to be sufficiently included within general fiction requirements or within an author list, demonstrating the passive approach warned against by the literature, indicating a possible reliance on or preference for mainstream authors and titles, and suggesting a misunderstanding of the concept that lesbian fiction includes both lesbian-related general fiction as well as specific lesbian genre fiction.

While lesbian fiction was considered by some library services to be included amongst general fiction acquisitions, this was not reflected in the catalogue entry for such titles. The checklist survey discerned a pattern of only lesbian romance or 'Classics' being catalogued with a lesbian subject access heading. With one 'Crime' title exception, no other genres of checklist titles held were identifiable from the catalogues as lesbian fiction. Such inconsistent use supports the suggestion in the literature review that subject access headings are not suitable for cataloguing lesbian fiction and that librarians in Scottish public library services are reluctant to amend catalogue entries to improve this. Library services are also not taking advantage of developments in information retrieval, such as folksonomies, to connect lesbian fiction they hold with lesbian fiction readers, such as the majority of the questionnaire respondents who actively sought lesbian fiction to read yet experienced difficulties in finding it.

The checklist survey and catalogue search discerned patterns and trends in the holdings of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries. The checklist titles published by specialist lesbian and LGBT publishers were severely lacking in all library services except library service UR2. Mentioned throughout the findings above, this library service had the highest number of recently published and 'Classic' checklist titles as well as the highest number of holdings when the catalogue was searched for lesbian fiction by subject. Although it is reasonable to expect library services in urban areas to provide larger selections, UR2 was a significantly higher proportion of lesbian fiction, surpassing even that of Brighton and Hove Libraries. The reason for this was not determined from the findings; it could, for example, be in response to user demand or due to a separate policy or initiative not captured by the FOI requests.

There was also a strong possibility that the high number of lesbian fiction titles held by library service UR2 was due to regular use of a specialist supplier, as four of the eight recently published checklist titles from lesbian and LGBT specialist publishers were held (ROMANCE2, ROMANCE4, ROMANCE6, CRIME3). In comparison, these 'Romance' and 'Crime' titles published by specialist publishers were not held by the significant majority of library services. Indications that older titles from the same authors had been purchased

suggests that the use of specialist suppliers may not be regular. If such titles have been purchased as a one off occurrence, this arguably results in a lower level of service provision to lesbian fiction readers compared with developing and maintaining a collection with recently published titles. The frequency of use of specialist suppliers, if used at all, should be an issue that is addressed within the collection development policy. In contrast however, the exception of library service UR2 suggests that a collection development policy mentioning LGBT fiction may not be a prerequisite to the provision of a higher number of lesbian fiction titles. Further research into this particular library service could possibly extract a model of best practice for the development of collections that include lesbian fiction, as well as determine if the collection is meeting the needs of lesbian fiction readers in that area.

Public library support of LGBT authors was seen as important by most of the respondents. The two titles by Scottish lesbian fiction authors, Val McDermid and Kirsty Logan, were held by a high number of library services, perhaps indicating a preference for supporting Scottish authors, which is mentioned as a selection priority in a number of collection development policies. The checklist titles that were longlisted for UK-based literary awards however were not as widely stocked. Of the three titles that were longlisted for the Polari First Book Prize, one was stocked in half of the library services (MYS1), the second in just over half (MYS3), and the third in no library services (MYS2). The two titles that were nominated for the Green Carnation Award (HIST3, HIST5) were both held by around two thirds of library services. This demonstrates that library services can do more to actively support LGBT authors in the UK.

In summary, the findings suggested that the availability of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries is limited, which may be due to the use of selection practices that rely on mainstream suppliers and that often misunderstands the nature of lesbian fiction. Lesbian fiction was also found to be largely inaccessible due to cataloguing practices that do not allow the lesbian-related content of titles to be reflected. Collection development policies were not being utilised to ensure that proactive approaches are taken in the selection, acquisition and development of lesbian fiction within collections.

6.2. Why should public libraries provide access to lesbian fiction?

Lesbian fiction should be provided in public libraries to meet the recreational reading needs of lesbian women, to represent lesbian women, communities and culture and because it can be a source of information, support and reassurance for lesbian women when they are coming out. The value of reading lesbian fiction is that relatable representations of characters and experiences can improve the reading experience, provide a sense of community and support the coming out process of lesbian women.

6.2.1. Representation of lesbian women

The majority of respondents felt that it was important for lesbian women to be represented in fiction and for this to be reflected in public libraries. Most respondents also felt that lesbian fiction is an important contribution to LGBT culture, and is often shared and discussed between lesbian women. Just over half of Scottish public library services expressed in their collection development policies that stock should reflect cultural diversity; to achieve this, LGBT fiction should be adequately represented in library collections. The respondents also agreed, almost unanimously, that public libraries must provide access to lesbian fiction to be socially inclusive, and doing so would contribute to the aim of promoting social wellbeing in *A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland.*

The majority of respondents agreed that lesbian women were not widely represented in fiction, yet for some it was a way to escape the heteronormativity and find affirming and validating portrayals of lesbian women and their experiences, to which they could better relate when reading. Public library services, by identifying lesbian fiction and making it accessible, can improve access to such representations that offer lesbian women the opportunity to read and learn about themselves and their place in the world. A broad range of lesbian fiction in different genres is needed in public libraries to allow lesbian women to access representations of their identities, experiences, communities and culture.

6.2.2. Lesbian romance fiction

The checklist survey determined that the holdings of the six lesbian romance titles, all nominated for Lambda Literary Awards, were extremely low. Three of the titles were held by library service UR2, and another library service held one title. Given that lesbian romance was the most consistently catalogued genre, it is likely that a large proportion of the lesbian fiction subject search results would be lesbian romance fiction, however the amount of holdings varied by library service. One reason for the low holdings of lesbian romance may be the low-quality examples of the genre that is frequently encountered, as expressed by the questionnaire respondents, both in terms of content and writing. Lesbian romance fiction that is of a high-quality can however be found amongst nominations for awards like the Lambda Literary Awards. Questionnaire responses expressed that reading was more rewarding if respondents could relate to plots and characters that represented their experiences of the world, such as same-sex relationships portrayed in lesbian romance fiction. An additional benefit of reading lesbian romance, reported by a few respondents, was being able to learn about and gain new understandings of lesbian relationships, again given the lack of representation elsewhere.

6.2.3. Coming out experience

It was suggested in the literature review that the information needs of lesbian women when they are coming out can potentially be met from recreational reading. The questionnaire findings suggest that reading lesbian fiction can potentially help lesbian women to understand and accept their sexual identity and to learn about and feel connected to the wider LGBT community through the positive portrayals of lesbian women. Most respondents also reported that they felt optimistic and less alone from reading lesbian fiction during this time. The provision of lesbian fiction can therefore allow public libraries to meet the information needs of lesbian women when they are coming out, which in turn can promote and support the social and mental wellbeing of such women, contributing to the aims of *A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland*. The selection of lesbian fiction should be done with an awareness that it can be a source of information for women who are coming out; lesbian fiction that explores the coming out experience and that presents positive and realistic portrayals of lesbian women should be included in library collections as they can be

valuable in allowing women to understand their identities and those of others within the lesbian community, as well as in providing reassurance and support.

6.2.4. Urban/rural divide

Several respondents reported that reading lesbian fiction helped them to feel less isolated. While the causes of such isolation for respondents, aside from their sexual orientation, are unknown, recent research by the Equality Network found that LGBT people living outside of the urban centres of Scotland are more likely to feel isolated and experience a lack of services that meet their needs. As lesbian fiction is valuable in that its reading can contribute to lesbian women's sense of community, both during and after the coming out process, it is important for public libraries in rural areas to provide an equitable service to lesbian women through the provision of materials that support and meet information and recreational reading needs. The catalogue survey however found that while *Rural* library services had on average the lowest number of checklist titles and overall lesbian fiction titles, the results of the lowest *Urban* library services was equal to that of the *Rural* library services, demonstrating that attention to LGBT-inclusive collection development needs to be paid by all library services in Scotland, irrelevant of the type and location of local communities that are served.

6.3. How can public libraries in Scotland best develop collections to include lesbian fiction that meets the needs of lesbian women?

From considering the findings regarding collection development in light of the questionnaire findings, several recommendations can be made, which are based on correcting a misunderstanding of what lesbian fiction is and highlighting the differences between passive and proactive approaches in the consideration and selection of lesbian fiction.

6.3.1. Definition and concept of lesbian fiction

The definition of lesbian fiction varied between existing literature, Scottish public library services and the questionnaire respondents as readers of lesbian fiction. The most common

definitions of lesbian fiction in academic literature are fiction by lesbian women, for lesbian women or about lesbian women. The respondents agreed with these definitions however the sexual orientation of the author was less influential compared with that of the character and the experience that was portrayed, and encompassed a broader range of sexual orientations than only lesbian, which, as has been noted, may be because lesbian fiction was read by women who identified as lesbian, bisexual, gay and other identities within the LGBT community.

The checklist titles reflected these definitions and served as an example that lesbian fiction can be found in genres beyond that which is traditionally considered lesbian fiction, namely the pioneering contemporary lesbian literature, such as those checklist titles that were referred to as 'Classics', and lesbian romance fiction. While 'Classics' are important for the preservation and education of the history of the lesbian community, and lesbian romance fiction was of importance to many of the questionnaire respondents who could relate to the relationships and experiences depicted, there is also a broader range of lesbian fiction to be found. If, however, public library services perceive lesbian fiction only to be either of these types of fiction, as the use of subject access headings suggests, such a misconception can limit the application of the label of lesbian fiction, and detrimentally impact both the availability and accessibility of lesbian fiction through selection practices and cataloguing respectively.

6.3.2. Collection development policies

It is recommended that collection development policies should include sections that state the need for LGBT fiction or for fiction that meets the needs and interests of LGBT people. Examples of existing statements include:

> We will provide fiction books… specifically written for the Lesbian,
> Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community (Tameside
> Libraries, 2015).

> Stock is chosen… to support the needs and interests of people of
>
> lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and heterosexual orientation (Bath
>
> and North East Somerset Libraries, no date).

Such statements can inform selection practices, by reinforcing that fiction that is of interest to lesbian women should be selected. Details on the selection practices used to acquire LGBT fiction should also be stated, outlining the use of both mainstream suppliers and alternative sources.

6.3.3. Selection practices

It is recommended that all public library services in Scotland use the full stock profile templates recommended by NAG for supplier selection specifications. The uses of stock profiles that omit LGBT requirements or are comprised of an author list could result in an inequity of service provision, in that such approaches exclude LGBT fiction from acquisition. The inclusion in supplier selection stock profiles of both LGBT-related general fiction and specific LGBT fiction, as its own genre, is likely to capture a broader range of lesbian fiction.

Supplier selection is nevertheless provided by mainstream stock suppliers and also takes away selection control from librarians; a reliance on this as a selection method to include LGBT fiction is a passive approach that can result in an inadequate, limited range of stock. Supplier selection should not be solely relied upon, and therefore the regular use of alternative and specialist suppliers is also recommended. The quality standards of fiction do not have to be sacrificed in the acquisition of lesbian fiction; as the checklist demonstrates, both mainstream and niche lesbian fiction can be identified using LGBT literary award nominations. It is unknown if and what other selection methods are used by Scottish library services, however given that lesbian fiction spans both niche and mainstream titles, published in the UK and in the US, different approaches must be used by library services to acquire a broad range.

6.3.4. Cataloguing of lesbian fiction

The criteria for the use of lesbian fiction subject access headings in Scottish public libraries' catalogues were difficult to determine. The checklist titles were likely to be considered lesbian fiction by the majority of the respondents, given that the most agreed upon definition of lesbian fiction was fiction with a lesbian character, which concurred with the definition applied as the content criterion in the checklist compilation. The majority of the checklist titles held by would be difficult for users to identify as lesbian fiction, or even as of lesbian interest, from searching the catalogue for the title itself or for lesbian fiction generally. The current use of subject access headings is unsuitable to catalogue lesbian fiction as the definition of lesbian fiction is not reflected. It is argued that fiction that is catalogued as what users consider it to be will be easier for users to search for and find. The cataloguing of lesbian fiction needs to be re-examined to improve the discoverability of such titles.

Folksonomies were suggested in the literature review as one possibility to improve the discoverability of LGBT titles for catalogue users. One library service, TW9, used a folksonomy on its catalogue, with multiple adjectives and nouns used to reflect the content of the title, including the sexual orientation of the character, rather than just the genre or subject. As noted in the findings, TW9 had the highest proportion of checklist held catalogued as lesbian fiction because of the use of this folksonomy. Folksonomies can allow the lesbian content of a title to be recorded and discovered, and can also distinguish between other LGBT identities such as bisexual and transgender. The majority of respondents reported that they would like lesbian fiction to be easier to find and having a catalogue that allows users to search by folksonomy keywords can potentially facilitate better discoverability for users looking to read books that reflect their identities, experiences and lifestyles.

It is recommended that the entries of Scottish library services' catalogues are amended to be able to reflect multiple subject headings and to catalogue titles as lesbian fiction according to a wider more inclusive definition of lesbian fiction. The incorporation of

folksonomies into Scottish public library catalogue should also explored further. Such improvements to the cataloguing of lesbian fiction will improve its accessibility, allowing reader to both actively seek and serendipitously find lesbian fiction titles.

6.3.5. Professional policies

The reason for the removal of the CILIP 'Equal Opportunities Briefing on Sexual Orientation in Libraries' is unknown however the recommendation it or some similar form of guidelines be updated and reinstated is made. The encouragement of proactive approaches to acquiring LGBT stock, including the explicit mention of LGBT users and fiction in collection development policies and the use of non-mainstream suppliers, can potentially improve the consideration, range, quantity and accessibility of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries, by reminding librarians in charge of selection not to overlook the provision of lesbian fiction for lesbian women.

7. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries in Scotland. While the research questions were answered, further research is required to fully understand its provision. It is hoped that this research will both improve awareness and be considered an advocacy of the under-researched area of lesbian fiction in public libraries.

7.1. Summary of answers to research questions

Current provision of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries varies by library service. Overall lesbian users and lesbian fiction are not being considered in collection development policies, and selection practices are often passive, in that they do not address the need for the provision of LGBT fiction. The majority of the lesbian fiction acquired by public library services is made inaccessible by inconsistent cataloguing. Recommendations for improvements to the provision of lesbian fiction in Scottish public libraries are for collection development, including selection practices and cataloguing, to become more proactive in order to provide lesbian women with access to lesbian fiction, the value of which is suggested by the questionnaire findings to be an improved reading experience, the sense of community and support the coming out process of lesbian women.

7.2. Recommendations for future research

Further research can build on, and address the limitations of, the contribution of this study to advancing the understanding of how public libraries can improve the provision of lesbian fiction, by taking into account its importance and role in the reading experiences of lesbian women. The research into the value of reading lesbian fiction to lesbian women was exploratory, and would benefit from in-depth qualitative research into the issues raised by the questionnaire responses.

Further research into the collection development of Scottish public library services is also recommended. Selection practices besides supplier selection are worth investigating, as well

as investigating the views of librarians responsible for the selection and acquisition of library stock to determine how they consider the inclusion of lesbian fiction in practice.

In the meantime, it is hoped that the recommendations on improvements to the provision of lesbian fiction can be of benefit to both public libraries and lesbian women, by allowing the former to improve services of value and relevance to the latter.

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Appendix 1 – Freedom of Information request

Dear FOI Officer,

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Strathclyde, and I am researching the provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries for my dissertation for an MSc in Information and Library Studies.

Under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act, I would like to request the following information:

1. I have found a copy of the library service's stock management policy online, however if there is a more recent version, please could you supply a copy. The stock management policy may be known by a different name, such as a collection policy, stock selection policy or a similar variation.
   OR
   Could you please supply a copy of the most recent version of the library's stock management policy? The stock management policy may be known by a different name, such as a collection policy, stock selection policy or a similar variation.

2. Is supplier selection used for acquiring library stock? If yes, does this include LGBT-related fiction or non-fiction titles? Is LGBT-related fiction included in the stock profiles given to stock suppliers to aid selection? Can copies of these be provided?

3. Has an Equalities Impact Assessment been carried out on the stock management policy? If yes, could you please supply a copy of the full report?

I would be grateful if you would supply this information in electronic form to this email address, broadley.alanna.2014@uni.strath.ac.uk.

If you are not the appropriate authority for this request, or for part of it, please let me know as soon as is convenient. If I can help to clarify this request, I can be contacted on [phone number] or at broadley.alanna.2014@uni.strath.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Alanna Broadley

Appendix 2 - Coding scheme for content analysis of FOI responses, collection development policies and supplier selection stock profiles

Used on Excel and SPSS.

Instruction	Variable name	Insert answer OR select one option					
Assign	Urban/Rural Code	e.g. UR1, TW2, RU3, MX4					
Classify	Local authority classification	URBAN		TOWNS	MIXED		RURAL
SPSS Code	*Local_type*	1		2	3		4
For ease of use only	Name of local authority	e.g. *East Lothian*					
Answer	Operated by charitable trust?	Yes			No		
SPSS Code	*Char_trust_code*	1			0		
	Was a policy found online?	Yes			No		
SPSS Code	*FOI_type*	1			0		
Obtain from FOI response	Does the library service have a Collection development policy?	Yes, online is most recent available	Yes, Policy is provided	Yes but policy is **not** provided	Policy not available since out-of-date	No, does not have a Policy but a draft is provided	No stock policy
SPSS Code	*StockPolicy*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Obtain from FOI response	Is the policy up to date?	Yes		Being updated	Due to be updated soon	Currently is a draft	
SPSS Code	*Currency*	1		2	3	4	
Evaluate policy	Is LGBT mentioned in the policy?	Yes		No		N/A due to policy not being available	
SPSS Code	*LGBT_in_policy*	1		0		2	
Evaluate policy	*Is cultural diversity or similar mentioned in the Policy?*	Aim/ objective of stock: to reflect cultural diversity (of community)	Selection criteria: reflecting cultural diversity/ responding to needs of a	Selection criteria of recognising/ promoting positive awareness of	Aim to include specialised, non-mainstream needs	Selection criteria: inclusion of socially excluded groups	

			culturally diverse community	multicultural nature of society		
SPSS Code	*Cultural_diversity*	1	2	3	4	5
Obtain from FOI response	Is supplier selection used?	Yes		No		Unclear/Not answered
SPSS Code	SupplierSelection	1		0		2
Obtain from FOI response & stock profiles	Does the supplier selection mention LGBT fiction?	Yes	No		N/A, supplier selection not used	Question was not answered
SPSS Code	LGBTsupsel	1	0		2	3
Obtain from FOI response & confirm mention of LGBT	Has an EIA been carried out for the policy?	Yes		Planned for future version being updated		No
SPSS Code	EIA_code	1		2		0
Notes						

Appendix 3 - Checklist of lesbian fiction titles for catalogue check

Titles are listed alphabetically, with details of LGBT literary award or source and category assigned for analysis.

Atkins, Charles (2014) *Done to Death*. Sutton, England: Severn House   Crime

    27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Mystery nominee

Bramhall, Andrea (2013) *Clean Slate*. Valley Falls, New York: Bold Strokes   Romance
Books

    Winner of the 26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Romance

Brown, Rita Mae (2015) *Rubyfruit Jungle*. London: Vintage Classics   Classics

    Library Journal recommendation

Bryant, Kris (2014) *Jolt*. Valley Falls, New York: Bold Strokes Books   Romance

    27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Romance nominee

Fearon, V.A. (2013) *The Girl with the Treasure Chest*. Village Books   Mystery

    Polari First Book Award Longlist 2014

Flagg, Fannie (2012) *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*. London: Classics
Vintage

    Library Journal recommendation

Forrest, Katherine V. (2013) *High Desert*. Midway, Florida: Spinsters Ink   Crime

    Winner of the 26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Mystery

Freeman, Anna (2014) *The Fair Fight*. London: London: Weidenfeld &   Historical
Nicolson

    Green Carnation Longlist - 2014

Garland, Rosie (2014) *Vixen*. London: Borough Press

Historical

> *Green Carnation Longlist - 2014*

Greenwood, T. (2013) *Bodies of Water*. New York: Kensington Books

General Fiction

> *26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction nominee*

Hall, Radclyffe (2014) *The Well of Loneliness*. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions

Classics

> *Library Journal recommendation*

Hamilton, Ian (2013) *The Wild Beasts of Wuhan: An Ava Lee Novel*. New York: Picador

Mystery

> *26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Mystery nominee*

Hannah, Mari (2014) *Killing for Keeps*. London: Macmillan

Crime

> *Author was awarded Polari First Book Award in 2013*

Hart, Ellen (2014) *The Old Deep and Dark*. New York: Minotaur Books

Mystery

> *Winner of the 27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Mystery*

Highsmith, Patricia (2014) *Carol*. London: Virago

Classics

Also known as Price of Salt

> *Library Journal recommendation*

Hitchman, Beatrice (2013) *Petite Mort*. London: Serpent's Tail

Mystery

> *Polari First Book Award Shortlist 2014*

Holt, Anne (2013) *Death of the Demon*. London: Corvus

Crime

> *26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Mystery nominee*

Kallmaker, Karin (2013) *Love by the Numbers*. Tallahassee, Florida: Bella Books	Romance
26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Romance nominee	
Lamb, Wally (2014) *We Are Water: A Novel*. London: Harper	General Fiction
26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction nominee	
Liebegott, Ali (2013) *Cha-Ching!* San Francisco: City Lights/Sister Spit	General Fiction
26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction nominee	
Logan, Kirsty (2015) *The Gracekeepers*. London: Harvill Secker	Fantasy
Author previously nominated for the Green Carnation 2014 Shortlist & Polari First Book Award 2015 Longlist (for The Rental Heart and other Stories)	
McCoy, Robbi (2014) *Farmer's Daughter*. Tallahassee, Florida: Bella Books	Romance
Winner of the 27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Romance	
McDermid, Val (2013) *Cross and Burn*. London: Little, Brown	Crime
26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Mystery nominee	
McDonald, Ann-Marie (2015) *Adult Onset*. London: Sceptre	General Fiction
27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian General nominee	
Miller, Isabel (2008) *Patience and Sarah*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press	Classics
Library Journal recommendation	
Okparanta, Chinelo (2013) *Happiness, Like Water: Stories*. London: Granta	General Fiction
Winner of the 26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction	

Prose, Francine (2014) *Lovers at the Chameleon Club, Paris 1932*. New York: Harper	General Fiction
27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction nominee	
Qiu, Miaojin (2014) *Last Words From Montmartre*. New York: New York Review Books	General Fiction
27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction nominee	
Roberts, Ann (2013) *Point of Betrayal*. Tallahassee, Florida: Bella Books	Crime
26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Mystery nominee	
Rule, Jane (2010) *Desert of the Heart*. London: Virago	Classics
Library Journal recommendation	
Schrag, Ariel (2014) *Adam*. Boston: Mariner Books	General Fiction
Stark, Nell (2013) The Princess Affair. Valley Falls, New York: Bold Strokes Books	Romance
26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Romance nominee	
Thoma, Jesse J. (2014) *Seneca Falls*. Valley Falls, New York: Bold Strokes Books	Romance
27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Romance nominee	
Waters, Sarah (2015) *The Paying Guests*. London: Virago	Historical
27th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction nominee	
Wilkins, Susan (2014) *The Informant.* London: Pan Books	Mystery
Polari First Book Award Longlist 2015	
Winterson, Jeanette (2013) *The Daylight Gate*. Oxford: Isis	Historical
26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction nominee	

Worsley, Kate (2013) *She Rises: A Novel*. London: Bloomsbury   Historical

26th Lambda Literary Award - Lesbian Fiction nominee

Appendix 4 – Catalogue check chart

Library service		Code (e.g. MX2)			
Title		Author	Copy held	Label	Series?
Adam		Schrag, Ariel			
Adult Onset		McDonald, Ann-Marie			
Blackmail My Love		Gilmartin, Katie			
Bodies of Water		Greenwood, T.			
Carol (or The Price of Salt)		Highsmith, Patricia			
Cha-Ching!		Liebegott, Ali			
Clean Slate		Bramhall, Andrea			
Cross and Burn		McDermid, Val			
Death of the Demon		Holt, Anne			
Desert of the Heart		Rule, Jane			
Done to Death		Atkins, Charles			
Farmer's Daughter		McCoy, Robbi			
Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe		Flagg, Fannie			
Happiness, Like Water: Stories		Okparanta, Chinelo			
High Desert		Forrest, Katherine V.			
Killing for Keeps		Hannah, Mari			
Last Words From Montmartre		Miaojin, Qiu			
Lovers at the Chameleon Club, Paris 1932		Prose, Francine			
Patience and Sarah		Miller, Isabel			
Petite Mort		Hitchman, Beatrice			
Point of Betrayal		Roberts, Ann			
Rubyfruit Jungle		Brown, Rita Mae			
She Rises: A Novel		Worsley, Kate			
The Daylight Gate		Winterson, Jeanette			
The Fair Fight		Freeman, Anna			
The Girl with the Treasure Chest		Fearon, V.A.			
The Gracekeepers		Logan, Kirsty			
The Informant		Wilkins, Susan			
The Old Deep and Dark		Hart, Ellen			
The Paying Guests		Waters, Sarah			
The Well of Loneliness		Hall, Radclyffe			
The Wild Beasts of Wuhan: An Ava Lee Novel		Hamilton, Ian			
Vixen		Garland, Rosie			
We Are Water		Lamb, Wally			
		Total			
Subject:(Lesbians Fiction)					

Appendix 5 - Questionnaire

You are invited to take part in a survey on reading lesbian fiction.

I am a student at the University of Strathclyde, studying an MSc in Information and Library Studies and researching the provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries for my dissertation. The purpose of this survey is to explore the value of lesbian fiction in the lives of lesbian women so as to justify recommendations for improving the provision of lesbian fiction in public libraries.

I am looking for women from the LGBT community e.g. lesbian, bisexual, gay, to answer questions about your reading preferences and your opinions and experiences of reading lesbian fiction, with some relating to your coming out experience.

The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

What will be done with my data?

The data will be stored safely in the UK. Your answers will be anonymous and you will not be identifiable from this work. Your data will be combined with that of other survey respondents and used in the final dissertation report.

How do I give my informed consent for participation in the study?

Please confirm that you agree to the above conditions by selecting the box below and following the link below to the survey.

Thank you so much for your time, it is greatly appreciated.

Please select this box if you would like to continue:

❍ "I have read and understood the information above and consent to taking part in this survey."

Section 1 of 4: Reading fiction in general

How important is reading to you?

❍ Not important
❍ Somewhat unimportant
❍ Neither important nor unimportant
❍ Important
❍ Very important

What genres of fiction do you like to read?

❑ Crime
❑ General fiction
❑ Bestsellers
❑ New releases
❑ Romance
❑ Historical fiction
❑ Science fiction
❑ Short stories
❑ Classics
❑ LGBT
❑ Horror
❑ Fantasy
❑ Family saga
❑ Other: please specify _____

Section 2 of 4: Reading lesbian fiction

There are different definitions of lesbian fiction. What is your definition of lesbian fiction?

Please select all that apply and add a definition in your own words.

- ❑ Fiction written by a lesbian woman
- ❑ Fiction written for a lesbian audience
- ❑ Fiction with a central character who identifies as a lesbian
- ❑ Fiction with a central character who identifies as a lesbian or bisexual
- ❑ Fiction with a lesbian theme
- ❑ Fiction that explores the lesbian experience
- ❑ Fiction with a lesbian-themed sub-plot
- ❑ Please add your own definition _____

Please use your own definition of lesbian fiction when answering the following questions.

How important is reading lesbian fiction to you?
- ○ Not important
- ○ Somewhat unimportant
- ○ Neither important nor unimportant
- ○ Important
- ○ Very important

Please rate your response to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Lesbian fiction is an important contribution to LGBT culture.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
It is important for lesbian women to be represented in fiction.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
To be socially inclusive, public libraries must provide access to lesbian/LGBT fiction.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Lesbian fiction is an authentic representation of lesbian women and experiences.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Lesbian women are widely represented in fiction.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Please rate your response to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy reading books with lesbian characters.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I actively seek out books with lesbian/gay characters.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I enjoy reading about characters with the same/similar sexuality to myself.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I would like books with lesbian characters to be easier to find.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I prefer to read books with lesbian/gay characters.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Please rate your response to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is important for public libraries to support LGBT authors.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I read lesbian fiction to support LGBT authors.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Other lesbian women have recommended lesbian fiction to me.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Reading lesbian fiction makes me feel connected to the wider lesbian community.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I read lesbian fiction that is popular with other lesbians.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
I talk about lesbian fiction I have read with my friends.	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Are there any other reasons that you read lesbian fiction?

[text box]

Section 3 of 4: Coming out

Did you read any lesbian fiction when you were coming out? By this we mean when you were realising, understanding and accepting your sexual orientation, as well as sharing this with other people.

○ None
○ A Little
○ Some
○ A Lot

[*Skip logic*: Answer next question only if answer for 'Did you read any lesbian fiction when you were coming out?' is not 'None'] Thinking back to when you were coming out, please rate how you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Reading lesbian fiction helped me to understand my sexual orientation better.	○	○	○	○	○
I was able to learn about the lesbian community when reading lesbian fiction.	○	○	○	○	○
Lesbian fiction made me aware that there were others like me.	○	○	○	○	○
Lesbian fiction helped me to accept my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○
Lesbian fiction gave me positive role models.	○	○	○	○	○
By reading lesbian fiction, I felt less alone.	○	○	○	○	○
Lesbian fiction gave me examples to deal with the reactions of others when I came out.	○	○	○	○	○
Reading lesbian fiction made me aware of my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○
Lesbian fiction made me optimistic about my future, in terms of my sexuality.	○	○	○	○	○

Section 4 of 4. Thank you for your answers so far. These are the final questions.

Please add any final comments or thoughts about your opinions and experiences of lesbian fiction, or if you would like to expand on your answers to any of the questions.

[text box]

What is your gender?

○ Male
○ Female
○ Intersex
○ Prefer not to say
○ Other: please specify _____

How old are you?

○ Under 13
○ 13-17
○ 18-25
○ 26-34
○ 35-54
○ 55-64
○ 65 or over
○ Prefer not to say

What is your sexual orientation?

○ Lesbian
○ Bisexual
○ Gay
○ Other: _____
○ Prefer not to say

What country do you live in?

- ○ Scotland
- ○ Elsewhere in the UK
- ○ Outside the UK, please specify _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

[End of questionnaire]

Appendix 6 – Overview of results for content analysis and catalogue check by library service

	Was a stock policy obtained for the library service?	Is supplier selection used?	Does supplier selection consider LGBT fiction?	Has an EIA been or going to be carried out?	Number of results returned for subject search	Number of checklist titles held
MX1	Yes	Yes	No	No	5	9
MX2	No response				0	10
MX3	Yes	Yes		No	33	10
MX4	Yes	No		No	8	15
MX5	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	31	15
MX6	Yes	No	N/A	No	33	8
MX7	Not provided	No	No	Not answered	25	9
MX8	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes (future)	12	11
MX9	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	49	10
MX10	Yes	No	No	No	12	14
MX11	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	10	15
MX12	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	14	13
MX13	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	8	12
RL1	No response				2	7
RL2	Yes	No	N/A	No	14	9
RL3	Yes	No	Yes	No	6	11
RL4	No	No	Yes	No	2	8
TW1	No response				4	14
TW2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	9	13
TW3	Not available	No	Unclear	Yes (future)	8	9
TW4	Yes	No	N/A	No	2	7
TW5	Yes	No	N/A	No	35	16
TW6	Yes	Unclear	N/A	No	47	15
TW7	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	25	13
TW8	Yes	No	N/A	No	15	13
TW9	Yes	No	Yes	No	43	9
UR1	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	20	16
UR2	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	162	24
UR3	Yes	No	No	No	19	12
UR4	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	0	14
UR5	Yes	Yes	N/A	No	7	8
UR6	Yes	No	No	No	28	18