



Evidence Summary

Link Established Between LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index Scores and Web-Based Resources of Academic Libraries

A Review of:

Ciszek, M. P. (2011). Out on the web: The relationship between campus climate and GLBT-related web-based resources in academic libraries. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 37(5), 430-436. doi: 10.1016/j.acalib.2011.06.007

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Abstract

Objective – To explore whether academic institutions that score highly on the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index also have well-developed Web-based library resources to support GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) students.

Design – Website analysis, percentage, and binary logistic regression analysis.

Setting – Library websites of colleges and universities in four American geographic regions: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West.

Subjects – There were 259 colleges and universities that participated in the 2010 LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index.

Methods – The author visited the library websites of all institutions and surveyed available GLBT-related resources. The criteria for online resources included: 1) A research guide for GLBT studies or geared toward GLBT students, 2) An individual identified within the research guide as a contact for GLBT-related resources, and 3) A subscription to EBSCO's *GLBT Life* database.

Whether or not the academic libraries had the above resources was then analyzed with each institution's score on the climate survey scale. The author controlled for geographical

location, religious affiliation, and campus setting of the college or university.

Main Results – There is a positive direct relationship between whether a library makes GLBT resources available on the Web and campus climate. However, only 25% of libraries surveyed published a research guide, 18% named a contact individual, and 31% subscribed to *GLBT Life*.

Conclusion – While parent institutions commit to GLBT students by taking the LBGT-Friendly Campus Climate Index survey, academic libraries lag behind providing online resources for this community.

The author recommends academic libraries:

- Create a top-level GLBT research guide.
- Provide contact information for a staff person assigned to provide GLBT-related research assistance.
- Assign a resource selector for GLBT-related resources.
- Subscribe to GLBT-related databases.
- Partner with GLBT organizations on campus to improve collections.
- Promote GLBT-related collections to the campus community.
- Perform an assessment of the information and resource needs of GLBT campus community members.
- Ensure the GLBT community is included in programming and services.

Commentary

GLBT-related research in the library and information arena has been ongoing for several decades, but tends to focus on public libraries and collections. Ciszek's article seeks to expand the collections focus into GLBT

resources made available via academic library websites.

There are several issues with this survey. While the author mentions that LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index scoring occurs on the basis of 50+ questions that each institution uses internally to assess the environment for LGBT students, he fails to adequately address how this self-assessment affects his study. Without any holistic review of campus attitudes and perceptions of GLBT campus community members, it is difficult to determine an institution's actual climate. Additionally, Ciszek intertwines personal and academic GLBT information seeking and does not address how they are connected, if at all. Finally, as Ciszek points out in his article, a significant issue is that the *GLBT Life* database – one of the three resources he uses to determine if a library is adequately contributing to creating a positive GLBT campus climate – is often bundled with other EBSCO products (p. 434). This database may also be financially out-of-reach for smaller institutions, regardless of how GLBT-positive their climates may be.

Academic libraries have an important role in making campuses GLBT-friendly and this article has an excellent bibliography and recommendations for how libraries can work toward this goal. However, this reviewer was disappointed by methodological weaknesses and theoretical gaps. In the future, research on links between the existence of GLBT online resources and campus climate should be based on more thorough climate studies, and account for the relationship between personal and academic information seeking in academic libraries. Ideally, future research would factor in not just existence of library resources as a sign of contributing to GLBT-friendly campus climates, but use, quality, and perception among library users.