



IJIDI: Book Review

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Reviewer: Robin Gee, Cornell University, United States

Book Review Editors:

Travis L. Wagner, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA
Zachariah Motts, Iowa State University, USA

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In *Trans and Gender Diverse Voices in Libraries*, editors Kalani Keahi Adolpho, Stephen G. Krueger, and Krista McCracken compile fifty-three chapters written by fifty-seven authors who identify as trans or gender diverse and are current or former library workers or LIS students. The book aims to give trans and gender-diverse people an opportunity to share their experiences working in the library and information science (LIS) profession, good and bad, so that other trans library workers might feel less alone. The secondary audience for the book is any LIS professional who does not identify as trans or gender-diverse but considers themselves allies or seeks better to understand the experiences of their trans colleagues or classmates.

This book is a significant contribution to LIS as it helps to fill a notable gap in scholarship around trans and gender-diverse workers in the field. While there is a wealth of literature on serving and supporting trans library users, there is a surprising dearth of information on the experiences of trans library workers themselves. It is a challenge even to estimate the number of LIS workers who identify as trans or gender-diverse as very little data is collected on them. For instance, as the editors point out in the book's introduction, the ALA's 2017 demographics survey does not include any gender options other than "male" and "female," leaving us with no information about library workers who do not fit those binaries.

Because the book is deeply personal and rooted in reflections on experience and identity, the chapters vary in tone and format. Some chapters are written casually, some are more formal, and one chapter even includes poetry. This textual variety not only reflects the diverse voices of the authors but also adds depth and richness to the book. While strong feelings and personal anecdotes were not edited out, authors were asked to anonymize references to people other than themselves, such as coworkers and bystanders. Some authors also chose to be published anonymously or under a pseudonym, further highlighting the complexity and sensitivity of the topic. This personal touch, this raw authenticity, is what makes this book truly unique and impactful.

The book is divided into seven sections: "Personal Experiences," "LIS Education," "Public Libraries," "Academic Libraries," "Archives and Special Collections," "Professional Reflections,"

and “Leaving Libraries.” There are many recurring elements across all sections, including anger and frustration, intersectionality, coming out and transitioning at work, self-advocacy, successes, and failures of institutional DEI initiatives, and trans joy. However, these patterns do not mean that all trans and gender-diverse people share the same experiences, and each chapter is uniquely moving and thought-provoking. The chapters also include author-supplied keywords, and the book contains an index so the reader can quickly identify chapters of particular interest to them.

Themes that run through almost every chapter are anger, frustration, and burnout. Many authors detail experiences where their identity has been ignored, disrespected, or experienced overt harassment from colleagues, classmates, or administrators. Anger is a justifiable reaction to feeling oppressed and helpless. While it is not unique to trans and gender-diverse people, the frequency of discrimination and harassment towards professionals with those identities across the library field is noteworthy.

Each section contains stories of coming out and transitioning (socially or medically) at work or school. These include a diverse range of experiences, such as perspectives of mid-career librarians who transitioned after years of working in the field; LIS students and early-career librarians just beginning their transition; people with supportive supervisors and coworkers; dealing with daily microaggressions including misgendering and deadnaming from both colleagues and patrons; fearing to come out due to organizational or community attitudes; being pushed out of the field entirely by hostile colleagues, supervisors, or administrators.

Some of these experiences are paired with helpful advice and recommendations for supporting trans coworkers, students, or employees and making the LIS field more proactively trans-inclusive. These recommendations include asking LIS faculty to integrate gender diversity in their class materials purposefully; calling out deadnaming, misgendering, and other transphobic language and behavior regardless of whether a trans person is currently present; changing forms and surveys to include more than two binary options and allowing users to choose multiple options; and pointing out that diversity initiatives fail if diversity is not reflected in management where decisions are being made.

Another common theme is the ways in which libraries and LIS programs focus on the appearance of diversity, equity, and inclusion without making lasting structural or systemic changes. While including pronouns in email signatures, nametags, or on Zoom calls is becoming more widely accepted, using trans and gender-diverse people’s chosen names and pronouns is still a huge issue, and the work to change that falls mainly on trans workers themselves. In the chapter “I Don’t Want to Write This, or, Against Explanation,” Jess Epstein discusses the extra emotional labor that goes into fielding inappropriate questions and fighting to be addressed by your correct name and pronouns, knowing that trans people are faced with the decision to either “take on the work of advocating for trans and gender diverse people or to know that it won’t get done” (p. 67).

In Jayne Walters’ chapter, “Standing Out,” she discusses her experiences of being visibly trans and the opportunities that such visibility has given her to help others feel embraced and celebrated. This includes teens she worked with as a juvenile librarian, coworkers, and attendees of her presentations on supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Many of the authors also call on cisgender readers to take on advocacy work for trans and gender-diverse people in their work lives. The chapter “Gender Inclusivity Trainings at Academic Libraries: Two Case Studies” is an

excellent example of both what should and should not be done when trying to educate staff members on gender diversity, and it includes outlines of dos and don'ts that readers who wish to hold their own staff training will find helpful.

Intersectionality is a common theme in this book. In the chapter "A Queer Queer: Academic Librarianship as an Autistic Nonbinary Person," M. P. Green makes the excellent point that "any identity does not exist in a vacuum" (p. 328). There are unique intersections and issues that come with being both trans and BIPOC, having a disability, or being financially insecure. In "Reflections of a Non-Binary Asian American in LIS," Alvina Lai recounts struggling to find where they fit: within library community groups, when they are the only person of color in their organization's LGBTQ+ group, or when they are the only non-binary individual in the company's Asian heritage group. Several authors also share their experiences as BIPOC trans and gender-diverse people being the target of both gender and racial discrimination in the LIS workplace.

Also notable are discussions on the absence of BIPOC leadership within LIS. Blanca Hernandez writes in his chapter "Being Seen" that he rarely saw people who looked like him on his school or local public library staff, implying that librarianship was not a viable career. "Remixing LIS Leadership: Considering Gender-Variant BIPOC - Are we there yet?" examines the difficulty BIPOC LGBTQ+ librarians face in attaining leadership roles. This chapter makes some excellent points about the necessary skills and experience BIPOC leaders offer libraries and also discusses the damage hostile library environments do to BIPOC librarians' health and wellbeing.

This book also depicts instances of trans joy and gender euphoria. In "Nail Polish Epiphany," Mark Bieraugel describes how getting their nails painted gives them a sense of wholeness. Debbie Kraemer writes in "Classroom Disrupted: Being Trans and Disabled in Library Instruction" that being trans and disabled disrupts students' expectations of library instruction, which provides opportunities to open the classroom space to discussions of critical information literacy. In "Boundary Setting as a Non-Binary Librarian and Facilitator," Amy Gilgan uses their identity and experience to create spaces where "folks can explore their liberatory potential" (p. 344) while also discussing how they think about and set boundaries so they can take care of herself while also sharing her gender identity. While starting conversations about the discrimination and injustice trans and gender-diverse people face and giving them space to voice and process their anger and grief is necessary, as a non-binary academic librarian myself, I appreciated the inclusion of joyful stories as well.

A weakness of the book is that its scope is somewhat limited to public and academic libraries; there are no stories from workers in school libraries and very few from special libraries. However, because there is little demographic information on how many trans LIS professionals there are, it is difficult to gauge who and how many voices are missing. Most perspectives come from people in the United States and Canada, with one author from Australia. That said, the breadth of people and experiences published in this book, while not representative of every trans and gender-diverse LIS workers' experiences, are still impressive.

Trans and Gender Diverse Voices in Libraries powerfully illustrates the gap between libraries' image as a safe place for everyone and the ways in which trans library workers are actually treated. The book opens the floor for further conversations on gender diversity in the LIS field. The publication of this book is a testament to the importance of understanding and supporting trans and gender-diverse workers in LIS. I highly recommend this book to any trans or gender-diverse person working in libraries, attending library school, or to any LIS worker wanting to

become a better ally to trans and gender-diverse colleagues.

References

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Robin Gee (rmg282@cornell.edu) is the Critical Pedagogy & Equity Librarian at Cornell University's Albert R. Mann Library. His work involves fostering campus-wide collaboration to meet the needs of historically underserved students and building library interest and programs in critical information literacy. In 2022, they received their MLIS from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.

