

EQUAL ACCESS

EQUAL ACCESS:

THE DEMOGRAPHICS, INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR,  
AND INFORMATION NEEDS OF TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

BY

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### ABSTRACT

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Research shows that transgender people have unique needs which differ from LGBTQ individuals and experience substantial barriers to obtaining quality library service. While past studies aimed to address the needs of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) library users, most focused exclusively on gay, lesbian, and occasionally bisexual individuals, despite the presence of transgender individuals in the acronym.

In a survey study, 102 individuals who self-identified as 18 years or older and transgender responded to a 60-question online survey that asked about demographics, information seeking behavior, information needs, library use, and library adaptations.

The majority of participants were white (74%), Designated Female at Birth (DFAB) (76%), under 40 years old (89%), and spoke English as a primary language (96%). Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the study sample reported visiting a library in the past year for recreational materials; 62%, school, education, and/or research; 48%, internet use; 28%, transgender-related research; 23%, an event; and 13%, something else.

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Study participants were rarely able to find the information they needed for spiritual health and well-being (9%); advocacy or political information about trans issues (10%); general or other information about trans issues (11%); physical health and well-being (17%); mental and emotional health (17%); legal information about trans issues (26%); and medical health information about trans issues (28%). Study participants were resourceful when seeking information but still experienced information deficits.

There are numerous adaptations libraries can implement to be more welcoming to transgender patrons: 1) up-to-date transgender literature; 2) up-to-date LGBTQ literature; 3) gender neutral bathrooms; 4) including sexual orientation and gender identity in library non-discrimination policies; 5) established, remote method for name changes; 6) more flexibility in library forms, specifically regarding title selection (i.e. Mx.) as well as the option to forego a title altogether; and 7) openly LGBTQ and transgender staff.

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This thesis is dedicated to my partner and my best friend. To my partner for his endless love, enduring patience, and unwavering support as I have devoted large portions of my time to this project. And to my best friend for her compassion and kindness throughout our many decades of friendship.

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**Table of Contents**

Method..... 4  
    Subjects..... 4  
    Instruments ..... 4  
    Procedures ..... 5  
Results ..... 6  
    Demographics ..... 6  
    Information Needs and Deficits..... 8  
    Endorsements of Library Adaptations ..... 11  
Discussion ..... 13  
    Demographics ..... 13  
    Information Needs and Deficits..... 14  
    Recommendations for Libraries ..... 17  
    Study Limitations ..... 24  
Conclusions and Future Study..... 25  
References ..... 27  
Appendix A ..... 32  
Appendix B ..... 33  
Appendix C ..... 43

\* For the entirety of this report, I will use singular-they pronouns “they,” “them,” and “their” to describe a singular transgender individual rather than the APA’s recommended “he/she,” “him/her,” and “his/her” out of respect to transgender individuals who do not identify their gender as binary.



**List of Tables**

Table 1. Demographic characteristics.....	7
Table 2. Gender and sexual orientation.....	8
Table 3. Information seeking behavior.....	10
Table 4. Reasons for utilizing potential information source.....	11
Table 5. Endorsement of library modifications.....	12
Table 6. Race/ethnicity: Study vs. US census.....	13

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### Equal Access: The Demographics, Information Seeking Behavior, and Information Needs of Transgender Individuals

Libraries are meant to be places where all individuals can gain equitable access to the information they seek (ALA, 2008a). Librarians have a professional obligation to provide all members of their community with equal access, regardless of sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation (ALA, 2008b). To properly facilitate this access, librarians need to be aware of the special needs of the various subgroups they might serve. They must strive to remove all possible barriers to equal access and create a welcoming environment for each individual. While many subgroups are well-defined and commonly recognized, transgender individuals are frequently overlooked and misunderstood by society as a whole. Library resources for and concerning the transgender community are scarce, and few research studies examine the unique information needs of this population. This study adds to the growing body of research on the demographics of transgender individuals and provides practical suggestions for libraries to better welcome and assist transgender individuals.

#### **Libraries and Transgender Individuals**

While there are many resources and studies aimed to address the needs of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) library users, most studies have focused exclusively on gay, lesbian, and occasionally bisexual individuals, despite the presence of transgender individuals in the acronym. Libraries and library professionals need to continue to gain an understanding of transgender individuals' information needs. Research shows that transgender people have unique needs which differ from LGBQ individuals<sup>1</sup> and they experience substantial barriers to obtaining

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<sup>1</sup> Transgender people can identify as heterosexual/straight as well as LGBQ, so they may belong to both groups.

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quality library service (Beiriger & Jackson, 2007; Taylor, 2002; Thompson, 2012).

The transgender community is a vulnerable group with complex information needs. Their unique needs, however, have not been frequently studied, understood, or accommodated. This lack of research is often attributed to the invisibility of transgender individuals as a population; invisible populations are notably difficult to locate and engage in research studies (Beiriger & Jackson, 2007; Taylor, 2002; Thompson, 2012). Only two studies have examined transgender individuals in relation to libraries and their specific information needs and they “represent[ed] very specific and relatively small sample sizes” (Thompson, 2012, p. 5). The author noted the limited literature shows that transgender individuals have specific and often overlooked information-seeking behavior and needs (Thompson, 2012).

### **Definitions**

A transgender person is broadly defined as someone who identifies their gender as different from the gender they were designated at birth (Coleman et al., 2011). This can include transgender women, transgender men, genderqueer<sup>2</sup> individuals, and people with other identities (see Appendix A: Glossary in Grant et al., 2011 for more information on other gender identities). A cisgender person is someone who identifies their gender as the same as the gender they were designated at birth (Grant et al., 2011). Many transgender individuals experience gender dysphoria, which is distress caused by a discrepancy between a person’s gender identity and the gender they were designated at birth (and their associated gender role expectations and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics) (Coleman et al., 2011). Many transgender people transition to a different gender than the one they were designated at birth. Transition can include

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<sup>2</sup> Individuals who identify as “neither entirely male nor female, identify as a combination of both, or who present in a non-gendered way” (Grant et al., 2011).

## EQUAL ACCESS

change in gender role and expression, psychotherapy to facilitate identity integration, hormone therapy, and surgeries (Coleman et al., 2011). Transition is a process spanning many years and is best viewed as a continuum rather than set stages, which is in direct contrast to the stages of coming out for LGB individuals (Beiriger & Jackson, 2007; Garner, 2000; Taylor, 2002; Thompson, 2012).

### **Literature Review**

Conservative estimates indicate transgender individuals comprise approximately 0.3% (~700,000) of the US population (Gates, 2011), yet they experience discrimination, violence, incarceration, homelessness, and unemployment at vastly higher rates than the general US population (Grant et al., 2011). In 2011, the results of the first nationally representative survey of over 6,400 transgender individuals were released and the findings were substantial (Grant et al., 2011). Ninety percent (90%) of transgender individuals reported harassment, mistreatment, or discrimination at their place of employment. Grant found twice the rate of unemployment for transgender individuals compared to the general population; these rates were four times higher among transgender people of color. Fifty-three percent (53%) reported being verbally harassed or disrespected in a place of public accommodation such as hotels, restaurants, buses, and government agencies. One-fifth (19%) reported being homeless at some point in their lives because of their gender identity/expression; 2% were currently homeless at the time of the survey, which is twice the rate of the general population. Seven percent (7%) of the study's sample reported arrest strictly due to police bias against their gender identity or gender expression; moreover, these rates were much higher for transgender people of color — 41% for black individuals and 21% for Latino individuals. In a K-12<sup>th</sup> grade setting, high levels of harassment (78%), physical assault (35%), and sexual violence (12%) were reported, leading

## EQUAL ACCESS

one-sixth (15%) of transgender individuals to leave school (Grant et al., 2011). Given the degree of discrimination and violence transgender individuals confront on a daily basis, libraries must be intentional in their efforts to make safe spaces where transgender individuals can safely and comfortably access needed information.

Transgender individuals' needs often change over time; their needs can include questions about legal rights, finding a culturally competent healthcare provider, name and gender marker changes on various legal documents, and physical effects of hormone therapy (Taylor, 2002; Thompson, 2012). Because of the nature of the information being sought, information resources must be both definitive and current. Libraries often fail to meet transgender patrons' informational needs because of outdated, lacking, or missing materials (Garner, 2000).

### **Study Questions**

In particular, this study answers the following questions: 1) Are transgender individuals able to find the information they need, regardless of source?; 2) What sources do transgender individuals use when they need information?; and 3) In what ways do libraries need to change to better accommodate transgender individuals?

## **Method**

### **Subjects**

This study included participants who self-identified as 18 years or older and transgender. A transgender identity was defined for this study as those who self-identify as a different gender than the one they were designated at birth. The eligibility requirements were purposefully broad to include as many transgender individuals as possible, given the small percentage of transgender individuals within the general population.

### **Instruments**

## EQUAL ACCESS

The survey was comprised of a total of 60 separate questions and sub-questions (see Appendix A). There were 14 questions pertaining to demographics such as age, state of current residence, current school enrollment, race and ethnicity, yearly household income, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Many of these demographic questions were taken directly from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2012). The gender identity and sexual orientation questions were adapted from the Fenway Institute (2013). There were 14 questions pertaining to information seeking behavior and were adapted with permission from Beiriger & Jackson (2007). For half of these questions, participants were asked to review a list of 13 potential information sources (e.g. internet) and to select their top three according to how often the sources were utilized for finding information on varying topics. For the other half of the questions, participants were asked to select all options that applied regarding reasons for utilizing their chosen resources. There were seven questions pertaining to information needs and were also adapted from Beiriger & Jackson (2007). Participants responded using a five point Likert scale. There was one multiple choice question asking about reasons for library use and participants were asked to select all options that applied. There were four open-ended questions about library use related to transgender topics. There were 20 sub-questions asking participants to rate on a five point Likert scale whether various changes in libraries would help them feel more welcome and safe. These 20 sub-questions were gleaned from recommendations in published literature (Beiriger & Jackson, 2007; Benton, 2009; Grant et al., 2011; Mathson & Hancks, 2008; Taylor, 2002; Thompson, 2012).

### **Procedures**

Potential participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling by social media (Facebook and Tumblr), at a transgender health and law conference in Connecticut,

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at a transgender health conference in Pennsylvania, and via key transgender dignitaries. The survey was available exclusively online in English from April 26, 2014 to August 26, 2014. This method was chosen as research has shown gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals spend more time online than heterosexual, cisgender individuals (Hillier & Harrison, 2007; Magee, Bigelow, DeHaan, & Mustanski, 2012; Witeck-Combs Communications & Harris Interactive, 2001), and also removes geographical barriers to data collection. The survey was anonymous and all participants were informed the survey would not collect any identifiable information. The cover letter and survey were both approved by Southern Connecticut State University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A).

### **Results**

After the data were collected through SurveyGizmo (2014), they were downloaded into SPSS version 20.0 (IBM, 2011). Over the course of the study, 114 individuals began the survey with 102 completing it fully. Most partial surveys completed the demographic questions and then left the survey when information-seeking questions were asked. All partial surveys were removed prior to data analysis.

### **Demographics**

The majority of participants were white (74%), Designated Female At Birth (DFAB) (76%), under 40 years old (89%), partnered or married (51%), employed full time (45%), and used English as their primary language (96%) (see Table 1). Ten percent (10%) of the participants claimed two or more racial and/or ethnic identities. While most study participants were designated either male or female at birth, 2% were designated intersex at birth. The majority of study participants had a post-secondary degree (62%), with 20% possessing a graduate or professional degree. Of those 25 years of age and older, 15% were currently enrolled

## EQUAL ACCESS

in school. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the sample reported a household income of under \$10,000; 71% reported a household income of less than \$50,000. Sixteen percent (16%) reported a household income of \$75,000 or higher. Household size was not asked.

For both gender identity and sexual orientation (see Table 2), participants could select all categories that applied to them. The majority (52%) identified their gender identity as Female-to-Male (FTM)/transgender man. Of those who identified their gender as non-binary (either genderqueer/non binary or genderfluid), 89% were under 35 years old. The majority (64%) identified their sexual orientation as bisexual or pansexual. While queer was not provided as a category choice, some participants (27%) wrote in “queer” in the “Other” category.

**Table 1 – Demographic characteristics**

<i>Demographic characteristics, % (n)</i>	Total (N=102)
Age	
18-19	15% (15)
20-24	27% (28)
25-29	26% (27)
30-39	21% (21)
40+	11% (11)
Gender designated at birth	
Female	76% (78)
Male	22% (22)
Intersex	2% (2)
Current place of residence*	
Northeast US	59% (60)
South US	19% (19)
West US	11% (11)
Midwest US	8% (8)
Ontario, CAN	3% (3)
Enrolled in college or graduate school	39% (40)
Attained post-secondary degree	62% (63)
Employed full-time **	45% (46)
Yearly household income	
Less than \$10,000	21% (21)
\$10,000-14,999	8% (8)
\$15,000-24,999	9% (9)
\$25,000-34,000	12% (12)
\$35,000-49,999	21% (21)
\$50,000-74,999	15% (15)
\$75,000+	16% (16)
Race/Ethnicity	
Non-Hispanic white	74% (76)
2+ races/ethnicities	10% (10)
Hispanic	6% (6)
Black/African American	4% (4)



## EQUAL ACCESS

Asian	4% (4)
American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN)	1% (1)
Other	1% (1)
Married or partnered	51% (52)
English as primary language **	96% (98)

\*Using the US Census Bureau's regional divisions

\*\* Categories were not mutually exclusive and total % may be higher than 100

**Table 2 – Gender and sexual orientation**

<i>Gender and Sexual Orientation, % ( n)**</i>	Total (N=102)
<b>Gender identity</b>	
Female-to-Male/transgender man	52% (53)
Male	34% (35)
Genderqueer and/or non-binary	32% (33)
Male-to-Female/transgender woman	19% (19)
Female	18% (18)
Genderfluid	12% (12)
Other <sup>1</sup>	7% (7)
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	
Bisexual/pansexual	64% (65)
Gay/lesbian/homosexual/same gender loving	51% (52)
Queer	27% (27)
Woman who has sex w/women, Man who has sex w/ men	18% (18)
Heterosexual	13% (13)
Other <sup>2</sup>	11% (11)
Asexual	8% (8)
Don't know	6% (6)

\*\* Categories were not mutually exclusive and total % may be higher than 100

<sup>1</sup> Other: agender; demi boy; femme; gender variant, androgyne, bearded woman; neutrois; questioning; trans.

<sup>2</sup> Other: asexual-spectrum; demisexual (2); panromantic (2); people lover; queer and skoliosexual; queer demisexual panromantic; queer dyke fag boy who has sex with boys boy who has sex with women; whore; woman who has sex with men.

In an effort to capture the extent to which participants utilized libraries, both in general and in relation to transgender topics, participants were asked about their library use over the past year. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the study sample reported visiting a library for recreational and/or leisurely materials; 62% visited a library for school, education, and/or research; 48% for internet use; 28% for transgender-related research; 23% for an event; and 13% for something else.

### Information Needs and Deficits

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For each of the seven different information need categories, participants provided their top three potential information sources for information seeking (see Table 3). The internet was the most commonly selected potential information source, with friends as the second most common. Doctors and therapists were among the three most frequently selected choices for information categories related physical health and well-being, medical health info about trans issues, and mental and emotional health. Libraries were not among the most frequently selected choices for any of the categories; they were chosen as an option by 0-14% of the sample for any given topic.

For each information need category, participants selected reasons for why they used those potential information sources (see Table 4). Convenience was the most common motivating factor; it was present among the top three for all seven information type categories and as the primary reason for six of the seven categories. Attitude of those interacted with was the second most common; it was present among the top three for all seven categories. Interestingly, it displaced convenience as the most common motivating factor for mental and emotional health. Up-to-date information was among the top three for six of the seven categories. Cost was among the top three motivating factors only for mental and emotional health.

Participants reported degree of information deficit for each of the seven information need categories. Study participants were always or very often not able to find the information they needed for spiritual health and well-being (9%); advocacy or political information about trans issues (10%); general or other information about trans issues (11%); physical health and well-being (17%); mental and emotional health (17%); legal information about trans issues (26%); and medical health information about trans issues (28%);

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**Table 3 – Information seeking behavior**

Top 3 sources for information, % (n)\*\*

Total  
(N=102)

	Internet	Friends	Support groups	Public Library	Hospital/ Medical library	Personal library	Doctor	Counselor/ therapist	Family	Legal aid	Advocacy/ political org	Religious/ spiritual org	Other
<i>Physical health &amp; well-being</i>	91% (93)	52% (53)	14% (14)	9% (9)	5% (5)	10% (10)	44% (45)	23% (23)	14% (14)	0% (0)	3% (3)	2% (2)	3% (3)
<i>Mental &amp; emotional health</i>	72% (73)	66% (67)	23% (23)	7% (7)	2% (2)	7% (7)	8% (8)	55% (56)	16% (16)	0% (0)	4% (4)	7% (7)	10% (10)
<i>Spiritual health &amp; well-being</i>	50% (51)	52% (53)	10% (10)	14% (14)	0% (0)	13% (13)	0% (0)	14% (14)	16% (16)	0% (0)	1% (1)	28% (29)	25% (25)
<i>Legal info about trans issues</i>	91% (93)	43% (44)	26% (26)	7% (7)	1% (1)	4% (4)	4% (4)	25% (25)	6% (6)	21% (21)	44% (45)	0% (0)	3% (3)
<i>Medical health info about trans issues</i>	89% (91)	52% (53)	18% (18)	6% (6)	4% (4)	8% (8)	47% (48)	26% (26)	2% (2)	0% (0)	13% (13)	0% (0)	6% (6)
<i>Advocacy/ political info about trans issues</i>	93% (95)	52% (53)	27% (27)	8% (8)	1% (1)	3% (3)	2% (2)	12% (12)	3% (3)	7% (7)	58% (59)	0% (0)	3% (3)
<i>General or other info about trans issues</i>	94% (96)	67% (68)	39% (40)	11% (11)	1% (1)	7% (7)	7% (7)	20% (20)	3% (3)	0% (0)	19% (19)	0% (0)	2% (2)

\*\* categories were not mutually exclusive and total % may be higher than 100

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**Table 4 – Reasons for utilizing potential information source**

*Information seeking behavior, % (n)*

*Total (N=102)*

	<b>Convenience</b>	<b>Attitude of those you interact with</b>	<b>Up-to-date information</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Other</b>
<i>Physical health and well-being</i>	84% (86)	49% (50)	55% (56)	43% (44)	15% (15)
<i>Mental and emotional health</i>	73% (74)	74% % (75)	34% (35)	44% (45)	14% (14)
<i>Spiritual health and well-being</i>	84% (86)	49% (50)	55% (56)	43% (44)	15% (15)
<i>Legal info about trans issues</i>	73% (74)	48% (49)	63% (64)	40% (41)	8% (8)
<i>Medical health info about trans issues</i>	74% (75)	60% (61)	59% (60)	35% (36)	10% (10)
<i>Advocacy/political info about trans issues</i>	72% (73)	53% (54)	60% (61)	36% (37)	5% (5)
<i>General/other info about trans issues</i>	76% (77)	59% (60)	52% (53)	30% (31)	3% (3)

\*\* categories were not mutually exclusive and total % may be higher than 100

A summary scale of information deficits was created, with a range from seven to 35. A score of seven indicated participants were always able to find what they need while 35 indicated they were never able to find what they need. Designated Male at Birth (DMAB) individuals reported a lower information deficit (mean 16, s.d. 5.4) than Designated Female at Birth individuals (mean 19, s.d. 3.3) ( $t(24.569) = -2.406, P < 0.05$ ). In addition, individuals with a Male-to-Female/transgender woman gender identity had lower information deficit when compared to all others in the sample ( $t(94) = -2.284, P < 0.05$ ); this was also true of those with a female gender identity ( $t(94) = -3.050, P < 0.01$ ).

### **Endorsements of Library Adaptations**

A significant portion (97%) of survey respondents indicated they need libraries to make some adaptations for them to feel safe and welcome ( $t(98) = 21.095, P < 0.001$ ). Individuals with either a genderfluid or Female-to-Male/transgender man gender identity required more adaptations in the library to feel safe when compared to others in the sample ( $t(39.101) = 2.215, P < 0.05$ ;  $t(97) = 2.003, P < 0.05$ ). However, those who identified as Male-to-Female/transgender

## EQUAL ACCESS

woman required less adaptations in the library to feel safe when compared to others in the sample ( $t(97) = -3.081, P < 0.01$ ).

The majority of respondents desired that the library include gender identity and gender expression as part of their non-discrimination policy (see Table 5). A majority of participants reported a desire for gender-neutral single-stall bathrooms where they did not need to ask for a key.

More study participants favored a remote name change process (such as online or by fax) as opposed to an established process for name changes that require changes be made in person. Study participants endorsed the desire for libraries to adapt their forms, either to remove gender and titles/salutations from library forms or to leave those items on forms but allow write-in/self-identification. Maintaining recent transgender and LGBTQ literature in the collection was also important to the majority of individuals.

**Table 5 – Endorsement of library modifications**

<i>Library modifications, % (n)</i>	<i>Total (N=102)</i>
Recent transgender literature in the collection	93% (95)
Gender identity and expression as part of their non-discrimination policy	92% (94)
Gender neutral, single stall bathroom where you do not need to request a key	92% (94)
Recent LGB/queer literature in the collection	92% (94)
An established remote process for name change (i.e. online, by fax, by mail)	88% (90)
Openly LGB/queer staff	87% (89)
Left gender and title/salutation on library forms but allowed write-in/self-identification	82% (84)
Openly transgender staff	81% (83)
Transgender themed events	81% (83)
Removed gender and title/salutation on library forms	80% (82)
Removed use of Mr/Ms in all library communications (i.e. overdue notices)	79% (81)
LGB/queer themed events	78% (80)
LGB/queer themed displays and artwork	76% (77)
Displaying LGB, queer, and/or transgender “safe space” designation	75% (76)
An established in-person process for name change	75% (76)
Special covers on the computer screens so others cannot observe your activities	75% (76)
Transgender themed displays and artwork	74% (75)
Reference assistance offered via Internet	73% (74)
Self-checkout stations	71% (72)
Reference desk in private area	62% (63)

## EQUAL ACCESS

It was theorized *a priori* that non-binary transgender individuals would place greater importance on certain library modifications than binary transgender individuals; thus, all endorsements of library modifications were compared for statistical significance. Of all recommendations for library adaptations, only one item was of greater significance to non-binary transgender individuals ( $t(96.329) = -2.941, P < 0.01$ ) who indicated it was key to their comfort that libraries remove the use of Mr. and Ms. from all library communications (such as overdue fines).

### Discussion

#### Demographics

The population of this study closely matched the racial and ethnic diversity of the general US population (see Table 6). However, this study had lower percentages of both Black/AA and Hispanic individuals than the general US population (4% in study vs. 12% nationally, and 6% in the study vs. 17% nationally, respectively) (US Census Bureau, 2013). In contrast, this study's population was comprised of 10% of those with two or more racial and/or ethnic identities, as opposed to the national percentage of 3% (US Census Bureau, 2013). The larger percentage of study participants with two or more racial and/or ethnic identities could partially account for the study's lower percentage of Black/AA and Hispanic individuals.

**Table 6 – Race/ethnicity: study vs. US census**

<i>Race/ Ethnicity</i>	<i>Non- Hispanic White</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Black/AA</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>2+ Races</i>	<i>AIAN</i>
Study	75%	6%	4%	4%	10%	1%
US Census	62%	17%	12%	5%	3%	0.8%

Of the participants in this study, 58% reported attaining a college or graduate degree. This is congruent with the findings of Grant et al. (2011) that found 47% of transgender individuals reported a college or graduate degree as compared with 27% of the general

## EQUAL ACCESS

population. The difference between this study sample's educational attainment and Grant et al.'s sample could be due to study recruitment predominately taking place at conferences which might attract more educated individuals. Fifteen percent (15%) of study participants 25 years of age and older reported active school enrollment. This is similar to the findings of Grant et al. (2011) that found, despite high levels of discrimination and violence in school, many transgender individuals return to school later in life, with 22% of those between 25-44 years old currently enrolled in school compared with 7% of the general population.

Despite higher levels of educational attainment, transgender individuals experience poverty at much higher rates than the general population (Grant et al., 2011) and this disparity was reflected in the study population. Participants in this study were asked for household income though household size was not. Assuming a household of one, 21% of all households in the study lived below the federal poverty line, which is 6.5% higher than the national poverty rate of 14.5% (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2014; US DHHS, 2014). If there were larger households in the study, the percentage of participants living below the federal poverty line would potentially increase. This finding is supported by the 2011 study by Grant et al. that found transgender individuals were four times more likely to live in extreme poverty (household income of less than \$10,000 a year) compared to the general population.

### **Information Needs and Deficits**

Study respondents reported a wide variety of potential information sources, though Internet and friends were consistently the most common. Using their various information sources, participants struggled most with finding legal information about trans issues (26%) and medical health information about trans issues (28%). These are deficits libraries should be aware of and consider during collections and program development. Both of these topic areas are

## EQUAL ACCESS

specific and apt to change and evolve regularly. Having up-to-date information for these two areas is imperative in providing comprehensive services to transgender individuals. It is also worthwhile to consider materials for other transgender topic areas. While participants did not report as large information deficits for those categories, their main sources are the internet and friends. These sources, while useful, are not always reliable, recent, or accurate.

It is interesting to note that participants seeking information about mental and emotional health most value the attitude of those with whom they are interacting, rather than convenience which dominated all other information categories. Of all categories, this sample was more concerned about being judged or discriminated against by information sources surrounding mental and emotional health than when seeking information about other information categories. While only 17% of survey respondents were always or very often not able to find the information they needed regarding mental and emotional health, libraries should keep this in mind when developing their collection. Given transgender individuals' negative experiences and expectations in regards to library staff, libraries should be sure their collection contains materials that directly address the mental and emotional health of transgender individuals. Libraries should be sure the items are accurately catalogued using the most up-to-date terms so patrons can easily locate the materials. This is especially crucial since this sample reported when they patronize libraries, they typically avoid interactions with librarians around transgender-related topics.

While libraries may not be able to provide all of the materials transgender individuals are seeking, librarians should be knowledgeable about reliable sources of information in other locations, such as local academic or medical libraries, LGBTQ legal advocacy organizations, and informative, factual websites (such as: Center of Excellence for Transgender Health, 2014; GLAD, 2014; GLMA, 2014; Lambda Legal, 2014; VCH, 2014; WPATH, 2014).



## EQUAL ACCESS

Libraries were not frequently selected as reliable sources of information by individuals in this study; only 28% of study respondents indicated they have patronized a library in the past year for transgender-related research. Participants provided qualitative responses for the reason they do not use libraries as an information source. Many individuals found library materials related to LGBTQ and transgender topics to be insubstantial: *“There wasn't a lot of information or books on the things I needed.”* Others expressed that while their local public libraries' collections did not sufficiently meet their needs, academic libraries were viewed more positively:

*For the most part, widely available print media is likely to be outdated, geared toward a cis audience, and politically problematic. I haven't found anything useful in print at my local public library. Academic libraries are more likely to have the kind of social science-focused materials I am looking for.*

Yet others had negative experiences with academic libraries as well: *“All gender studies resources at my undergraduate level libraries was cissexist and, at times, transphobic, or just plain trans-exclusive.”* When asked about their use of library reference services, most said they had not used them for fear of discrimination or had experienced discrimination when they had: *“No, I did not because I was afraid to”* and *“[the reference librarian's] ignorance of LGBTQ identities, ignorance of resources, [and had a] clear distaste in dealing with me and my questions.”* Some individuals reported experiencing discrimination at the hands of library staff: *“The last time I checked, my local library had one YA novel on trans[gender] identity, and the librarian asked me questions about why I was checking it out, in a way that made me feel unsafe.”* Still others were not actively mistreated but found librarians to be uninformed about LGBTQ reference: *“It was not [an] actively negative [experience], but the reference librarian certainly didn't understand until I went over several basic definitions and explanations of*

## EQUAL ACCESS

*transgender issues.*” These experiences highlight the need for libraries to provide their staff with comprehensive training in regards to appropriate treatment of LGBTQ and transgender patrons.

Study participants sought out information through other venues because of convenience, more positive interactions, and up-to-date information. As one participant said: *“I have internet access at home and can usually find what I'm looking for. I'm not confident that the librarians in my area would be able/willing to help with transgender-related research, questions, or support.”*

Libraries need to make a substantial effort to change the patron experience for transgender individuals; recent collections with relevant information and well-trained library staff are imperative in this effort. However, even with these basic improvements, libraries must be aware that many transgender individuals have dismissed libraries as a potential source of information and will not approach libraries in their search for information. To provide services this population, libraries must make a concerted effort to show transgender communities that libraries are aware they exist and are making distinct efforts to be a safe place. This effort may include making changes related to the recommendations within this report; however, part of it will also include providing notices and advertisement of said changes. It is one thing to make changes internal to the library; it is another to publicly acknowledge those changes and stand in solidarity and support of all gender identities.

### **Recommendations for Libraries**

Overall, a significant majority of the sample needed libraries to make some adaptations to order for them to feel safe and welcome. While transgender women required fewer adaptations in order to feel safe when compared to the rest of the sample, transgender men and genderfluid individuals required more. Below, the four most pressing modifications will be discussed, as well as other adaptations libraries can make.

## EQUAL ACCESS

**Up-to-date transgender literature.** First and foremost, the majority of study participants endorsed libraries maintaining up-to-date transgender fiction and non-fiction literature in their collection. As highlighted by qualitative feedback within the survey, this is an important issue faced by transgender library patrons. There are numerous sources that provide ongoing reviews of recently published materials that are relevant to this population (GBTRT, 2014; YALSA, 2014). Additionally, if there are concerns about transgender-focused materials being challenged by library patrons, the American Library Association (ALA) Office of Intellectual Freedom provides extensive resources for proactive and reactive steps to be taken in regards to challenged materials (ALA OIF, 2014). If a library does not have a collection development policy, one should be formulated and finalized as part of the library's efforts to be more welcoming and inclusive. A collection development policy should include guidelines regarding requests for reconsideration of materials in the collection (ALA OIF, 2014).

**LGBQ literature, bathrooms, and non-discrimination policies.** Three modifications were endorsed as equally important by the majority of study participants, second in priority only to recent transgender literature:

- Recent LGBQ literature in the collection;
- Unlocked gender neutral, single stall bathrooms; and
- Gender identity and expression as part of the library's non-discrimination policy.

**LGBQ literature.** Similar strategies used for improving and maintaining the transgender literature collection can be employed for the LGBQ fiction and non-fiction literature collection. Reviews of recent LGBQ and transgender young adult and adult fiction and non-fiction can be found through the Rainbow List (GLBTRT, 2014).

## EQUAL ACCESS

***Bathrooms.*** The issue of bathrooms can be very straightforward in principle yet more complex in practical application. At the minimum, libraries must offer gendered bathrooms that remain unlocked and free for all to use. Restricting patron access to bathrooms is considered a violation of library ethics as outlined by the ALA (ALA, 2008a; ALA, 2008b; Mars, 2013). By requiring patrons to request access to the bathroom, groups that may experience discrimination are further disenfranchised as even toileting becomes a regulated activity with librarians as gatekeepers. If libraries are experiencing challenges related to inappropriate use of the bathroom, they should explore other ways to address the issue beyond locking the bathrooms.

Libraries can also be more welcoming to transgender patrons and other marginalized groups (such as patrons with disabilities who require assistance in the bathroom) by posting statements to the effect that individuals are welcome to use whichever bathroom in which they feel most comfortable; caregivers and guardians are free to use either bathroom as needed; and harassment of others in their use of the bathroom is unacceptable (Sandberg, 2014). In addition, libraries can compile a list of gender-neutral and single-stall bathrooms in the area surrounding the library for patrons' convenience (Sanberg, 2014). Whenever possible, libraries should provide gender neutral bathrooms to their patrons, with bathroom signage that is gender neutral and representative of all genders (Sandberg, 2014). Some companies provide gender-neutral bathroom signage. For example, My Door Sign provides all-gender bathroom signage; they will provide signage to some types of organizations for free upon request (My Door Sign, 2014).

***Non-discrimination policies.*** All libraries should have a non-discrimination policy and review it periodically for accuracy and additions. The ALA has a comprehensive non-discrimination statement found within the *Library Bill of Rights*; the interpretation clearly assures free and equal access to library services, materials, and programs to people of all sexual

## EQUAL ACCESS

orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions (ALA, 2008b). Many libraries choose to adopt prepared policies from the ALA, including the *Library Bill of Rights* (Prentice, 2011).

While the *Library Bill of Rights* is all-inclusive, the degree of inclusion may not be evident to a layperson reading it. In order to clearly show patrons the library's commitment to inclusion, libraries should create and clearly display their stance of non-discrimination and equal access, perhaps within their mission statement. The non-discrimination statement should be easily viewable on the library's website so patrons can review it prior to visiting the library if they so choose. Libraries should consider providing patrons with an anonymous mechanism to provide feedback regarding their experiences with library staff, including experiences with discrimination and bias. Finally, libraries should consider creating a plan for addressing the diversity of the community they serve. The ALA's Office of Diversity provides guidance for libraries seeking to create a diversity plan which typically includes a definition of diversity, an assessment of need, a mission statement, priorities or goals, a delegation of responsibilities, and a statement of accountability (ALA OD, 2014).

**Name changes and library forms.** The third level of most endorsed modifications was regarding paperwork and policies within library systems, including both name changes (i.e. changing the name associated with a particular library card) and fields on library forms.

**Name changes.** Survey respondents were provided with two different options in regards to name changes: either an established in-person process or an established remote process (e.g. online, fax, etc.). Seventy-five percent (75%) endorsed an established in-person process and 88% endorsed an established remote process. Libraries should seek to make the name change process the least restrictive possible. At the least, libraries must have a formalized, established method for patrons to change their name with the institution. Patrons' names can change for a variety of

## EQUAL ACCESS

reasons and the library should easily accommodate those changes without asking for the reason for the change. Name changes should be able to be made remotely, such as through email or fax. At the best, libraries should allow patrons to change their name without proof of legally changing it.

Many colleges and universities have moved towards removing administrative barriers for individuals seeking to change their name on file, no longer requiring proof of legal name change to change students' names within the majority of their systems (e.g. Blackboard and email) and keep legal names private when they are necessary (e.g. financial aid) (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005). While there may be instances where legal names are necessary (e.g. collections for outstanding accounts), few patrons will seek to change their name and for those that do, it is of vital importance to their comfort within the library. Libraries need to consider whether it is appropriate to apply cost-benefit analysis to a matter of facilitating equal access for all patrons.

Another alternative is to allow name changes with no proof of a legal change and provide a form to patrons with different fields for Preferred Name and Legal Name and be clear only Preferred Name will be visible within circulation management systems and all library communications will be addressed to Preferred Name. In any case, library staff should receive training regarding the library's specific name change process and staff should be instructed to respect patrons' privacy by not asking the reason for the change.

***Library forms.*** Survey respondents were provided with three different modifications related to library forms: a) left gender and title on library forms but allowed write-in/self-identification (endorsed by 82%); b) removed gender and title from library forms (endorsed by 80%); and c) removed use of Mr./Ms. in all library communications (endorsed by 79%). Based on these responses, libraries should edit their forms accordingly. While the endorsed modifications may seem contradictory, the responses highlight that how libraries format their

## EQUAL ACCESS

forms and communications is very important to transgender individuals. Libraries should examine their current forms and evaluate them for accessibility to transgender patrons.

First, forms should not require a title (e.g. Dr., Mr., Ms., etc.) but offer patrons some standard titles along with space for patrons to write in a title if they so choose. For example, some non-binary transgender individuals prefer the gender neutral title of Mx. (pronounced like “mix”), short for Mixer; this title has been accepted by many government institutions, universities, and businesses in the UK (McNamara, 2013). In order for libraries to be welcoming to non-binary transgender individuals, it is vitally important for patrons to have the option of removing gendered titles and salutations from all library communications. For those patrons whose titles are important to them, they can select one as they see fit and those who do not desire a title can leave the field blank. Library staff should be trained to only use titles during communication with patrons if they are present in the system; in other words, library staff should not call a patron and ask to speak to Ms. Smith if the patron did not indicate a title but instead only provided their first and last name. Systems used to manage communication with patrons should follow this format as well, regardless of whether communicating by phone, mail, or email.

Secondly, if library forms have gender markers, they should be removed. There is little reason for libraries to ask patrons their gender and it is too complex question to address with a set of checkboxes. While providing more gender options could make checkbox categories more reliable, gender identity can be a sensitive piece of information, especially for transgender individuals. In many states, it is legal to discriminate based on gender identity; having patrons' gender identities accessible to all library staff could be a safety risk. If libraries desire to know

## EQUAL ACCESS

the gender distribution or other demographic information of their patronage, they should create an anonymous survey.

**Openly LGBQ and transgender staff.** The fourth layer of modifications focused on the necessity of openly LGBQ and transgender staff members. In 2010, the American Library Association reaffirmed their support of Equal Opportunity Employment for LGBT librarians and library workers, updating their policy manual's language from "gay rights" to "gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights" given the understanding that "gay rights" is not "an acceptable short-hand term for all groups based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression" (ALA, 2010). All libraries should seek to support LGBQ and transgender colleagues, working towards creating an accepting and welcoming work environment for LGBQ and transgender library staff. Libraries should be sure their statement of Equal Opportunity Employment includes LGBQ and transgender individuals by adding sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected classes.

**Other endorsements.** The four areas expounded on above were the most broadly endorsed modifications libraries should make to welcome transgender patrons. Other endorsements included: a) transgender themed events (81%) and LGBQ themed events (78%); b) LGBQ themed displays and artwork (76%) and transgender themed displays and artwork (74%); c) displaying an LGBQ and/or transgender "safe space" designation (75%); d) computer screen covers to prevent others from observing computer activities (75%); e) reference assistance via the internet (73%) and reference desk in a private area (62%); and f) self-checkout stations (71%).

**Summary.** Many recommendations are items that primarily effect internal library procedures, related to non-discrimination policies, collections development, name changes, and



## EQUAL ACCESS

library forms. There are some adaptations which are more publicly visible, such as gender neutral bathrooms, openly LGBTQ and transgender staff members, hosting LGBTQ and transgender events, displaying LGBTQ and transgender themed displays and artwork, and LGBTQ “safe space” signs. In the end, each individual library will need to make decisions around these adaptations based on their surrounding community, including municipal, county, state, and nationwide regulations, ordinances, and laws. All of these suggested adaptations have been simplified into a seven-item hand-out for libraries that desire to be more accessible, safe, and welcoming to transgender patrons (see Appendix B).

### **Study Limitations**

While the sample size was larger (102 vs. 45 & 99) than previous studies looking at library use, information needs, and transgender individuals, the study sample was relatively small (Beirger & Jackson, 2007; Taylor, 2002). Additionally, while the study sample was more geographically diverse (US vs. North Carolina/Yahoo groups & Portland, OR) than previous studies, the sample was predominately comprised of individuals living in the Northeast US (Beirger & Jackson, 2007; Taylor, 2002). While the study had more individuals identifying as 2+ races and/or ethnicities than the general US population, this difference may not account for the study’s lower percentage of Black/AA and Hispanic individuals. The survey was offered only in English, thereby limiting responses to those who read English.

Additionally, the majority of the sample was DFAB; the needs and perspectives of DMAB transgender individuals may differ. This discrepancy could be due to online snowball sampling, if more DFAB individuals shared the survey with their followers than DMAB individuals. Online communities of transgender individuals are frequently divided by gender.

## EQUAL ACCESS

Also, the key transgender dignitaries who responded to requests to inform others of this study were predominately transgender men.

The study sample was predominately those under 40 years of age; older transgender individuals may have significantly different needs and perspectives. This difference could be due to the data collection method, as the survey was only available online, as well as the snowball sampling method which relied heavily upon online networks.

The study sample had a small percentage of individuals who identified as heterosexual. The group was too small to perform tests determining statistical significance; it could be that heterosexual transgender individuals have significantly different needs and perspectives. The survey was exclusively available online, thereby limiting this study's sample to those with access to the internet.

### **Conclusions and Future Study**

This study explored various complexities of providing culturally competent library services to transgender individuals and highlighted the heterogeneity of the transgender community. Overall, study participants were very resourceful when seeking information but still experienced substantial information deficits. Most respondents described negative experiences in relation to libraries and were hesitant to seek information through libraries. There are numerous adaptations libraries can implement to be more welcoming to transgender patrons. For libraries to follow the most basic of the ALA's tenets – the *Library Bill of Rights* – they must take active steps to provide equal services to all members of their community. In the end, the obligation firmly rests with libraries to actively demonstrate their commitment to transgender-competent services.

## EQUAL ACCESS

Future studies could investigate the information needs and deficits of DMAB individuals, heterosexual transgender individuals, and older transgender individuals. In addition, they should also focus on increasing sample size and specifically targeting Black/AA and Hispanic transgender individuals.

## EQUAL ACCESS

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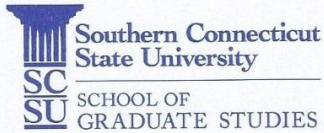
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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Date: 3/10/14

Attn: Mr. Aubri Drake  
35 Midway Dr.  
Cromwell, CT 06416

CC: Dr. Mary Brown, Information and Library Science

Re: Protocol Review

Protocol Title: Equal access: Exploratory research into the demographics and information-seeking behavior needs of transgender individuals and participatory suggestions on how librarians can better facilitate equal access

Protocol Number: 14-041

Department: Information and Library Science

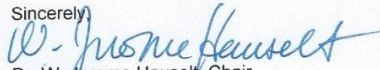
Dear Mr. Drake,

Your protocol has been examined and is considered exempt from continuing IRB review. If during the conduct of your research any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent if applicable, data collection must cease and the IRB must be notified immediately so that appropriate review of the changes may be accomplished.

If you have submitted a consent document and it has not been returned with this letter, it does not require IRB date stamping. The use of your consent document in your research is strongly urged by the IRB.

Good luck with your research. If the IRB can be of any assistance please do not hesitate to contact me directly. Please be sure to include your IRB number in any correspondence.

Sincerely,



Dr. W. Jerome Hauselt, Chair  
School of Graduate Studies  
Voice: 203-392-5243; FAX 203-392-5221  
Email: [hauseltw1@southernct.edu](mailto:hauseltw1@southernct.edu).  
(Revised: 7/2/09)

APPENDIX B  
PARTICIPANT SURVEY

**1. Age**

<input type="checkbox"/> 18-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-54
<input type="checkbox"/> 20-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-59
<input type="checkbox"/> 25-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 60-64
<input type="checkbox"/> 30-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 65-69
<input type="checkbox"/> 35-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 70-74
<input type="checkbox"/> 40-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 75-79
<input type="checkbox"/> 45-49	<input type="checkbox"/> 80-84
<input type="checkbox"/> 50-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 85 and over

**2. State of current residence** (*select one*)

- |               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Alabama       | New Hampshire            |
| Alaska        | New Jersey               |
| Arizona       | New Mexico               |
| Arkansas      | New York                 |
| California    | North Carolina           |
| Colorado      | North Dakota             |
| Connecticut   | Ohio                     |
| Delaware      | Oklahoma                 |
| Florida       | Oregon                   |
| Georgia       | Pennsylvania             |
| Hawaii        | Rhode Island             |
| Idaho         | South Carolina           |
| Illinois      | South Dakota             |
| Indiana       | Tennessee                |
| Iowa          | Texas                    |
| Kansas        | Utah                     |
| Kentucky      | Vermont                  |
| Louisiana     | Virginia                 |
| Maine         | Washington               |
| Maryland      | West Virginia            |
| Massachusetts | Wisconsin                |
| Michigan      | Wyoming                  |
| Minnesota     | American Samoa           |
| Mississippi   | Guam                     |
| Missouri      | Northern Mariana Islands |
| Montana       | Puerto Rico              |
| Nebraska      | US Virgin Islands        |
| Nevada        |                          |

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Tribal/native lands: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Education attainment**

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 9th grade	<input type="checkbox"/> Associate's degree
<input type="checkbox"/> 9th-12th grade no diploma	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree
<input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate (includes equivalency)	<input type="checkbox"/> Graduate or professional degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Some college no degree	

**4. Current school enrollment**

- not enrolled
- elementary school grades 1-8
- high school grades 9-12 (includes continuing adult education)
- college
- graduate school

**5. Race/ethnicity (select all that apply)**

- Black or African American
- Latin American or Hispanic
- White or European American
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Language (select primary, secondary, and NA for each)**

English	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary language	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary language	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary language	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary language	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary language	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary language	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
other - write in	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary language	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary language	<input type="checkbox"/> NA

If other language, please indicate: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Employment status (select all that apply)**

- unemployed
- employed part time
- employed full time
- employed multiple part time
- unable to work
- student
- retired

EQUAL ACCESS

**8. Yearly household income**

- less than \$10,000
- \$10,000-14,999
- \$15,000-24,999
- \$25,000-34,000
- \$35,000-49,999
- \$50,000-74,999
- \$75,000-99,999
- \$100,000-149,000
- \$150,000-199,999
- \$200,000 or more

**9. Gender designated at birth**

- Male
- Female
- Intersex

**10. Gender identity now** (*select all that apply*)

- Male
- Female
- Female-to-male(FTM)/transgender male/trans man
- Male-to-female(MTF)/transgender female/trans woman
- Genderqueer or non-binary
- Gender fluid
- Two Spirit
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Transition process** (*select answer for each category*)

	<i>yes, in future</i>	<i>yes, in process</i>	<i>yes, complete</i>	<i>not desired</i>	<i>doesn't apply</i>
social transition <sup>3</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
hormones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
top surgery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
bottom surgery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other surgeries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**12. Based on your current gender identity, do you think of yourself as:** (*select all that apply*)

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>3</sup> Social transition can be different for each person but might include changing your name, pronouns, clothes, hair, etc

## EQUAL ACCESS

- lesbian
- gay
- homosexual
- man who has sex with men
- woman who has sex with women
- same gender loving
- straight or heterosexual
- bisexual
- pansexual
- asexual
- other: \_\_\_\_\_
- don't know

### 13. Relationship status

- single
- partnered
- married
- divorced
- widowed

### 14. Relationship orientation *(select all that apply)*

- monogamous
- non-monogamous
- polyamorous
- swinger
- open relationships
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 15. When you have questions about physical health and well-being, where do you go first? *(pick three)*

- internet
- friends
- support groups
- public library
- hospital or medical library
- personal library
- doctor
- counselor or therapist
- family
- legal aid
- advocacy or political organization
- religious or spiritual organization
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 16. Why do you use these information sources instead of others? *(select all that apply)*

- convenience
- cost

## EQUAL ACCESS

- attitude of those you interact with
- up-to-date information
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 17. How often do you need information about physical health and well-being, but are unable to find it?

- never
- rarely
- sometimes
- very often
- always

### 18. When you have questions about mental/emotional health and well-being, where do you go first? (pick three)

- internet
- friends
- support groups
- public library
- hospital or medical library
- personal library
- doctor
- counselor or therapist
- family
- legal aid
- advocacy or political organization
- religious or spiritual organization
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 19. Why do you use these information sources instead of others? (select all that apply)

- convenience
- cost
- attitude of those you interact with
- up-to-date information
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 20. How often do you need information about mental/emotional health and well-being, but are unable to find it?

- never
- rarely
- sometimes
- very often
- always

### 21. When you have questions about spiritual health and well-being, where do you go first? (pick three)

- internet
- friends
- support groups

## EQUAL ACCESS

- public library
- hospital or medical library
- personal library
- doctor
- counselor or therapist
- family
- legal aid
- advocacy or political organization
- religious or spiritual organization
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 22. Why do you use these information sources instead of others? *(select all that apply)*

- convenience
- cost
- attitude of those you interact with
- up-to-date information
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 23. How often do you need information about spiritual health and well-being, but are unable to find it?

- never
- rarely
- sometimes
- very often
- always

### 24. When you have questions about legal information about trans issues, where do you go first?

*(pick three)*

- internet
- friends
- support groups
- public library
- hospital or medical library
- personal library
- doctor
- counselor or therapist
- family
- legal aid
- advocacy or political organization
- religious or spiritual organization
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 25. Why do you use these information sources instead of others? *(select all that apply)*

- convenience
- cost
- attitude of those you interact with
- up-to-date information

## EQUAL ACCESS

other: \_\_\_\_\_

**26. How often do you need legal information about trans issues, but are unable to find it?**

- never
- rarely
- sometimes
- very often
- always

**27. When you have questions about medical/health information about trans issues, where do you go first? (pick three)**

- internet
- friends
- support groups
- public library
- hospital or medical library
- personal library
- doctor
- counselor or therapist
- family
- legal aid
- advocacy or political organization
- religious or spiritual organization
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**28. Why do you use these information sources instead of others? (select all that apply)**

- convenience
- cost
- attitude of those you interact with
- up-to-date information
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**29. How often do you need medical/health information about trans issues, but are unable to find it?**

- never
- rarely
- sometimes
- very often
- always

**30. When you have questions about advocacy/political information about trans issues, where do you go first? (pick three)**

- internet
- friends
- support groups
- public library
- hospital or medical library
- personal library



## EQUAL ACCESS

- doctor
- counselor or therapist
- family
- legal aid
- advocacy or political organization
- religious or spiritual organization
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**31. Why do you use these information sources instead of others?** *(select all that apply)*

- convenience
- cost
- attitude of those you interact with
- up-to-date information
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**32. How often do you need advocacy or political information about trans issues, but are unable to find it?**

- never
- rarely
- sometimes
- very often
- always

**33. When you have questions about general or other information about trans issues, where do you go first?** *(pick three)*

- internet
- friends
- support groups
- public library
- hospital or medical library
- personal library
- doctor
- counselor or therapist
- family
- legal aid
- advocacy or political organization
- religious or spiritual organization
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**34. Why do you use these information sources instead of others?** *(select all that apply)*

- convenience
- cost
- attitude of those you interact with
- up-to-date information
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**35. How often do you need general or other information about trans issues, but are unable to find it?**

EQUAL ACCESS

- never
- rarely
- sometimes
- very often
- always

**36. In the past year, have you visited a library:** *(select all that apply)*

- for internet use
- for leisure (borrowing books for recreational reading or viewing library materials for pleasure)
- for school/education/research
- for an event
- for transgender-related research, questions, or support
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

**37. If you used a library for transgender-related research, questions, or support, what was your experience? If positive, what made it positive? If negative, what made it negative?**

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**38. If you used a library for transgender-related research, questions, or support, did you communicate with a reference librarian (in person, online, by phone, etc)? If so, what was your experience? If positive, what made it positive? If negative, what made it negative?**

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**39. If you haven't used a library for transgender-related research, questions, or support, why not?**

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**40. Libraries that have the following feel more safe and welcoming to me:**

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Gender identity and expression as part of their non-discrimination policy	SA	A	U	D	SD
Reference desk in private area	SA	A	U	D	SD
Special covers on the computer screens so others cannot observe your activities	SA	A	U	D	SD
Openly LGB/queer staff	SA	A	U	D	SD
Transgender themed displays and artwork	SA	A	U	D	SD
Gender neutral, single stall bathroom where you do not need to request a key	SA	A	U	D	SD

EQUAL ACCESS

Left gender and title/salutation on library forms but allowed write-in/self-identification	SA	A	U	D	SD
Displaying LGB, queer, and/or transgender “safe space” designation	SA	A	U	D	SD
Openly transgender staff	SA	A	U	D	SD
LGB/queer themed displays and artwork	SA	A	U	D	SD
Recent LGB/queer literature in the collection	SA	A	U	D	SD
Transgender themed events	SA	A	U	D	SD
An established remote process for name change (i.e. online, by fax, by mail)	SA	A	U	D	SD
Recent transgender literature in the collection	SA	A	U	D	SD
An established in-person process for name change	SA	A	U	D	SD
LGB/queer themed events	SA	A	U	D	SD
Removed gender and title/salutation on library forms	SA	A	U	D	SD
Reference assistance offered via Internet	SA	A	U	D	SD
Removed use of Mr/Ms in all library communications (i.e. overdue notices)	SA	A	U	D	SD
Self-checkout stations	SA	A	U	D	SD

**41. Do you have any other suggestions or recommendations for changes libraries could make to help you feel more welcome and safe?**

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APPENDIX C

SIMPLE BUT CRITICAL:

Changes libraries can make to increase equal access for transgender library patrons

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1. **Include gender identity and gender expression in your library's non-discrimination policy.** This tells transgender people you are aware they exist and deserve to be treated with respect. If you don't have a policy yet, create one and include these items. Review the Library Bill of Rights for sample language (ALA, 2008). Also consider creating a Diversity Plan directly addressing the needs of your community (ALA OD, 2014).
2. **Provide a gender neutral single-stall bathroom** (sometimes called a family bathroom) **where patrons do not need to ask for the key.** If that is not possible, gendered bathrooms should not be locked and post statements welcoming individuals to use whichever bathroom is most comfortable for them. If bathrooms are locked, patrons are required to request a key from library staff. For transgender individuals, this can be very stressful as it makes them vulnerable to misgendering and potential harassment.
3. **Maintain a collection with recent LGBTQ and transgender literature.** Most transgender people have written off the library as a source of information due to very outdated materials. There are many resources that provide guidance and ongoing reviews for maintaining a relevant collection and handling challenges to library materials (ALA OIF, 2014; GLBTRT, 2014; YALSA, 2014). Once you have developed a solid collection, don't be shy about advertising it.
4. **Foster an accepting work environment where library staff can openly identify as LGBTQ and transgender.** Representation is important and helps transgender individuals feel safe and connected to your library.

## EQUAL ACCESS

5. **Offer patrons the option to not select a salutation/title or write in their own on library registration forms.** Remove gender from your forms if it's currently present. Make sure to apply those titles, or lack thereof, to all library-patron communications.
  - a. **Example Titles:** Mr. Ms. Mrs. Dr. Rev. N/A Other:\_\_\_\_\_
6. **Provide an established, remote name change process (such as online, by email, or by fax).** This allows transgender individuals to update their personal information without worrying about being outed as transgender to all library patrons in the immediate vicinity of the front desk. It increases patron comfort and limits the degree of discrimination the patron may face from library staff. If at all possible, do not require patrons to provide proof of legal name change before updating their library records. At the minimum, allow patrons space to provide a preferred name in addition to their legal name.
7. **Provide LGBQ and transgender themed library events as well as artwork and displays when appropriate.** Include LGBQ and transgender materials into themed displays when possible. Keep an eye on local and national events that may impact transgender patrons and provide gathering space when appropriate.

### **Recommendations based on endorsement from surveyed transgender individuals:**

Drake, A.A. (2015). *Equal Access: The Demographics, Information Seeking Behavior, and Information Needs of Transgender Individuals and their Recommendations for Librarian Facilitated Equal Access*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT.

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