

AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE

The Placement of GLBT Books in Our Libraries

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As we all know, running a library is hard work. The list of responsibilities and tasks we accept seems to be never ending. While ensuring that our bookshelves are neat and tidy and our patrons find what they need is important, the power of advocacy should be in the foreground of our planning.

Many times, it is difficult to see what is going on in our collection, as the sheer volume of books can be overwhelming. While undergoing a massive weeding program, we discovered a problem with the categorization of books on our shelves. The Dewey system had determined that books dealing with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) issues would be listed under 306.76. This is in the area concerning sexuality, which initially seemed to make sense. However, when we had our noses firmly planted in the stacks as we weeded, we realized something further. Books on the very same shelf dealt with subjects such as prostitution, incest and divorce. At first we believed that these books had been shelved incorrectly or mislabeled. As a group, we were all quite surprised that books about GLBT issues would be grouped with such potentially dark and negative themes. When we went back to the source, the Dewey classification system, we realized it was an issue with the classification system itself.

We decided to collaborate with Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Gay-Straight Alliance, Youth Embracing Sexualities (YES). YES worked together with the teacher-

librarians to find a new, more inclusive and positive space for these books. The decision was to place books about GLBT social issues under 305.49, between women's rights and just before the social status area. Books that explored the rich history of GLBT peoples were placed in 905, an area that was listed as "social publications" and unused. Moving these books to another shelf seemed small, but did wonders to make our library an accepting and GLBT-friendly place.

By working with YES, the library staff was able to empower themselves as well as the student members of that group. Even this year, YES feels proud of their participation in such a worthwhile endeavour. Imagine if all libraries could move towards being the agents of positive change for our students. Our libraries reflect our communities, and all should feel welcome. The power of advocacy is available to all of us. ■

DEWEY CALL NUMBERS

306.74—**Prostitution**
306.76—**Homosexuality**
306.777—**Incest**
306.8—**Divorce**