



# LGBTQ+ Books on Library Shelves: The Predicaments of Libraries in Africa

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## ABSTRACT

This review analyzes the quandaries facing libraries from African countries, especially from the sub-Saharan region, regarding the free dissemination and access to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ+) content. It examines the challenges the libraries face and finally highlights the role they should play in disseminating LGBTQ+ content.

## KEYWORDS

LGBTQ+; Africa; libraries; marginalization; censorship; library users

## Introduction

Libraries play a significant role in any society; they are versatile and multifaceted institutions crucial in promoting education, information access, culture, and community development. Drake and Bielefield (2017) argue that libraries must ensure that all library users have access to equal and equitable information at all times. Bouaamri et al. (2022b) support this argument by noting that the role of libraries is to uplift the life and livelihood of society; as such, libraries must ensure that the entire society is well informed. For a library to assist its population, it must establish the community's information needs (Scott, 2011). This review is focused on the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning) society regarding access and utilization of information in African countries. Arnfred (2004) notes that, unlike in Western countries, information regarding sexuality in African countries is difficult to obtain. Since 1970, there have been annual LGBTQ+ pride demonstrations to support and fight for equal rights for the community. However, the knowledge of their whereabouts is limited in many African countries due to the sensitivity and conflicts associated with most African cultural and religious norms and taboo practices. As such, few African authors have written or published articles covering LGBTQ+ issues. The majority of the available publications about LGBTQ+ have been written by authors from Western countries.

Otike and Hajdu (2023) allude to the importance of free access to information as a fundamental human right since it is considered an avenue that