

LGBT@NYPL

<http://www.nypl.org/voices/blogs/blog-channels/lgbt>

A.

LGBT@NYPL is one of the blog channels available through the New York Public Library (NYPL) website. It connects “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities with the exciting resources, services, and expertise that The New York Public Library has to offer.”¹ It is a free, virtual space that unites physically disparate materials from the various NYPL collections, community services, programming, and external resources.

LGBT@NYPL is 3 things: a research guide, a programming guide, and a community portal.

Features

- Highlighted LGBT-related programming and exhibitions at branch libraries
- Research guides for LGBT Studies materials
- Access to the LGBT manuscript and archival collections
- Access to the LGBT Digital Collections
- Access to free LGBT@NYPL content available on iTunes
- NYPL virtual reference service
- External links to vetted information on LGBT health issues, history, and resources specifically for teens and seniors

B.

NYPL employs blogs such as LGBT@NYPL as a content management tool. The blog is designed to facilitate access to LGBT-related information held primarily by NYPL, but also in other locations. This information may be held in physically separate locations and across

collections, but is coherently arranged in a single, virtual location that is available to anyone with an Internet connection.

The benefits of using a blog as a content management tool is that many patrons do not require any special or additional training to access the content beyond an orientation to the various features; patrons who are comfortable browsing the Internet may not need any assistance. RSS feeds allow users to receive notifications as the blog is updated and librarians are available through the virtual reference service, AskNYPL.

Users derive additional benefit from the collaborative nature of the blog. The ability to leave comments fosters community participation and feedback. The blog is also connects users to the library's LGBT Committee, which creates additional accountability between resource allocators and the populations served.

C.

Those outside the LGBT community tend to assign gays and lesbians, and especially transgendered individuals, a kind of "master status," which belies the fact that the LGBT community is as diverse as society as a whole.²

LGBT@NYPL, therefore, is an ongoing attempt to orient patrons and scholars to the library's holdings. Research guides enhance physical access by helping to locate relevant materials but also enhance intellectual access by illuminating pathways to resources and illustrating interdisciplinary relationships. Providing publicity for LGBT-related programming at various branch libraries reaches a larger audience and helps to contextualize featured content.

As a community portal, the blog enhances both physical and intellectual access to external resources; the blog also functions as a nexus for information germane to the LGBT community that is external to NYPL. Librarians have compiled links to vetted resources and

organizations that can enhance involvement and communication within and without the LGBT community.

D.

Blogs, in general, are an inexpensive and simple way for cultural institutions to organize information, promote content, and encourage community interaction without having to redesign physical spaces or physically rearrange materials. Many cultural institutions already have a blog presence that they employ to highlight upcoming events, new acquisitions, etc. The creation of blog “channels” centralizes content and allows cultural institutions to target specific audiences.

Channeling is an important information management tool, preventing an institution’s blog presence from becoming unwieldy or overwhelming users with irrelevant content. Rather, information can be concentrated where it will benefit users most. It is of vital importance that the relationship between an institution’s physical and virtual content be explained or illustrated. Finally, the development of specific channels should be tailored to user need and demand.

¹ About LGBT@NYPL

² Jaeger, *Disability and the Internet: Confronting a Digital Divide*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers (2012): 17.