

Public Library Association's national conference teaches librarians about 'queering the library,' how Dewey Decimal system is biased against 'historically marginalized groups'

PAUL SACCA

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<https://www.theblaze.com/news/public-library-association-s-national-conference-teaches-librarians-about-queering-the-library-how-dewey-decimal-system-is-biased-against-historically-marginalized-groups>

Over **4,000** people will attend the [Public Library Association's national conference](#), which is happening this week in Portland, Oregon. There are more than 100 programs for library professionals at the three-day event, including a session titled: "Queering the Library: Strategically Creating Space for the LGBTQ+ Community."

The hour-long program that was held on Wednesday aimed to provide public librarians with a "foundational knowledge of LGBTQ+ community needs and be able to evaluate their libraries' offerings," identify gaps in "services and programming for the LGBTQ+ community," and develop "planning and design for LGBTQ+ services, programs, and anti-bias advocacy."

The "Queering the Library" course description says:

Uplifting the LGBTQ+ community requires a reimagining of the way that libraries connect with customers, as well as active anti-bias work. This presentation showcases a highly successful from-scratch approach taken by one urban library system to extend efforts beyond Pride Month over a 2 year period that spanned the pandemic. Participants will receive resources on these efforts including strategies for change, staff training, resource development, award-winning programming, collection development, outreach, community partnerships, and more.

The program featured speakers Rebecca Oxley – a librarian with Prince George's County Public Schools who uses the pronouns "she/they" – and Teresa Miller – a librarian with the Prince George's County Memorial Library System who uses the pronouns "she/her/hers."

The opening slide in the "[Queering the Library](#)" demonstration featured an LGBTQ rainbow flag with a clenched fist – similar to the Black Lives Matter symbol.

The demonstration asks, "Want to start your own LGBTQ+ work team?" In one of the slides, it advises librarians to "create a plan for backlash."

There is a cartoon of a "Gender Unicorn" that asks children to determine their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression or "[SOGIE](#)."

The Gender Unicorn was created by the Trans Student Educational Resources – a "youth-led organization dedicated to transforming the educational environment for trans and gender non-conforming students through advocacy and empowerment."



The Seattle Public Schools released a YouTube video explaining the Gender Unicorn.

https://youtu.be/MV_zXX54I_c

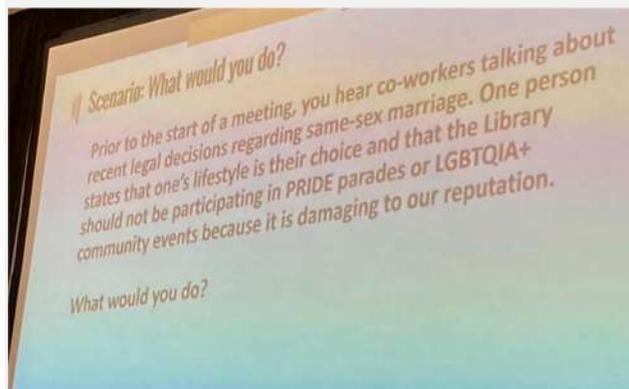
The Public Library Association's national conference also featured a demonstration titled: "Students Take Pride: Supporting GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances) in Middle and High Schools."

There is a "Removing Bias and Barriers from Your Cataloging" program that proclaims that the Dewey Decimal system has "bias and flaws in common cataloging approaches towards historically marginalized groups and communities."

The description of the "[Removing Bias and Barriers from Your Cataloging](#)" program:

While the Dewey Decimal Classification system provides a strong foundation for organizing public library collections, it contains prejudiced perspectives that need updating to move beyond outdated and biased viewpoints dominant at the time of its creation. Learn how we adjusted our cataloging of history items for a more accurate, inclusive, and equitable collection. Libraries are for everyone - now your collections can be too.

Meghan O'Keefe – an adult services librarian with the River Forest Public Library in Illinois – argues in the demonstration that the Dewey Decimal Classification is "not accurate" and "portrays history as only the story of those in power."



There are multiple programs at the PLA's national conference centered on "equity" and "diversity," including "A Roadmap to Inclusion," "Diversity, Equity, and Access," "Doing the Work: Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion," "Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Antiracism in a Sundown Town," "Pathways to Professional Diversity Through Library Internships, Fostering Equity and Inclusion by Promoting Employee Wellbeing."