

Keahi Ka'iwalani Adolpho, Stephen G. Krueger, and Krista McCracken

Seeing Yourself in the Profession

Trans and Gender Diverse Voices in Libraries

Academic Library Workers in Conversation is a *C&RL News* series focused on elevating the everyday conversations of library professionals. The wisdom of the watercooler has long been heralded, but this series hopes to go further by minimizing barriers to traditional publishing with an accessible format. Each of the topics in the series were proposed by the authors and they were given space to explore. This issue's conversation addresses breaking down barriers in academic publishing, one of the main goals of this column. The three editors of *Trans and Gender Diverse Voices in Libraries* discuss bringing their book into the world and how it feels to create space in the LIS professions for oft excluded voices.—

Dustin Fife, series editor

Keahi Ka'iwalani Adolpho (KKA): I was hoping we could start by talking about why we felt our newly published book, *Trans and Gender Diverse Voices in Libraries*,¹ needed to exist, and what considerations and changes we had to make in the editing process to make it possible. For me, a lot of my motivations had to do with my experiences being the first and only out trans person in the libraries where I've worked, and how few trans and gender diverse library workers I knew during my first couple years in the field. While it is very isolating to find myself being the only person of color in a particular meeting, committee, or department, I've never been the only person of color in a whole library. I also was able to make horrified eye contact with a classmate of color during library school when the professor or a fellow student said something wild, and connect with other librarians of color as soon as I entered my first professional position (especially since I was in a diversity residency cohort).

That being said, I've often had experiences being the only trans person I know of in a whole library, or feeling like I'm the only trans person at an entire conference, and being the first out trans person many people have worked with or even interacted with. It can be exhausting and isolating in very similar and very different ways that I experience as a person of color. So, my hope was that this book would help other trans and gender diverse library students and workers feel less alone. Considering we wanted this book to be as inclusive as possible, we did our best to publish every chapter that we could. We had a lot of conversations around protecting author privacy throughout this process, which is something that most library publishers don't generally think about.

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Stephen and Krista, I'm interested in knowing more about what motivated you during our shared project.

Stephen G. Krueger (SGK): That sense of isolation was definitely a central reason behind the book for me as well. At my first librarian job, I was the only openly trans person on the whole campus who wasn't a student. That was when I founded the Trans and Gender Diverse LIS Network,² and it quickly became clear that a lot of us have felt similarly alone at work. The book has 3 editors and almost 60 authors, all of whom are trans or gender diverse, and that really gets across the point that we exist within library work as well as being patrons of libraries. One thing that I think sets this book apart is that we were very flexible about accepting proposals, since we wanted to remove barriers to publishing that prevent a lot of people from getting a chapter out. It isn't peer reviewed; most of the chapters center on personal experiences, and inviting strangers to pass judgment on that kind of content would have been inappropriate.

And like you said, Keahi, we paid a lot of attention to author privacy and protection. Fully half of the authors in the LIS education section, most of whom were graduate students at the time of writing, needed to publish anonymously, possibly to protect themselves and their career prospects rather than getting the benefits of a book chapter on their CV. What does that tell us about the library profession right now? Well, we don't need to wonder—plenty of the other chapters demonstrate that concerns of early-career people about coming out or being outed at work are well founded.

Krista McCracken (KM): To echo you both, Keahi and Stephen, the sense of isolation was something that motivated me in this project. There are very few out trans or gender diverse folks in staff roles at my university, and I'm the only one connected to the library currently. Many of us have had the experience of being the only, or token, trans person in our workplaces, and this book provides space for us to openly talk about experiences. This book also clearly shows that trans and gender diverse folks are not a monolith—there is a huge range of perspectives, experiences, and views shared in the book.

SGK: One of the things we wanted to do with this article was to talk about the practical process of proposing and editing a book, since I think a lot of people in library work aren't sure how that happens. That included us—we've all authored book chapters, and I've written a solo book, but we sort of had to figure out how to go about this project as we were doing it. For me it was all very new; I discovered that I really love the editing process, but there was definitely a lot of trial and error. How did you all feel about becoming book editors and doing that type of work?

KKA: This was my first time editing anything. I had peer reviewed an article or two before this and I had contributed a book chapter to an edited volume, so I felt like I had a small idea of what to expect but was very aware there was a lot I didn't know. When we started the process, I was largely focused on the logistics involved and the need for this type of book. I didn't realize how much I'd enjoy editing. It was great working with the authors and seeing their chapters transform from their proposal, to a draft, to the final version that got published. It was overall a really rewarding experience. I learned a lot of lessons though and would do a ton of things differently if I had to do it all over again. How about you, Krista?

KM: I really enjoyed the book editing process, but it was definitely a learning process for me as well. I've been a longtime editor of the Canadian history website ActiveHistory.ca, but editing a book was an entirely different experience that required a lot more attention to

detail and depth. I appreciate that we were able to co-edit this book; sharing the workload and having others to bounce ideas off of was incredibly valuable. This was a new venture for all of us as editors and we worked with a number of first-time authors. I love that we were able to make space for people to publish for the first time and help break down barriers to publishing. I am also really happy that we intentionally created space for authors to connect with each other, be that via Zoom or Discord—making the writing process a bit more community-centered than the average book project. What were some of your favorite takeaways from working on this book?

KKK: It's really hard to narrow it down, but without just repeating what you said, Krista, I really enjoyed that one of our chapter authors used a metaphor about how trans and gender diverse exclusion is like anti-bird and -pigeon spikes on buildings. Even with transantagonistic and trans-exclusionary policies in place, many of us still find our way into the profession. But in order for us to have true trans and gender diverse inclusion, people can't just say we're welcome and call it a day. It's not enough to have positive feelings or the absence of negative feelings towards trans and gender diverse people, you have to actually dismantle the anti-trans architecture you have in place. The metaphor worked well, and also I love pigeons.

SGK: My favorite thing about it is probably the finished book itself, which I'm super proud of. The chapters are really wonderfully written. Our authors did an incredible job and were so generous and thoughtful in what they shared. I don't know if another book like this, where trans and gender diverse people in a given profession are completely centered in these numbers, exists at all; if so, I haven't seen one. I would have found this book so valuable when I was a library student, and I'm so glad it exists now.

KM: Keahi and Stephen, I think we can be happy and proud that through this book we've created a generative space for trans voices. I hope one of the biggest takeaways for the readers of this article and our book is that we have to continue to intentionally transform publishing to remove barriers and lift up excluded and marginalized voices if we want to build a more inclusive profession. ✍️

Notes

1. Kalani Keahi Adolpho, Stephen G. Krueger, and Krista McCracken, *Trans and Gender Diverse Voices in Libraries* (Sacramento: Library Juice Press, 2023). Want to learn more about the book? You can read many of the chapters for free at <https://translisnetwork.wordpress.com/trans-and-gender-diverse-voices-in-libraries/>.
2. Trans and Gender Diverse LIS Network homepage, <https://translisnetwork.wordpress.com/>.