

CITY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

*Section 28 and Black History Month:
public libraries after the new urban left*

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January 2020

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of MSc in Library Science**

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Abstract

The advent of Section 28 and Black History Month had very different initial impacts on British public library provision from 1987 onwards. Equal opportunities policies in new urban left local government of the earlier 1980s led to an increase of LGBT+ literature in libraries and schools, leading to the punitive Section 28 law, which would lead public libraries to self-censorship. The abolition of the GLC led to Black History Month (BHM) as a legacy of race and ethnic minority unit work. In library services today a historiography of Black and LGBT+ lives has been built through Black History Month and the corrective LGBT+ History Month (LGBTHM) respectively, with both being observed in modern day British local library services. Using desk research, surveys and in depth interviews with British public library workers about their experience of these phenomena of the 1980s, this dissertation investigates this history, recognises the work done by library workers and the results. Findings include the comparison of library services who stood up or fell to self-censorship under Section 28, as well as understanding BHM as a successful legacy of the new urban left's LSPU and ultimately the value seen in BHM and LGBTHM by librarians today.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

'Section 28' legislation and Black History Month (BHM) as products of the new urban left era have had a significant impact on LGBT+ and Black public library provision since 1987. The advent of the new urban left brought an equalities provision watershed within local authorities in the 1980s. The Thatcher government reacting to the school and library supply of children's LGBT+ literature brought in the Section 28 law which would lead libraries to self censor. The GLC and the LSPU (both of the new urban left) would create Black History Month as a final legacy project after the GLC was abolished by Thatcher. With the new urban left and Thatcher's government, and the popular press battling over these issues, public library services would be impacted in the middle. Black History Month and now LGBT+ History Month (a corrective project of Section 28) are now observed and successful in many library services. This project will analyse primary resources and receive input from librarians during the period to contribute a historical account, as well as seeking to understand the legacy of these events in libraries today.

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was introduced by the Conservative government to restrict the growing availability of LGBT+ children's literature being available in local authority libraries, schools and nurseries (Petley, 2019, pp. 81-83). It affected all potential LGBT+ provision (for adults as well as children) in public libraries at the time. A year before, Black History Month formed as a Greater London Council (GLC) legacy project at the time of a wider public mood within Black British communities to reclaim, teach and celebrate Black history (Wong, 2016; Olusoga, 2017, p. 518).

This dissertation will outline the history of library provision and policy which both contributed to and were impacted by these watershed events, taking into consideration the legacy they have had on services today. It will also look at the possibility of library neutrality in a politicised climate, the perceived canon of literature and whether provision for Black and LGBT+ communities benefit from celebration months or if this can only lead to a risk of annexing of provision outside of the mainstream.

Rationale

This is an under researched area. Local authority libraries programme Black History Month annually, but little is known about the history of the implementation itself. It would be useful to have a greater understanding of how BHM meets library users' needs, as well as research into whether the celebration can counteract underrepresentation of Black contributions to history as was initially intended (Karenga, 1988). Similarly LGBT+ History Month proposes a LGBT+ historiography. Both projects contribute a dissemination of these ideas through multiple means within a library setting, which has a unique function in presenting history.

In 2019, we have extensive research into providing inclusive services, however, conflicting political forces have stifled progression on inclusive provision over the years. The culture wars between these forces such as seen with the new urban left (pioneering in equality provision) and Thatcherism (conservatism and austerity) continue to impact the services we see today.

Section 28 is now recognised as having a big social impact on LGBT+ representation in cultural services (Vincent, 2015, pp. 287-288), its origins stemming as reaction in part to *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin* and other LGBT+ literature becoming available to young people in libraries and schools. Investigating these historic events in more detail within a LIS context can hopefully help current practitioners to understand their relevance and to acknowledge the subsequent impact on current practice.

Existing literature summary

Some has been written on Section 28, particularly its impact on education and LGBT+ people within the education system (Sanders and Spraggs, 1989), but little investigating the impact in local authority-run libraries. Within LIS literature generally, John Vincent, Walker and Bates, Elizabeth Chapman and Ann Curry have discussed its impact within wider research.

Walker and Bates (2016, p. 280) looked at contemporary LGBT+ school library provision, finding it to be generally poor and that 'only small, localised improvements had been made' since the repeal of Section 28.

Ann Curry (1997) researched library directors' views on LGBT+ stock inclusion in *The Limits of Tolerance*, observing the impact of Section 28 on stock decision making whilst the law was in force.

John Vincent has written extensively on LGBT+ issues in library services. Including his own experiences and research on Section 28's impact in libraries, most thoroughly in a published working paper *Lesbians, Bisexuals, Gay Men and Transgendered People* (Vincent, 1999) and a chapter in *LGBT People and the UK Cultural Sector* (Vincent, 2014). *An Introduction to Community Librarianship* (Vincent, 1986) outlines guidance for providing library services to specific groups (such as LGBT+ or Black communities). Over the years he has written guidance for LGBT+ and BAME library provision. More recently, an article 'Why Do We Need to Bother? Public Library Services for LGBTQI People' for *Library Trends* (Vincent, 2015) and a chapter on mainstreaming resources (Vincent, 2019). He also contributes to this research in a survey and interview in chapters 6 and 7.

An understanding of the new urban left and the wider left movement within the Labour Party has had a resurgence of interest and therefore research. This is acknowledged as due to the Labour Party currently being under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and other recognisable figures from the new urban left era. Simon Hannah's dissertation *Radical Lambeth – the politics of the new urban left on Lambeth Council 1978-1986* touches on this. Similarly *Culture Wars: The media and the British left* edited by James Curran, Ivor Gaber and Julian Petley which covers the left's conflict with the media to the current day has been reprinted as a second edition due to this renewed interest (Curran, 2019a, p. 2).

Some has been written on 1980s Haringey and its LGBT+ equality work. Davina Cooper wrote a radical analysis following her own work as a councillor as a PHD thesis in *Sexing the city: lesbian and gay municipal politics 1979-87* by (Cooper, 1992), which was later condensed into a book with a similar title. She also contributed the chapter 'Positive images in Haringey' in *Learning our lines: sexuality and social control in education* (Cooper, 1989), which also included the chapter by Sanders and Spraggs, mentioned above. Susan Reinhold (1994) also covered the topic in her dissertation thesis *Local conflict and ideological struggle: 'Positive images' and Section 28*.

Little analysis has been written specifically on Black History Month in the UK. There is a brief overview of BHM in *Black history, white history* (Korte and Pirker, 2011), which looks at wider ideas of Black history within British society. Other books on British Black history useful for this thesis have been written by David Olusoga (2017) and Peter Fryer (1993). Stuart Hall's writing impacted the ideology of the new urban left (Payling, 2017, p. 258) and his analysis of Thatcherism and the left has also been relevant (Hall, 1988).

Within LIS literature there is only some passing acknowledgement of BHM events in writing with a separate focus (Chapman, 2015, p. 255; Corble, 2019, p. 268) and within some government reports such as one produced by John Vincent for Arts Council England which acknowledges BHM under Black library provision (Vincent, 2018a).

On BHM in education provision, Nadena Doherty (2019) researched the teaching of Black History and purpose of Black History Month at key stage three in UK schools. The research found that Black students experienced racial micro-aggressions 'symptomatic of wider racist structures and processes within the National Curriculum for history' (Doharty, 2019, p. 110).

This literature is referenced within the desk research chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 which chart the political context, Section 28 and Black History Month chronologically.

Due to identifying the limited literature on the topic, there is a research gap. This contributes a great deal to the decision for this dissertation to rely on testimony, additional benefits and negatives of this will be explored throughout. While chapters 3 to 5 investigate documents relating to this history, chapters 6 and 7 use testimony to add insight and reflect on the legacy of these subjects.

Chapter 2: LGBT+ and Black user needs

This dissertation focuses on Section 28 and Black History Month within British public libraries since the 1980s, events that began at a similar period and that had significant impact on library services for LGBT+ and Black communities. Services, particularly for these groups, should be specifically designed to meet user needs.

Catering for user needs in library services is considered central to LIS research and practice. This is demonstrated through interpretation of information behaviour, using ‘particular epistemological and ontological assumptions, personal and social values, and ways of knowing... [which] influence how members of various publics can access and interact with library services and information systems.’ (Gibson *et al.*, 2017, p. 753). These various publics account for diverse user groups of varying needs.

LGBT+ or Black users can face social exclusion and can be left out of service design. For example culture allows for a centring of assumed white subjects ‘placed centre stage and assumed as ‘normal’ (Gillborn, 2006, p. 318). Considerations in how these users (or even hard-to-reach as yet non-users) could be served were looked at under principles of community librarianship. John Vincent’s *An Introduction to Community Librarianship* (1986) outlines how to cater for groups such as Black users (Vincent, 1986, pp. 17-19) and Lesbians and gay men (Vincent, 1986, pp. 23-23).

In a contemporary setting these tend to be referred to as information needs, with reading for pleasure and wider cultural engagement that libraries are able to provide. The groupings used in Vincent (1986) differ to contemporary equivalents, but many of the needs are translatable. Similarly, across the time period, technology has changed for both libraries and their users, but the fundamental user needs can be recognised as similar.

Some recognised needs of Black and LGBT+ users

Reading for pleasure is a core user need, particularly of concern for public libraries. Mark Norman writing in 1999 about LGB resources acknowledges an academic literature gap in

regards to LGB fiction for the purposes of reading for pleasure in libraries (Norman, 1999, p. 190).

Another recognised need is space to discuss and organise. For Black liberation in South Africa, libraries were safe spaces in the Anti-Apartheid movement ‘for ideas and debate... in working-class areas with low levels of literacy where the books, as props, supported oral discourse’ (Dick, 2007, p. 710).

Criticism of library neutrality

There is a recognised tension between ideologies of library neutrality and the needs of marginalised groups. John Wenzler (2019, p. 56) describes how in LIS discourse neutrality is now widely seen ‘as a fundamental flaw in the traditional ethos of librarianship have become increasingly common in the mainstream discourse of the profession’. Wenzler explains that neutrality firstly allows for the status quo of the dominance of privileged groups over marginalised groups to prevail and secondly therefore, neutrality is a myth, as a position is always being taken.

Communities in crisis

Gibson *et al.* (2017) criticise neutrality when looking at how libraries need to serve communities in crisis. Their article ‘examines librarianship’s engagement with, and disengagement from black communities through the lens of the Black Lives Matter movement’ in the USA. Similar instances could include how librarians take austerity into account when delivering services, which has disproportionately hit Black and LGBT+ citizens (O’Hara, 2014, pp. 62-64; Field, 2016, p. 43).

Neutrality is also traditionally recognised as a trait of wider council officers, which was challenged under the politicisation of councils under the new urban left (Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, p. 91).

Chapter 3: The new urban left - Local government as sites of equality policies

Services under politics of the new urban left and Thatcherism, acknowledged an impossibility of this neutrality.

The new urban left defined a left wing, progressive and inclusive approach to local government which took place in many urban councils (most notably the GLC) during its height in the 1980s. Its beginnings grew as a coalition of new left members of the Labour Party from the late 1970s onwards, who, inspired by 'the leftwards shift within constituency parties and the ideas of politicians such as Tony Benn,' focused on moving the party left and taking up issues such as women's rights, racism and community based local campaigns (Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, pp. 6-8). These activists and their ideology took interest in local government as a site to make change using ideas of Marxist and inclusive localism to effect policy. The councils were additionally personified by the politics of their leadership such as Ken Livingstone at the head of the GLC in London, Derek Hatton in Liverpool and David Blunkett in Sheffield (Robinson, 2012, p. 139).

Local government as a site of resistance became practical, if not essential to the left as the Conservatives led by Thatcher won the 1979 general election. Local government became 'the only remaining site of power for Labour politicians. Changes could not be effected at a national level until Labour won a general election.' (Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, p. 9). Therefore the new urban left also came to be defined by their active opposition to Thatcherism and the Conservative policies of central government.

Simultaneously parts of the media began to identify the phenomenon of the new urban left (and by extension, the Labour Party) as the 'loony left'. The word loony was used as a 'pejorative label deployed by the popular press to delegitimise the 1980s new urban left' (Curran, 2019a, p. 1). This phrase was deemed ultimately destructive by Stuart Hall (1988, p. 263); 'Once the one-liner was launched, the deep symbiosis between Thatcherism and the press guaranteed it an uninterrupted flight.'

Stuart Hall (1988, p. 263) saw this labelling as provoking moral judgements from citizens 'It locked together in a single image high rates and political extremism with those powerful subliminal themes of race and sex.' The left representing a liberalisation in society, promoting the rights of minority groups such as LGBT+ and Black communities, against Thatcher who stood for conservative family values (Weeks, 2017, p. 318). When Section 28 came to be debated in parliament these binary arguments played out, as Lucy Robinson (2012, p. 179) observed 'where you stood on the politics of sexuality was a code where you stood on Thatcherism and the radical Left'.

The Labour Party in particular did not shake this reputation within much of the media, which made them electorally toxic until the 1990s New Labour rebranding of the party (Curran, 2019a, p. 3)

Femi Otitoju (2017) felt that the GLC's equalities policies have had significant impact on subsequent policies and laws but that the legacy was hidden, in part by Thatcher's abolishment, and according to the GLC Story (2017, p. 8) archive project because even 'New Labour were hostile to its legacy'.

The new urban left was largely broken up and had its power taken away by Thatcher in her abolishment of the GLC (GLC Story, 2017, p. 8), the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) (Mooney, 1990) and other large local authorities broken into smaller constituencies with less power (Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, p. 64).

Thatcherism

Margaret Thatcher was prime minister during 1979-1990 (Leach, Coxall and Robins, 2011, p. 21). Her pioneering politics, which in analysis became known as Thatcherism, combined perceived ideologies of monetarism, privatisation, hyper-individualism, anti-statism and the promotion of the nuclear family (Thomas, 1993, p. 27; Gilroy, 2002, p. xxxiii; Leach, Coxall and Robins, 2011, pp. 28-31). Her political legacy included the miners' strikes and 'the disastrous poll tax' (Leach, Coxall and Robins, 2011, pp. 28-31).

Thatcherism was further understood to describe an ideology beyond just a political project, more

so a politics that was smoothly embedded into British life, (Harris, 2015) with ‘deep roots in the political traditions of the right.’ (Hall, 1983, p. 10).

Thatcher’s anti-statist ideology of rolling back the state in particular, put forward the idea of a minimal state made by ‘a succession of curbs on local government spending’ (Leach, Coxall and Robins, 2011, p. 30). Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (1983, p. 11) saw this as a ‘roll back [of] the historic gains of the labour movement and other progressive forces’.

Thatcher suggested that as a result the state should interfere as little as possible with the nuclear family. Thomas (1993, p. 32) connected this promotion of the nuclear family with individual consumerism, described as ‘Decentralising power and placing it in the hands of the consumer is proposed by utilizing the structure of the family’.

Thatcher’s promotion of this conservative concept of the nuclear family (Sanders and Spraggs, 1989, p. 9) manifested as a ‘hidden ‘moral agenda’’ (Hall, 1988, p. 263) which would come into play over issues such as Section 28 and the AIDS crisis, to which the government response was also seen as poor (Charles Buckle, 2012, p. 111).

Leach, Coxall and Robins (2011, pp. 28-29) observe Thatcher and her legacy as controversial and acknowledge her admirers’ appreciation of her benefit to the British economy, as well as home and foreign policy whereas criticism from Labour, the trade unions and some Conservatives see her destruction to social cohesion, industry and public services.

Thatcher’s anti-statism saw her abolish many of the councils and bodies pushing forward the agenda of the new urban left. The perceived binary positions on the issue of race and sex (as outlined in the previous section) manifested in Thatcherite discourse which had ‘fused local government autonomy and the promotion of homosexuality together’ (Smith, 2009, p. 16).

Thatcher’s opposition to local government anti-racist and pro-LGBT policies were evident in her speech at the 1987 Conservative conference where she had been newly re-elected as prime minister:

In the inner cities—where youngsters must have a decent education if they are to have a better future—that opportunity is all too often snatched from them by hard left education authorities and extremist teachers. And children who need to be able to count and

multiply are learning anti-racist mathematics—whatever that may be. Children who need to be able to express themselves in clear English are being taught political slogans. Children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay.

(Thatcher, 1987)

Including this position in her speech returning to government put Thatcher clearly on the conservative side of the moral war that was being played out.

LGBT+ work of the New Urban Left and within lesbian and gay units

The ILEA (1986) produced a Positive Images booklist 'for use by teachers and librarians in secondary schools and further education colleges', for choosing books with LGBT+ subjects to support teaching or to be stocked in a school library. The booklist would come to be part of the controversy that led to Section 28 (Reinhold, 1994, p. 484). Generally however, there was criticism that the ILEA lesser followed the GLC's more radical policies, taking a more circumspective approach to LGBT+ rights, but were still portrayed as radical on these issues within the media (Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, p. 165).

Lesbian and gay units also were a product of the new urban left. They were implemented at the GLC and at many local authorities. Madeline Colvin (1989, p. 3) identified that 'most local authority services... are geared to the needs of heterosexual families and are based on the unexamined assumption that the population is uniformly heterosexual.' To understand and address the needs of lesbian and gay citizens, the units would look 'to research where discrimination exists, to offer proposals for policy improvement, to train officers to understand these policies and to encourage lesbian and gay members of the community to make use of services which may never previously have been offered to them, or which they have never before felt able to use.'

Haringey Council introduced the country's first lesbian and gay unit in 1986 (Otitoju, 2017; Cooper, 1989, p. 51). The unit published literature, such as leaflets explaining to residents what the unit did and how it worked. One leaflet (Haringey Council, no date) lists 'just some of the initiatives undertaken by various Council services mainly with the support of the Lesbian and

Gay unit and the sub-Committee in consultation with Haringey's Lesbian and Gay communities'. Amongst many areas of improvement, under community affairs it lists that it 'Made literature of interest to lesbians and gays available in libraries' and 'Put on films and exhibitions of interest to lesbians and gays in libraries and Bruce Castle museum'. The committee would make specific recommendations to the library service about books or magazines that should be bought (Cooper, 1992, p. 175). The unit was closed not long later, in 1990 (Reinhold, 1994, p. 480).

Positive Images was a phrase used again after ILEA's booklist. Firstly it was the name used for a Haringey Council education policy (to include positive images of lesbian and gay people in schools) (Cooper, 1992, p. 23) and later a local activist campaign in Haringey entitled Positive Images formed in September 1986 (Cooper, 1992, p. 190).

Similar work was also seen in other local authorities. Cooper (1989, p. 51) identified that Camden employed two officers in 1985 to report on the needs of lesbians and gay men. Islington also had a Lesbian and Gay Committee and the library service was noted for its involvement with the committee, developing lesbian and gay policies. As a result in the early 1980s Islington Libraries developed lesbian and gay collections, held exhibitions such as the Hall Carpenter Archives, ran consultations with the lesbian and gay community and adapted the library classification system so that LGBT+ issues did not come under the psychology classification (Cooper, 1992, p. 102).

There was evidence that staff would work across similar units and projects between councils and the GLC. Femi Otitoju worked at both the GLC and later the Haringey lesbian and gay unit (Otitoju, 2017).

The GLC had a gay working party which published *Changing the world: a charter for lesbian and gay rights* (Charles Buckle, 2012, p. 112). The GLC also funded the London lesbian and gay centre (Vincent, 2014, p. 48) and gave funding to Gay's The Word bookshop (Finch, 2017) which in turn libraries purchased LGBT+ stock from, as discussed in chapter 7.

In hindsight both some critics blamed Ken Livingstone and the GLC's radicalism regarding LGBT+ rights as giving the Thatcher government an excuse to implement Section 28 (Payling, 2017, p. 269; Robinson, 2012, pp. 145-146; Livingstone, 1998). Ken Livingstone (1998) later defended this work, stating that 'The GLC funded a study which showed that amongst young

lesbians and gays, half had experienced problems at school, many had been beaten up because of their sexuality, some had been evicted from their homes and some had tried to commit suicide. To have ignored this problem would have been political cowardice.'

Black inclusion of the New Urban Left and within Race units

Lambeth set up a pioneering race relations unit in 1978 (Hannah, 2018, p. 17; Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, p. 124) with an ongoing ethnic minorities working party set to work towards better BAME representation within the workforce and councillors alike (Curran, 2019b, pp. 9-10).

Lambeth's model was replicated by the GLC, setting up an ethnic minorities unit (EMU) in 1982 and soon afterwards 'similar bodies, in nine radical councils in London [were] created between 1978 and 1986' (Curran, 2019b, p. 10).

The GLC ethnic minorities unit would administer grants that community groups could apply for (Gilroy, 2002, p. 180). The GLC would create publicity declaring London 'as an 'anti-racist zone' and the announcement that 1984 was to be an anti-racist year in which the struggle against racism would be a continual and primary focus of the council's work.' (Gilroy, 2002, p. 181). Ansel Wong (2016) describes that this 'anti-racist momentum initiated by the programmes and priorities of the Ethnic Minorities Unit (EMU) of the Greater London Council' directly led to the vision of what would become Black History Month. Wong worked for the EMU from 1981 (GLC Story, 2017, p. 7) until the GLC's dissolution in 1986, after which he worked with the London Strategic Policy Unit on legacy projects such as African Jubilee Year and BHM (Zamani, 2004, p. 33; Addai-Sebo and Wong, 1988).

The period saw the rise of autonomous Black 'Cultural and political organisations, such as Sivanandan's Institute of Race Relations, the Race Today Collective, Southall Black Sisters and John La Rose's New Beacon were part of the broader new left' (Warmington, 2020, p. 26). Sivanandan was himself a librarian and Race Today and New Beacon Books had an impact on librarians and library collections (explored in chapters 6 and 7). Although these groups had convoluted relationships with the white left at the time, who were perceived as only being 'tentatively committed to multiculturalism' (Warmington, 2020, p. 26).

Black libraries

The new urban left developed calls for the renaming of buildings and roads after ‘to highlight the contribution made by blacks to world history as well as the multi-ethnic composition of neighbourhoods’ (Gilroy, 2002, p. 181). This project was later repeated in the African Jubilee Year Declaration. The policy affected a number of libraries:

Dalston CLR James Library was renamed as such in 1985 as part of Hackney Council’s own Anti-Racism Year, at the recommendation of the service’s Afro-Caribbean community librarian who recommended that at least one library in the community should bear the name of a ‘African/Afro Caribbean figure of local, national or intellectual repute’ (Watson, 2014).

Marcus Garvey Library in Haringey had its foundation stone laid by Marcus Garvey Jnr during the African Jubilee Year on 7th August 1987, the library would become operational in 1993. (Wanda, 2008).

Dalston CLR James library and Marcus Garvey library also had special Black Interest collections. The Dalston CLR James Library developed the named Three Continents Collection in 1989 (Durrani, 2016, p. 195) . Whereas the Marcus Garvey Library has a special collection of works by and about Marcus Garvey, as well as a Black literature section (Wanda, 2008).

A proposal by Lambeth councillor Sharon Atkin to rename all Lambeth libraries (and other buildings) after Black figures in 1986 was put forward but dropped by the council when met with local backlash (Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, p. 128).

London Strategic Policy Unit (LSPU)

The London Strategic Policy Unit (LSPU) was set up as the GLC was disbanded to save jobs and continue on some of the radical policies in process from the GLC (Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, p. 64). The LSPU was described as a legacy project in itself and existed until March 1988 when funding ran out (Finch, 2017; Lansley, Goss and Wolmar, 1989, p. 65).

There was a fairly smooth transition from the same people and projects being worked on in the GLC moving to the LSPU (Finch, 2017) with nine Labour-run local authorities contributing the funds for the LSPU's work (Wong, 2017).

The LSPU had a main committee (Addai-Sebo and Wong, 1988) and similarly to the GLC set up specialist units for women, race, police and economic development (Wong, 2017). The LSPU were instrumental in leading on the creation of Black History Month which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

Much was established by the new urban left, when in local government politicians and officers were able to lead on progressive inclusive projects. Race units and lesbian and gay units were set up and led on equal opportunities and positive images provision which would come to impact libraries.

Thatcher's moral crusade was supported by messages in the media and she had a quick response to abolish the GLC and other new urban left projects to fit the Conservative agenda.

The political battle between these two ideologies; the new urban left and Thatcher would impact on services such as libraries in the middle of this battle. Equalities work established by the identified councils, and at times within dedicated units set a precedent for ongoing work in these areas. With some evidence of lesbian and gay units working directly with libraries.

Chapter 4: Section 28

The Local Government Act (1988) included clauses to reduce the autonomous powers of local government and as a wider 'strategy for destroying the power-base of the Labour opposition' (Sanders and Spraggs, 1989, p. 6). The Act saw the introduction of competitive tendering, and a destruction of abilities to favour employing minorities which Anna Marie Smith (1994, p. 184) viewed as an 'attempt to reduce [local authorities] to de-politicized service delivery points'. Smith explained that placing a clause about restricting LGBT+ rights within the act was not an odd placing as 'Thatcherite discourse had fused local government autonomy and the promotion of homosexuality together' (Smith, 1994, p. 16).

Section 28 of the Act outlined that local authorities were prohibited from "intentionally promot[ing] homosexuality or publish[ing] material with the intention of promoting homosexuality", and "promot[ing] the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (*Local Government Act 1988*).

In impacting local authority provision it was interpreted that this could cause a withdrawal of local authority funding and facilities for LGBT+ groups, that films and plays in locally funded cinemas or theatres could be restricted, as well as library books and LGBT+ education in local authority run schools (Sanders and Spraggs, 1989, p. 29). As mentioned, much has been written on the law culturally and specifically in education but little has been written on the interpretation and impact within public libraries which will be discussed further.

There was fear and self-censorship within library services and its considered that the delivery of LGBT+ provision over the past 30 years has been largely impacted by the legislation (Vincent, 1999, p. 75). Section 28 was in place for approximately 15 years, until its repeal in 2003 (Mills, 2006, p. 253). Since the repeal in 2003, there has been some comment that not enough been done to reverse self-censorship and implement provision that fully addresses the needs of LGBT+ library users (Vincent, 2015; Chapman, 2015, p. 434), research in chapters 6 and 7 further library workers' observations around this.

However the legacy of Section 28 can also be seen in corrective initiatives like LGBT+ History Month which is celebrated in many libraries (Barr, 2019). This will be investigated also.

The positive images initiatives and wider LGBT+ equalities work of the new urban left in local councils, making LGBT+ literature available to young people were the influencers of the legislation, but also found their work at risk. This is outlined in the following section, depicting a before, during and after of this legislation.

Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin

A major instigator of the backlash that led to the Section 28 legislation is generally understood to be reporting of the availability of the children's book *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* (Charles Buckle 1995; Mars-Jones, 1988) in the mid 1980s.

The picture book, originally published in Denmark and translated into English, tells the story through photographs and print of Jenny who lives with her dad and his partner. They do normal family things such as eating breakfast in bed but also face homophobia in the street (Mars-Jones, 1988).

Allegations of the book's availability to children in London schools was first reported in a story in the *Islington Gazette* on 2 May 1986 and was reprinted throughout the following week by *The Sun* and *The Sunday Mirror*. The news stories contained complaints from teachers and governors around the book's un-Christian message 'force-fed' to their children by the Labour-run GLC (Petley, 2005, pp. 162-164). In fact, there was only one copy of the book at the ILEA's Isledon Teachers' Centre, which had never been seen by any children (Charles Buckle, 2012, p. 114; Petley, 2005, p. 164). Petley (2005, pp. 163-164), referring to *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* being published in 1983 (when it was only briefly covered by the *News of The World*), felt that the timing of the scandal in 1986 had entirely political motives. It was also falsely claimed by politicians in the resulting parliamentary debates that the book's publisher was grant-aided by the GLC (Smith, 1990, p. 44). After the media attention, then head of the ILEA Frances Morrell removed the book from being available at all to teachers and schools (Mooney, 1994, p. 44).

As well as the controversy around the availability of books within schools, a number of local library authorities also came under scrutiny.

Haringey

In 1986, at approximately the same time as *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* had been found in the ILEA teachers centre it was also found available for loan in Haringey Libraries by local activists the Parents Rights Group (PRG) (Cooper, 1992, p. 227). The PRG preceded to court media attention and lobby politicians over its availability, claiming to raid Haringey Libraries 'to remove copies of the book which they would then subsequently burn on mass fires.' (Cooper, 1992, p. 208)

Lambeth

Lambeth was cited in the parliamentary debates ahead of the Section 28 vote as having 'lesbian and gay books displayed in two Lambeth play centres'. This wasn't confirmed to be true, but John Vincent who was head of service at the time accepted that it could be 'possible' as under Lambeth's extensive outreach programme at the time (explained in more detail in chapter 7) there was a large amount of frequently refreshed stock as he explained in 2014; 'Lambeth Library Service certainly did lend a range of stock to play centres for young people, and it may well have included LGBT material; and *Young Gay and Proud* and *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* were certainly, rightly, available in public libraries' (Vincent, 2014, p. 50).

Media coverage

The negative delegitimisation of the 'loony left' continued in the media coverage, pinpointing the new urban left as responsible for the supply of these LGBT+ titles. This media attention was considered to be a large influence on the political decision to implement Section 28 (Charles Buckle, 2012, p.138). Just previously, the AIDS crisis had been a vehicle for homophobic sentiment in the press (Smith, 1994, p. 16) and the *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* seemed to be a continuation of this (Charles Buckle, 2012, p. 114).

The critical press stories included misreporting and attacks on library provision at this time, such as that the Haringey Labour Party wanted 'heterosexual books banned from libraries', that *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* was 'widely stocked in schools and libraries', the PRG's threat to hunt for and burn any copies of *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* found in Haringey libraries

and that 'Haringey Labour chiefs have agreed to put the book ... in the children's section of borough libraries' (Petley, 2019, pp. 83-89).

Research by James Curran and colleagues at the Goldsmiths Media Research Group (1987) had previously found that media attacks on the equalities policies of the new urban left as generally lacking in evidence and in some cases entirely false. Also, a Press Council judgement around the *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* stories found misreporting and a failure to correct these misrepresentations (Petley, 2005, pp. 163-164).

Public trust of tabloid press was actually very low, 'In 1988, only 12% thought that tabloids like the Sun were truthful, and only 25% said the same of middle-market papers like the Daily Mail.' (Curran, 2019c, p. 133). So there was little validity or trust in the stories which ultimately paved the way for Section 28.

Politicians input and parliamentary debates

As identified in Chapter 3 there was a specific Thatcherite ideological agenda to restrict LGBT+ provision. Politicians also cited the media stories in the parliamentary debates (Charles Buckle, 2012, p. 139). Politicians claims in the debates, like the claims in the press have also since have similarly been recognised as false (Smith, 1990). As well as *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, politicians complained of the availability of *The playbook for kids about sex* and *The Milkman's On His Way*, the latter of which was reportedly available in Haringey's libraries (Charles Buckle, p. 114).

Politicians who led the legislation included David Wilshire and Jill Knight. It was supported by Michael Howard, the then local government minister (Reinhold, 1994, p. 454; Petley, 2019, p. 103). Although Thatcher did not join debates on the clause, some saw it as 'her personal project' (Robinson, 2012, p. 171) and that she had given a 'personal blessing' (Petley, 2019, p. 104).

As the act reached the House of Lords, Lord Peston of the Lords' Library and Computers Sub-Committee (UK Parliament, 2019) was lobbied by the Library Association (1988a; Curry, 1997, p. 2) to attempt to add an amendment to Section 28 removing public libraries from being

affected by the bill. Unfortunately, the amendment was lost, 28 votes to 42 (McManus, 2011, p. 151).

Legal views of Section 28

The legislation was seen as 'imprecisely drafted and dangerously open to misinterpretation' (Colvin, 1989, p. 92) meaning that it could be interpreted differently, led by knowledge or confidence by a citizen, librarian, a barrister (such as Madeline Colvin) or in a court of law. Potentially the political persuasions and moral code of each would play a part also.

John Vincent explained that 'Lambeth, along with a number of other library authorities got legal advice, which told us that nothing we would do would actually contravene Section 28 because it was a completely useless bit of legislation' (LGBT Youth North West, 2015, pp. 67-68).

Interpretation of promotion

The first part of Section 28 read; 'A local authority shall not— (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality'.

It was unclear for a public library, whether by simply having LGBT+ books available this would be deemed as promotion, as stipulated as prohibited in the clause. The clause's author MP David Wilshire is alleged to have said that the 'production of positive images of homosexuals amounted to promotion' (Cunningham, 1987).

Rolph, A. *et al.* (1988) writing into the *Library Association Record* about these remarks from Wilshire suggested 'If this does become an accepted legal definition... will librarians be forced to remove from their shelves all material that shows lesbians and gay men as having equally valid life-styles as heterosexuals, including sometimes living with children?' The letter went on to ask the LA to continue to lobby the bill (as it was going through parliament), on the grounds that librarians have a duty to serve all groups in society without any discrimination.

Interpretation of a pretended family

Thatcher's ideology of the nuclear family was represented in the second line of Section 28. Part 1(b) read 'A local authority shall not... promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.' (*Local Government Act 1988*). This line only affects schools and not wider local authority provision (unlike 1(a)).

Madeline Colvin (1989, p. 49) understands that this prohibition would still allow teachers to have LGBT+ books on resource lists for teachers themselves or within teachers centre libraries but likely not allow them to be 'generally in the classroom or be freely available in a school library'.

Advice from bodies

Liberty produced a book, *Section 28: A practical guide to the law and its implications* by Madeline Colvin (1989), which offered a legal interpretation and practical guidance to bodies (including local authorities). Colvin advises to libraries that they can still acquire and display LGBT+ books and other materials 'under a gay/lesbian heading, if it so wishes' (Colvin, 1989, p. 22.).

The Library Association (1988a) distributed a published briefing to librarians outlining advice around how to continue with provision and any risks they may need to consider.

Contradictory legislation

There was also evidence that existing legislation could in some cases contradict or overrule the prohibitions within Section 28. The availability of LGBT+ library books could be seen as part of a library service's duty of equal treatment to provide a comprehensive library service for all under the Public Libraries and Museums Act (Behr, 1990, p. 133; Colvin, 1989, p. 10). The principles of equal treatment in the European Convention on Human Rights were also referenced as overruling Section 28 in library services' duty to serve LGBT+ users by Madeline Colvin (1989, pp. 11).

Libraries following the section after May 1988

Daryl Leeworthy (2019, p.126) describes the implementation as 'rapid' and that 'anecdotally, Section 28 had a stark effect'. There were soon examples across the country of the law being implemented.

In 1989, an Aberystwyth Library exhibition contributed to by local students was censored by the area librarian (Evans, 1989, p. 82). Presumably the same students, a group called 'Aberystwyth action against Clause 28' chained themselves to a radiator within the library with an intention to occupy the library over a bank holiday (Geraint Lewis, 1989, p. 709). Citing Section 28, the librarian D. Geraint Lewis (1989, p. 709) claimed 3 out of 50 items of display were removed, these including 'an advert for local gay discos and an advert for a gay Asian befriending service' (Leeworthy, 2019, p. 126). Following publicity of the incident in the *Gay Times* a letter written into the *Library Association Record* (Wintersgill, 1989, p. 582) claimed that the students' exhibition had not 'cross[ed] the boundary between expressing an opinion and presenting information, and promotion'. Geraint Lewis (1989, p. 709) responding via another letter in a later issue of *Library Association Record* confirmed that he felt the items contravened guidelines set by the local county council. Geraint Lewis described the protesters as a 'unscrupulous pressure group' and argued against Wintersgill interpretation of the risks of Section 28, suggesting that he supported the law, believing it could be implemented with 'a correct application'.

Wolverhampton Libraries were the only other authority found in the literature to have actively acted on Section 28, allegedly specifically removing *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin* from stock (Evans, 1989, p. 82).

Aside from these few examples, self-censorship in libraries was not found to be widely reported.

Libraries rejecting the section after May 1988

Some library authorities, particularly in areas of the new urban left took a radical position and stood against the legislation.

Tower Hamlets

The Tower Hamlets Lesbian and Gay Campaign Group gifted LGBT+ books and organised exhibitions in the borough's libraries in early 1988. These exhibitions focused on Section 28 itself as it came into law, displaying some of the books they deemed at risk (Bird, 1988; Library Association, 1988c).

Librarian Anne Cunningham defended the library service's right to display LGBT+ books, quoting Department of Environment guidance on Section 28, stating that 'The law has been widely misinterpreted in this issue... Globe Town libraries will continue to display books for loan that are of interest to ALL members of the community' (Tower Hamlets, 2019).

Haringey

Haringey's lesbian and gay unit ([Haringey Council, no date) acknowledged Section 28 as a 'serious challenge to lesbian and gay rights' and that 'the future looks uncertain but the Council has reaffirmed its commitment to equality for lesbians and gays'.

Unfortunately the Haringey lesbian and gay unit didn't last long after publishing this leaflet closing in 1990 and the work they were pushing forward would have come somewhat to an end.

In 1993 the Daily Mail reported that Haringey were continuing to stock LGBT+ childrens books such as *Daddy's Roommate* and *How Would You Feel If Your Dad Was Gay?* as well as stocking the Pink Paper, to the complaint of local Conservative councillor Jim Buckley (Massey, 1993). However, again this cannot be verified for accuracy, it does prove at least that this issue was still of concern to journalists and councillors.

Haringey's archives hold a copy of *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* that have library labels and stamps proving it was put into stock at Hornsey Library in August 1993, however there are stamps inside reading 'reserve stock' (implying possibly that it would have to be requested for, and not on open shelves) and a 'PG' sticker along with a dewey shelf number, presuming this signalled parental guidance (Bösche, 1983).

Brighton

There was published research on Brighton Central Library and Hove Central Library's LGB collections users by Mark Norman (1999). The research was undertaken in 1997 before Section 28's repeal in 2003. The research found both the separate collection increased access and a research gap in LGB users' needs. Norman (1991, p. 191) acknowledged the relevance of past research on librarians' anxiety around (the still in force) Section 28 in his literature review.

Librarians as activists

There is also evidence of library workers attending marches and speaking out against the legislation. John Vincent and Jan Holden (Chapter 6/Appendix 1) attended marches. These protest marches attracted thousands of protestors; in London 10,000 and Manchester 15,000 (McManus, 2011, p. 157). Similarly, it was generally reported that library staff in Islington campaigned against Section 28 (Gelder, 2018).

The *Library Association Record* included a small news piece detailing the Gay Librarians Group (GLG) mobilising against it, encouraging members to write to their unions, attend marches and the group produced it's own newsletter 'Stop Clause 28' (Library Association, 1988b, p. 65).

The silence of the 1980s and 1990s

The lack of information during the Section 28 era is recognised now by LGBT+ people who grew up using libraries during the time, Elizabeth Chapman (2012, quoted in Vincent, 2014, p. 6) refers to the 'silence' of LGBT+ topics in libraries during Section 28's period.

Similarly, LGBT+ activist Claire Blake contributing to an oral history project (LGBT Youth North West, 2015) remarked 'When I was at school there was no information at school, and there was also no information in libraries... it was very isolating and very depressing'.

Prosecution

No prosecution was ever brought forward whilst Section 28 was in force. Only an organisation called The Christian Institute attempted to bring a case to court against Glasgow city council for supporting a gay pride event and publishing gay sex advice on its website (Cook, 2007, p. 211).

Repeal

Section 28 was finally repealed in 2000 in Scotland and then the remainder of the UK in 2003. No evidence could be found of a direct response in library services at the time but CILIP produced lesbian and gay guidance for libraries in 2004 (Armstrong, 2006, p. 9).

Section 28 still has a legacy in LGBT+ provision in libraries. John Vincent (2019, p. 283) considers that LGBT+ provision is still very patchy and 'it is clear that libraries have considerable work to do'. He mentions that he has come across library staff who still believe Section 28 to be in force. This both raises the question of why these staff are not provided with accurate information, and suggests more clearly needs to be done by library leadership to correct this. Therefore Section 28 could still affect decision making on behalf of what libraries understand they are able to provide.

LGBT History Month

One way that libraries are serving LGBT+ users now is through the observance of LGBT History Month. Soon after the repeal of Section 28, Schools OUT, frustrated with the slow progress on LGBT+ rights in the school system, started LGBT History Month (LGBTHM) in the UK in 2005. LGBTHM existed in the USA and along with acknowledging the success of Black History Month in the UK, Schools OUT saw the opportunity to set up the celebration month, gathering support from the then Labour government (Barr, 2019; Fenwick, 2010, pp. 140-142).

The beginnings in library services are unclear but there are many library services today that observe it. Croydon's mayor ceremoniously opened an 'expanded LGBT section of the [central] Library' (Burgess, 2010, p. 58) for Croydon's LGBT History Month celebrations in 2010. Some

other recent library authorities that observe LGBTHM include Lewisham (Vincent, 2018a, p 36) and Lambeth (Lambeth Libraries, 2019c).

LIS research that has included analysis of the frequency of LGBTHM observance include Chapman (2015) and Guy (2016). Elizabeth Chapman (2015, p. 263) using a broad selected sample of local authorities found that most she questioned observed LGBT History Month in one way or another in 2013, but found that two authorities did not observe it at all. Similarly, Hannah Guy (2016, p. 119) – who sent out a survey found that of 37 respondents, 45.9% of their libraries celebrated LGBT History Month but more reported that they would look to observe LGBTHM in forthcoming years. Both of these instances confirm that observance is not consistent in all local authorities. With these studies being now a few years old, the observance within some may have developed.

A 2016 CILIP blog post authored by John Vincent and Elizabeth Chapman (2016) outlined best practice on observing the month. Evidence of how libraries observe LGBTHM include displays using posters and LGBT+ stock (Imrie, 2018; Chapman, 2015, p 269) and hosting of events (Lambeth Libraries, 2019c).

Robert Mills (2006, p. 254) regards that the use of libraries to host LGBTHM events (as well as bars, town halls, art galleries, museums and lecture halls) ‘bodes well for the potential accessibility of the events’, presumably as these public spaces are frequented by diverse members of society and promote the month further than perhaps if events were only in traditional LGBT+ venues.

Compared to Section 28, little opposition to LGBTHM observances could be found. There is some still from the press, as Mills (2006, p. 254) notes The Sun newspaper’s criticism of LGBT History Month in 2005 having a ‘linger[ing]’ of the same language used in the era of Section 28.

Pride and Pride Month

Chapman (2015, p. 141) also found only one authority in 2013 observing Pride. Since then there has been a rise in specifically the general cultural observance in Britain of Pride Month, a USA originated concept of celebrating the month of June as well as the specific Pride march day

(Library of Congress, 2019; Paskett, 2019).

Some evidence of Pride and Pride Month events include: Deptford Pride - a local community Pride in Lewisham, integrated a 'LGBT Family Fun Day' the same day as the local Pride parade, hosting a drag queen story time, crafts and film screening (Deptford Pride, 2019). Norwich millennium library, in 2012, had the Norwich Pride opening ceremony starting just outside their doors and included similar all day events within the library as part of the celebrations (Vincent, 2015, p. 290) and various events in Lambeth during Pride Month 2019 including crafts, drag queen storytimes and drag king workshops (Lambeth Council, 2019).

Conclusion

This chapter established library services' involvement in the controversies that led to Section 28, as well as understanding somewhat the effects on the same services afterwards.

Legal advice suggested there was little to no risk for libraries under the law, but as evident in the literature it still had a big effect as library services became more cautious for fear of being seen to promote homosexuality.

There are some examples of Aberystwyth and Wolverhampton libraries censoring materials, but self-censorship which was likely to be widespread was far less likely to be reported on.

There were some examples of library services immediately continuing to provide LGBT+ provision. Tower Hamlets in particular vocalised to their library users the incoming risk on LGBT+ literature availability. This could be considered a response to their communities in crisis as defined by Gibson *et al.* (2017).

Some examples were found in the literature of library users who grew up under Section 28 and the silence and lack of representation they found around LGBT+ issues.

The repeal 15 years later in 2003 did not release a sudden surge of lost LGBT+ provision, developments have been slow since but some headway has been made with LGBT+ History Month and Pride observances, although this is not consistently observed in all local authorities.

Chapter 5: Black History Month

Black History Month (BHM) created in the UK in 1987 sought to celebrate 'the monumental contribution of Africa and Africans to the economic, cultural and political life of London in particular and Britain in general.' (Zamani, 2004, p. 33). Library services today observing BHM present programmes of events featuring 'authors, films, music, dance, theatre and a month-long chance to learn about and celebrate African Caribbean Heritage and Culture' (Lambeth Libraries, 2019b).

Inspired by the celebration run in the USA since 1926, the first UK Black History Month was in October 1987 (Wong, 2016). It was created by Akyaaba Addai-Sebo with the support of colleagues from across the GLC and the LSPU (Zamani, 2004, p. 33), such as Ansel Wong, Linda Bellos, Ken Livingstone and Paul Boateng amongst others (Wong, 2016). Previously whilst living in the USA Addai-Sebo was involved in the project evolving Negro History Week to Black History Month in 1976, as part of which he initiated a programme with the libraries of the Washington DC metropolitan area, providing lectures to school children about African culture. Upon moving to the UK Addai-Sebo found work at the GLC where he worked as a coordinator of Special Projects. It was there that a colleague had told him that her 6 year old son, Marcus, named after Marcus Garvey had come home from school and had asked her why he could not be white. Addai-Sebo was deeply affected by the incident, which he felt exemplified happenings in 'the classrooms and playgrounds of the various schools of the UK, were so strong and powerful that they denigrated that person's identity which made that child question his identity as an African or being black' (Zamani, 2004).

Ansel Wong claimed a political intention behind BHM's creation describing it as 'a defiant gesture against Thatcher's abolition of the GLC. We were not going down with a whimper. We would use the death throes of the GLC and the little money left to make a statement of the black presence in this country and the validity of our multiple heritages.' (Wong, 2016). Sally Tomlinson (2019, p. 103) also noted BHM's creation was 'of particular irritation to Mrs Thatcher'. Interviewed in 2017, Ansel Wong saw a direct legacy between the early anti-racist work of the GLC and subsequent founding of African Jubilee Year and Black History Month (Wong, 2017).

Although Thatcher was able to abolish the GLC, Black History Month as one legacy project survived and has been institutionalised into mainstream library provision (Chapman, 2015, p. 255)

African Jubilee Year declaration

BHM was institutionalised by being outlined in 1987's African Jubilee Year declaration (Addai-Sebo and Wong, 1988, p. 319).

The declaration called on councils to sign up to a promise to uphold the GLC's existing anti-apartheid and anti-racist declarations, promote positive images of Africans, name streets, buildings and parks after Pan-African revolutionaries, support London African organisations and movements, pursue policies in accordance to these and mark African Jubilee Year as well Black History Month (Addai-Sebo and Wong, 1988, p. 319).

The declaration in regard to BHM read: 'The committee, the Association and the Authority hereby declare the period between August 1987 and July 1988 as African Jubilee Year and the month of October 1987 (and every October thereafter) as Black History Month, and undertake to organise appropriate events to publicise and implement the adoption of this Declaration and to encourage all other local authorities and organisations to do likewise'

Councils signing up to the declaration

It is understood that after the declaration was sent out, councils across London signed up to it (Wong, 2016). This was led strongly by council leaders who also had committee positions at the LSPU. In Lambeth for example, Linda Bellos presented the motion at (London Borough of Lambeth, 1987, item 20.4). Both Lambeth and Haringey (London Borough of Haringey, 1987, item 4) passed the declaration in July 1987.

As well as institutionalising Black History Month, the African Jubilee Year declaration (Addai-Sebo and Wong, 1988, p. 319) called on local authorities to uphold the GLC's anti-racist

declarations, promote positive images of African people, encourage the renaming of buildings after 'prominent personalities of the Pan-African revolutionary process' and support African organisations and liberation movements across London. All principles seen to impact or be part of library services of the era, from the renaming of buildings (Chapter 3) to anti-racist considerations in stock selection (Chapter 7).

Sam Walker writing in 1993 was not otherwise positive about African Jubilee Year but described it as 'partly successful' in its legacy in creating Black History Month (Walker, 1993, p. 5).

Black History Month – National consistency today

Writing in 1993, Sam Walker observed that 'Today Black History Month is celebrated by very few London Councils. In fact most councils no longer 'remember' or deliberately fail to organise activities for Black History Month' (Walker, 1993 p. 5). This anxiety about the erosion (or in some cases, slow uptake) about consistent Black History Month programming nationally now is continually discussed.

The following four categories identify levels of Black History Month provision; Full, partial, alternative and none. The analysis will also look at the representation of these within library services.

Councils with full programmes today

A 2019 article about Black History Month in the Camden New Journal highlights 'Southwark, Lambeth, Haringey and Hackney' as being boroughs notably providing full programmes (Cobbinah, 2019).

The Lambeth 2019 programme produced by Lambeth Libraries had 57 events listed, 49 of which were in libraries, the remaining 8 being in local community centres or the Black Cultural Archives (Lambeth Libraries, 2019). Haringey's 2019 programme included 120 events, only two of which were not held at their libraries (Haringey Council, 2019). After some 'diversity months'

(discussed below) Wandsworth returned to running a Black History Month programme in 2019 with 21 events listed, all in libraries (Better, 2019).

Alternatives to Black History Month

Wandsworth adapted BHM in 2014 to instead rebrand as Wandsworth Diversity Month (Mehta, 2018). This continued every October until 2018, when this change received local and national criticism in the press and social media (Andrews, 2018; Mehta, 2018; Weale and Booth, 2018). The library service subcontracted out to Better (GLL) included events and activities around 31 events in total, with only 9 concerning the Black community, others included Polish, Italian, Indian and Mandarin culture (Better, 2018).

In 2019 Wandsworth reinstated a full Black History Month, no doubt due to this backlash, with 22 events happening across libraries in the borough (Better, 2019).

Partial Black History Month programmes

Even Wandsworth Diversity Month had specific publicity; such as a brochure or presence on a council website. Many local authorities do not have easily identifiable full programmes.

The City of Westminster, as a central London council, had just six events in 2019, only one at a library (Westminster City Council, 2019). Although it had its own dedicated webpage and branding, having just the six events and no noticeable brochure, it is a very small observance compared to the full programmes of Haringey or Lambeth.

The London Borough of Havering, identified by Michelle Jackson (Chapter 5/Appendix 1) as having 'very few' Black History Month events in the 1980s', did not have a 2019 Black History Month programme easily findable on the website or events listed, but on their active Facebook page they had 4 events advertised with photos of posters (Havering Libraries, 2019).

The libraries identified as hosting partial programmes publicise their events very little outside library buildings and own communities, which can restrict the impact of provision. With well-known authors or special interest subjects library services can attract audiences from further

afield and outside of their typical communities. A local economic impact is also recognised by Walker (1993, p. 5).

In Wales Black History Month is delivered nationally by Race Council Cymru (as opposed to by a local authority), In 2019 they hosted 9 events across the country (Race Council Cymru, 2019) with none identifiable in libraries.

No Black History Month

Hillingdon, similarly to Wandsworth has been identified as a borough that lacked a Black History Month programme. In fact they clearly state that they purposefully do not celebrate it, with a council source saying 'Hillingdon has not participated in Black History Month for more than 10 years. The council constantly celebrates different aspects of our multicultural history and we do not restrict our activities to one month or any particular topic.' (Philip, 2019). Hillingdon has a Black population of 7.3% as opposed to the London average of 13% in the 2011 census (London Borough of Hillingdon, 2018, p. 7).

Sample of national provision

The intentions of the declaration intended the organising of BHM on a local (rather than national) level by each local authority. With 408 local authorities nationally, it would take a considerable piece of research to observe and quantify the extent of each's provision. This would require thorough data analysis or a consideration of an appropriate sample (as explored in Chapter 1).

Criticism of BHM

The institution of Black History Month is often criticised, for a variety of reasons including the local patchy observance. But most document criticism surrounds the concern that the subject is tokenised and annexed within only one month of the year, suggesting Black needs can otherwise be forgotten in mainstream provision.

Black studies academic Kehinde Andrews (2018a, p. 179) describes the institutionalisation of the month as a dulling down, that events are 'indistinguishable celebrations' and that the implementation by the state, rather than at grassroots loses any appeal for Black communities to celebrate their history. Andrews (2018b) also in criticism of Wandsworth's implementation of Diversity Month, views that Black history is 'too urgent' to be placed within one month. Korte and Pirker (2011, p. 253) say that the observance of BHM 'ultimately testifies to the fact that black British history is more present and accessible today, but not yet sufficiently interwoven with existent dominant narratives of the nation's historical culture'.

Nadena Doharty (2019, p. 124) argues BHM therefore annexes Black history and normalises the status quo. 'Black History in this case study has been shown to have a functionalist role in a way that 'normal' (White) History does not... Black History is racialised and annexed onto History for one month or a separate unit rather than being integrated, and inflicted with the problems of allowing whiteness to dominate the scope and direction of the histories of black peoples.' This concern is recognised and discussed by library workers in the following chapters.

Conclusion

A clear link between the latter work of the new urban left, is the LSPU setting up the legacy project of Black History Month. Over 30 years on, through growth and institutionalisation of the month has become part of mainstream library provision.

BHM is a large celebration in some library authorities running around 100 events during the month, but is hardly recognised in others. Future research could systematically analyse the national picture.

There is some anxiety and criticism of this lack of provision and Diversity Month in some local authorities, as well as the concern around the risk of poor general provision with the annexing of Black interests within one month.

The model of Black History Month replicated with LGBT+ History Month is testament to its success and recognisability. The two in contemporary library settings, along with the wider questions about annexing, separated sections and the users they seek to represent provide

questions to be discussed in the following chapter, where testimony from library workers help to build a picture of this success.

Chapter 6: Questionnaire analysis

This chapter will analyse responses from library workers answering structured questions around the subjects, with some input from the more in-depth interviews where relevant in drawing direct comparisons. Fuller in-depth analysis of the interviews will form the following chapter.

There were eleven respondents in total. Eight respondents by questionnaire only, one by questionnaire and follow up questions in an interview and two interview only. The questionnaire data is attached in Appendix 1. Appendix 1 contains answers from participants 1-9 and Appendix 2 contains answers from participants 7, 10 and 11.

With a focus on the research question I was interested in participants' memories of the historical events and effects of Section 28 and Black History Month. This is examined with the questions separated into these two topics.

Respondents roles and locations

Ten of the 11 participants worked in libraries during the 1980s, the other – Tim O'Dell was living in Lambeth and presumably using libraries, as he was aware of the events but did not become a librarian until 1995.

Some respondents had worked over a number of locations, so across the 11 participants, 12 different local authorities are represented. Six of the respondents had worked in Lambeth, therefore a focus on Lambeth (particularly through the interviews) will be looked at in Chapter 7. Local authority library services represented include: Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Havering, Westminster, Greenwich, Southwark, Northamptonshire, North Yorkshire, Sheffield and Gwynedd. As a self-selecting sample, I was happy with the range of locations as these include the perspectives of librarians both inside and outside of urban areas.

Participants had worked in a variety of roles or had various ways of describing their work, with job titles given such as: library assistant (reference and lending), cataloguer, bib tracer, a

Summer Reading Scheme assistant, Saturday library assistant, team librarian, principal librarian of community services, principal librarian of adult & special services, local history librarian, acting head of library service, specialist in children's work, children's librarian and principal children's librarian.

The local impact of Section 28 in local authority library services: Provision before Section 28

Lisa Gardner described how Lambeth had been buying and promoting Lesbian and Gay writing by producing booklists and buying from smaller bookshops with specialist stock (such as Gays the Word, Sisterwrite and SilverMoon). The service included Lesbian and Gay viewpoints and experiences in an in-depth analysis of collections on a variety of topics, such as an analysis of pregnancy and childbirth materials which included materials for gay, as well as heterosexual, people wishing to become parents. She commented that there wasn't much around in the 1980s on the subject. Similar projects existed elsewhere, such as Jan Holden explaining that Sheffield had a gay men and lesbian policy development group.

This active consideration for LGBT+ groups prior to Section 28 had the potential to be lost with the legislation coming in. John Vincent observed that 'There was a reasonable level of provision in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but much of this disappeared after Section 28 – and much was not restarted after 2003'.

Personal reactions

Library workers used emotive words about how they and colleagues at the time felt about the legislation coming in. Using words like 'frustration', 'angst', 'increased fear', 'shock', 'panic', 'concern' and 'scared' to describe their remembered reactions and workplace moods.

Lisa Gardner said there was a lot of concern by many colleagues. John Vincent and Jan Holden went on marches and demonstrations.

Hywel James explained that ‘Shock was the main response in the library service to this central government attempt to censor information by putting pressure on local government and its services (education and libraries in particular). Although it took place against the background of the HIV/AIDS public health campaign many thought the government’s approach was heavy handed but typical of a Conservative Government.’

Responses to the legislation

There was some self-censorship. Mark Freeman felt that ‘Services were scared to fall outside the law and probably panicked into denying services which could have been delivered’ and that Section 28 allowed for ‘extreme views to prevail’. Tim O’Dell said ‘Initially there was fight-back and formally people felt it was wrong but it had an insidious nature.’ He explained that it opened up permission for impact from homophobic staff and readers as well as ‘within management... it was a reason to question everything’. Chris Dobb mentioned negative reaction from the community when some local residents stirred up a controversy around some of the books that were essentially banned but were in the reserve store with careful access.

However, in some instances services for LGBT+ people did continue. John Vincent referred to the booklists at the time in Lambeth - *Stories and poems by and about lesbian women: a booklist* and *Creative writing by and about gay men: a booklist* (both published 1987), which were accompanied by book displays after Section 28 came in. He explained that Lambeth ‘continued with provision much as before although this wasn’t without problems.’ Lisa Gardner, also in Lambeth, agreed that ‘in practice we went on buying the same materials as before. I don’t recall any change in procedures.’ Although staff had to do an audit of where controversial LGBT+ books were in Lambeth’s libraries, none were removed. Later in the 1990s in Lambeth Tim O’Dell said that Section 28 was largely ignored on the ground.

Chris Dobb also responded that Section 28 ‘did not stop the purchase of ‘acceptable’ materials and Jan Holden said that it made library workers ‘more imaginative’ in their methods.

There was however an impact on initiatives that might otherwise have been taken. In Havering, Michelle Jackson felt there was no longer an open approach. In Lambeth, John Vincent said there were still initiatives, but lower-key, for fear of political opposition.

Mark Freeman in North Yorkshire explained that 'although we did buy stock during that time, we couldn't "promote" it and this led to a difficulty in being able to share the importance of such things as teenage novels around that theme. The first time we were able to "promote" materials for the sector was when we undertook the Branching Out Reader Development programme and this took place whilst Section 28 was still in force. The staff training programme associated particularly with LGBT fiction required a specific element to ensure that we were prepared for any comments and to make sure that anything that we undertook did not contravene Section 28.'

There was little evidence of staff removing books, but some books were put in reserve stores, as according to Chris Dobb, Hywel James and Michell Jackson.

Hywel James explained that the press controversy and politicians questions around *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* led to children's stock deemed sex education being moved from open access shelves to a reserve stock for adult request only. 'This was the case I believe until 2003 when the reserve collection was dispersed to libraries,' said James. Other participants referred to the perceived thin line between LGBT+ books and books of an explicit sexual nature with Michelle Jackson explaining 'some LGBT books were restricted access, however this was probably more due to sexual content'.

Quality of LGBT+ stock in the 1980s, and now

Lisa Gardner remembers in particular the poor quality of children's books representing LGBT+ families 'I remember particularly a meeting about representations of families and relationships in picture books and we struggled to find good materials representing LGB relationships and families. There was one called *Heather has two mommies*, and another called *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*. Neither were fantastic books but that was all there was.' Chris Dobb, supposedly referring to similar titles, said that 'the books that became notorious were already a bit old hat anyway!'

Participants overwhelmingly felt that stock had now improved since then, in regards to LGBT+ representation. 6 said yes (that stock had improved), 2 said yes and no, and 1 said they didn't know. Mark Freeman described that there were now 'far more resources'. Michelle Jackson saw

that library managers were now generally 'planning their services to include LGBT representation, whether it's stock or events'.

In locations where participants identified LGBT+ library collections to be poor, austerity and cuts in funding were thought to be to blame. John Vincent also felt that some staff had 'an unease with/lack of knowledge of the materials'. He was aware of some authorities now with noticeably 'thin' LGBT+ collections. There were some comments about the users of LGBT+ collections, Chris Dobb saying 'I find that for the more middle class LGBT+ people they generally have their own ways of acquiring reading material and don't rely on public libraries to any great extent.'

There was also concern about resources for events. Hywel James felt that the provision of events was markedly different to the availability of good stock with 'limited resources it would be difficult for small rural authorities to ensure programming of events specifically aimed at the LGBT+ community.' Chris Dobb identified that attendance at LGBT+ events at his authority had been low.

Austerity and limit on resources

John Vincent's reference to the 'thin' collections and Hywel James referring to limited resources for events are undoubtedly connected to other respondents' comments about the connection to austerity on library services, and that impacting specific initiatives with marginalised groups. John Vincent felt that 'the effects of austerity have meant that funding for purchase of library materials is limited' and has recognised collections as a result as being 'pretty thin'. Chris Dobb observed that over the period 'there has been a big decline in the use of public libraries generally which is partly attributable to savage cuts.' There has been wider writing on austerity in library services as 'a loss in the everyday' (Robinson and Sheldon, 2018), remarking on the lost essential spaces of closed libraries. Even within libraries that survive and stay open during and after austerity, the core runnings and therefore collections and services are affected. With it being established that marginalised groups (including specifically Black and LGBT+ people) are broadly disproportionately affected by the last decade's programme of austerity (O'Hara, 2014, pp. 62-64; Field, 2016, p. 43), the responses in this research suggest that marginalised groups have also been disproportionately affected in cuts to library services designed to respond to their specific needs.

There is a suggestion that libraries could have done more to counter prejudice and represent LGBT+ people if the services had not been hit by the combination of these cuts and Section 28.

LGBT+, how far have we come?

Chris Dobb thinks that a greater 'influence has been the popular media' contributing to a change in understanding and representation of LGBT+ lives. Respondents generally agreed with sentiments such as that libraries could 'play their part' with developing understanding and representation. Mark Freeman acknowledges that 'attitudes have now changed considerably but that we still need to push forward and to remember our history.'

Hywel James recognised that in pointed cases, libraries meeting information needs could help; 'Access to suitable information at the proper time can certainly change lives - libraries, and public libraries have always struggled to show or measure their impact but from responses received as a librarian and hearing how users have taken advantage of what is offered, I think that libraries have contributed to a greater understanding of LGBT+ lives, whether that includes a fair representation it is difficult to confirm.'

The origins of Black History Month in local library services

I was interested to find out more about the first Black History Month events in libraries and how programmes grew. So the first question was 'What are the earliest memories you have of Black History Month, and connected events in libraries in your borough?'. With this question I hoped to acquire some information about how early and in what form library services began to take on BHM programming, as this was something that there seemed to be little literature about. Certainly there is no academic literature on this topic and the earliest archival documents I found listing various Black History Month library provision spanned from 1989 (the first booklist) to 1999 (the first programme of library events) as identified in Chapter 5.

There aren't many particularly clear answers, with rough dates quoted. In Lambeth, Tim O'Dell recalls 'Late 1980s', Lisa Gardner who worked in Lambeth in the 1980s recalls her earliest memories as being 'Working in West Norwood Library in 1980s and selecting materials for a

book display in the library.’. John Vincent ‘remembers BHM starting’ but more in his role as Grants Officer at the Black Cultural Archives during the 1980s. Len Reilly didn’t recall Black History Month happening during his time at Greenwich in the 1980s, it was ‘not til I worked at Southwark in the 1990s’.

Jan Holden from Sheffield did not include a date or time period but stated ‘We celebrated BHM in libraries in Sheffield with events and materials’. Mark Freeman’s first memories of Black History Month in North Yorkshire was their Branching Out programme, which he remembers as being in the early 1990s. Branching Out was a programme run by Opening the Book that helped library authorities embed reader development principles into their service. According to their website the first Branching Out programme was in 1998, so this could be a more accurate time period (Opening the Book, 2019).

As across the board rough dates or estimates were quoted, it appears that BHM in libraries was applied piecemeal locally, growing organically over the years. The declaration raised by the LSPU certainly was observed as motions at council level in 1987 (London Borough of Lambeth, 1987; London Borough of Haringey, 1987) but joining up with library services appears to be a later, but still frequent, adoption.

Understanding of Black history

Most respondents felt that BHM had a positive effect on awareness around Black history, with some answering ‘yes or no’ to some extent but not entirely.

Hywel James identified that Black History Month’s ‘associated material helped library staff to access material on Black History especially at a time when the Anti Apartheid movement was gaining momentum in the late 1980s leading up to the release of Nelson Mandela’. Clearly identifying an information need for the authority’s population, to be able to have resources to understand the historical context for current affairs. It also suggests a new availability of this ‘associated material’ published or available via companies Books for Students or Children’s Book Foundation (now Book Trust) which produced lists which included small publishers.

In addition, in regards to representation in children's stock, he expresses that as both a children's librarian and a parent of BME children he 'ensured that positive images of BME children and cultures were stocked and old stock with negative images (e.g. Golliwogs.Red Indians) deselected and discarded'. He notes that Black History Month was more represented by these initiatives with stock and information provision rather than with events.

Len Reilly thinks BHM is positive but is perhaps misnamed in that the programming has come to include 'all aspects of Black culture' (rather than just Black history) and regarding any evidence of the benefits of Black History Month, that 'in part only black communities can answer that'.

Positive observations included John Vincent recognising that BHM had 'raised the profile of... black authors' Mark Freeman agreed that he thought BHM had a positive effect in 'the same way as LGBT History Month'. Michelle Jackson felt that BHM had 'definitely' helped promote Black history, that it 'has grown over the decades'.

Lisa Gardner agreed that it had helped develop a support of Black history, and gave an example 'I am so pleased there is now a postgraduate course in Black History which is UK focused now being run at Goldsmiths'. Indeed the advent of courses at Goldsmiths and Birmingham City University add prestige to the discipline and is also undoubtedly necessary to improve on the low numbers of BME staff and students involved in the field of History in UK Universities (White, 2019).

Advocating for BHM now

Jan Holden explained that she still felt a struggle advocating for Black History Month. 'I am still having the same arguments about 'why black history?' in my current role, however I am more confident in my answers I don't know if that is a product of age and experience or if the world has changed. I am anxious however that the current political situation means we are going back in time.' These comments about the negative impact the current political situation in the UK (like comments around austerity above) could have on initiatives like Black History Month ran frequently, in terms of political mood.

A UK wide Black History Month?

With BHM being run locally council to council, Chapter 4 found that observance was patchy across authorities. The questionnaire confirmed similar concerns from the participants.

Mark Freeman felt that 'only quite a narrow part of the population is aware' of Black history and that part of the blame is that 'Black History teaching in schools is still very patchy'. Something observed in research by Nadena Doharty (2019).

John Vincent is concerned about BHM's effectiveness if it is only 'seen as something that areas with high numbers of BAME people get involved with, rather than it needing to be celebrated UK-wide'. Michelle Jackson who worked at the London borough of Havering 1984-1998, raised this concern. She recalled that events associated with Black History Month were 'Very few. I do not recall any events and at the time, Havering was the least ethnically diverse borough in London'. Chapter 5 looked at the extent of Havering's 2019 BHM, identifying it as only partially observed (some events, without a full programme). The borough still has a low ethnic diversity according to the 2011 census, which found that Black Africans – although the largest BAME group in the borough – make up just 3.2% of the population (London Borough of Havering, 2018). Michelle Jackson now sees a greater awareness and leadership regarding BHM from library managers and describes it as a 'success'.

Hywel James of Gwynedd and Mark Freeman talking about North Yorkshire also identified their local authorities as having a low BAME population. Whilst recognising this, all communicated an importance still of Black History Month for these populations.

This is something that has been the concern of Black historians such as Peter Fryer (1993, p. 6) who observed that 'white people need to know something about black history, since for us it furnishes a version of British history that strongly challenges our national sense of smugness and self-righteousness, our avowal of fair play... British history cannot be written honestly or taught honestly without taking into account the contribution that black people have made to it.' Similarly, the established concept from Rudine Sims Bishop who saw the ability for white children to read diverse books as 'windows onto reality... where children... may meet people unlike themselves' (Bishop, 1990).

Performance artist and writer Travis Alabanza (2019) wrote specifically around BHM; 'I would love to see Black History Month as a time when not only black folk are celebrating, reflecting, working but when non-black people also use the month as a time to interrogate their relationship with race, their complicity in the system, and how to be an agitator of it'.

The development of Black provision

All respondents still working in public libraries felt that BAME library provision was better now (those that didn't feel they could comment no longer work in the sector). Jan Holden felt the provision was 'less tokenistic' than in the 1980s. Chris Dobb thinks that again possibly good provision is only more evident 'in authorities where there is a large black population and/or if there are interested library staff'.

Michelle Jackson saw a positive change in the way that library managers took on an interest in the provision, 'library managers are much more aware of their communities and towards the end of my tenure, the word 'inclusive' used more frequently to reflect changing attitudes.' Mark Freeman agreed that library services were more aware of and catered for their local communities: 'I think we have all become much more aware of the diversity of our communities and to be fair, they too have changed very much over recent years.'

Hywel James gave a bit more detail on the increasing availability of a range of stock; 'in Gwynedd events such as Black History Month and its coverage in the professional press and support from some publishers and library stock suppliers meant that the range of stock improved which made book selection and making it easier to respond to requests for specific material (e.g. ' world religions/ festivals and legends /ethnic foods etc).'

Lisa Gardner said she would 'imagine stock was better' but was one of the respondents who no longer worked in a public library so felt she couldn't really comment. She recalled difficulty in finding relevant stock while at Lambeth 'In selecting materials for display one of the challenges was finding materials which were about and by Black people in the UK. Although we bought publications from small and community publishers (New Beacon etc) as well as mainstream ones, much of our holdings were of Black US experience and history.'

John Vincent had the 'impression ... there are library services (such as Lambeth and Birmingham) which are making good levels of provision; I think this is probably better than it was in the 1980s, but the effects of austerity have meant that funding for purchase of library materials is limited. However, there are others (such as my home library authority, Devon) where the stock is pretty thin.' Again similarly to the impact on LGBT+ stock he identified poor collections as a result of austerity.

The legacy of the 1980s

In conclusion, the participants were asked what they felt was the legacy of library provision of the 1980s were, with particular reference to Section 28 and Black History Month.

Tim O'Dell felt the political landscape was relevant. 'The 1980s are seen as a period of 'political correctness' - the rise of the Black sections in the Labour party, identity politics, etc. but that was all in response to a really vicious government assault on people: Serious racist attacks, Section 28, attempts to roll back abortions rights - the re-establishment of the nuclear family – Thatcher's 'there is no such thing as society'. Section 28 was one of many rights being stripped away, and BHM one aspect of Black activism of the period.

Another aspect is regretted by Tim O'Dell who said that although the legacy of the period was 'a greater understanding of the need to build alliances and to try to tackle institutional discrimination but also, unfortunately, the absorption of many of the leadership of that struggle into the institutions themselves.'

Some respondents thought the history was being lost with many workers of that generation having retired and 'a lot of wheels being reinvented' (Jan Holden). Chris Dobb said that younger staff 'are very supportive of Black History Month, but don't have the same level of passion for it, quite understandably.' This raises a question about how legacies and library histories are handed down to future generations of library staff, to ensure other priorities don't dampen enthusiasm.

There were some positive comments, for example Jan Holden says 'it's easy now to have conversations about ethnic minority and LGBT issues even in large rural county authorities like

the one I work in now. It's mainstreamed it more. I was able to bring BHM to the rural county I work now, 20 years ago and it's brilliant!

Similarly Michelle Jackson mentions a growth; 'Black History Month has grown, it is a success and many organisations have contributed'

Mark Freeman feels that the legacy now is that 'We live in a much freer society that we did but cannot be complacent', a sentiment later agreed with in the interview with Abibat Olulode. He continues; 'there is still a need for our libraries to support both people of colour and people from the LGBT+ community.' Referring to these groups' specific user needs when accessing library services. Also that these needs continue to exist and continue to be something that libraries need to consider.

Hywel James' thoughts were that 'In Public Libraries the legacy of this period can be seen in the more 'liberal' selection policies and an increased belief among professional library staff that its moral and ethical code is an essential tool and important guide especially when faced with the vagaries and prejudices of central and local government.' His comments suggest that liberalising stock selection policies likely mean in thanks to initiatives (such as BHM and LGBT+ booklists and other events of the time) an increased interest in a diversity in stock to be both published and made available for libraries to purchase since. Also the moral and ethical codes seen as important increasingly by library workers, which is evident in LIS literature and policy such as the CILIP ethical framework (CILIP, 2019).

John Vincent refers to recent conversations with colleagues around the question of the era's legacy, suggesting that it is a relevant topic of interest to practitioners. He said 'Some people think the legacy was generally positive – but I think they are either too young or too apolitical to understand the damage caused by Thatcherism, the cuts, and the general politics... so much time was taken up in warring with either central government over funding and over a general tightening of curbs on freedom such as Section 28, or local politicians who wanted to set an agenda that did not match their elected rhetoric!'

Vincent's other description of those who saw the legacy as 'generally positive' was 'too apolitical', suggesting that some library workers do not engage in their work with a critical or social justice focus. The view of a need for core principles of social justice to be needed for

inclusive library services has been a concern of LIS research (Muddiman, D. *et al.*, 2000, p. 59). A binary opposite of this is the recognition of neoliberal LIS environments which values marketisation (McMenemy, 2009) a key component and legacy of Thatcherism (Hall and Back, 2009, p. 684).

The 'time taken up warring' with government stopped library workers and/or activists continuing with more progressive initiatives, is certainly regrettable, but the work itself and the general work pushing forward equalities provision by library workers at the time (as demonstrated in the literature and this research) was valuable.

Mainstreaming provision

Considerations around mainstreaming were common in participants' responses. There were some examples that Black and LGBT+ provision has become more interwoven with general practice. Len Reilly saw the legacy of work in the 1980s of being 'in urban areas to make work with minorities mainstream'. Some authorities have entirely mainstreamed LGBT+ and Black stock, as described by Chris Dobb: 'A lot of the designated collections we built up for BME communities and LGBT+ have been drastically reduced - but this is largely because we have mainstreamed a lot of these materials and people don't see them so much as a separate collection. Many of the books we might have included in these collections are now reviewed and promoted entirely as any other books - so we are expected to have them in the usual ways.' It is worth also identifying Dobb referring to these collections as being 'drastically reduced', there may be outside factors such as a wider wealth of information sources for users now, but if stock is reduced even within the mainstream, this results as being a thinner selection of options for potential readers from these communities.

Len Reilly's observation that this work is in urban areas, may be that his work within inner London (Greenwich, Southwark and Lambeth) it is recognised as becoming mainstream, but also implies that he thinks that this work may be lacking in rural areas, as identified previously with participants seeing provision variable across authorities nationally.

Of the participants who were hesitant to answer the question on legacy and some felt they

couldn't answer the question. Lisa Gardner felt that it was 'a very hard question. I don't think I can answer it'.

Conclusion

Historical context was given to Section 28 and Black History Month. Section 28 was predominantly remembered for the anxiety and anger it caused to participants and their colleagues. Black History Month appeared organically at different time periods throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with some librarians finding it hard to advocate for within their local authority, which has improved since.

There was generally a fondness for BHM, with some concern of consistency on the subject of regions that did not observe the month. Initiatives around it widened access to Black literature being available to libraries, that in one region had not otherwise been available before. Libraries following BHM helped standardise an understanding of the need to serve ethnic minorities at strategic and management level. There were examples of librarians when moving authorities taking with them their standard application of BHM and implementing the observance in their new workplace.

There was a consensus in understanding of how the era and the phenomena of Section 28 and Black History Month have since effected LGBT+ and Black provision, with comparisons made between the benefits of LGBTHM and BHM today.

In regards to current provision; participants raised the increased trend mainstreaming of LGBT+ and Black stock into general fiction and non-fiction areas, as opposed to their own locations, with some acknowledgement collections had gotten thinner. There was concern around the poor practicality or popularity of specifically LGBT+ events.

Participants were quite realistic in regards to giving library services credit for provision on knowledge of Black history and LGBT+ issues, recognising that other cultural aspects have a part to play, and where libraries and wider society has failed to represent these groups.

Austerity was mentioned by respondents to have had a great impact on provision for these

groups. One example being; reduced funds to buy and build good collections. There was a general feeling that this combination of austerity and Section 28 has impacted the ability to provide good LGBT+ provision over the years.

There were some differences in opinion and provision that were hard to compare. Where there were very different views on the same question, may suggest that policies and provision in these very different authorities may be different now, or have been very different from each other in the 1980s. Therefore difficult to compare to each other.

It is felt that provision has been historically built upon but there was a comment that services now could be prone to 'reinventing the wheel'. The era is not necessarily remembered fondly, specifically the perceived harms caused by the Thatcher government (of which Section 28 was one) with participants contributing to protest marches and remembering conflict with local and national government.

Chapter 7: Interview analysis

Three librarians who worked for Lambeth libraries were interviewed. Oniel Williams and Abibat Olulode, current Lambeth librarians, have both worked for the service since the mid 1980s. John Vincent (who also completed the questionnaire) worked in Lambeth Libraries 1974-1996 but continues to work closely with the library sector. Having insight from these three participants whose memories, perceptions and experiences spanned these years has contributed more detail, of the impact these events had on one library authority. It appears from the interviews that Lambeth was a local authority that resisted Section 28 to an extent. There is already a good deal of literature about section 28 but these interviews provide new material about establishing Black History Month in this borough and is therefore what is focused on in this chapter.

There were two major aspects of policy and provision referred to throughout the interviews: the outreach programme and stock selection policy. These are both identified in Black and Muddiman's *Understanding Community Librarianship* (1997).

Outreach

Lambeth's outreach programme was developed by children's librarian Janet Hill (Vincent, 2018b) in the 1970s. By 1982 it had grown to provide deposit collections of library materials with regularly changing stock at over 500 community organisations within the borough (Vincent, 2018b; Black and Muddiman, 1997, p. 85). Oniel Williams lists some examples such as 'community organisations, old people's homes, sheltered flats, children's homes, mental health centres, community groups, information, surgeries'. Librarians listened to the needs of these community groups, Oniel Williams explaining; 'the outreach programme had a much broader base and the libraries in Lambeth could reach out to them and involve them in delivering a service to them'. Consequently, multicultural representation became a core consideration in building the outreach collections, and in turn Lambeth librarians could feed back user needs to publishers (Black and Muddiman, 1997, pp. 83-84). Another aspect of the

outreach programme was bringing storytelling (another core library provision) to community spaces and council estates, as mentioned by Abibat Olulode.

Stock selection

A thorough stock selection process is associated with this era in Lambeth. Librarians would take consideration when choosing stock, often upholding moral and professional standards, rather than allow censorship or localised bias.

John Vincent explains that Lambeth librarians would hold weekly meetings to discuss and select stock. It was 'around 1981-82, that sort of period, we were reviewing a lot of children's books and some adult books and we were building up a really good knowledge of what was available.' There would be a specific interest in diverse stock and librarians built relationships with booksellers such as those local to Brixton or would stock diverse books such as Ira O'Flaherty, Gay's the word, Peckham Bookplace, Centerprise Bookshop and Sabarr Bookshop. John Vincent talking of Ira O'Flaherty, explained that it "specialised in LGBT, Black and particularly American material, so we'd get approvals from him as well and we could go to his bookshop and select stuff.' The service would buy this stock to supplement purchases from mainstream suppliers.

Librarians would read and meet to review stock that could be deemed 'controversial or edgy' as Abibat Olulode describes it, 'we would have to read the book and then write a report on it and say whether we were going to recommend the book to be stocked or not'

The policy attracted notoriety with the local press and some readers alleging censorship. Abibat Olulode explains 'It was a policy that was quite controversial that got Lambeth in the headlines quite a lot because it was reported that we'd 'banned' books in inverted commas, that we thought portrayed women in a derogatory way or that was racist or things like that and it would get in the papers and be a bit of a fuss. I think at the time we were still very liberal.'

Section 28 in Lambeth

The impact of Section 28 in Lambeth was briefly covered in Chapter 4 regarding LGBT+ children's book availability in Lambeth play centres (available through Lambeth's outreach programme). Also mentioned in Chapter 6 by Lisa Gardner, was an audit on where LGBT+ books were on shelves in the borough. Tim O'Dell says that even into the 90s, Section 28 gave self-censoring or 'questioning' permission to some managers, staff and customers. John Vincent was the head of service at the time and sought legal advice which 'was that the law could not be used'.

One factor that may have contributed to Lambeth's pragmatic response to Section 28 was John Vincent's leadership. Abibat Olulode remembers having an openly gay head of service was important 'so there wasn't any problem about that', suggesting a less political or less confident management or one with a heteronormative bias, may have led a service more prone to the self-censorship. This was otherwise hinted at across library services nationally as seen in Ann Curry's research in 1997 which found that although most heads of service felt libraries should portray 'homosexuality in a positive light', 'for British directors, the spectre of Section 28 is a determining factor' on the inclusion of LGBT+ stock (Curry, 1997, pp. 67-70). Abibat Olulode 'barely' remembered the impact of Section 28 in Lambeth, explaining that aside from the age consent issue she came up against little. She remembers, 'apart from that we just carried on as normal. In fact, everybody was really outraged and more determined to stock things like that to be honest!'

Similarly to Mark Freeman in Yorkshire, Abibat Olulode did mention a more explained they did have a more careful approach on selecting materials depicting LGBT+ teenagers. This was considered in the librarians' stock selection meetings, the predominant concern was the gay age of consent (21 at the time). If there was 'a main protagonist that was 16 or 18 and in a gay relationship', then the librarians would have to think twice about stocking it. She does not remember if any books were actually banned on this basis but her memory of the time was that librarians' fear of breaking the law indicated that books such as this for young people may well have not been available during these years, because of Section 28.

Abibat Olulode also confirmed, as Lisa Gardner did in Chapter 6, that Lambeth continued to stock *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*. Olulode explained that as it was a picture book just

about a 'different kind of family' that did not depict 'gay sex or anything like that' they would still 'stock those kinds of things.'

LGBT+ provision since

LGBT+ provision was generally seen to be consistent in Lambeth Libraries over the following decades, with displays, gay book sections (later to become LGBT+) and finally events coming later in the borough, according to Abibat Olulode. The observance of LGBTHM and Pride Month being the most recent additions.

John Vincent recalls LGBT History Month as having different origins to BHM but both from the USA. He considered BHM more rooted in a radical Black tradition whereas LGBT History Month in the UK has predominantly been adopted as a vehicle for work with schools. LGBTHM having its base in school outreach and resources, and as a secondary aspect being observed by government and therefore local councils and libraries, again means implementation varies on a local level. Abibat Olulode considers 'I seem to think that LGBT History Month is quite a new thing, so I'm not sure whether it existed then, and if it did it might have just been in America, I don't know.'

As established in Chapter 4 there is a further emergence of library services observing Pride. In June 2019 Lambeth observed Pride Month (Lambeth Council, 2019) with the libraries hosting LGBT+ events in a similar vein to the observance of BHM or LGBTHM. John Vincent observes that local communities hold Pride events across the year 'from March through to October now', so its at odds with the local communities if institutions observe Pride Month in June as opposed to how the local communities celebrate it. Generally the Pride examples in Chapter 4 did coincide with local Pride celebrations. Abibat Olulode says she can remember Pride going back to the 1980s but couldn't 'remember if libraries ever did anything for it, it could be not actually, because I would have thought I would remember if there was.'

LGBT+ events in Lambeth's libraries therefore seem to have started much more recently

than the Section 28 period.

Long term impact of Section 28

Rather than the library service being particularly pioneering on LGBT+ provision, Abibat Olulode felt that it follows contemporary culture where LGBT+ provision has become standard; 'the two things have gone together. I think society has become in some senses more open. I would hesitate to use the word liberal because I'm not sure, because hate crimes have gone up and there still is a big problem with homophobia.'

Black History Month in Lambeth

Chapter 5 charted the beginnings of Black History Month and its dispersal to local organising across London boroughs (and later the wider UK). The participants' knowledge of the origins of this was limited but there was a certain association with the GLC. Abibat Olulode assumed it was brought in with 'perhaps the GLC or whatever' and was uncertain on why it is in October. Oniel Williams remembers that 'The GLC were taking some initiative, I know that they did something [similar] from about 1985, but I think Black History Month started from about 1987.'

Abibat Olulode remembers Lambeth's first engagement with Black History Month in the form of Black Achievers book displays and children's provision. It coincided with a recognition locally within the library service that more needed to be done for Black library users.

She explains that there was a strong belief in multicultural representation in the library service, with religious festivals such as Jewish holidays, Diwali and other Asian festivities observed. But it was acknowledged that 'there was a very low Asian population in the London Borough of Lambeth, there still is now and there was then' and there was a consideration that as a borough with a high Black population, these users were being underrepresented. With an exception of Kwanzaa being observed at one point, Olulode recognised that 'Black people live in all countries from all sort of different cultures... and I suppose that's the thing with the Black community, there isn't a particular religious festival or anything like that'.

Oniel Williams mentioned a similar impetus, that he was aware that members of the community were concerned about a lack of positive images for young Black people, which the library service sought to fulfil with provision such as Black Achievers.

Black History Month would suit these community needs and as it was eventually implemented, its growth and success in Lambeth is in large part because of its community.

The development from 'Black Achievers' to BHM

Abibat Olulode explains the development of the Black Achievers displays 'about scientists, inventors, sports people, or actors and so on' which were the embryonic start of Black orientated provision. These would eventually evolve into the Black Interest sections present in Lambeth Libraries today. Abibat Olulode remembers a Black Interest booklist in the period produced by one of her colleagues which would have been one of the succession such as *Blacks In Britain* (Lambeth Archives, 1989) and in the 1990s: *Across the seas to Britain*, *Black poetry* and *Black women writers*, mentioned by John Vincent.

The demand for Black positive images as mentioned by Oniel Williams creates a demand for publishing and stocking the books as he explains 'then you see those titles start to be produced, and we start stocking them.' The first Black Achievers displays were for children but then adult books in stock were added and this was seen by Abibat Olulode as the origin of BHM. However, Oniel Williams also mentioned that there was already a wider precedent for Black events within the library service before Black History Month became an institutionalised programme.

BHM as a programme

The events programmed for Black History Month seem to have grown organically on a small scale between the late 1980s and 1990s. These were low key and last minute at first, with rushed planning from about mid-September, displays were made, making use of relevant stock.

Abibat Olulode identifies 2000 as when BHM started to be planned strategically in Lambeth Libraries, as she saw the dawn of the new millennium as an incentive to plan things properly and not last minute. The programme for Brixton Library, for which she was responsible had a number of events across the month. She made sure to programme events for both adults and children 'to get different people in'. She sees this as being the beginning of what we recognise as the Black History Month programme now; 'so that year we had what I would have considered to have our first quite big Black History Month... I think it started off being a bigger thing from then'

She adds a disclaimer; 'but that's my perception of it and that's because I was directly involved.' Understanding that there may be other perceptions of how BHM has evolved over the years, particularly in other boroughs evidence given by other participants in Chapter 6 demonstrate similar organic or slow building up of an institutionalised programme that has now come to be expected in their libraries.

Abibat Olulode had continuing concerns that materials and resources available centred largely on African American perspectives because of the much larger Black US population and number of publishers. However, Oniel Williams remembers the 1980s having a healthy culture of Black self-publishing, small community presses and the ability for libraries to buy from more of a variety of them. Oniel Williams also worked for Black Ink, a local publisher for young Black writers. The library service bought from bookshops (as outlined above) but were also in the heart of radical Black publishing in Brixton (and wider, London) with the Race Today collective based locally who would co-ordinate the International Black and Third World Book Fair held at Brixton Town Hall (as well as Camden and Islington) which Oniel Williams and other librarians attended.

Williams fondly remembers authors of the time who came to the bookfairs such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Oku Onuora, Linton Johnson, Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara and Alice Walker. He explains that 'In the 80s they were making their names as international authors so they would have been significant for librarians, to know and to engage with.'

Popularity now

The developed BHM programme responds to the needs of local library users is now very popular, events can often 'be pushing at the seams'. Oniel Williams says: 'as a national celebration, I think it's been tremendously powerful, because, what it's done; it's been institutionalised. A programme of activities, and it's created an expectation on the part of local authorities and people who are engaging with communities, especially communities that have a significant Black African and Caribbean population.'. This echoes some of the thoughts from participants in Chapter 6, who saw BHM a vital part of their provision in local authorities with high Black populations.

Abibat Olulode agreed to this positivity, pointing further, to BHM now being observed by broadcasters, major museums and art galleries, so that it has 'permeated society much more which is a good thing'.

BHM Brochure

Lambeth libraries like many other local authorities produce a brochure of their BHM programme (Lambeth Libraries, 2019a), which is available in print and online as a downloadable PDF.

Discussion of the relevance of this brochure was an emergent theme discussed, as an object and a form of marketing for the month's events. Abibat Olulode and Oniel Williams both raised the importance of the brochure. They look to justify why a brochure is still relevant in an age of increased online marketing and reveal a fondness for it as a physical object.

The consideration about whether members of the public would still be able to find the information online is on account of an emergence of the internet since BHM's inception, when paper marketing would have been the main method.

Abibat Olulode outlines that the budget for BHM is £5000, 'most of which goes on the brochure'. So the popularity of the brochure must justify this spend. Oniel Williams sees how the tangible physical object is attractive, 'I think with the case of Lambeth, because we've done brochures or pamphlets, from at least 1990, because we've done it as a hard copy, then I think people have had a physical product that they can pick up, without even having to ask, because once it's

available then you can just pick one up and go.’ With the brochures being produced over the years, there is a comfortable expectation of this. Similarly Abibat Olulode says ‘There's a nice little brochure we do that you can take away and you can keep and look back on, you can find out more about things.’

Like all library services, the accessibility of multiple formats for users with specific needs is important. There is an acknowledgement of a marketing expectancy for cost and an increasingly online audience, however much fondness remains for the physical hard copy.

A similar brochure has also been made in recent years for Lambeth LGBT History Month (Lambeth Libraries, 2019c), suggesting a future precedent for both.

BHM at home in the library

Given the initial wide intention of BHM by the LSPU, its development within libraries to be in some cases (such as Lambeth) quite big celebrations has been a potentially surprising development. Participants were asked why they thought this had developed.

The LSPU’s intention was for local authorities to run BHM observances locally. John Vincent felt that the demise of council race units since the 1990s which ‘had some people who would maybe take on some of that role for the council, mostly they've gone now... there's a sort of vacuum of who would actually organise something and it has sort of fallen to libraries because they're good at putting on events and doing things, and that's... almost accidental that libraries had done it and are good at it. It wouldn't fit neatly with... bin collection or something, so there are other parts of the council where you couldn't see there being the opportunity to join with people and celebrate something or do something.’

Abibat Olulode thinks that libraries programming the bulk of the council’s BHM programme is perhaps just a perception within LIS. She compares to Camden where ‘it was quite a big thing, much bigger than in Lambeth, it had a huge budget, so they used to be able to bring authors over from America and they used to organise it with everyone from all different

sections of the council would come together and do Black History Month so it wasn't just libraries... It was perhaps Arts & Events [department] that was in charge of it'.

This view suggests that like the national picture, BHM provision is programmed in a variety of strategic ways in various geographic locations and has possibly also changed over the years.

An expectation of BHM

Interviewees did think that local communities would notice if BHM were dropped. There is perhaps an anxiousness to this, with the awareness of cuts in other authorities, or the change to Diversity Month, as explored in Chapter 5. Abibat Olulode acknowledged a particular popularity of BHM in 2019, as opposed to previous years, and felt that during those years, had Black History Month in Lambeth not happened, there may have been less objection.

Oniel Williams says that there is always now an 'expectation' of the programme, but by saying 'especially communities that have a significant Black African and Caribbean population.'

Considering local authorities stopping BHM or adopting a Diversity Month model, Oniel Williams calls this a 'contraction' and 'erosion, of what has been created.' He interrogates what the concept of Diversity Month can mean;

It's not just a couple of boroughs, if you did a survey, you'd probably find nationally there's probably more than you think. But it started to look like it might be a trend and it may still be a trend so, 'Diversity Month', rather than Black History Month. Nobody will campaign for the preservation or extension of Diversity Month. Diversity is taken to mean breakdancing and wine tasting from Italy *and* Black history, you know, all those kinds of things. Interesting as they are - and all of them have a place within the life of a healthy community, that's not the issue - but when you then dilute Black History Month in that way, and then you take the Diversity Month away, who would

miss it? Like what is the community that's affected by that?
(Oniel Williams)

What Williams raises, is the suggestion that BHM has come to represent a part of Black culture, that specifically discusses and caters for Black experiences. For a local authority to remove provision that has existed now for generations will impact the community they seek to serve and will raise objections. Diversity should be a central aspect of mainstream provision, that is celebrated all year round as part of what a library has to offer the community.

Austerity

Government reductions in public sector funding were seen as a threat to programming events themselves and the staff time needed to programme and run them. This particularly affects the ability for extensive programmes such as BHM and LGBTHM which have many events over a short period. The pressure on staff time as a result of staffing cuts also has a noticeable impact on a librarian's approach to acquisitions and stock management, including procuring stock for marginalised groups which may be harder to locate.

Oniel Williams sees this funding cuts as a reason behind some local authorities withdrawing BHM altogether. There is also an acknowledgement that there is less money to run the programmes than in past decades. Launch events, for example once had their own funds. Talking of the first big Black History Month programme at Brixton Library in 2000 Abibat Olulode explains 'I think we might have had a launch event and food and everything like that. We don't do that now, but we did do that for a number of years, because we had more money in those days so we could afford to spend quite a bit of money on the launch event whereas now we wouldn't do that.'

John Vincent observing that there 'is not time' now for staff to read all children's stock bought in, suggests many library services have far less librarians and staff in general than they would have in the 1980s. He sees the 1970s and 1980s as having more of a generosity that benefited library services, as opposed to a 'meanness' since the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent austerity. He explains that this meanness also surrounds issues for 'people in poverty or

refugees or people with special needs or whatever it is, that we were only finding out about maybe in the 70s and 80s'. That community librarianship looked at serving these groups, there's a suggestion that now libraries cannot be as centrally focused on these issues under this culture of meanness.

The development of provision

After discussing these histories, Abibat Olulode considers that 'things have improved massively in terms of what Lambeth Libraries does with LGBT festivals, stock, celebrations and the same for the Black community'. Oniel Williams, however feels that a measurable improvement or decline in provision is 'probably not as clear cut as you might think'.

Participants widely suggest that events held in libraries, were of a lesser number and lesser focus in the 1980s. Oniel Williams thinks that event provision is better now 'in terms of event planning I think it is much better and much more relevant to Black African and Caribbean communities. In Lambeth Libraries, we've got a very strong reader development team and we are very good at rolling out events across the whole year and across the whole spectrum of our service, from children and young people to adults.' He also adds that perhaps Lambeth can miss some celebration dates, 'International Women's Day, we never do anything significant around that, ever'. If community identity programming is centred on celebration dates, there is a risk that some groups are missed out in these cases, even if they are otherwise represented in mainstreamed provision.

John Vincent saw the 1970s and 1980s community outreach programme as being key to running relevant provision; 'the range of voices I think you picked up from that, was thrilling because you got first hand views from people.' Oniel Williams explains the subsequent demise of the outreach programme was in part to closures of community organisations and an ideological shift in focus;

The service in the 80s was very orientated towards outreach, taking the service out. Now, we don't have any mobile libraries, community groups have closed down, in the sense that the funding sources have changed. In those times you had organisations like Manpower Services commission and the GLC etc. The local authorities like Lambeth

had budgets that they would give to community organisations to run and operate services, so the outreach programme had a much broader base and the libraries in Lambeth could reach out to them and involve them in delivering services. So the pattern has changed now, we have fewer community organisations, we work with more institutions now, like schools and the budget lines that we operate on are much tighter. But still we find a way of being effective.

(Oniel Williams)

Working in this way embedded librarians within the community, and helped them co-design provision that was relevant to them. The loss of many community organisations has changed the methods in which the library service is able to listen to users' needs.

Politics and Neutrality

John Vincent identifies that the ideology of Lambeth Libraries throughout the 1980s was 'strongly anti-racist, so one of the things we did was we put out lots of committee reports, had exhibitions, things that were all about anti-racism.' Abibat Olulode also remembers that 'we were very into multiculturalism'. John Vincent doesn't see this action carried out in contemporary library services, that leadership would see it as 'a bit dangerous'. He also considers that a groundswell of opinion would be needed for libraries to take radical steps, and that CILIP's stance on neutrality hinders this.

The CILIP ethical framework lists 7 core ethical considerations for LIS practitioners. These include 'Human rights, equalities and diversity' and 'Impartiality' (CILIP, 2019). There is certainly a tension between the two here, if impartial is understood as taking a neutral stance, John Vincent believes that 'libraries do need to take positions on things... in an informed way' to be able to cater for diverse groups. As Wenzler (2019, p. 56) puts it, 'false claims of evenhandedness... capitulate to an unjust status quo'. For diverse groups to be appropriately served, it needs to be recognised that due to inequalities in society, marginalised groups are likely to have both more specific and possibly more demanding user needs.

'Black History' Month

Oniel Williams considers what it means to represent and discuss Black history within the community, in that BHM can represent aspects of what is missing from how British history is traditionally taught. That this should include Windrush and anti-racism as 'It's British history. It's all history made in Britain'. He also compares BHM's method to the traditional assumption that history is education about royalty and the ruling classes, whereas BHM seeks to represent 'the history of the working Black people...Because that's when you start to deal with power, who controls these resources and it should be part of the conversation.'

Williams describes an importance in integrity and political intention in the curation of events. He explains 'whether we're doing events for children, events around LGBT people, whether doing Black History Month, it's got to have integrity - it's got to serve the constituency in whose name the events are being held... If you involve the name of a particular interest group you've got to then deliver something that is in their best interests.' This recognises the specific user needs of these marginalised groups, when these groups have events held in their name, there's a recognition that the subject of events have to be relevant to the community, that librarians have to be in touch with current issues. As Williams explains 'we need to have an eye towards keeping the ideas fresh in development.'

Oniel Williams recognises that having a good reputation for events is also important to attract publishers and authors, saying that 'we've become recognised as a good outlet for authors, so we get publishers approaching us with their significant authors coming into the country'. He identifies that this reputation has led to the library hosting events of political and cultural importance. One example being the Race Today collective, who launched their 2019 anthology as part of the Lambeth Libraries Black History Month programme. Oniel Williams recognises this as being a 'quality mark' upon the library service, with their BHM relevance for having 'declared themselves as serving the cause for liberation' for BAME working class communities. He also talks proudly of a Brixton Library event, hosting Caribbean academic Hilary Beckles, who spoke to an audience of a hundred people at a library event in the wake of the Windrush scandal, attended by 'big people' of the local Brixton community. Contemporary authors such as Afua Hirsch and Angie Thomas are also fondly remembered.

Representative collections in libraries

When discussing quality and diversity in contemporary public library collections, John Vincent references recent research identifying low BAME and LGBT+ representation within published children's literature; 'recent figures have shown that the proportion of books reflecting either BME or LGBT people in children's books is really, really low still, so in that sense I don't think that has improved a great deal.'

He references his work with the 2017 review of the CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway medals (CILIP, 2018), where he helped chair a scoping workshop. He perceived a disconnect between publishers' assumptions and the needs of 'real children';

'the thing that really struck me I suppose was that the publishers were quite opinionated but their opinions were based on sales figures, not understanding what the needs of real children were. In the 70s and 80s there would be individual publishers where I'd know somebody and they would meet with me and we would talk through regularly, 'kids in Lambeth are fed up with more books about bears... what we actually want is something that reflects more these sorts of issues' and we'd have that sort of discussion, and I'm not aware that so much of that happens now? No.

(John Vincent)

If there is this distance between publishers and real children's needs this has an impact on collections available in libraries.

Abibat Olulode sees the growth of the Black Achievers sections into Black Interest sections of good size as a signifier of Black stock improving within Lambeth Libraries. She views that collections are now 'way, way better. I think it's definitely evolved and improved. In terms of Black Interest sections, when we eventually had them... it might have been a shelf, or two shelves worth. Now we'd have in a main library - Brixton, Streatham etcetera - we'd have a whole bay, or a couple of bays. You might have a bay of fiction and a bay of non-fiction or whatever.' John Vincent described that he was excited to see such large Black Interest and LGBT+ sections at Brixton Library because 'you don't get that in lots of other places'. He describes seeing thin Black and LGBT+ sections when browsing in other library services,

considering that 'stock may be on loan' but for a casual browser it does appear that 'there's not much of a choice'.

Abibat Olulode is somewhat aware that there are published books from past decades that may no longer be available and that the nature of Black popular literature has changed; 'I do mourn the demise of the other imprints... the African writers series, Caribbean series, they aren't published anymore... now, you've got the Black Romance series, this that and the other, but they're less high-brow aren't they? They're a bit more like Mills & Boon, whereas these were more high-brow writers and I quite liked that. They probably do still exist, but I don't know if they'd be collected together in the same way.'

As mentioned Abibat Olulode felt that Black literature is less USA dominated now, but still to some extent as she explains that now it 'is better than it was in the 1980s or the 1990s, [but] that rule does hold still.'

One negative impact on stock is recognised as a change in buying from bookshops, to the use of mainstream library suppliers instead. Oniel Williams says 'I can't be so categorical that our stock is more representative.'. Referring to the community publishers, independent bookshops and book fairs, 'We have a lot fewer now. We've got Waterstones and a sprinkling of other bookshops. Not as many.'

In addition he thinks there's an impact from the change in how libraries would have bought from the independent bookshops and distributors in the 1980s 'as opposed to [suppliers] Askews & Holt - big multinational ones, they have come to replace the way we as libraries buy books.'

John Vincent regards a potential lack of selection from suppliers. 'you'll get what the supplier sends you which may not include American LGBT stuff for example, because that is not in their remit'. Research by Elizabeth Chapman (2015, p. 359) confirmed similarly when finding that suppliers generally had a poor overall selection of LGBT+ books for young people. Buying outside of suppliers is now very uncommon in most local authority libraries due to staffing and financial reasons (Vincent, 2019, p. 280).

Another perception is that librarians possibly no longer hold as much knowledge of their collections as librarians in the 1980s did. John Vincent talking about the stock selection methods of the 1980s identified that most stock was seen and read by library staff, who built up

a good knowledge of literature and the books in their library collections. He perceives that now there can be situations where 'you'd go into work and find a box of new books that had arrived and you'd never seen them before'. Again he addresses that 'there's not time for that now', meaning cuts in resources and less staff time. He considers it a big impact in the quality of what libraries can offer now as opposed to the 1980s, explaining 'for me at least I think that's one of the big gaps'.

There were also considerations about whether celebration months help reader development. John Vincent considers that a productive result would potentially start a longer term interest in literature 'if a library service produced a booklist for example or highlighted resources on the web so that it had a legacy after the month, then people could follow a reading journey, starting in Black History Month, and then following on, but it needs that legacy bit I think.'. The implication that a booklist or display only serves part of its purpose in representation, if a reader does not pick up inspiration to read more from suggestions on a booklist, or an introduction to an author. John Vincent also expresses doubts as to how effectively either BHM or LGBTHM can reach beyond existing library users.

Public opposition to LGBT+ literature

Public mood and opposition to the availability of LGBT+ literature to children has grown more tolerant in some aspects, since the time of *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, but some comparable opposition remains.

John Vincent thinks that despite the poor representation within publishing there's now 'more understanding, and you see libraries for example, providing material and there's more understanding of why they are doing it and there's more acceptance among some families that it's good to see that range of material.'. Abibat Olulode thinks that 'society has become in some senses more open' to LGBT+ topics.

However, John Vincent sees that there are new voices in opposition to children's access to LGBT+ literature. He draws parallels with the religious or conservative groups that objected to *Jenny Lives With Eric and Martin* or *Meg and Mog* ('the [religious] playgroups wanted them taken out, because they didn't want witchcraft as they called it - because Meg's a witch'), to

conservative and 'TERF' (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist) objections to Drag Queen Storytime in current day libraries. John Vincent identifies these as 'new voices that are challenging having LGBT and to some extent, more LGBT materials and things available for children.' But continuing with a hopeful thought, he considers that 'young people themselves that I've met seem to be generally much more aware and understanding and accepting of each other.'

Abibat Olulode references recent anti-LGBT+ protests at a Birmingham primary school following the No Outsiders resource programme (Parveen, 2019) as an example of why LGBT+ literature availability for children is still an important and contentious issue 'I was reading an article about a family that actually goes to one of those schools in Birmingham that have had the protests. It's a family with two mums and how frightening and intimidating that is for them. Imagine you are in a family that's 'different' and you're having to run the gauntlet of that every day. I'm glad that people are standing up for people's rights in regard to that. Those kind of things, like that school thing, is quite frightening.'

The new urban left impact

Oniel Williams recognised the work the GLC were doing with Black communities, particularly through the GLC's own race unit and their encouragement of the Black Arts Movement, which have a legacy through to today.

John Vincent didn't feel there was a direct connection between the GLC and the themes being discussed, but recognised the work of the ILEA as being relevant; 'I can see a relationship between the ILEA and the work that went on in schools really strongly, so the ILEA promoted all sorts of what they then called 'positive images' and that was really strong. And I think was reflected really well in the activities and the book provision and so on in schools. I think that worked really well.'

He recognised a 'slight animosity' between Lambeth Council and the GLC, explaining that 'Lambeth always had a slightly more strained relationship with the GLC, so the politicians in Lambeth did or didn't want to be told what to do by the GLC, so there was always a kind of slight animosity'.

He personally had mixed feelings around the politics of the GLC as 'that it promoted some good policies and did some good things, but some of it was kind of political flag waving without a lot of content'. But still he certainly felt somewhat the identity of the GLC and London at the time working on progressive policies was important 'I think it set a tone for what was happening in London that was really important and it was that sort of, not necessarily the individual actions but the sense that London could be unified in some ways and could be progressive would be something you wouldn't ordinarily get elsewhere. Although, there were local councils like Sheffield or Birmingham, Manchester, for example who were doing things very similarly. It's just the GLC was the front runner I suppose.'

Mainstreaming stock

There was some discussion from the participants in Chapter 6 around the decisions on separate stock sections and mainstreaming, with participants feeling that a mixture is good practice.

Abibat Olulode recalls her personal experience of looking for Black writers in the 1980s, that she was used to seeing Black Interest sections in other library authorities but that wasn't yet existent in Lambeth on her first visit in the late 1980s;

I remember coming to Lambeth before I lived here, I'd been in libraries in Brent a lot...and they had Black Interest sections there and I remember coming to Brixton Library, joining and asking where the Black interest section was... and being told 'Oh no, it's all sort of integrated, it's not in a special section'... And so I remember thinking 'right' [lingers]. It's a little bit easier finding stuff that you're looking for, because I was really into Black women's fiction at the time... I wanted to just be able to go to the place, because you don't always know the authors. I wasn't looking for particular authors I was just looking for that as a genre and I was just reading everything, so people from different countries, it could have been Black Americans, it could be African writers, Caribbean writers. There used to be this really good series, I think it was Heinemann, who published all these African writers that you never would have heard of, not particularly famous, but some of them would be famous. I used to love reading these books by all

these people from different cultures, but that was more in my personal life than my professional life.

(Abibat Olulode)

Abibat Olulode's reference to the 'special section' debate is the same mainstreaming question. Her own reading interest in finding identifiable Black women authors and her questions when arriving at Brixton Library demonstrates that a separate section helped her specific user needs. A reader preference is a viable argument for separation, if the library layout is appropriate to the interests and needs of readers.

Abibat Olulode believes that 'It's useful to have the sections, but I can see the argument for having things integrated and I think you do to a certain extent. We've got the Black Interest sections but then you can find Black authors in the main section... I think that's about right.' The importance of having Black authors integrated into the main sequence too allowing for discoverability for someone browsing that main fiction section and does not suggest it is of any different or lesser merit.

Abibat Olulode compares that there have always been the same discussions about separate LGBT+ sections (which were initially called a gay section until more recently). She raises a specific risk for this separation about how LGBT+ spine labels 'would be identifying people if they were carrying it round... you could be outed or attacked'.

The risks around outing or stigma are specific considerations for the needs of LGBT+ users. Staff within the library can support these users, something which John Vincent considers can be met with appropriate training.

CLR James Library and the Marcus Garvey Library have their well known Black history collections and the ceremonial opening of LGBT+ collections such as the one in Croydon celebrated in 2010. It is evident there is some institutional appreciation for having these collections identified and separate.

Abibat Olulode does not have a set preference for separation or mainstreaming, understanding that because of concerns around user needs 'discussions still go on now, we still have those

discussions or controversies.’

John Vincent’s view is that a balance of both separation and mainstreaming is appropriate, outlining some examples; ‘having material pulled out to celebrate LGBT History Month and Black History Month and having exhibitions and displays, but then maybe interfiling the stock for some part of the rest of the year so that anybody can come across it. But with the catalogue, or with exhibitions, or something that highlights the stock if it is interfiled, so that people can find things easily, a mix of the two works reasonably well.’

Mainstreaming events

A similar consideration can be applied to events provision and it raises similar issues and conclusions. Mainstreaming or separation in terms of events, in terms of library provision that does observe BHM and LGBTHM also needs to consider events relevant to Black and LGBT+ communities throughout the year.

The concerns around the October annexing of Black provision and events within BHM are considered by the respondents.

Abibat Olulode acknowledges the arguments for and against having BHM and can ‘understand both sides’. Her view is that ‘it is quite useful to have a month of celebration because you’re putting a lot of effort into a concentrated time period. Whereas I think if you weren’t having the month and you were doing celebrations throughout the year would you really do as many? We’ve got 56 Black History Month events this season, October and November, would we have 56 spread out throughout the year? I don’t know. It also gives people something to focus on, to look forward to.’

Oniel Williams considers criticisms from members of the public around the annexing of Black History Month, suggesting that not enough is being done, and a request for provision ‘all year round’ is a reaction to the general ‘white programming’ within British culture in publications, newspapers and television. Oniel Williams sees this perception as unfortunately one legacy of BHM, and that therefore that libraries do have a duty for ‘all year round programming, that’s the challenge’.

Black History Month is sometimes sarcastically called 'Black Employment Month' (Shuttleworth, 2007; Andrews, 2019), highlighting how organisations can fall to only inviting Black speakers, authors and performers to run events within October. It is important to not perpetuate this problem and engage with Black arts throughout the year whilst having this celebration.

Abibat Olulode and Oniel Williams give examples that Lambeth does embed diverse programming throughout the year. Oniel Williams references a Hilary Beckles event in June 2018 and Abibat Olulode outlines that 'I don't think, just because you do have Black History Month, doesn't mean you can't have Black author events throughout the rest of the year. When we have the Readers & Writers Festival it's not a white Readers & Writers Festival, you can celebrate Black authors during that as well.'

The perceived legacy

In looking at the legacy of the 1980s the thesis in part asks, were the library services of the 1980s producing inclusive provision that we could learn from today?

John Vincent thinks a focus on good inclusive provision is better placed in the 1970s than the 1980s, 'If I could tweak your question and say 1970s, because I think the 1970s were even better than the 1980s... The technology and things are clearly better now so you've got access to much more material than you ever had then. But the kind of provision that libraries were starting to make in the late 70s, early 80s and the connection that libraries were making with their communities, that was just taking off' Vincent felt that Lambeth's community outreach was a large aspect of this work.

Oniel Williams thinks the main legacy of BHM is that through decades of programming 'we've built up a expectation' of it's annual observance. Williams and Olulode had mentioned previously the controversy that would be caused if it was no longer programmed. John Vincent observes that BHM 'is definitely in the calendar'. It's has built an institutionalisation and expectation locally, geographically wider the implications could be variable.

Oniel Williams raises the thematic phenomenon of Black Futures in recent BHM programming, to consider what a legacy of BHM could be. He references the publication of *How long 'til*

Black Future Month by N.K. Jemisin and the Black Cultural Archives' Black Futures Month theme to their observation of BHM 2019 (Campbell, 2019).

Jemisin's essay that inspired *How long 'til Black Future Month* included a consideration; 'As I write this, it's February — Black History Month in the United States... No one seems puzzled by the fact that there is no time correspondingly devoted to examining, celebrating, or imagining the black *future*.' (Jemisin, 2013).

Oniel Williams considers that BHM's legacy includes understanding Black history for a potential for imagining a Black future; 'the idea of Black Future Month is a response to Black History Month and what that is really provoking a conversation about is; what your legacy is, is what you are celebrating actually building a programme for going forward? So it is provoking that conversation. Are you just waving a flag to say 'This is what we've done, we're great' or are you saying 'This is what we've done and because you know what you've done you can now do'. So it's that conversation that I think has come out of the institutionalisation of Black History Month.' Going back to the concerns about the Diversity Month concept, he adds 'We've got to build a future and the future is linked to the Black history so going forward, is the future Diversity Month or something more meaningful?'

Complacency and risk

Oniel Williams and Abibat Olulode acknowledge that this provision will always need advocating for, as it is at risk. Oniel Williams explains that 'the legacy is not without challenge and we shouldn't be complacent... because the gains can be eroded.'

Abibat Olulode says that the memory of Section 28 is a warning, of a risk; 'I don't think there's been a legacy... except, and I would also think that this in the context of a few things that are happening right now, is it's a warning isn't it? Because things were more liberal and then that law was brought in and it was less liberal. Because we think in society that we're making progress but it can all be snatched away at any time.'

Conclusion

The participants helped to build on an understanding of some historical events and contexts within Lambeth around Section 28 and Black History Month. As well as their legacy today. Black History Month particularly dominates the discussion as there was more knowledge from participants on this subject, which supplemented the larger availability of literature and subsequent desk research on Section 28.

The identified issues and discussions around user needs intersected frequently between Black and LGBT+ provision and how the library service approached these.

LGBT+ events in Lambeth libraries are much more of a recent concern than events for the Black community which were recognised to have been existent since the 1980s, events generally are a more central part of the library service's output now.

There was concern about the possible erosion of Black provision with the advent of Diversity Month in some other local authorities.

Conclusions made around the separation or mainstreaming of both events and stock were similar for both Black and LGBT+ provision, that a mixture was necessary. There was an acknowledgement of the particular common concerns around the annexing of BHM but participants were confident it served needs well, with for example, the events gaining popularity annually within the community. There was an awareness that provision had to be of good quality and presenting LGBT+ and Black stock both uniquely and within mainstream fiction sections. Similarly it was acknowledged that LGBT+ and Black event programming should be represented throughout the year and not just within celebration months.

Comments around the lack of provision on International Women's Day continue to suggest an approach to programming that centres on celebration days/months. If this approach is the only one taken then there is a risk that some groups may always get missed out. Another example of how a balance of both separation and mainstreaming is ideal.

Interactions with outreach collections and community organisations were a fundamental way that the library service could understand and cater for user needs. This has changed considerably with less outreach, resources and the loss of many community organisations.

There was also consideration with how Black and LGBT+ stock was purchased through independent specialist bookshops in the 1980s, this embedded libraries within the community, supporting small presses and independent bookshops. The loss of this, to the gain of contracts with mainstream library suppliers which research (Chapman, 2015) has found that librarians feel has a poorer selection.

There was a similar theme about risk of loss or erosion of provision. Abibat Olulode mentioned the shock at the immediacy of punitive laws such as Section 28 coming in at a time where equalities provision was improving, whilst Oniel Williams talked of the risk to Black provision with local authorities removing or changing BHM to a diverse celebration.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

A lineage is recognised from the work of the new urban left's equalities agenda, their specialist units and their impact on Section 28 and Black History Month, and provision for these groups going on decades afterwards.

Librarians working with these issues in the 1980s have contributed valuable detail on events and their feelings in hindsight. Participants described their increased fear and concern, mourning the damage done to services due to Section 28. Whereas the institutionalisation of Black History Month has brought positives, opening up a diversity of literature and an appreciation for equalities work from managers.

The focus on Lambeth's provision through interviews allowed for a depth of investigation into issues of public mood around Black provision, the radical local landscape and a justification for the politicisation of events and general provision.

There is some evidence of the negative impact of Section 28 on self-censorship within library services, but for the most part this is undocumented. Comparatively the Black History Month, became institutionalised and grown to be an annual expectation in library provision. LGBT History Month is starting to capitalise on the successes of this model and is becoming increasingly observed in libraries also.

This dissertation is advocating for public librarians to understand and develop upon their library history, for recognition within library workplaces and within wider discipline of LIS. Particularly the histories of how British public libraries have catered for marginalised community groups.

Austerity has had a fundamental impact on these collections and events, funds for stock and staff time are needed to provide a good quality service.

A rejection of neutrality was discussed, with the conclusion that for libraries to adequately cater for marginalised groups, they need to be able to take a stand on things. For example there was a regret that libraries do not take a strongly anti-racist stance, as Lambeth Libraries did in the 1980s.

Separation or mainstreaming of Black and LGBT+ collections has had previous research but there has been little comparison or investigation into the same principles regarding the observation of celebration months. Some criticism of this 'annexing' focuses on the normalisation of the (white/heterosexual) status quo and poor quality provision. In particular Black History Month, and to a lesser extent LGBTHM are now embedded within library provision and wider culture and provide an opportunity to give space and recognition to these communities. Provision has to be of good quality and relevant. There must be care and an understanding of importance of this provision from library workers, so that members of these communities feel that they are understood, consulted and involved in provision that represents them. All users need to see themselves in the mainstream provision libraries provide, so that a heterosexual, white canon of literature or programming is not upheld or presumed.

This dissertation has found gaps in the understanding of how widespread BHM and LGBTHM are observed. Recommendations for future research would include a systematic analysis nationally of how these celebration months are acknowledged nationally, particularly within library services.

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