

## **Pushing the Envelope: Exploring Sexuality in Teen Literature**

Posted on November 2, 2010 by [Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults](#)



**By Eleanor Wood, Decatur (Ill.) Public Library**

[Tweet](#)

### **Abstract**

This paper examines whether young adult literature accurately reflects young adults' knowledge of and interaction with sexuality. Teen literature has grown to represent a broader inclusion of sexuality, be it orientation, sex, or examples of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Some of these topics have been present in teen literature for decades, but there has been a shift in focus, content, and acceptance. Today's young adults are exposed to many new possibilities and are freer to choose and explore their sexuality without as much backlash as in previous years, which means more choices to make without much structure or guidance in that process. Teens are faced with family and community expectations for their sexual orientation and activities; they can and should reflect on their own feelings in the matter, as well as what their peers are doing and expecting from one another; reading about these topics provides teens with a safe learning environment. Sex is incredibly important post-puberty as it is frequently on their minds, on their TVs, and in their books. By being aware of what literature is available in the interests of our diverse teen populations, we can provide better reader's advisory without fretting over whether we are censoring material. The goal as librarians is to further our awareness of the availability of materials for teens to read and identify with as they explore their own sexuality and become comfortable with who they are.

Sex presents a complex problem in libraries with regard to how we interact with our patrons. We all want to protect children—our youngest group of patrons—from overt sexual references, yet for adult patrons of public libraries, we allow open access to sex so long as they comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Where is the line between “okay”□ and “too much”□ for our young adult patrons? According to Martin, the line is drawn at sexuality, “often considered the issue that divides children's from adolescent literature.”□<sup>1</sup> Sexuality can be defined as the recognition of what is sexual.<sup>2</sup> It is this age where puberty, sexuality, and sex come into play in the lives of younger patrons—and authors, publishers, television producers, and musicians know it. For this age range, a greater range of sexuality is both more marketable and more widely accepted than ever before. Teens are faced with both family and community expectations for their sexual orientation and activities, yet they can and should reflect on their own feelings in the matter, as well as their peers' activities and expectations. What can young adult librarians do to better serve this population? Know your community, know your collection, and aim to provide truthful and accurately written materials on your shelves in order to promote healthy sexuality in young adult patrons and a healthy environment for our young adult patrons to learn more about themselves.

Puberty brings endless changes to teen lives, including bodily changes and heightened curiosity about bodies and romantic or sexual interactions. Teens seek answers to their questions from any source available, often friends, trusted adults, or the media. The library has always been a bastion of information, and in this topic, as in any subject, we should strive to provide the most accurate and factual information for our patrons. If the material is there, tweens and teens will read it. Libraries can accomplish this through comprehensive nonfiction collections containing factual information and through novels in which teens learn how others react to situations and interact with people. Experiences described in novels have profound influence on their teen readers—yet another reason to categorize them as “coming of age” □ stories.<sup>3</sup> Because teens and adults find bodily changes awkward to discuss, the subject is often avoided in the home; teens will devour any information they can get from library materials.’

Sexuality is not just about the physical act, but also about orientation, inclination, exposure, interest, healthy and unhealthy relationships, and overall sexual health. Sexual health includes a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and relationships and emphasizes that potential sexual interactions should be safe and pleasurable. Teenagers need to explore sexuality as an abstract concept, as well as how it applies to them and how they will interact with others. Consideration of this topic does not exist in a void, but is subject to the views and expectations of their family, friends, and community. Sax states that sexuality is a good thing, and that it is a healthy part of becoming an adult; it is about who you are.<sup>4</sup>

### **A Brief History of Teen Literature and Sexuality**

In the beginning, there was nothing—young adult literature did not exist. Teens chose from adult titles or continued to read books intended for children. One foundation of YA literature can be seen in the Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys books, which contained occasional references to the mere existence of relationships. These were followed years later by novels detailing the demise of teen characters who chose to have premarital sex, such as Jerrie Oughton’s *Perfect Family*, in which the main character, Welcome, is turned out of her home in shame and ultimately gives up her baby in addition to everything else she has lost. Like Welcome, the character Carol in Richard Peck’s *Don’t Look and It Won’t Hurt* is repudiated by her parents and moves into a home for unwed mothers. Similarly negative fates awaited gay and lesbian characters, usually in the form of institutionalization or frequent car crashes. *The Man Without a Face* by Isabel Holland and *Trying Hard to Hear You* by Sandra Scoppettone both feature this violent and pessimistic ending for the gay characters involved. The arrival of Judy Blume briefly revolutionized young adult literature by openly acknowledging sex, although society quickly resumed the position that teens do not or at least *should* not have sex. Trites states that most young adult books have conflicting messages about sexuality that “both reflect and perpetuate Western culture’s confused sexual [morals].” □<sup>5</sup>

In researching this matter, the wealth of articles published on this topic shows that the sensitive subject of sexuality in teen literature is nothing new. The inclusion of sexuality in young adult literature has been a slow process that we are still in the middle of navigating. The genre has come a long way in including descriptions of healthy and unhealthy relationships, LGBTQ issues, teen pregnancy, and teenage sex, but the descriptions often still ring false or cautious. Focusing on unhealthy relationships and teen pregnancy, Kathryn Clarke’s *The Breakable Vow* demonstrates that while authors are trying to get these issues into print, the attempts often push morals rather than providing truthful insights to which teenaged readers can relate. Stone is correct in saying, “Books are possibly the safest place for them to learn about sex—not just the physical part but also the complex web of emotions that accompanies it.” □<sup>6</sup> Stone’s article provides an interesting and important glance into the mind of a YA author, explaining the reasoning behind adding or excluding sex from young adult stories. Authors

do not include sex to be gratuitous or rebellious; rather, it is included for its realism, and in the case of coming of age or problem novels, it propels the action. Author Lara Zeises explains that “with fiction you get to explore the emotional impact of whatever choice your character makes.”<sup>7</sup>

## **A Place For YA Literature**

Imagine if fiction for young adults was still nonexistent, such as it was seventy years ago. Let us say that children’s literature was studied until around age twelve (sixth or seventh grade), and the next year, students ‘switched to literature written for adults, picking a classic novel to read for English class. Which scenario is psychologically better for adolescents? Going from Dick and Jane stories to *Pride and Prejudice* or *East of Eden*, or reading current young adult literature, which showcases characters their own age with their own ideas, interests, and curiosities? Where would we rather have teens learn about sexuality—from Phyllis Reynolds Naylor’s *Alicieseries* or from Lady Gaga’s music videos? Perhaps we need to put YA literature in context as a set of stepping stones in social education, and consider the alternative of no sexuality represented in YA literature at all. Pattee points out that if we recognize YA literature and mass media as some of the information teens receive about sexuality, we are less likely to be concerned with the explicit nature of the content, and more worried about the accuracy and context of the information. She stresses that sexually explicit young adult literature gives familiar terms and romantic context for the clinical terminology and cold hard facts used in sex education courses. Pattee also ‘reminds us’ that reading can be ‘for learning’ or for leisure,’ that teens can read the same material and get different things out of the text.<sup>8</sup> Some teens will read a book simply for its story, while some will glean information relevant to their situation. Author Debra Garfinkle examines the need for accuracy from a different perspective, saying fiction needs “to be ‘real’ because teenagers especially hate phoniness and because teenagers especially need to make sense of all the sexual changes they’re going through.”<sup>9</sup> Knowledge is power; teens find satisfaction in knowing more about sexuality and feel more confident with that additional knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

## **Sexuality and Teen Literature**

According to The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy’s 2009 survey, 46 percent of high school teens have had sex while 37 percent report being sexually active. This number is down from 1991 but has remained fairly steady over the last few years.<sup>11</sup> Young focused on a different set of data from the National Center of Health Statistics and quotes the statistics as 42 percent of girls and 43 percent of boys under the age of 18 have had sex at least once.<sup>12</sup> Yet for such a high number of teens being sexually active, there is not a corresponding amount of young adult literature depicting the act of sex. This dearth is not new in the genre—critics as far back as the late 1970s and early 1980s have called for a less conservative and more positive approach to sex in young adult literature.<sup>13</sup> MacGregor focused on the messages sent to young girls through several contemporary novels and found that across several categories, with few exceptions, the majority of books further the abstinence-only sex education that many teens receive in school. Many contemporary novels offer negative consequences for the girls who partake in sex, in the form of unpleasant or unwanted sex, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, or emotional turmoil: “Their stories tell us that sex is not something a girl should want to do.”<sup>14</sup> Many storylines serve to terrify teenage girls who are already scared of getting a sexually transmitted disease or becoming pregnant and repeat the idea “that the only things that result from sex are negative.”<sup>15</sup> Negative consequences abound, such as Amber’s first and only sexual experience resulting in contracting herpes in Marilyn Reynold’s *If You Loved Me*, or Bridget’s emotional recoiling and withdrawal from others after her first sexual encounter in Ann Brashare’s *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. In *After* by Amy Efaw, Devon’s whole world is turned upside down when she denies that she is pregnant and copes by throwing her baby in a dumpster.

According to the National Center of Health Statistics for 2007, teens aged 15–19 made up 4.3 percent of those giving birth.<sup>17</sup> Teens as young as thirteen are getting pregnant, so comprehensive information must be delivered to them at earlier ages.<sup>16</sup> Sex education, whether abstinence-only or comprehensive, needs the helping hand of everyone in the community, including the library. We should have information available that will fill in gaps with facts, instead of the romanticized versions of relationships and sexual encounters they witness on television and in movies. Teen pregnancy and its subsequent consequences and choices are often the topic of young adult literature, but include little discussion of the teens' reflection on what they think and feel about sex and their sexuality, and even less discussion of the actual act. The pregnant characters in Efav's *After* and Anne-Laure Bondoux's *Life As It Comes* focus on the consequences and choices following conception; readers never see Devon or Patty's thoughts or reflections about the act of sex or what either character thinks of herself sexually, and the plots of these books are driven by the active choices made after sexual intercourse. Emge points out that today a pregnant teen is no longer subject to imminent disapproval and banishment to the outskirts of society, that "having a baby out of wedlock no longer brands girls as damaged goods."<sup>18</sup> Pregnant teens are not faced with being sentenced to attend alternate schools any more than LGBTQ teens are required to be institutionalized for their orientation.

### **Teen Literature and Sexuality**

Literature is a valuable way for young adults to "try on difference social masks" in forming their identity.<sup>20</sup> Exposure to images of different orientations and open sexuality through various media "allows sexualized messages and products [to] be more easily accepted during this developmental age."<sup>21</sup> The American Psychological Association (APA) is referring to a negative sexualization of girls and not necessarily a healthy sense of one's sexuality, but the sentiment that this age is more impressionable is apt. The broader the substance of your library's collection, the more exposure youth will have to different ways of life and acceptance thereof.

Collecting and promoting materials with LGBTQ characters or those that promote an open-minded view of sexuality helps assimilate LGBTQ adolescents and aids straight teens in accepting gay peers.' Unfortunately, while homosexuality in young adult literature is nothing new, we have been dealing with its censorship for decades and continue to see examples of it. Cart's 1996 book reminds us that "according to the American Library Association, the topic of homosexuality was the leading cause of book challenges in 1993."<sup>22</sup> The children's book *And Tango Makes Three* has made the top three on ALA's lists of most challenged or banned books for the last four years. While there are still a limited number of titles published where homosexuality is the main theme, growing numbers of books feature gay friends of the main characters.' Manfredi points out "books being published for young adults are not queer-friendly by default. The field has expanded in many positive ways, it is not free from some of the pitfalls of earlier eras."<sup>23</sup> These characters may not be the focus of the stories, but they appear with more frequency each passing year. Cart states the truth of the matter simply as "gay kids, like any others, need to see themselves represented in literature; they need positive role models too, just like any other kids."<sup>24</sup> The results of the interview project described in Meixner's article revealed that libraries often have more LGBTQ literature in their young adult nonfiction collections than in their fiction collections.<sup>25</sup> This project also discovered that unfortunately teens often do not request these materials. The lack of requests for this material may indicate teens' shyness in asking librarians for these titles, or reluctance to check out books that might expose their sexuality to their parents or peers, rather than a lack of interest. There needs to be a balance between texts in the nonfiction collection that answer frank questions and fiction titles that give context and explain emotions.

Goldstein and Phelan point out that manga, incredibly popular with teens, gives readers a chance to look through the opposite gender's eyes and see how they think and feel.<sup>19</sup> Japanese acceptance of sex, bodies, and a variety of

sexual orientations is expressed openly in these graphic novels, giving young readers a much different and more open view of sexuality and guidance on how to cope with a young discovery of sexuality, sex, and relationships. Manga allows teens to read about relationships and physically interacting with romantic interests from both a heterosexual and a homosexual point of view. Including a variety of manga in your collection gives teens an open and accepting environment in which to read about these subjects. Manga is wonderful at expressing visually and linguistically the tension and stress that accompanies coming of age, puberty, and the first discovery of the opposite (or same) sex. *Ranma* and *Princess Knight* are two prime examples of stories that give teens the chance to see through the other gender's eyes and learn how they are viewed by the opposite gender. Cross-dressing is common in manga and characters are often drawn to be of ambiguous gender. From this, teens can learn that many romantic situations are the same regardless of gender or orientation.

Emge's article describes the situation best: "Today's teens are possibly under more pressure to have sex than to avoid it. Sex is so openly glamorized in today's culture that its allure is virtually inescapable."<sup>26</sup> Young adults' main sources for information about sex and sexuality include the Internet, friends, television and films, music (videos and lyrics), video games, and magazines. The depiction of sexuality in these media is what teens perceive to be true, especially among younger or more ignorant teens. Several types of media are cited in articles written about teen influences, but none of the articles list books as having sway over teens' decisions regarding their sexuality or in society's sexualization of girls.' Books may be left out of these considerations because the researchers think books have little to no influence on teens, that teens don't read books, or they don't believe this subject is included in literature, which leaves magazines as the only printed reading material for youth. The APA reports that "the number of teen-focused magazines has increased dramatically from 5 in 1990 to 19 in 2000."<sup>27</sup> As magazines tend to be mostly visual, it is easy for self-esteem to be negatively influenced, particularly in regard to physical appearance. The APA states that "accepting these [objectified] views of women and their bodies was associated with negative attitudes toward breastfeeding and the 'functional' aspect of one's own body."<sup>28</sup> Not only are teens overwhelmed with impossibly idealistic images and expectations of physical perfection, but the natural and healthy aspects of human anatomy and biology are disparaged. Levine and Kilbourne point out, "Although graphic sexual messages abound in the media, there is rarely any accurate information about sex (the major networks still refuse to run condom ads) and certainly never any emphasis on relationships or intimacy."<sup>29</sup> With all the emphasis that advertising and marketing place on sex and its appeal to sell products, messages from concerned adults and interest groups advocating accuracy or restraint in the depiction of sex are buried and overlooked.

### **Sexuality and the Teen Library Collection**

Much of the interest in writing this paper came from participating in Biederman's library survey on sex in YA literature, conducted in 2009.<sup>30</sup> The final paper included responses from teens taken from a similar survey regarding general young adult reading trends. When asked whether they had read any young adult fiction containing sexually explicit material they had never before encountered, more than 50 percent of teens aged 16–18 said no, whereas just under 50 percent of teens aged 14–15 said yes. More than 40 percent of teens surveyed said that explicit sexual content in books does not make them uncomfortable (particularly for 16-year-olds) while fewer than 40 percent replied that it only sometimes made them uncomfortable. In asking whether literature influences their own sexual experiences, the data showed that fewer than 15 percent across all ages said novels often influence them, 38–65 percent (depending on age) said it sometimes affects their judgment, and 32–58 percent (depending on age) said literature never influences their choices. Most importantly, when asked why teens choose to read fiction with sexually explicit content, they gave "to be entertained" as the primary reason;

the second was “exploring situations they’ve not yet encountered.”□ The majority of young adult readers are choosing books for the story, not to serve as how-to sex manuals, but this does not change the need for the information they are reading (and largely discarding) to reflect accuracy about sexuality and sex. Rather, it shows that teens are able to self-monitor what they read.

Within my own young adult fiction collection, I wanted to discern the amount of material that had messages of sexuality. Four different young adult librarians have built up this large collection over approximately eight years representing several different opinions of YA literature and sets of values. I obtained a random sample of 124 titles by selecting the second book from every shelf, and evaluated the books for the presence and level of sexual content. Specifically, I looked for references in the categories of sexuality, sexual intercourse, oral sex, LGBTQ, masturbation, and other (instances of groping, sexual abuse, and rape were recorded in this category). Relationships and kissing were not included as possible categories; books mentioning only these were not considered. Reflections on orientation were placed in the LGBTQ category, and any text considering how they felt about sex or the potential to interact romantically were counted in the sexuality category.

Seventy-eight percent of the titles had no reference to sexuality, seven percent referenced sexuality, four percent discussed sex, seven percent included LGBTQ, and four percent were other. The sample contained no references to oral sex or masturbation. The majority of the books were published in 2005 and 2007; 47 of the titles were published in the last five years. No real correlation between date and amount or type of sexual content could be made. If relationships and kissing had been included as categories, it is estimated that would have doubled the number of books which included references to sexuality; however, in most of these titles, the sexuality themes would not be considered a central part of the story. In examining whether stories were geared more toward one gender or another, only one-quarter ‘ focused on males and their feelings or reflections, while three-quarters of the titles surveyed gave a female perspective.

The overall number of books on the young adult fiction shelves in my library with references to the above categories was slightly higher than anticipated. The search resulted in a better understanding of how the collection overall is diversified and of the content in specific titles that can now be recommended to teens looking for certain types of stories.

The sample included a variety of approaches to teen sexuality such as Hurwin’s *Circle the Soul Softly*, which gently discusses incestual rape and the main character explores her sexual and romantic feelings for David. In Cohn and Leviathan’s *Naomi and Ely’s No Kiss List*, one of the main characters is openly gay and his orientation accepted without question. Another title with a gay main character set in a romance story is *Vintage: A Ghost Story* by Steve Berman. The *Gossip Girl* series is notorious for its inclusion of sex in all forms, and since the series is ever-expanding, it was not surprising to have one of the series, *I Like It Like That*, included in the sample.

## **Conclusion**

This project provided not only insight of titles for future readers’ advisory, but also information that can be used to defend the collection against censorship. Knowing your collection is only part of the solution—knowing your community’s values and expectations will help you tailor your collection to your teens, and know what will be allowed onto the shelves, and what will push the envelope a bit too far. Continuing to read book reviews and compare booklists will enable library staff to broaden the collection. Learn more about what the community wants

by attending school meetings and speaking with teen patrons and their parents. Ask trusted patrons what they think about the collections and what is missing.

Cart says the following regarding books with gay themes or characters, but it is true of all young adult literature dealing with sexuality: there are insufficient good books. He also states, “The books also need to be honest and candid in their treatment of the subject.”<sup>32</sup> However hip young adult librarians can be, we must not overlook our own feelings about sexuality in young adult literature. Any teacher will tell you that young adults can sense your discomfort, which spreads and compounds the problem. Your openness should be present in your collection, your displays, and your manner. If you aren’t comfortable with the subject, seek out local sex educators through Planned Parenthood, The National Campaign, or sexual assault or domestic violence centers. They can help you find resources, titles, and determine accuracy of content. Resources and booklists also exist in abundance, and while it would be impossible to create one comprehensive list of all books, booklists, and recommendations for titles addressing the issue of sexuality, a selection compiled from resources utilized in the writing of this article can be found at the end of the piece.

In a collection, the amount of material in any of these areas is indicative of several factors, such as an individual librarian’s choices and comfort level with these subjects as well as the community’s values and expectations (or the librarian’s perception of these). Within your library’s collection development policies, it is your selection of titles that determine the breadth of your collection’s horizons and thus affects the horizons of your young adult patrons. A paucity of material in any area only perpetuates ignorance in sexually aware teens. As Meixner’s students learned, it is “possible for libraries, like schools, to perpetuate as well as perpetrate violence against LGBTQ youth”<sup>33</sup> and by extension, other teens reviewing their sexuality, be it orientation, interest, personal opinions or values, or navigating relationships, simply by not having a balanced collection.<sup>33</sup>

Being a teenager is complicated. Sex is complicated. Most adults will likely admit that sex is complicated, even with the benefit of years of practice and experience, and teens do not yet have much experience or knowledge in this area. Having accurate material available for them to get the information they seek is part of our job and helps make the issues less complicated. “Young adult literature becomes one of few places where readers can find greater explication of the mechanics of the sex act, descriptions of sexual maturation, and scripts for negotiating their own sexuality.”<sup>34</sup> Our YA collections need more titles that fill this important information need for our teenage patrons. “Teenagers deserve to have the option of seeing positive representations of sex in the books that they are reading.”<sup>35</sup> Much of this article may be preaching to the choir, as our ability to select titles with accurate information is limited to what the authors of YA literature produce, and more than likely they will not be reading this. Instead, the goal as librarians is to further our awareness as to what is available and on our shelves for teens to read and identify with in exploration of their own sexuality and identity.

## References

1. Michelle Martin, “Saussure, Sex, and Socially Challenged Teens: A Polyphonic Analysis of Adolescent Fiction,”<sup>32</sup> in *Children’s Literature. Annual of Modern Language Association Division on Children’s Literature and the Children’s Literature Association* 30 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), 219.
2. *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2778.
3. Diane Emge, “I’m Pregnant! Fear and Conception in Four Decades of Young Adult Literature,”<sup>33</sup> *Young Adult Library Services* (Winter: 2006): 22.

4. Leonard Sax, *Girls on the Edge: the Four Factors Driving the New Crisis for Girls: Sexual Identity, the Cyberbubble, Obsessions, Environmental Toxins* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 12-13.
5. Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 95.
6. T. L. Stone, "Now and Forever: The Power of Sex in Young Adult Literature," *Voice of Youth Advocates* 28 (no. 6 2006): 463.
7. Marlene Perez, "Going All The Way in Teen Literature,"  *Young Adult Library Services* (Winter 2006): 22-29.
8. Amy Pattee, "The Secret Source: Sexually Explicit Young Adult Literature As An Information Source,"  *Young Adult Library Services* (Winter 2006): 30-38.
9. Perez, "Going All The Way In Teen Literature,"  20.
10. Trites, *Disturbing the Universe*, 96.
11. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "Teen Sexual Behavior and Contraceptive Use: Data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009,"   
[http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/FastFacts\\_YRBS2009.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/FastFacts_YRBS2009.pdf) (accessed August 2, 2010).
12. Sandra Young, "Teens Having Sex: Numbers staying steady,"  *CNN Health 'The Chart' Blog* 2010.  
<http://pagingdr Gupta.blogs.cnn.com/2010/06/02/teens-having-sex-numbers-staying-steady/> (accessed July 24, 2010)
13. A. M. MacGregor, "Let's (Not) Get It On: Girls and Sex in Young Adult Literature,"  *Voice of Youth Advocates* 26 (no. 6 2004): 468.
14. Ibid, 465.
15. Ibid, 466.
16. Young, "Teens Having Sex."
17. B. E. Hamilton, J. A. Martin, and S. J. Ventura, "Births: Preliminary Data for 2007,"  *National Vital Statistics Reports* 57 (no. 12 2009). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
18. Emge, "I'm Pregnant! Fear and Conception in Four Decades of Young Adult Literature,"  26.
19. Lisa Goldstein and Molly Phelan, "Are You There God? It's Me, Manga: Manga as an Extension of Young Adult Literature,"  *Young Adult Library Services* (Summer 2009): 32-38.
20. American Psychological Association, *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2007). Retrieved from  
<http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html>, 21 (accessed July 28, 2010)
21. Ibid, 21.
22. Michael Cart, *From Romance to Realism: 50 Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 228.
23. Angie Manfredi, "Accept the Universal Freak Show,"  *Young Adult Library Services* (Summer 2009): 27.
24. Cart, *From Romance to Realism*, 232.
25. Emily Meixner, "Teacher Agency and Access to LGBTQ Young Adult Literature,"  *Radical Teacher* 79 (2006): 17.
26. Emge, "I'm Pregnant! Fear and Conception in Four Decades of Young Adult Literature,"  26.
27. American Psychological Association, *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls*, 8.
28. Ibid, 25.
29. Diane E. Levin and Jean Kilbourne, *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood, and What Parents Can Do To Protect Their Kids* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), 151.



30. Lynn Biederman, "From Blume to Block and Beyond: Sex in Young Adult Literature," □ *ALA 2009 Annual Conference Materials*, 2006, <http://www.teenlitlab.com/SexinYoungAdultLiteratureALAConferenceFinal.pdf>. (accessed July 28, 2010).
31. Manfredi, "Accept the Universal Freak Show," □ 28.
32. Cart, *From Romance to Realism*, 230.
33. Meixner, "Teacher Agency and Access to LGBTQ Young Adult Literature," □ 17.
34. Pattee, "The Secret Source: Sexually Explicit Young Adult Literature As An Information Source," □ 38.
35. MacGregor, "Let's (Not) Get It On," □ 468

### Recommended YA Titles from Text

- Amateau, Gigi. *Claiming Georgia Tate*
- Blume, Judy. *Forever*
- Brother, Meagan. *Debbie Harry Sings in French*
- Chambers, Aidan. *Postcards from No Man's Land*
- Dole, Mayra Lazara. *Down to the Bone*
- Garfinkle, D. L. *Storky: How I Lost My Nickname and Won the Girl*
- Harmon, Michael. *Last Exit to Normal*
- Hartinger, Brent. *The Order of the Poison Oak*
- Jenkins, A.M. *Beating Heart: A Ghost Story*
- Johnson, Maureen. *The Bermudez Triangle*
- Jones, Carrie. *Tips on Having a Gay Boyfriend*
- Juby, Susan. *Another Kind of Cowboy*
- Klein, Norma. *Beginners' Love*
- Kluger, Steve. *My Most Excellent Year*
- Knowles, Jo. *Lessons from a Dead Girl*
- Levithan, David. *Boy Meets Boy*
- Liberman, Leanne. *Gravity*
- Lockhart, E. *Dramarama*
- Lockhart, E. *Fly on the Wall: How One Girl Saw Everything*
- Malloy, Brian. *Twelve Long Months*
- Moore, Perry. *Hero*
- Miracle, Lauren. *Kissing Kate*
- Naylor, Phyllis. *Achingly Alice*
- Nelson, Blake. *Gender Bender*
- Pearson, Mary. *A Room on Lorelei Street*
- Perez, Marlene. *Unexpected Development*
- Peters, Julie Anne. *Between Mom and Jo*
- Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna*
- Ryan, Sara. *Empress of the World*
- Sanchez, Alex. *Getting It*
- Sanchez, Alex. *Rainbow Boys*
- Sanchez, Alex. *So Hard to Say*
- Sloan, Brian. *A Really Nice Prom Mess*
- Sloan, Brian. *A Tale of Two Summers*

- Smith, Cynthia Leititch. *Tantalize*
- St. James, James. *Freak Show*
- Takahashi, Rumiko. *Ranma ½*
- Tezuka, Osamu. *Princess Knight*
- Wittlinger, Ellen. *Hard Love*
- Yoshinaga, Fumi. *Antique Bakery*
- Zeises, Lara. *Anyone But You*

### **Further Reading and Resources**

- Cart, Michael and Christine Jenkins. *The Heart Has Its Reasons* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006).
- [Explore LGBTQ History!](#)
- [Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network](#)
- Huegel, Kelly. *GLBTQ: The Survival Guide For Queer and Questioning Teens* (Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2003).
- [Human Rights Campaign](#)
- Martin, Hillias and James Murdock. *Serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Teens: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* (New York: Neal-Schuman, 2007).
- [OutProud: The National Coalition for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth](#)
- [Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays](#)
- [The Trevor Project](#) (Crisis Hotline for LGBTQ youth)

### **About the Author**

Eleanor Wood is the Young Adult Librarian, as well as a Reference Librarian, at Decatur Public Library in Illinois.