

'The Library is open': creating safe working environments for LGBTQ+ library employees and marketing supportive LGBTQ+ services

Date: 17-18 August 2023

Location: Government of the Netherlands, The Hague, The Netherlands

**Managing and Developing a LGBTQ+ Collection:
The Case of the Nélida Piñon Library at Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro**

Carlos Alberto Della Paschoa

Instituto Cervantes Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

E-mail address: khartlotz3@yahoo.com.br

Elisete de Sousa Melo

Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

E-mail address: elisetemel@hotmail.com



Copyright © 2023 by Alberto Della Paschoa & de Sousa Melo. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Abstract:

This article aims to present the steps in the management of LGBTQ+ Collection of the Nélida Piñon Library of Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro. One of the guidelines of the Collection Development Policy of the Cervantes Institute Libraries Network is to offer a representative, current and balanced vision of the Spanish speaking countries cultural reality. Following this guideline, the library of Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro began to develop a collection specialised in LGBTQ+ culture and literature to meet the needs of its users, since Spain is one of the forerunner countries in the approval of same-sex marriage (2005), along with the Netherlands, Belgium and Canada. It has progressive legislation on the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, such as homoparental adoption or official gender status change. In cultural terms, both Spanish cinema and literature reinforce and highlight references to LGBTQ+ culture in Spain. To contrast with the Spanish reality, the collection also brings together works on LGBTQ+ culture in Hispanic American Countries. According to the president of Cervantes Institute, Luis García Montero, the institution's mission is not only to spread Spanish vocabulary and culture, but also to show the best face of Spain around the world. And that Cervantes Institute wants its venues to be "spheres of freedom" in countries where there are no LGTB+ rights. Started in 2005, the collection has been expanded over time, currently bringing together around 300 documents, including books and videos. The library seeks to acquire works that deals with the different groups of the LGBTQ+ community and has documents

on children's and young people's literature, gender studies and Queer theory, lesbian, transvestite, transsexual, bisexual and transgender issues, biographies and the history of homosexuality in Spain and Latin America. The library promotes and organises activities focused on LGBT+ culture, such as the presentation of the short film "The inevitable story of Leticia Diniz" by Marcelo Pedreira about the situation of transvestites in Brazil, supported the Rio de Janeiro International Gender and Sexuality Festival up to 2019. It is noted that the collection is a reference for researchers and scholars of LGBT+ culture in the Hispanic Universe. Therefore, it meets the purposes of the institution. This is a report of the experience with a qualitative focus on the development of specialised collections.

Keywords: *Collection development; Collection management; LGBT+; Queer theory; Nélica Piñon Library.*

Introduction

Most libraries usually have special collections aiming to meet the needs of their community and users. Together with it, there are the mission and purpose of the institutions to which they belong. These collections are formed through a Collection Development Policy (CDP) established by the information unit according to the profile of its collection, public and institutional mission with different objectives: documental support to teaching and research programmes, stimulus to reading and formation of readers, preservation of documental heritage, democratization of access to information for a local or specific community.

This article seeks to report the experience in the conception, implementation and development of a collection focused on sexual diversity, that is, on the LGBT+ community, addressing the main processes carried out in each of the steps of the systematization of the LGBT+ Collection of the Nélica Piñon Library of Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro.

It is verified that to establish, create and develop a special collection, planning is necessary, which means the adoption of a course of action, through the establishment of processes and procedures in accordance with the mission, vision, values and institutional objectives, so that they allow its management, growth, diffusion and constant evaluation, among other aspects (RBIC, 2009).

To discuss the procedures adopted for the formation of this collection, it is necessary to contextualise Cervantes Institute and its Libraries Network.

The Cervantes Institute

Cervantes Institute is a Spanish public institution created in 1991 with the mission of promoting and disseminating the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures around the world. To achieve its mission and objectives, the institute has three pillars of action:

1) The academic area which offers Spanish courses for foreigners, proficiency exams (DELE and SIELE) and didactic updating of Spanish teachers.

2) The cultural area, responsible for carrying out cultural activities by means of musical presentations, art exhibitions, film, shows etc.

3) The library and documentation area, through the Cervantes Institute Libraries Network, whose collection constitutes an essential instrument to discover and learn about the

Hispanic Culture, besides offering documental and bibliographical support to research and academic production on the Spanish and Hispanic American Cultures.

Therefore, the Cervantes Institute Libraries Network is presented below.

The Cervantes Institute Libraries Network – RBIC (Red de Bibliotecas del Instituto Cervantes)

The RBIC is the largest international network of Spanish libraries in the world and forms part of the Spanish State library system. And it is positioned within the framework of action of Cervantes Institute as fundamental and indispensable piece for the organisation to successfully achieve its objectives.

There are currently 60 libraries spread over five continents in multicultural diversity and multilingual spaces. The Nélida Piñon Library in Rio de Janeiro is one of its eight information units in Brazil.

They offer, disseminate, generate information, promote communication and encourage knowledge of Hispanic Culture in an international context. Their collections and services are available to anyone interested in the language, literature and culture of Spanish speaking countries. Their bibliographic collections are guided by a Collection Development Policy that aims to offer a representative, current and balanced vision of the Spanish and Hispanic American cultural reality, according to the objectives of the institution. Each library must, in accordance with this CDP, in addition to the general collection, create some specialised sections such as the *Local Collection*; *One library, one author*; or thematic sections, among others, such as the *LGBT+ section* of the Nélida Piñon Library, which is presented as follows.

The Nélida Piñon Library

Opened to the public in 2004, the library of Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro has become a locally, nationally and internationally reference centre, specialised in the languages and cultures of Spain and Hispanic America. The collection currently holds around 30,000 documents. In addition to the general collection, it contains personal collections and specialised sections such as:

1) Nélida Piñon Personal Collection that brings together works from various areas of knowledge of the Humanities, more than 2,000 titles with dedications from Brazilian and international writers and artists;

2) The *Local Collection*, which brings together historical, cultural and literary works related to Brazil's relations with Spain and Hispanic America;

3) The *Valeriana Collection*, dedicated to the Spanish writer and diplomat Juan Valera, who was on a diplomatic mission in Rio de Janeiro at the end of the 19th century;

4) The *Carlota Joaquina de Borbón Collection*, dedicated to the Spanish queen and wife of King Dom João VI, when the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves was created in 1815 with the transfer of the Portuguese court to Rio de Janeiro in 1808.

The RBIC libraries are usually named after a representative author of the Hispanic culture. In the case of the unit in Rio de Janeiro, there was an exception and on June 20th 2022 the Nélida Piñon Library was inaugurated as a tribute to the Galician-Brazilian writer and academic, who died in December of the same year. In return for this gesture, Nélida Piñon donated her personal library (around 8,000 documents), as well as works of art that further enriched the library's collections.

These collections have been built up over time through donations or thematic issues in accordance with users' needs, based on the RBIC's CDP. One of these is the LGBT+ Collection, the subject of this article, which is described below.

The LGBT+ Collection

The LGBT+ Collection was created in 2005 as a result of the following factors.

In 2005, Spain approves same-sex marriage, thus becoming one of the forerunner countries along with the Netherlands, Belgium and Canada. In addition, it started to develop progressive legislation on the rights of the LGBT+ community, such as homoparental adoption or the change of official gender status.

Consequently, this change is reflected in library management with the inclusion of LGBT+ bibliographic collections, supported by legislation for equal rights in some autonomous communities in Spain, such as Galicia (Law 2/2014), Cataluña (Law 11/2014), Extremadura (Law 12/2015), Madrid (Law 03/2016), Murcia (Law 8/2016) and Balears (Law 8/2016) (Gómez-Hernández, Pérez-Iglesias, 2017). Another aspect to highlight is the new Spanish family model presented in the methods of teaching Spanish as a foreign language.

The motivating fact that gave impetus for the creation of the collection was the continuous request for the film "A mi madre le gustan las mujeres" (in English: My Mother Likes Women), a Spanish comedy directed by Inés Paris and Daniela Fejerman (2002). This film has been in great demand by Spanish teachers to be shown in classes as a didactic and cultural tool, which has led to a huge request for LGBT+ themed films and literature by students and other users.

Although there were some documents on this subject in the general collection, how to justify the creation of a specialised collection in LGBT+ culture?

To this end, it was necessary to consult the CDP of the RBIC, which states that "the bibliographic collections of the Cervantes Institute Libraries Network are based on a common collection of obligatory presence derived from its primary function: to offer a representative, current and balanced vision of the Spanish and Hispanic American cultural realities, in accordance with the institution's objectives" (RBIC, 2009). It can be seen that the approval of same-sex marriage, as well as other issues related to sexual minorities, is the reflection of a new and current social context in Spain, so from the point of view of offering a representative view of the Spanish Cultural reality the creation of a collection specialised in LGBT+ culture is justified; meeting the informational demands of users and the Collection Development Policy of RBIC.

In cultural terms, both Spanish cinema and literature have as one of their characteristics to present references to LGBT+ culture in Spain. Therefore, the LGBT+ Collection begins first with Spanish cinema, with the selection of videos already existing in the collection that are

included within this theme, and then moves on to literary works. Due to a spatial issue, at this moment it was decided that all documents integrating this collection would not be gathered in a single space, but would be identified in the library catalogue by means of the acronym "LGBT" in the specimen file, consequently being able to be located in the library system AbsysNet.

During this process, we realised the lack of a significant documental representativity that reflected the reality of LGBT+ culture in Hispanic American Countries and, according to the Collections Development Policy of RBIC, it should also offer a representative vision of the "Spanish-speaking world cultural reality". At this moment, the importance of searching for documents that deal with the Hispanic American LGBT+ culture was perceived as a way to offer a contrasted view between the Spanish reality and that of Hispanic American Countries.

Unlike the Spanish context, the social reality of the Latin American LGBT+ community differs in each country of the region.

The concern with the defense of the rights of the LGBT+ collective has become the focus of attention of public organisations in Latin America, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), whose LGBTI Support Group upholds the regional efforts to ensure that all human beings live free of violence and discrimination, based on their sexual orientation, gender orientation or expression. It was observed that the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations still does not contemplate the LGBT+ community in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Given this scenario, the importance of searching for documents dealing with the Hispanic American LGBT+ culture was perceived as a way to offer a contrasted vision between the Spanish reality and that of Hispanic American Countries. In this sense, it also includes works referring to the Brazilian LGBT+ collectivity.

The management and development of this collection has its own particularities as follows.

Management of the LGBT+ Collection

The LGBT+ Collection of the Nélida Piñon Library, as previously mentioned, follows the standards established by the RBIC, which comprises several phases. In this sense, it can be seen that the mentioned collection is aligned with the recommendations of scholars on collection development and management who state that the collection management process is made up of steps. According to Carvalho (1995), collection management is composed of "a set of activities, characterised by a decision-making process, which determines the convenience of acquiring, maintaining or detaching bibliographic materials, based on previously established criteria".

According to Ramos (2016), collection management involves the formation and development of collections that "is understood as a process composed of interrelated stages in a cyclical and permanent movement of planning and execution of collection management". The phases are: community study, selection policy, selection, acquisition, thinning, evaluation.

The main steps of the management of the LGBT+ Collection of the Nélida Piñon Library are distributed in:

1. Selection

Before starting the selection process, it is necessary to know the available budget, the existing collection, supply and users. The selection must also take into account the following criteria: thematic content, anticipated use, adequacy to the collection, quality, language of publication, date of publication, existence of copies.

In relation to Spanish publications, the selection is carried out through:

- Consultations with experts in LGBT+ culture;
- Suggestions from users;
- Catalogues of publishers of LGBT+ literature (Amistades Particulares, Amor de Madre, Dorna, Dos Bigotes, Egales, Kakao Books, La Calle, LES, Sietch);
- Catalogues of Spanish bookshops specialising in LGBT+ literature (A Different Life, Antinous, Berkana, Cómplices, Mira);
- Websites and blogs specialising in LGBT+ culture.

In relation to Hispanic American publications, although the selection takes place as the above mentioned, most LGBT+ publishers are in Argentina (Documenta/ Escénicas, Gog y Magog, Hekht, La Mariposa y la iguana, Maravilla, Monada, Nebliplateada y Paisanita) and Mexico (Taika). The same occurs with the specialised bookshops that are in Argentina (Otras Letras) and Mexico (Somos Voces, U-Tópicas, La Murciélaga, La Cháchara Periférica, El Armario Abierto).

To obtain information on LGBT+ literature from the other Spanish-speaking Countries, intensive internet searches are required and acquisition is not always possible due to importing and shipping these books.

Once the titles are selected, they are included in the annual *Desiderata* of titles for acquisition.

2. Acquisition

The list of *Desiderata* is sent to a Spanish distributor and wholesaler who will take care of obtaining the selected books. It is relevant to remember that obtaining all the titles rarely happens because some may be out of print or even hard-to-obtain Hispanic-American editions, which requires consulting different catalogues.

3. Maintenance

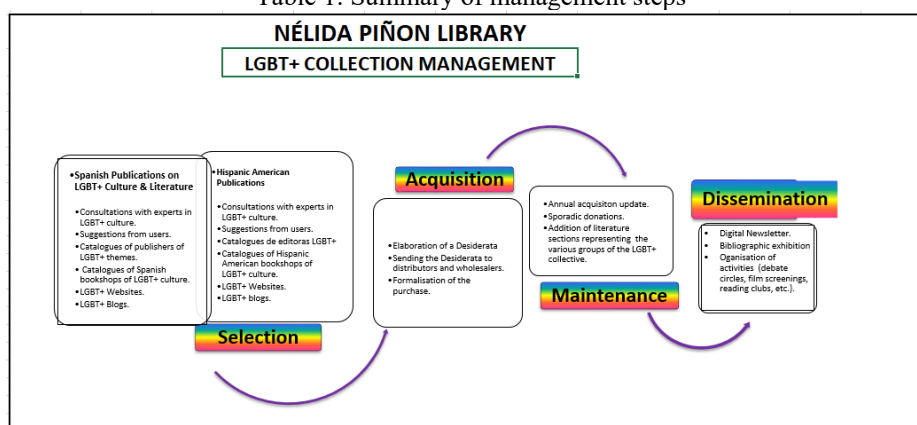
The specialised collection is built up over time, with new titles acquired annually and through sporadic donations. Throughout its 18 years of existence, the collection has been gathering works that represent and meet the necessity of the different groups of the LGBT+ community, such as: children's and youth literature, gender studies and Queer theory, lesbian, transvestite, transsexual, bisexual and transgender, biographies and history of homosexuality in Spain and Latin America.

4. Dissemination and library outreach activities

Novelties are communicated to users through a digital newsletter and bibliographic exhibitions. The library also seeks to promote this collection during the Rio de Janeiro International Gender and Sexuality Festival, held in collaboration with Cervantes Institute. It also organises activities aimed at the LGBT+ community, such as the presentation of the "The inevitable story of Letícia Diniz", a Brazilian short film directed by Marcelo Pedreira (2012) about the situation of transvestites in Brazil, and debates featuring the actress and transvestite Jane Di Castro and transgender activist Indianara Siqueira in 2014.

Thus, we can summarise the Nélide Piñon Collection management steps in the following table.

Table 1: Summary of management steps



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The flowchart shows that selection and acquisition are the steps that most require the information professional's attention because they are the central steps of collection management.

The effective fulfilment of the processes of a specialised collection involves the information skills of the librarian responsible for it. The profile of this professional is described below.

Librarian's role

The professional librarian has a key role in the development of a specialised collection because he/she knows the mission, vision, values and objectives of the library as an institution, the existing collection, its community, users and their needs, which make him/her the most suitable person to adjust the collection development criteria so that he/she can evaluate and select the titles that will enrich this collection.

It is understood that the librarian has enough expertise to develop and define the profile and quality of a specialised collection in a particular subject. It is perceived that it goes without saying that the responsibility of this professional is to make information accessible to its users regardless of the support (either physical or digital).

According to Vergueiro (1989), Collection Development activity should be the responsibility of the professional librarian, since he/she is (or should be) able to evaluate the material taking into account the objectives of the institution as well as the users information needs.

Considerations

In accordance with the president of Cervantes Institute, Luis García Montero, the focus of the institution is not only to spread Spanish vocabulary and culture, but also to show the best face of Spain around the world. And that Cervantes Institute wants its headquarters to be "spheres of freedom" in countries where there are no LGTB+ rights. In this sense, the creation of an LGBT+ collection, in addition to giving visibility to this community and culture, is fundamental to meet the informational needs of the different groups that compose it, from theoretical and formative texts to personal and recreational reading.

Libraries constitute a democratic space by nature in which all diversity of knowledge is present. Including a section, collection or books with LGBT+ content is to give voice and space to this community, it is to meet the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and, endowed as they are with reason and conscience, should behave fraternally towards one another".

Certainly the collection is a reference for researchers and scholars of LGBT+ culture in the Hispanic Universe. Hoping to enlighten with the LGBT+ Collection of the Nélida Piñón Library Cervantes Institute in Rio de Janeiro, this would contribute to other librarians to have similar initiatives to develop more collections on this theme.

Bibliography

Almeida, Maria Christina Barbosa de. (2005). *Planejamento de bibliotecas e serviços de informação*. Brasília: Briquet de Lemos.

Carvalho, Maria Carmen Romcy de. (1995). *Estatística e padrões para o planejamento e avaliação de bibliotecas universitárias*. Brasília: [s. n.].

Fernández-Paradas, Antonio-Rafael. (2020). *Patrimonio y memoria LGTBI en las leyes autonómicas en España*. *El profesional de la información*, v. 29, n. 1, e290110.

García Montero, L. (2019). El Instituto Cervantes quiere que sus sedes sean "ámbitos de libertad" en países donde no hay derechos LGBTI. Europa Press Cultura. Recuperado de: <https://www.europapress.es/cultura/exposiciones-00131/noticia-instituto-cervantes-quiere-sedes-sean-ambitos-libertad-paises-donde-no-hay-derechos-lgtbi-20190628154930.html>

Gómez-Hernández, J.-A., & Pérez-Iglesias, J. (2017). Cultura LGTBI en las bibliotecas públicas españolas. *Diálogo a propósito de las nuevas leyes de igualdad*. *Anuario ThinkEPI*, 11, 095–108. <https://doi.org/10.3145/thinkepi.2017.13>

Organización de las Naciones Unidas. (1948). *La Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos*. Recuperado de: <https://www.un.org/es/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Organización de las Naciones Unidas. (2015). *Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible*. Recuperado de: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/development-agenda/>

Organización de los Estados Americanos. (2016). *Declaración conjunta de los miembros fundadores del Grupo de Apoyo LGBTI OEA*. Recuperado de: <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/lgtbi/docs/DeclaracionConjunta-MiembrosFundadores-GrupoApoyo-LGBTI-OEA.pdf>

Red de Bibliotecas del Instituto Cervantes. (2009). *Política de desarrollo de colecciones de la Red de Bibliotecas del Instituto Cervantes*. Madrid: RBIC.

Ramos, Rosane de Oliveira. (2016). *Formação e desenvolvimento de coleções em centros de documentação: espaço para diálogo e atuação interdisciplinar*. Natal, RN: UFRN.

Recuperado de: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://na01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Frepositorio.ufrn.br%2Fbitstream%2F123456789%2F39843%2F3%2FFormacaoEDesenvolvimento_Ramos_2016.pdf&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cf66a931b02a8447ed1f208db6120dc54%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638210565984868573%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=FpDHzY11v5qntj%2F7LEDWclI79VpKNJ6dtckRqbk88Y%3D&reserved=0

Vergueiro, W. (1989). *Desenvolvimento de coleções*. São Paulo: Polis.