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Russell Michalak

Goldey-Beacom College, michalr@gbc.edu

Monica Rysavy

Goldey-Beacom College, rysavym@gbc.edu

Trevor A Dawes

University of Delaware, tad@trevordawes.com

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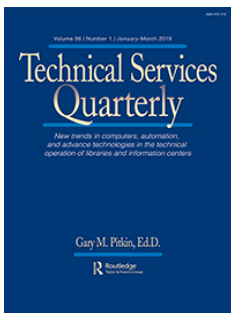


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Amazon.com vs. EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions: Evaluating New and Used Book Vendors While Building a Diverse Collection

Russell Michalak^a, Monica D. T. Rysavy^b, and Trevor A. Dawes^c

^aDirector of the Hiron Library, Archives & Learning Center, Goldey-Beacom College, Wilmington, Delaware, US; ^bDirector of the Office of Institutional Research & Training, Goldey-Beacom College, Wilmington, Delaware, US; ^cMay Morris Libraries, Museum and Press, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware, US

ABSTRACT

This article will share a small college's comparison of the benefits and challenges that occurred when ordering a curated list of new and used print books from EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions, a traditional book jobber, instead of Amazon.com, a book retailer. The researchers analyzed the acquisition process, final purchase cost, and reconciliation workflow between the two vendors. Results from this study revealed a 3.1% final cost difference between the two vendors. Additionally, this case study addressed the workflow undertaken to build a curated list of new and used LGBTQ and Title IX print books. This research contributed to the literature as scholarship that compared titles in academic libraries between one subject area, gender studies, in combination with an assessment of the collection development, acquisition, and ordering software tools provided to academic libraries from a traditional book jobber and a book retailer was scant.

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relationships; acquisitions;
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collection assessment

Introduction

This research was conducted in response to the library director's need to reexamine the new and used print book acquisition process workflow, final purchase cost, and the reconciliation workflow process of Amazon.com, the library's sole book vendor for the past 18 years. This article compared which book vendor—a traditional book jobber, EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions, or a behemoth in the retail industry, Amazon.com with Prime or without Prime—better streamlined the library's workflow acquisition and reconciliation process, improved collection development process, and was more cost effective.

The institution purchased a curated list of 75 new and used books on gender studies from EBSCO Library Solutions instead of from Amazon.com with Prime or without Prime to determine which company's acquisitions software tool improved internal business processes. Amazon.com (with Prime) had been the library's sole book vendor for the last eighteen years, because it provided the most

CONTACT Russell Michalak  michalr@gbc.edu  Goldey-Beacom College, 4701 Limestone Rd., Wilmington, Delaware 19808

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cost-effective option to purchase print books and was also provided the least expensive and most expedited means of shipping them to the college. In the past, very few issues ever arose when ordering and purchasing print books from Amazon.com, but to reconcile the credit card statement following the institution's business office's procedures proved to be too time consuming for the librarians at this small college.

Time spent reconciling the credit card statement proved to be taking away from other library initiatives. Time could have been better spent by librarians and library staff on: outreach, assessment of services, and marketing. A salesperson from EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions claimed his product, an online web-based software, with a "suite of tools in one easy interface designed for all kinds of libraries" (S. Sutton, personal communication, May 2017) could save time for librarians and library staff to work on other projects because GOBI streamlined collection development (locating books), the ordering process (selection), and management of a collection. Consequently, the researchers conducted a comparison of GOBI Library Solutions and Amazon.com. To offset the higher cost of books provided by EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions, EBSCO offered this library a tiered discount (also known as a sliding scale discount) for new and used print titles because of the school's small student population, FTE 1,645.

As part of the library's collection development process, the researchers, who were not gender studies experts, compiled a list of subject headings aligned with gender studies to assure they purchased pertinent books for the collection. See [Appendix D](#). Then, the researchers searched in eight regional schools' public facing catalogs and its own catalog using those subject headings. This process was conducted to ascertain how many books librarians should order. To determine which books the library should order from this vendor and retailer comparison study, the researchers used some of the tools offered by GOBI. The researchers browsed subject-specific (gender studies) lists sent via GOBI's email notifications, examined detailed bibliographic records, and performed advanced search and filtering. The researchers selected 75 new and used, fiction and non-fiction, print books for this study.

This case study contributed to the literature; the researchers compared subject headings about gender studies between eight academic libraries and its own catalog for collection development purposes and used a curated list of 75 titles to compare EBSCO Library Solution's and a Amazon.com's book acquisition software. Literature like this case study was sparse.

Literature review

Vendor's business relationships with academic libraries

Recent literature about libraries' business relationships with traditional book vendors was scarce. Which book jobber academic libraries can be limited

because of external agencies; therefore, libraries must commit to extended terms to receive lower prices. Smith (1999) pointed out that libraries may be legislated by government agencies, consortia, or “a library may commit to a specified annual expenditure in return for concessions from a vendor. These arrangements are assisted by bids and special terms” (p. 97). However, when selecting a vendor to order books, Dannelly (1999) enumerated four general areas that must be evaluated: “effectiveness, efficiency, economics, and the ethics of the proposed arrangement” (p. 106).

Johnson (2014) cautioned that ethical issues can emerge when working with book suppliers and book vendors. Similar to institutions who seek new auditors every three or four years to demonstrate to the board of directors or trustees that the institution follows best practices and was ethical, libraries should review the contracts and purchase agreements with book vendors “as a business decision, and the needs of the library must be placed first” (p. 76). Switching book vendors demonstrates to a library’s constituents that the staff member responsible for negotiating contracts does not receive fringe benefits.

By contracting with online book vendors mainly to order and purchase books and eBooks, a library’s acquisition’s team can better streamline its workflow process. The utilization of vendors by libraries’ technical services departments “automatically eliminates the necessity for finding and recording addresses for all sources and reduces the number of boxes to open, invoices to process, checks to issue, and people to contact about problem receipts” (Reid, 1984, p. 76). Vendors “can’t exist without us, but likewise, we can’t exist without them” (Reid, 1984, p. 4). Twenty years later Johnson (2014) concurred, stating, libraries acquired all titles from online vendors to streamline ordering, shipping, and receive consolidated invoicing. Most importantly many online book vendors offered discounts when libraries order in bulk (Johnson, 2014, p. 162).

Discounts are an important consideration when librarians select an online vendor from whom to purchase books and eBooks. Smith pointed out that

there is direct relationship between the vendor’s discount policy and a library’s order mix [“the combination of relatively profitable and unprofitable titles”] (p. 95). Most vendors offer either a sliding-scale discount policy (wherein the library’s discount is determined by the individual publisher’s discount) or a flat rate discount (wherein the discount for each title is the same irrespective of the publisher’s discount). (p. 95)

The means by which a vendor markets the price of his/her product—books—affects the library’s selection of a vendor. Melkin (1999) explained “the option of advertising without a price remains, but that seems undesirable since the library community needs price information even when it is only an approximation” (p. 29). Librarians should be cognizant that wholesalers, as a legitimate practice, mark up the margin on net books to cover costs (Marsh

& Lockman, 1988, p. 176). Historically, academic libraries have had a choice to purchase books directly from publishers when discounts are not offered from vendors (Johnson, 2014, p. 166). Discounts given to libraries that purchase books from vendors who do not manufacture “the products they sell nor do they establish list prices (the recommended retail price set by the publisher)” vary and the literature is sparse on how vendors set their prices (Smith, 1999, p. 95).

The length of time academic libraries have purchased books from vendors, in part, determines the perks, price discounts, and service vendors offer libraries. Smith (1999) argued many vendors offer discounts for loyalty to their service (p. 103). He stated, “[P]rofitability, service, and satisfaction can only be the results of sincere commitment and skill” (p. 103). Melkin (1999) emphasized “The vendor may be providing something in addition to direct selling, namely, service in the form of consolidated ordering, bibliographic information, and time savings in payment and in claiming. The publisher cannot provide such service” (p. 25).

Librarians and vendors must ensure the vendor–library relationship remains amicable. Dannelly (1999) asserted “A successful library-vendor relationship has to be based on shared priorities and goals that define specified services to the library and frequent, honest, and effective communication between the organizations’ representatives” (Dannelly, 1999, p. 109). Melkin (1999) pointed out,

Publishers may continue to spend their advertising dollars to inform the library market of their particular products, but with the expectation that those products will be bought from the vendor. For these publishers[,] the vendor often becomes an ally, a partner in reaching an ultimate end customer, the library patron. (p. 25)

Again literature was scant regarding the process of how libraries acquire monographs from GOBI. In one case study, Horava (2012) shared that the University of Ottawa’s use of “innovative methods to select and order monographs is a valuable means of demonstrating efficiency and organizational performance while focusing on timely delivery of materials to the patron community” (p. 4). Specifically, the library staff shared lessons they [had]

learned from YBP [Yankee Book Peddler] about an ordering workflow that would empower the selector to place orders directly in the vendor system (GOBI). The selectors [were] asked to place their orders in an Export Cart rather than a Select Cart, and the acquisitions staff would not verify the order for duplicates before importing them into Millennium [integrated library system] and confirming them with the vendor. (Horava, 2012, p. 4)

He enumerated the benefits to this new system:

- Orders would be processed more quickly, resulting in a saving of about one week in the arrival of books;

- Fund balances would be more up-to-date and accurate, seeing that there was no backlog of orders to be processed;
- Titles ordered would appear in the catalogue twenty-four hours after selection;
- Selectors could place the orders anytime it was convenient for them; and
- Significant time savings for the acquisitions staff, thus freeing them up to deal with more complex orders. (p. 4)

On the other hand, library administration bemoaned the delay selectors caused in the acquisitions process.

Librarians in North Carolina who belong to the Triangle Research Library Network (TRLN) documented viable discount models for eBooks between academic libraries and vendors like EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions. The authors argued eBook acquisition would become mainstream among all sizes of libraries globally only with consortial eBook sharing. Lippincott et al. (2012) shared, "No such discount exists for e-Books, meaning that, for academic libraries that prefer paperback versions, the corresponding e-Book purchase will be much more expensive" (p. 4).

The cost savings can be significant for academic libraries that purchase print books from vendors rather than from publishers. While recent literature was sparse about the changes to this practice, Melkin in 1999 argued, "Vendors seem to have evolved closer relationships with librarians than publishers have with vendors. Perhaps, there is more understanding of the role of the librarian in the vendor's business which regularly has a librarian on staff" (p. 31).

Retailer's business relationships with academic libraries

Literature about retailers', such as Amazon.com, business relationships with academic libraries likewise was minimal. For many libraries, acquiring titles quickly for a student or faculty member is a core part of all librarians' job function since they are employed to serve customers. Therefore, librarians will acquire a book or eBook in the most expeditious means possible even if it means ordering from retail giants like Amazon.com. Johnson (2014) argued "Libraries occasionally purchase from retailers if they need an item quickly and the retailer can guarantee speedy delivery" (p. 166). She noted that one frequently used retailer is Amazon.com (p. 166). She cautioned that "one complication for public institutions in dealing with retailers is ensuring that no tax is charged. Retailers do not offer discounts to libraries, but paying list price (plus shipping, if delivered) may be justified if the need is urgent" (p. 166).

At the time this study was conducted, only one case study analyzed the process in which a community college library contracted with Amazon.com as the sole supplier of its library's print books. Greene (2014) stated that

Columbia Gorge Community College (CGCC) utilized Amazon.com as their sole wholesale book supplier because the service “is fast and offers competitive pricing. Additionally, we [CGCC] paid for an Amazon Prime membership (currently \$99 annually) that made Amazon *really* fast because it includes free two-day shipping on most items” (para. 7). Regarding the process in which that library paid for books through its business office, the author noted, “Relying almost exclusively on Amazon meant that we needed to have a credit account (essentially a credit card) with Amazon that allowed us to pay our bill monthly instead of with each order. Our business office worked with us to set up open purchase orders (POs) for different types of materials as well as a process for tracking the orders and paying the monthly bills.” While this process seemingly simple, Greene pointed out that not all business offices can or will allow such an arrangement (para 8). He further added, “While other vendors have analogous collection development tools of varying complexity, my experience is that they are less intuitive to use than Amazon’s wish lists” (para. 10).

Likewise, the literature was negligible regarding usability studies of online book retailers such as Amazon.com. Libraries increasingly use online retailers such as Amazon.com because “it is one of the largest used- and new-book marketplaces online” (Ghose, Smith, & Teland, 2006, p. 4). In addition, Ghose et al. remarked that one unique feature are lists with new and used books marketed side by side that are available to consumers in Amazon.com’s online marketplace (p. 4). In contrast, book selectors must navigate between several online vendors’ websites to determine the price difference between a used print book and a secondhand copy of the same title. Alternatively, for some vendors a librarian selecting a title must scroll down the page to find a used or secondhand book rather than compare prices on one page.

Secondhand market business relationships with academic libraries

The literature was also sparse about secondhand market relationship with small and large academic libraries. This occurs because many academic libraries rely on the retrieval of out-of-print titles from an interlibrary loan department (Landesman, 1999, p. 180). While many academic libraries have purchased many secondhand and out-of-print books online recently, comments made by librarians in the 1990s are still relevant. Specifically, librarians must also consider whether the online vendor or an online book catalog can supply out-of-print or used books. Landesman (1990) asserted “Library literature does not deal extensively with the out-of-print market” because “computerization has had relatively little impact as yet on the out-of-print market” (p. 202). Books are still listed in catalogs and sent to potential buyers via email. Purchasing out-of-print titles electronically

through email with a secondhand market vendor or through their online store has become commonplace, but this method of marketing used books has not altered acquisition librarians process of purchasing used and secondhand books online.

To lessen the burden on libraries' budget, some libraries have outsourced the acquisition of used books to online vendors. Bickers (2002) indicated that vendors who provide searching online for out-of-print titles provide a useful service to librarians with insufficient time and resources to do the search themselves" (p. 173). Amsberry (2005) pointed out "requests for older titles from both students and faculty indicate that there is indeed a demand" for out-of-print books. However, librarians loan titles for many of their customers when budgets are constrained, or out-of-print books cannot be found (Amsberry, 2005, p. 434).

Libraries have conducted business with secondhand bookdealers to acquire obscure titles in-person and online. For librarians who select titles to purchase for a library, "the out-of-print market is often avoided;" because out-of-print titles are

hard on the acquisition staff, being among the more labor-intensive ways devised to spend one's time. It is hard on the business office, which doesn't understand the rush about paying or why the library insists on leaving orders outstanding for years (Landesman, 1999, p. 187).

However, Landesman (1990) had previously asserted that purchasing books for the library collection from the out-of-print market is "rewarding" (p. 187). She gleefully asserted that "coming up with a really obscure book one never thought could be found can quite make your day" as "there are bargains to be had if one works at it" (p. 187). This frustration has continued with librarians who order books online from retailers like Amazon.com and traditional book jobbers, whose catalogs are online.

The literature regarding studies that conducted a cost comparison between new and used books sold online likewise remain sparse. However, Ghose et al. (2006) studied the viability of Amazon.com selling used books online through its marketplace. The researchers declared,

There is nothing new about the sale of used books. Rather, what changes on the Internet is a radical increase in the variety of used books offered for sale, a radical decrease in the prices of the used books, and a radical decrease in the associated search costs for consumers to locate these used books. (p. 9)

Academic libraries have increasingly developed business relationships with online retailers such as Amazon.com who sell used and new books online. Therefore, libraries must evaluate the cost of new and used books when they purchase books from each vendor to determine whether the retailer will enforce third-party sellers to deliver used books quickly. But most

importantly, academic libraries must determine whether the condition of a used book as described by the third-party dealer was worth the price or whether loaning the book would be more cost effective instead. Ghose et al. (2006) discovered “84% of used-book purchases would not have occurred at Amazon’s new-book prices” (p. 3).

Some academic libraries have had to purchase used books from online vendors at lower costs when budgets have been reduced. Staley and Palo (2010) asserted that

buying used books can cut one’s acquisitions costs substantially. As of this writing, a ‘like new’ copy of *College Accounting*, by Douglas McQuaig and Patricia Bille, (ISBN 978-0618824175) was available used through Amazon.com for \$82.50, plus 3.99 shipping. A new copy ran \$115.05. Buying a used copy in good condition would save one’s library about 28 percent. Buying used is an especially good strategy when one is purchasing titles from higher-priced vendors. (p. 116)

However, the authors argued that “most used book vendors do not offer the same range of payment options that a book jobber will. Many require advance payment. Some only take credit cards or PayPal, while others will accept purchase orders” (p. 116).

Overtime online used booksellers now exist from which libraries can purchase print books, but knowing who to acquire books from can be a challenge. Levine-Clark (2004) argued, “Libraries wishing to purchase used books in place of new will need to compare discounts with those offered by their library vendors and keep shipping costs in mind” (p. 297). However, librarians must remain vigilant to ensure the savings of titles does “not offset the added labor cost of searching and ordering titles on an individual basis” (Levine-Clark, 2004, p. 297). Of course, the book’s condition must be considered in addition to the labor cost, shipping cost, and discount price (Levine-Clark, 2004, p. 297).

Methodology

Four research questions guided this case study:

- RQ1: How does this institution’s collection of LGBTQ titles compare to selected regional academic institutions’ titles when conducting keyword and subject heading searches using the same terms?
- RQ2: How does the acquisitions experience between Amazon.com and EBSCO’s GOBI Library Solutions compare?
- RQ3: How does the final purchase cost between Amazon.com and EBSCO’s GOBI Library Solutions compare?

- RQ4: How does the reconciliation workflow process compare between Amazon.com and EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions?

Before purchasing additional print titles for the library's collection, the researchers at this institution conducted keyword and subject heading searches using their discovery service with index (EBSCO Discovery Service). Additionally, they conducted the same searches from among the eight regional academic libraries' public-facing portals (each institution's discovery tool found from Marshall Breeding's libraries.org) to evaluate their current LGBTQ and Title IX collections, as illustrated in [Table 1] (Breeding, 2017):

The researchers used the following terms "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "transgender," "queer," "Title IX," "homosexual," and "homosexual" and "gay" within each institution's search box to determine the need for future purchases. Searches were limited to "book" and "eBook" within the institution.

These search terms were informed by the following resources:

- All of the chosen keywords were included in MacDonald and MacDonald's *Suggested Keyword Searching: Initiating Research on Popular Topics Using Electronic Databases*; (MacDonald & MacDonald, 2001, p. 389).
- All of the chosen keywords were previously entered by students, staff, and faculty during database searches within the last six years at this institution;
- All of the chosen keywords, with the exception of "Title IX" were utilized by Graziano, in his examination of the expansion of gender studies at Concordia University in 2016, pointed out "the keywords used to search both resources [theses and dissertations], which include abstracts for most theses, were: gay, gays, lesbian*, homosex*, queer*, bisexual*, transgender*, transsexual*, intersex*, and lgbt*" (Graziano, 2016, p. 119).
- Title IX was included as a search term due to its inclusion of gender discrimination in the Title IX policy, "Title IX's sex discrimination

Table 1. Regional academic institutions and their proprietary discovery services.

Institution	Discovery Service (w/index)
Drexel University	Summon
Rowan University	Summon
Temple University	Primo Central
The Pennsylvania State University	Summon
University of Delaware	WorldCat Local
University of Pennsylvania	Summon
Villanova University	Summon
West Chester University	Primo Central

prohibition extends to claims of discrimination based on gender identity or failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity and Office of Civil Rights (OCR) accepts such complaints for investigation” (GLSEN, 2014, para. 1).

Results

Current institutions’ LGBTQ and title IX titles compared to selected regional academic institutions’ titles

Both researchers conducted independent keyword searches of this institution’s print and e-Book format titles using the keyword terms listed in [Table 1](#). Results revealed ([Appendix A](#)) that there were 475,097 titles that contained the LGBTQ keywords which comprised 68.02% of the overall collection. It is important to note that these are not unique title results. Results of the LGBTQ and Title IX keyword searching revealed that there were 478,824 non-unique titles, which comprised 68.55% of the overall collection. The keyword term “gay” had the most keyword results in this institution’s discovery service (103,407), while the keyword term “Title IX” had the least results (3,727). All keywords, except for one, were singular. “Homosexual and Gay” were added as a Boolean search because searches such as those for “John Gay and the London Theatre” (book title) and for “Prairie Bohemian: Frank Gay’s Life in Music” (book title) appeared in the search results frequently when searching for “gay” by itself.

Subject searching by the authors with the same keywords of this institution’s collection in the discovery service revealed that there were 3,645 titles with LGBTQ subject headings which comprised 0.52% of the overall collection. As with the keyword search results, the subject heading results are not considered to be unique titles. Results of LGBTQ and Title IX subject heading searches revealed ([Appendix B](#)) that there were 3,657 non-unique titles which represented 0.52%. The keyword terms “gay” and “Title IX” again had the most and least results when conducting subject heading searches as they produced 1,859 and 12 results, respectively.

While the need to expand the LGBTQ and Title IX titles in this institution stemmed from this institution’s presidential directive, the library director deemed it necessary to conduct a regional institution title comparison before proceeding with the new title selection and purchase order from past experiences with self-study accrediting team inquiries and collection management best practices.

Eight regional institutions’ collections had the same LGBTQ and Title IX keywords by conducting keyword and subject heading searches within the regional institutions’ public-facing discovery tool as illustrated in [Table 1](#). Of the eight collections reviewed with keyword searching ([Appendix A](#)), only

two institutions provided access to more combined non-unique LGBTQ and Title IX titles than this institution (The Pennsylvania State University = 1,144,742 and Drexel University = 738,924). However, subject term searching ([Appendix B](#)) revealed that seven of the eight regional institutions searched held more non-unique titles with these terms as subject headings than this institution.

When comparing keyword search results per term between this institution and the other eight institutions researched, only two terms appeared more, on average, in other institutions' discovery tools—"queer" (on average 69.94% more) and "gay" (on average 40.64% more). In comparison, when reviewing subject search results between this institution and the regional institutions, seven of the eight keywords appeared with more frequency, on average, in the regional institutions' discovery tool, as illustrated in [\[Table 2\]](#).

Acquisitions experience: Amazon.com vs. EBSCO's GOBI library solutions

Collection development analysis

The librarian designated as the selector for social sciences' titles—including gender studies—identified a list of 75 LGBTQ and Title IX. See [Appendix C](#) & [Appendix D](#). In addition, the researchers compiled a list of eight other academic library's print and eBook titles that they held at the time the study was conducted.

Based on the librarian's recommendation of reviews and refined selection lists generated by EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions, 75 titles were acquired. For the purposes of this study, the library chose to purchase only print titles because Amazon.com only offered eBooks in the Kindle format (not a library-licensed model) when the study was conducted; otherwise comparing prices between GOBI and Amazon.com would not be valid.

Table 2. Keyword comparison of owned or leased print and eBook titles.

Keyword term	Keyword searches				Subject searches			
	This institution's library	Average among 8 regional libraries	% Difference between this institution and 8 regional libraries		This institution's library	Average among 8 regional libraries	% Difference between this institution and 8 regional libraries	
			+ or -				+ or -	
Lesbian	45,450	21,797	52.04%	-	751	1,386	84.54%	+
Bisexual	20,397	10,139	50.29%	-	1,859	3,754	101.91%	+
Transgender	9,682	3,204	66.91%	-	154	140	8.93%	-
Queer	38,638	65,663	69.94%	+	210	235	11.96%	+
Title IX	3,727	3,152	15.43%	-	269	587	118.08%	+
Homosexual	53,836	28,440	47.17%	-	12	46	283.33%	+
Gay	103,407	145,436	40.64%	+	268	316	17.96%	+
(Homosexual and Gay)	36,299	16,961	53.27%	-	93	335	259.95%	+

Library staff compared title details in both systems, GOBI Library Solutions and Amazon.com, for the following criteria: list price, net price, savings (in dollars), and average percentage savings. Details were recorded in a library-staff-shared Excel workbook for streamlined access.

Acquisition analysis—Amazon.com

The literature was sparse regarding Amazon.com's price structure. At the time the study was conducted, Amazon.com's pricing, specifically how that company determined its discount pricing per title, had remained a trade secret. Attempts by the researchers to locate specific details regarding Amazon's pricing were unsuccessful; however, comments by the news media described concerns with Amazon's pricing structure. *New York Times* reporter, Strietfeld (2013) reported, "Discounting, and especially inconsistent or shifting discounting, really messes with a publisher's ability to price a book fairly and accurately to its cost" (para. 10).

More specifically an article written by *New York Times* reporter Hansell (2002) stated,

Amazon.com now discounts nearly all books over \$20.00 by 30 percent. Amazon.com once offered discounts of as much as 50 percent on best sellers, and 20 percent discounts on other books. Early last year, the company started to raise book prices – with 5 percent to 10 percent discounts more common – only to reverse the increases as sales fell. (para. 10)

Analysis of data collected from searching Amazon.com for information on the 75 LGBTQ and Title IX titles revealed that the average percentage savings for the titles researched yielded a 21.22% off the original list price, as illustrated in [Table 3](#).

Amazon.com's shipping costs without a Prime subscription for the title list researched in this study cost \$116.25, as illustrated in [Table 4](#). By paying the \$99 annual program fee for Prime membership to Amazon.com, shipping costs were considered to be a sunk cost. See [Table 4](#).

Acquisitions analysis—EBSCO's GOBI library solutions

One discount model that EBSCO's GOBI Library Solutions offered to certain schools with a limited budget, including the library where this study was conducted, was a tiered discount or sliding scale discount model. According to EBSCO, the discounts per title range from up to 10% on university press titles and 40% on trade presses. Titles for which EBSCO did not receive a discount from publishers were not discounted for libraries.

Analysis of data collected from searching and finally purchasing the 75 LGBTQ titles from EBSCO revealed that the average percentage savings for the titles purchased was 18% off the original list price, as illustrated in [Table 4](#). Of the 75 titles purchased, 66 new books were acquired in the GOBI platform and 9 used books were acquired from Alibris via GOBI BookZone.

Table 3. Amazon acquisitions summary.

Total List Price For 75 Titles	\$1,763.62
Shipping*	\$99.00
Total Final Net Price	\$1,455.57
Average List Price	\$23.51
Average Net Price	\$19.41
Average % Savings	21.22%
Total Saving List to Net if ordered	\$38.05

*Included annual Prime subscription.

Table 4. GOBI's library solution acquisitions summary.

Total List Price For 75 Titles	\$1,886.66
Shipping	\$0.00
Total Final Net Price	\$1,615.80
Average List Price	\$25.16
Average Net Price	\$21.54
Average % Savings	17.75%
Total Saving List to Net if ordered	\$270.86

Final vendor purchase cost comparison

After comparing the best method to purchase a curated collection of 75 LGBTQ and Title IX titles, the library in this study found the Amazon.com without a Prime membership to be the least effective method to purchase books. The total price with five to eight-day shipping was the second-most expensive method—\$1,571.82. The least-expensive method to purchase these 75 books is Amazon.com with an annual \$99 Prime subscription—\$1455.57. Results from this study, as illustrated in Table 5, revealed a final cost difference between Amazon (without Prime Shipping) and GOBI Library Solutions of 2.80% (in favor of Amazon without Prime Shipping) and a final cost difference between Amazon (with Prime Shipping) and GOBI Library Solutions of 11.01% (in favor of Amazon with Prime Shipping).

Discussion

Importance of building a diverse collection

The library focused on the LGBTQ and Title IX collection to enhance its collections, and therefore, the services available to those who study these fields, and to demonstrate its commitment to a diverse and welcoming environment. In recognition that college and university campuses are becoming increasingly diverse, libraries have been seeking ways to build inclusivity. Having collections that represent both the campus constituents and the broader community builds inclusivity.

At ALA's (2017) Annual Meeting in Chicago, its governing body, Council, voted to adopt definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion that were recommended by an earlier ALA-charged task force. The earlier task force

Table 5. Vendor cost comparison.

	Amazon.com	Amazon.com with Prime	GOBI's Library Solutions
Total # of titles purchased	75	75	75
Total List Price	\$1,763.62	\$1,763.62	\$1,886.66
Total Net Price	\$1,455.57	\$1,455.57	\$1,615.80
Shipping Cost	\$116.25	n/a Prime*	Included
Final Cost with Shipping	\$1,571.82	\$1,455.57	\$1,615.80
Average Discount %	21.22%	21.21%	17.75%
Final List to Net Discount %	10.88%	17.47%	14.36%

* Prime membership is not factored into the purchase price as it is a separate annual membership fee.

defined inclusion as, "... an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization's success" (American Library Association, 2014, para. 4). In terms of creating this environment it is important to have all users, including the LGBTQ population, see themselves reflected in the libraries' collections. The University of Maryland, in its Collection Development Diversity Statement (2015) pointed out

Collection strategies and services serve as the foundation for learning and give the information seeker tools to do whatever is of excellence. It must be a community service whether it is for students, faculty, or for the greater good of our communities, cities, states, and nation. (University of Maryland Libraries, 2015)

By providing access to these resources, the library ensures that its customers have access to the materials whether to explore their own identities, or to learn about cultures, people, and customs different from their own. As described above, there has not been a wealth of LGBTQ collections, or research about these collections in libraries. The lack of availability of these resources can lead to a sense of isolation, especially among the populations whose identities would be examined in these collections. And, as learning tools, the exploration of cultures and identities in these collections can lead to individuals being more effective team members—whether these teams are in the classroom or in the workplace.

Advantages and challenges to ordering from Amazon.com with prime

Amazon.com with Prime shipping was utilized by this institution's library as its sole vendor for print titles since 2000. To determine the best option, the researchers compared the cost of shipping 75 titles without Amazon Prime to the annual \$99 Prime subscription fee. Shipping without Prime at the time of research was \$116.25. Finally, Amazon.com was a web-based portal that required no additional assistance from the information technology department to install and provide support for the application. In addition, the

mobile app enabled library staff to quickly purchase titles requested by faculty when interacting with them across campus.

While browsing Amazon.com for titles, library staff compared prices for new and used books on the same page which made for convenient comparison of purchase options. Furthermore, Amazon’s “Wish List” feature made it simple to track print titles that faculty and students requested of library staff for potential future purchase when the cost of the book decreased. While purchasing was a simple process, webinars and tutorials were available for support if needed. The return process for Amazon orders involved completing an online return form to generate the mailing label and mailing the title back (typically with free shipping). The overall purchasing workflow is illustrated in Figure 1.

Despite the numerous benefits to purchasing print books from Amazon.com, there were significant challenges to the reconciliation process. The major disadvantage was the time-consuming process of reconciling purchase invoices with the college’s business office. For example, library staff had to duplicate the credit card statement that itemized purchases from Amazon.com during the previous month in an expense report verbatim—word-for-word, column-by-column, and row-by-row—into an Excel workbook. Then, a library staff member printed each order invoice from the previous month and numbered the invoice to match the recreated typed photocopy in the Excel expense report. But books ordered with this did not necessarily ship in that billing cycle (such as instances when books were preordered or a used book). This resulted in books shipping sometimes months after purchase. Furthermore, the credit card statement did not list title details, only that the purchase came from Amazon.com and the purchase price. Since it was not possible to search through past Amazon orders for pricing details, a library staff member had to tediously search through each prior order manually in Amazon.com to

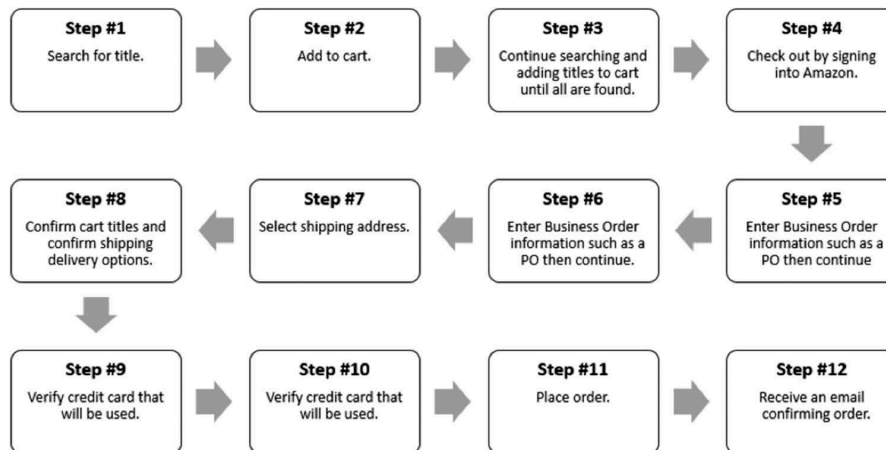


Figure 1. Amazon.com purchasing workflow.

match the pricing details from the order. The process was further complicated if multiple titles with the same price were purchased. To further add to the overall cost, the college spent on average \$450 each month or \$5,400 pretax per year in library staff wages to reconcile the credit bill or 9% of the librarian's time annually.

More complications arose when a library staff member had to search in the previous month's order invoices for the books that did not ship, but were included on the credit card statement. In total, the reconciliation process took at least five hours per month. After submission to the business office, the expense report was often returned for updates/edits as procedures frequently changed when the auditor recommended new best practices. In addition, the purchasing account is linked to one email account so if an individual staff member's account is used and a librarian in charge of ordering departed, purchase history was lost.

Furthermore, book titles were suggested to purchase based on order history according to an algorithm generated by Amazon.com (usually book titles written by the same author as the title purchased); librarians did not curate the book titles recommended for purchase.

Advantages and challenges to ordering from EBSCO's GOBI library solutions

As library administration became increasingly frustrated with the time spent reconciling orders from Amazon.com each month, they began to explore alternative online book jobbers. During this time, a representative from EBSCO approached library administration with the possibility of purchasing titles from GOBI's Library Solutions. Library administration decided to purchase the LGBTQ and Title IX list described in this study as a pilot, with the intent to compare three main factors: acquisitions experience, final purchase cost, and reconciliation workflow.

The acquisitions experience with GOBI's Library Solutions was similar to what library administration experienced with Amazon.com. The platform was web-based, so no new software had to be installed. Therefore, the college's information technology department did not have to install new software on each library staff's workstation nor was technology support needed. In the web-based platform, library staff could run reports on open orders and invoiced orders. However, with GOBI, responsibility for purchasing and selecting print books can be shared by staff. The number of libraries who have purchased a specific title is shown; in addition, there was a report showing how many peer institutions have purchased a specific title. Upon purchasing titles from GOBI, invoices can be tracked. The overall purchasing workflow is illustrated in [Figure 2].

In contrast to the cumbersome process of reconciling Amazon.com orders with the college's business office, the GOBI payment process is a marked

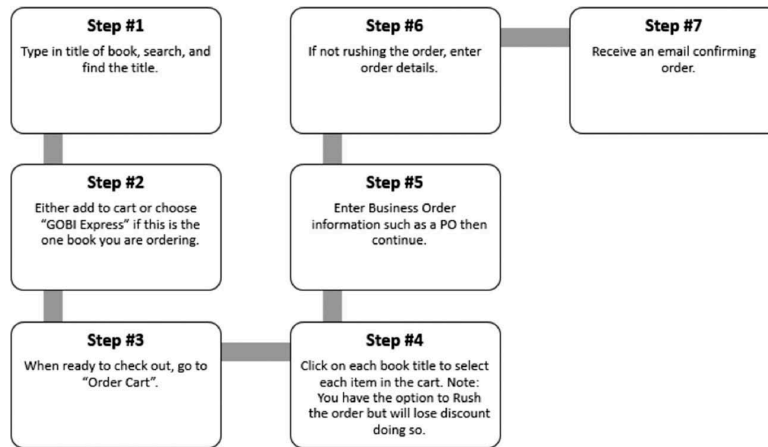


Figure 2. EBSCO's GOBI library solutions purchasing workflow.

improvement as one check request was submitted by library staff to pay the invoice from the college's business office.

To further add to the overall cost, the college would have spent, on average \$50 each month, or \$600 pretax in library staff wages per year to library staff to reconcile the credit bill or 1% of librarians' time annually.

The researchers in this study have been satisfied with the excellent customer service and one-on-one training. In addition, a sales representative visited the physical library to discuss pricing, terminology, and process.

Training was necessary to use the product. For example, filtering within lists was not user friendly. It was not clear that one could click the page number box and type in the page number of the results that a person wanted to view as opposed to using the forward/back arrows. Library staff could not track the orders. Filtering was limited and many of the more advanced features—like reading lists showing the “basic essentials”—were only available with the payment of additional fees.

Unfortunately, shipping time was slow for new books to arrive and even slower for used books to arrive; writing a note delayed the shipping time for an order even more. Rushed orders incurred additional fees. The discount price was not shown until the items were purchased.

Advantages and challenges to ordering secondhand titles from Amazon.com and EBSCO's GOBI library solutions

Finally, librarians who select books for acquisition should be wary when purchasing used books from vendors who operate in Amazon.com's marketplace. The quality of used books received at the library oftentimes was suspect. Consequently, a library staff member had to follow the lengthy process to return the purchased

used books that often arrived in poor quality and could not be added to the collection without damaging other books. A better use of staff time would be to process and copy catalog books.

Another problem with third-party book dealers who operate out of Amazon.com's marketplace was the inconsistency of their training; as more used books were purchased from third-party dealers on Amazon.com's marketplace, it was obvious that many dealers were not trained in accurate terminology to describe the condition of a book.

Regarding reconciliation of the credit card, the library was charged on the librarian's credit card once an order was shipped. Much to the frustration of the institution's business office, the book was ordered in September, arrived in October, but the purchased item showed up on the credit card statement for September. When the library staff reconciled an order for a secondhand title with this process where more than 500 plus titles had been purchased in a month, the invoice was very difficult to locate.

At the time this study, the six secondhand books purchased from Alibris via EBSCO's GOBI's BookZone, an online secondhand book marketplace, arrived packaged in the condition (new) as the dealers described them. Finding the used books was as rewarding as Landesman described. Staff time was not misused. An invoice arrived after the arrival of the book, and then a library staff member completed a check request and all purchase orders were reconciled in a timely manner.

Purchasing secondhand books online from Amazon.com's marketplace or from EBSCO's GOBI's BookZone will always result in slower delivery. If the book purchase is for faculty who want the book immediately, one would be wise not to purchase from secondhand dealers, as the order is unlikely to arrive quickly. A librarian should suggest to customers to borrow a book from another library through interlibrary loan.

Limitations

Dannelly (1999) had cautioned librarians when selecting a specific vendor that the library should not accept the relationship developed by other libraries

as proof; the mix of orders and other vendors cited in such studies directly influences results. These studies may provide additional areas of concern that need to be clarified, but all a vendor study can potentially accomplish is to evaluate services from specific vendors to a single institution (p. 121)

due to each institution's student population, overall budget, and type of institution (e.g., community college, liberal arts college, master's level college, or research university). In addition, a vendor could give specific deals to a non-profit vs. a for-profit institution. Not all contracts and discounts granted to colleges and universities by vendors and retailers are uniform throughout the world.

The comparison of titles available through each institution's collection could vary depending upon which discovery service each institution subscribes. Varying reports exist that describe how each discovery tool has been indexed. However, as stated by Dannelly previously all vendor studies are only comparable to a specific institution.

Moreover, the number of titles used to assess the price comparison between GOBI and Amazon.com was small—75 titles. A case study with a broader list and greater quantity of titles could provide different results.

The size of the institution plays a role in the final net price for the list of books purchased. For this institution, it received a tiered discount, which was given by EBSCO to small academic libraries with limited budgets and community colleges. As Dannelly pointed out, the same titles ([Appendix C](#)) could produce different price results, if the 75 titles were purchased at an Academic Research Library (ARL).

Implications

One former university librarian pointed out

Research and case studies conducted about libraries by librarians at small-to-medium-sized libraries benefit all sizes of libraries. These studies, in particular, are also applicable to the greater library community because there are about 4,000 American colleges that can learn from the lessons shared by researchers. (S. Michalak, personal communication, May 2017)

Conclusion

While Amazon.com with Prime provided the quickest shipping time, and a slightly lower final cost for the LGBTQ and Title IX book list examined for this study, avoiding the challenges experienced with reconciling Amazon.com orders proved to be beneficial to this library's overall acquisitions workflow. Moreover, the used books received from GOBI were in the condition the used or secondhand book dealer had described, which was a relief to technical services processing staff. The time saved by writing a check request in lieu of reconciling the credit card bill following the college's business office procedures made ordering from GOBI a preferable choice.

Furthermore, the advantages afforded by GOBI Library Solutions, namely the assistance provided in curating this title list combined with personalized customer service and weekly curated title lists via email, made this vendor a worthy book jobber to consider despite the increase in cost. Libraries need to meet the evolving needs of the patrons they serve. Regularly adding new diverse subject matter materials, such as by working to build a diverse and inclusive LGBTQ collection, is one key component of building a supportive environment for assisting students, staff, faculty, and the community who seek information about these topics. This

was accomplished by utilizing many of the features offered by EBSCO's GOBI Library Solution that were discussed in this case study.

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Appendix A. Keyword Search Results (n and %) by Institution, by Topic

	GBC	PSU	RU	UD	U.Penn	VU	WCU	TU	Drexel
LGBTQ and Title IX Combined Holdings	478,824	1,144,742	272,483	19,478	19,721	2,639	69,566	77,543	738,824
LGBTQ and Title IX %	68.551%	21.039%	68.121%	0.601%	0.306%	0.205%	4.937%	1.943%	36.941%
Lesbian	45,450	80,263	32,110	3,567	2,766	320	9,242	8,928	37,180
Lesbian %	6.507%	1.475%	8.028%	0.110%	0.043%	0.025%	0.656%	0.2237%	1.859%
Gay	103,407	576,676	97,646	8,031	10,766	1,270	31,333	37,774	399,989
Gay %	14.804%	10.598%	24.412%	0.248%	0.167%	0.098%	2.224%	0.947%	19.999%
Bisexual	20,397	37,175	16,402	737	577	72	3,313	3,337	19,500
Bisexual %	2.920%	0.683%	4.101%	0.023%	0.009%	0.006%	0.235%	0.084%	0.975%
Transgender	9,682	9,410	5,093	731	725	111	2,159	2,320	5,085
Transgender %	1.386%	0.173%	1.273%	0.023%	0.011%	0.009%	0.153%	0.058%	0.254%
Queer	38,638	261,609	40,389	3,295	3,038	431	13,888	16,237	186,419
Queer %	5.532%	4.808%	10.097%	0.102%	0.047%	0.033%	0.986%	0.407%	9.321%
Title IX	3,727	12,729	3,056	183	222	25	692	628	7,682
Title IX %	0.534%	0.234%	0.764%	0.006%	0.003%	0.002%	0.049%	0.193%	0.384%
Same-Sex	203,687	59,964	23,276	1,754	962	120	3,528	2,892	29,846
Same-sex %	29.161%	1.102%	5.819%	0.054%	0.015%	0.009%	0.250%	0.072%	1.492%
Homosexual	53,836	106,916	54,511	1,180	665	290	5,411	5,427	53,123
Homosexual %	7.707%	1.965%	13.628%	0.036%	0.010%	0.022%	0.384%	0.136%	2.656%
Homosexual and Gay	36,299	66,980	29,047	539	254	136	2,732	2,626	33,370
Homosexual and Gay %	5.197%	1.231%	7.262%	0.017%	0.004%	0.011%	0.194%	0.066%	1.669%
Institution's Collection Size	698,498	5,441,121	400,000	3,240,000	6,438,305	1,289,346	1,409,000	3,990,379	2,000,000

Appendix B. Subject Search Results (n and %) by Institution, by Topic

	GBC	PSU	RU	UD	UPenn	VU	WCU	TU	Drexel
LGBTQ and Title IX Combined Holdings	3,657	23,315	4,203	4,151	4,665	820	7,406	5,938	5,133
LGBTQ and Title IX %	0.524%	0.428%	1.051%	0.128%	0.072%	0.064%	0.526%	0.149%	0.257%
Lesbian	751	5,545	1,148	608	512	122	818	1,081	1,253
Lesbian %	0.108%	0.102%	0.287%	0.019%	0.008%	0.009%	0.058%	0.0271%	0.063%
Gay	1,859	11,259	1,903	2,569	3,306	324	5,032	3,443	2,192
Gay %	0.266%	0.207%	0.476%	0.079%	0.051%	0.025%	0.357%	0.086%	0.110%
Bisexual	154	504	106	68	77	17	70	142	138
Bisexual %	0.022%	0.009%	0.027%	0.002%	0.001%	0.001%	0.005%	0.004%	0.007%
Transgender	210	594	139	199	234	33	239	240	203
Transgender %	0.030%	0.011%	0.035%	0.006%	0.004%	0.003%	0.017%	0.006%	0.010%
Queer	269	2,135	342	257	279	34	571	524	551
Queer %	0.039%	0.039%	0.086%	0.008%	0.004%	0.003%	0.041%	0.013%	0.028%
Title IX	12	20	5	257	10	4	45	13	14
Title IX %	0.002%	0.000%	0.001%	0.008%	0.000%	0.000%	0.003%	0.000%	0.001%
Same-Sex	268	828	134	174	236	30	503	383	241
Same-sex %	0.038%	0.015%	0.034%	0.005%	0.004%	0.002%	0.036%	0.010%	0.012%
Homosexual	93	1,787	231	14	8	166	94	90	288
Homosexual %	0.013%	0.033%	0.058%	0.000%	0.000%	0.013%	0.007%	0.002%	0.014%
Homosexual and Gay	41	643	195	5	3	90	34	22	253
Homosexual and Gay %	0.006%	0.012%	0.049%	0.000%	0.000%	0.007%	0.002%	0.001%	0.013%
Collection Size	698,498	5,441,121	400,000	3,240,000	6,438,305	1,289,346	1,409,000	3,990,379	2,000,000

Appendix C: LGBTQ and Title IX Book Purchase Title List

- (1) A Home at the End of the World
- (2) BALLS: It Takes Some to Get Some
- (3) Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen
- (4) Beyond (Straight and Gay) Marriage
- (5) Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out
- (6) Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter?
- (7) Boy Meets Boy
- (8) Boy's Own Story
- (9) Charity and Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America
- (10) Comfort & Joy
- (11) Conundrum
- (12) Dear John, I Love Jane
- (13) Debating Same-sex Marriage (Point/Counterpoint)
- (14) Dirty River: A Queer Femme of Color Dreaming Her Way Home
- (15) Easy Way Out (Book Zone)
- (16) Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature
- (17) Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience
- (18) For Colored Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Still Not Enough: Coming of Age, Coming Out, and Coming Home
- (19) Frog Music
- (20) Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity
- (21) Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation
- (22) Gender: Ideas, interactions, institutions
- (23) Getting Over Homer
- (24) How to avoid sexual harassment suite (book zone)
- (25) Hunting Girls
- (26) Intersex (For Lack of a Better Word)
- (27) Juliet Takes a Breath
- (28) Kicked Out
- (29) LGBTQ Intimate Partner Violence
- (30) LGBTQ Stats
- (31) LGBTQ Voices in Education
- (32) Lucky in the Corner
- (33) Making Gay Okay
- (34) Martin and John
- (35) Mister Sandman
- (36) Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions
- (37) Nothing is Terrible
- (38) Object of my affection
- (39) One Man Guy
- (40) Openly Straight
- (41) Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit
- (42) Plays Well with Others
- (43) Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States
- (44) Queer America
- (45) Queer City (import) (used)
- (46) Queer History of the United States
- (47) Queer: A Graphic History

- (48) Recent history of lesbian and gay psychology
- (49) Sacred Country
- (50) Same-Sex Marriage and Children
- (51) Same-Sex Marriage: A Reference Handbook
- (52) Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire
- (53) She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders
- (54) Switching Teams: What Coming Out Later In Life Taught Me About Love
- (55) The Beautiful Room is Empty
- (56) The Farewell Symphony
- (57) The Girls
- (58) The Lost Language of Cranes
- (59) The Man of the House
- (60) The Price of Salt
- (61) The Promise of Rest
- (62) The Short History of a Prince
- (63) The Well of Loneliness
- (64) Title IX: A brief history with documents (Book Zone)
- (65) Title IX: The 37 Words that Changed America
- (66) Top 250 LGBTQ Books for Teens
- (67) Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender
- (68) Transformation of Title IX: Regulating Gender Equality in Education
- (69) Transgender Athletes in Competitive Sport
- (70) Transgender History
- (71) Transparent: Love, Family, and Living the T with Transgender Teenagers
- (72) Travels in a gay nation: portraits of LGBTQ Americans
- (73) Whipping Girl
- (74) Windy City Queer
- (75) World in the evening

Appendix D. Steps Taken to Build an LGBTQ Collection with GOBI Library Solutions

