

# Out on the Shelves

## INFORMATIONAL GUIDE FOR LIBRARIES

*Out on the Shelves* is an online resource that helps connect rainbow young people with positive representations of themselves and their identities in books and other media. The resource is available all year, and there is a campaign during June to promote the resource and encourage libraries around the country to get involved.

By getting involved with *Out on the Shelves*, libraries can demonstrate to their rainbow communities that these institutions are a safe, inclusive place, and that rainbow people are valued and represented in the library's collections.

### Adding items to your collection

The *Out on the Shelves* online resource provides lists of books featuring various rainbow identities. These book lists can be viewed by identity, genre or age-range. The resource provides relevant information on all listed books' contents to guide acquisitions that are appropriate for your community. All our listed books also include a Worldcat link so that young people can find books in their local libraries.

Depending on your library, it may (or may not) be appropriate to highlight the rainbow books in your collection through spine labels. This practice can make it easier for people to identify books with rainbow characters, but may also pose a safety risk if readers are not out to others about their identity or are fearful of bullying. Other options could include 'rainbow' tags in the library catalogue, book lists in the library, displays, or indicative bookmarks that can be removed if the reader desires.

### Displays and Promotion

Even if you're not able to add any or many items to your collection, you can still highlight and promote the items you do have. We encourage all libraries to create a display during our annual campaign. There are a number of Out on the Shelves downloadable posters that can be used in a display. This is also a great opportunity to get youth or queer straight alliances/rainbow diversity groups involved.

By creating a display and promoting the rainbow items in your collection, you are indicating to rainbow communities that they are valued, safe and included.

If you do create a display, don't forget to snap a photo and enter our display competition!

## Events

During our June campaign, we encourage libraries to host events related to rainbow representation in books. By doing this, you indicate to your community that you are supportive of rainbow identities and give rainbow young people a safe, age-appropriate place to celebrate books. You will also connect your younger community with rainbow stories and each other.

Below, we've outlined a few different ideas for events you can run at your library. You know your community best, so host events that work best for your local young people. This is another opportunity to invite young people to get involved - they can volunteer or help facilitate one of the events, which increases autonomy and self-determination.

### Some event ideas include....

#### Rainbow book club

Host a rainbow book club! Invite young people to share thoughts on a rainbow book they recently read. Create the option for a young person to run the event to build a 'by us, for us' environment.

#### Movie and book event

Host a screening of a rainbow movie based on a book. Have time for students to look through a selection of rainbow books and make borrowing the books easy. If there are multiple copies of the book that inspired the movie in the collection, have those readily available. Provide snacks and time for discussion afterwards.

#### Stream our live events

As part of our annual campaign, we often host live events. In previous years, we have hosted a live author panel with rainbow authors, and people watching Online had the opportunity to ask our guest authors questions. Check out our Events page for upcoming live events this year.

### Some further ideas to celebrate the Out on the Shelves campaign:

- Have a local rainbow writer speak
- Book InsideOUT for a training or workshop
- Screen a film or educational resource, such as *More Than Four*
- Creative writing or poetry sessions!
- Invite your school QSA, local queer youth group or other rainbow young people in to create a display together

For more details about our events, visit [outontheshelves.insideout.org.nz/campaign-week/event-ideas/](https://outontheshelves.insideout.org.nz/campaign-week/event-ideas/)

## Addressing Concerns

Including rainbow books for young people is part of building an inclusive collection at your library. Just as an intersection of books about different cultures, religions, and backgrounds builds a stronger collection, so do books about rainbow young people.

It is vital for all youth to have access to age-appropriate, positive representations of rainbow identities. Lack of access and visibility of such material can cause rainbow youth to feel isolated and depressed, and we know there is a high rate of suicide among our rainbow young people.

Increasing the visibility of rainbow resources that feature positive, affirming representations across gender, sexuality, race and culture are vital for all young people and ensure they have healthy, respectful friendships and relationships.

*Out on the Shelves* features books for all age ranges—from kindergarten through to university. Rainbow content is not inherently any more “mature” or “adult” than non-rainbow content, and research proves that many rainbow young people are aware of their identities from a very young age. Young people seeing themselves represented in literature is an important part of healthy, mirroring development.

Further, presenting all young people with access to rainbow stories helps normalise difference for young people. This also has been shown to reduce bullying and have positive mental health and societal outcomes.

Some libraries and school libraries worry about push-back from parents or ‘concerned citizens’ in their communities. For school libraries, we suggest referencing Ministry of Education’s [Inclusive Education Guidelines on Supporting LGBTQIA+ Youth](#). For public libraries, please refer to your library’s mission statement (which often signal access for all) or IFLA documents.

All students and young people deserve to see themselves reflected in the collections of libraries. Offering a wide variety of resources with authentic perspectives helps young people understand themselves and their world.

For further information on the evidence behind creating an inclusive collection, please refer to this wonderful resource from the National Library (<https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/school-libraries/collections-and-resources/building-an-inclusive-collection>)