



# Wright Memorial *Public Library*

## Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

We are sorry if you have been offended by any material in the library's collection. Wright Memorial Public Library subscribes to the Library Bill of Rights as adopted by the American Library Association. This document reads, in part: "Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation." Everyone's tastes are different and it is the library's responsibility to provide materials on a multitude of subjects and viewpoints, in many styles.

If you think that an item does not belong in the library, we invite you to fill out this form and return it to the front desk. The staff will see that it is given to the library director, who will be in touch with you regarding your request.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Representing:

Self

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Material on which you wish to comment:

Title: This Book Is Gay

Author, artist, or producer: James Dawson

Format: non-fiction

What brought this work to your attention? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are your concerns about this work and/or what are your specific objections to it?  
(Use back or additional pages if you wish.) \_\_\_\_\_

This book is from the teen section!  
Chapter 9 - actually describes to  
the reader how to have gay sex - in a  
very descriptive way. There are some  
drawn pictures of nude bodies and  
body parts. It seems almost pornographic.  
No, actually it is! on the back →

What would you like the library to do with this work?

- Re-evaluate it.
- Withdraw it from the collection.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a work representing your viewpoint that you would like to recommend for the library? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

The glossary of terms in the back is also offensive.

The tone of this book is anti-heterosexual, Flippant. Angry and aggressive. Text is peppered with gross and inappropriate words. p. 186 for example

Our library needs to be a place of safety where our young people can come to learn and enjoy discovering new things and ideas. ~~This book should have a warning~~ This book exposes them to subject matter that is X rated.

**From:** [Kristi Hale](#)  
**To:** [Jacqui Taylor](#)  
**Subject:** Request for Reconsideration  
**Date:** Friday, July 21, 2017 3:18:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Jacqui,

Here's what I discovered so far about "This Book is Gay."

- Our copy was added in 6/15 and has circulated a total of 6 times (2 YTD, 2 last year, and 2 in 2015). We also own it in digital format.
- This book is owned and placed in the Young Adult collections of all of the area libraries that I have checked so far:

Dayton Metro	Owned at 5 libraries	Several checked out
Greene County	Owens 5 copies	3 of 5 checked out
Washington Centerville	1 copy	Checked out
Troy Miami County	1 copy	Checked out

- According to Worldcat, more than 700 libraries across the nation own this book, including many Ohio libraries (Cleveland PL, Westerville, Worthington, Columbus Metro, and numerous small Ohio libraries (Ada, Bellaire, Camden, Way, Carnegie East Liverpool, Chillicothe, Eaton, Granville, Perry County, Tipp City).
- The title is well reviewed from School Library Journal as an insightful and informative book for people with questions about a very sensitive topic: *Gr 10 Up—This witty, no-holds-barred look at the LGBTQ experience provides information that parents or school friends often can't or won't give. The book covers dating, religious perceptions of LGBTQ people, bullying, coming out, and more. Employing occasionally snarky, informal language, Dawson provides very direct, frank guidance (among the subheadings are "Doing the Sex" and "Why Are Gay Men So Slutty?"), including sexual advice (complete with labeled anatomical cartoons). However, these are all topics about which teens are curious. Though the book has an intended audience, a variety of readers will appreciate it. VERDICT An insightful option for those with questions about what it's like to be LGBTQ.—April Sanders, Spring Hill College, Mobile, AL --This text refers to the [Audio CD](#) edition.*
- The book was [contested in Wasilla, Alaska](#) and ultimately retained. Here's a news story: <http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-et-jc-lgbt-book-for-teens-challenged-in-alaska-20151125-story.html>

Thanks Jacqui,  
Kristi



**Kristi Hale** *Director*

Wright Memorial Public Library

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[hale@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:hale@wrightlibrary.org) | [wrightlibrary.org](http://wrightlibrary.org)

**From:** [Kristi Hale](#)  
**To:** [Brian Potts](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Request for library material reconsideration  
**Date:** Monday, July 24, 2017 8:18:00 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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It is a YA book, so I discussed it with Jacqui. The title was "*This Book is Gay*." The discussion went fine, and I explained that we need time to review. However, with a short investigation, I think it unlikely that we'll remove it. I don't think she'll take that news well.

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**From:** Brian Potts  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 22, 2017 10:07 AM  
**To:** Kristi Hale <[hale@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:hale@wrightlibrary.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: Request for library material reconsideration

Hi, Kristi

Sorry I didn't get the title. The patron was hesitant to give it to me and I didn't pursue it. I hope your discussion went alright.

Brian



**Brian Potts** *Adult Services Coordinator*  
Wright Memorial Public Library

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[Visit the Wright Library Digital Collection](#)

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**From:** Kristi Hale  
**Sent:** Friday, July 21, 2017 9:10 AM  
**To:** Brian Potts <[potts@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:potts@wrightlibrary.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: Request for library material reconsideration

Brian,

Do you know the title of the book about which she is concerned?

Thanks,  
Kristi

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**From:** Brian Potts  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 20, 2017 10:21 AM  
**To:** Kristi Hale <[hale@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:hale@wrightlibrary.org)>  
**Subject:** Request for library material reconsideration

Hi, Kristi

called today hoping to set up a time to meet with you regarding a teen book that she has concerns about. She already has the form and will have that filled out, but would like to meet in person. She is planning coming in tomorrow morning (Friday) just after 10:00. Her phone number is \_\_\_\_\_, in case we need to contact her.

Brian



**Brian Potts** *Adult Services Coordinator*  
Wright Memorial Public Library

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[Visit the Wright Library Digital Collection](#)

**From:** [Jacqui Taylor](#)  
**To:** [Kristi Hale](#)  
**Subject:** Challenged Book  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 16, 2017 4:22:44 PM  
**Attachments:** [This Book is Gay reconsideration request.docx](#)

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Hiya Kristi,

Please find attached my completed paperwork for “This Book is So Gay.” My professional opinion is that we should keep the book in the library, in Young Adult Non-Fiction. Please let me know if I may be of any further assistance in this matter.



**Jacqui Taylor** *Youth Services Coordinator*  
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## “This Book is Gay” Selection Criteria Analysis

### 1) Reviews in library journals and other publications

#### a. Professional print publications

- i. Publishers Weekly 06/22/2015: First published in the U.K., this irreverent, informative handbook offers a wide-ranging overview of gender identity, sexual orientation, coming out, dating, and more. Adopting a humorous tone that should help set anxious readers at ease, Dawson dismantles stereotypes, such as “Gay women hate men” (“I imagine they’d hate men who said that to them, yes”); defines a range of terms from “camp” to “cubs”; and offers (very) frank information about sex (“A bit of spit, Brokeback Mountain–style, is NOT a substitute for a proper water-based lubricant”). Gerrell’s playful b&w cartoons help maintain an encouraging atmosphere, even when Dawson turns to homophobia/transphobia, anti-gay legislation, and STDs. Readers will find guidance to navigating their sexual identities and more general advice about self-esteem, forming respectful relationships, and seeking personal fulfillment. Ages 14–up.
- ii. Book List May 15, 2015: Often breezy in tone but always informative, Dawson’s book is filled with facts and stories about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or, as the author puts it, “the full and infinite spectrum of sexual and gender identities.” If you think this means the book is aimed at straight readers as well as gay ones, you would be right. The need for the book is dramatically demonstrated by the results of a 2012 survey that revealed that, of the 300 kids participating, 95 percent had been taught nothing about gay sex as part of sex-education classes. This egregious gap has now been filled by Dawson’s book, which is witty and wise and so packed with information it’s hard to imagine a reader who won’t learn something new. (Did you know a gay guy with a penchant for sportswear and man jewelry is called a scallie?) Illustrated with clever cartoon art, the book is generally upbeat while honestly acknowledging downsides of being LGBTQ, such as homophobia and bullying. Another plus is the careful and generous attention it gives to transgender people and topics. Originally published in Britain, the book is international in scope and, to its credit, evidences the universality of the LGBTQ experience. Highly recommended.
- iii. School Library Journal June/July 2015: Gr 10 Up—This witty, no-holds-barred look at the LGBTQ experience provides information that parents or school friends often can’t or won’t give. The book covers dating, religious perceptions of LGBTQ people, bullying, coming out, and more. Employing occasionally snarky, informal language, Dawson provides very direct, frank guidance (among the subheadings are “Doing the Sex” and “Why Are Gay Men So Slutty?”), including sexual advice (complete with labeled anatomical cartoons). However, these are all topics about which teens are curious. Though the book has an intended audience, a variety of readers will appreciate it. VERDICT An insightful option for those with questions about what it’s like to be LGBTQ.—April Sanders, Spring Hill College, Mobile, AL

iv. Kirkus April 2015: Speaking with candor, humor, and enthusiasm, Dawson addresses topics from coming out to sexually transmitted infections to sex apps. With irreverent chapter titles like “Stereotypes Are Poo” and a chatty narrative voice, the tone is largely upbeat, though the author also touches on “some MEGA-SAD FACE topics” like discrimination. Easily readable tables and humorous cartoons further liven up the presentation. To add more perspectives, segments from interviewees who represent areas of the LGBT spectrum not represented by the author himself are also included. Chapters on sex and apps like Grindr are helpfully matter-of-fact, and readers hear from people who choose casual sex as well as those who prefer emotionally intimate relationships. The book is a U.K. import, and while U.S.–based readers shouldn’t have much trouble understanding Britishisms like “fancy” or “shag,” some of the anti-discrimination laws referenced won’t apply. More troubling, the book’s efforts to support transgender readers are undermined by persistent, thoughtless affirmations that biology really is destiny—for instance, when the author debunks the myth that “gay men are ‘girls’ ” with a jokey “Penis? Check! Yup, gay men are, in fact, male.” Important for its frank sex talk but far less inclusive than it aims to be. (glossary, resources) (Nonfiction. 12-18)

b. Professional websites

i. Teen Reads: <http://www.teenreads.com/reviews/this-book-is-gay>

“THIS BOOK IS GAY is an absolutely necessary book to read if you’re part of the LGBTQ community; it offers a ton of great tips and advice, along with several interesting and moving stories from other members of the community. [...] Dawson’s experience as a teacher specializing in Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) in the UK shines through in this book --- it is clear that he is used to communicating important life lessons to teens and young adults in a way that makes them feel comfortable.”

ii. School Library Journal: <http://www.teenlibrariantoolbox.com/2015/06/book-review-this-book-is-gay-by-james-dawson/>

“In July 2013, Dawson conducted a national survey on the issues covered here. This is where the quotes, some statistics, and in-depth interviews came from. Dawson says to think of this book as an instruction manual. [...] The conversational tone and whimsical illustrations make it easily accessible and easy to flip through. It’s both serious and funny, covers a ton of topics, and is a great starting point for anyone looking to know more about being gay or coming out.”

iii. American Library Association Intellectual Freedom Blog:

<http://www.oif.ala.org/oif/?p=5794>

“‘This Book is Gay’ should stay on the shelves; the book should be reclassified to a Dewey call number for sexual education; and it should be ‘in a place that teens can access and feel comfortable accessing,’”

## 2) Information from publishers’ catalogs and promotions

a. “Lesbian. Bisexual. Queer. Transgender. Straight. Curious. This book is for everyone, regardless of gender or sexual preference. This book is for anyone who's ever dared to wonder. This book is for YOU. There's a long-running joke that, after "coming out," a lesbian, gay guy, bisexual, or trans person should receive a membership card and instruction manual. THIS IS THAT INSTRUCTION MANUAL. You're welcome. Inside you'll

find the answers to all the questions you ever wanted to ask: from sex to politics, hooking up to stereotypes, coming out and more. This candid, funny, and uncensored exploration of sexuality and what it's like to grow up LGBT also includes real stories from people across the gender and sexual spectrums, not to mention hilarious illustrations. You will be entertained. You will be informed. But most importantly, you will know that however you identify (or don't) and whomever you love, you are exceptional. You matter. And so does this book. One of *The Guardian's* Best Books of the Year. *Booklist* starred review."

- b. Note: "This Book is Gay" was originally published in the UK, then shortly afterwards in the US, and has been reprinted at least once. It has also been released in Paperback, Audiobook, and eBook formats; and in English, Spanish, and German. All printings except the first refer to the author as Juno Dawson (rather than James Dawson) and use she/her pronouns, since the author transitioned from cis gay man to transgender woman in the period between first and subsequent publications.

### 3) Examination copies

- a. N/A

### 4) Patron recommendations

- a. N/A

### 5) Popular demand

- a. "This Book is Gay" has circulated 6 times since it was added to the library's collection in July 2015.

### 6) Availability and cost

- a. "This Book is Gay" has been widely available since it was first published in 2015, and its price is below average for young adult nonfiction books. The Wright Memorial Public Library purchased the book on June 11, 2015, at a cost of \$9.99. We also own two e-book versions of this title.

### 7) Interest and appeal to Wright Memorial Public Library patrons

- a. Every year, multiple times per year, teen patrons approach Mrs. Bengson asking for books that provide more information about LGBTQ issues or reflect LGBTQ experiences. Given the sensitivity of sexual and gender identity, I am certain that the book is used by teen patrons more often than the few times per year that Mrs. Bengson is asked for recommendations or the book is checked out. In her career as Teen Services Librarian, Mrs. Bengson has received feedback from teen patrons that they feel affirmed when they find LGBTQ information and representation at their public library. Patrons appreciate reading professionally written, edited, and reviewed books on the subject, instead of peer-to-peer information or poorly- or un-verified information on the internet.

### 8) Professional judgment based on education, training, and experience

- a. In all reference services, but especially when the topic at hand is of a sensitive nature, the Youth Services staff strives to strike the right balance for the patrons' information needs; sometimes a book with a more narrative tone is desired, sometimes rigidly factual information is desired. We ask careful questions to discern which book may be best for each patron individually. Frequently the best book for teenagers researching LGBTQ issues is "This Book is Gay."

- b. "This Book is Gay" is written for teenage readers. Its vocabulary, tone, semi-illustrated format, and 1-to-1 style. Young adults are known for their exploration of identity and intense interest in romantic and/or sexual relationships. This title strikes a relatable, understanding, energetic tone while encouraging readers to understand and stand against homophobia, find their own self in a heteronormative world, and practice emotionally and physically safe sex (abstinence encouraged).
- c. The quality of the writing is an excellent example of casually informative. The information covered in this book is rarely presented this well, and for so inclusive a population. The binding is strong and the publisher is established. The book is carried by several of our neighboring libraries, including Dayton Metro, Washington Centerville, Green County, University of Dayton, Troy Miami County, Cleveland, Westerville, Worthington, Columbus, State Library of Ohio, Antioch University, and Xavier University.

**From:** [Kristi Hale](#)  
**To:**  
**Subject:** RE: Request for Reconsideration of Library Material  
**Date:** Thursday, August 3, 2017 1:29:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Brian mentioned that you had stopped by to see me. I'm sorry I missed you. I don't have any additional update at this time regarding your Request for Reconsideration of Library Material. However, I should have a decision some time the week of August 25<sup>th</sup>. I appreciate your patience.

Please call me if you would like to discuss or add to your Request. I'm available until 5PM today and until 3PM tomorrow.

Best regards,  
Kristi  
(937)294-7171

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**From:** Kristi Hale  
**Sent:** Friday, July 21, 2017 3:13 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you again for meeting with me today. I have begun the process of evaluating the material in question. After reviewing the projects and schedules of my evaluation team, I will need more time than I originally thought when we spoke this morning. We have the book pulled off the shelf while we are reviewing, and I will get back to you with a decision by August 25<sup>th</sup>.

I appreciate your patience.

Sincerely,  
Kristi



**Kristi Hale** *Director*  
Wright Memorial Public Library

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**From:** [Kristi Hale](#)  
**To:** [Brian Potts](#); [Jacqui Taylor](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Response letter for Request for Reconsideration of Library Material  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 22, 2017 4:12:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [Request for Reconsideration This Book is Gay 8.17.docx](#)

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Sorry. I hit send instead of Attach.

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**From:** Kristi Hale  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 22, 2017 4:12 PM  
**To:** Brian Potts <[Potts@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:Potts@wrightlibrary.org)>; Jacqui Taylor <[Taylor@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:Taylor@wrightlibrary.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: Response letter for Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

Good. Here's the shortened version. Plus I found an error in LGTBQ and fixed it.

---

**From:** Brian Potts  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 22, 2017 4:00 PM  
**To:** Kristi Hale <[hale@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:hale@wrightlibrary.org)>; Jacqui Taylor <[Taylor@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:Taylor@wrightlibrary.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: Response letter for Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

This is an excellent letter. I agree, though, that the last large paragraph may go beyond collection policy reasons for keeping the book. I think thanking the patron again for her thoughtful request and following our procedures would be sufficient.

Brian

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**From:** Kristi Hale  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 22, 2017 3:20 PM  
**To:** Jacqui Taylor <[Taylor@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:Taylor@wrightlibrary.org)>; Brian Potts <[potts@wrightlibrary.org](mailto:potts@wrightlibrary.org)>  
**Subject:** Response letter for Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

Jacqui & Brian,

Can you please review this response letter and provide me with some feedback? I'd like to send it to the patron this week. In particular, I'm wondering if I should just leave the entire last big paragraph off. I appreciate your thoughts and candor.

Thanks,  
Kristi



# Wright Memorial

*Public Library*

## Administration

Kristi Hale  
Director

Steve Maag  
Fiscal Officer

Linda Cosgrove  
Administrative  
Services Coordinator

## Board of Trustees

Lu Ann Stanley  
President

Joshua Lounsbury  
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Melissa Wolcott  
Secretary

Linda Deitz

Delia McMullen

Joseph Fulford

Kathleen Webb

August 22, 2017

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It was a pleasure to meet you and discuss your concerns about a book in the Wright Memorial Public Library's collection, *This Book is Gay* by James Dawson. I appreciate the sincerity of your opinion and the time you invested to review the book and submit a Request for Reconsideration. Thank you for your patience as we took the needed time to review the material carefully and make a determination.

It is the goal of the Wright Memorial Public Library Board of Trustees to recognize the diverse library needs of all citizens, regardless of age, race, national origin, religious, social, or political views. The Library recognizes that some materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some users. Selection decisions are not made on the basis of any anticipated approval or disapproval, but on the merits of the work in relation to the overall development of the collection and the necessity of meeting the needs of many individuals with a broad range of interests and viewpoints. I have enclosed a copy of our Collection Development policy for your reference.

After receiving your request, we reviewed the title indicated against the selection criteria from our policy manual. Here is a summary of our findings:

- This title is owned in book and digital formats by more than 700 libraries in the United State, including Dayton Metro, Washington-Centerville, Greene County, Tipp City, Troy-Miami Township, and many other Ohio public libraries.
- The title has been well-reviewed by professional organizations, including School Library Journal, Booklist, and Publisher's Weekly, as an informative and insightful resource for those with questions about what it is like to be LGBTQ.
- The American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom blog followed a court case in Wasilla, Alaska, where the same book was contested. The blog cites the Reconsideration Committee's findings: "*This Book is Gay*' should stay on the shelves...and it should be 'in a place that teens can access and feel comfortable accessing,' such as the young adult or adult sections."
- Teen patrons sometimes approach Wright Library's librarians asking for books that provide more information about LGBTQ issues or reflect LGBTQ experiences.
- The copy at Wright Library has been available since 2015 and has circulated six times. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, it is likely that other



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*Public Library*

## Administration

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*Director*

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users have accessed the information in the book while in the Library, rather than checking it out.

Given these findings and our selection criteria, we have decided to retain the book in Wright Library's collection. We further decided to allow it to remain in the Library's Young Adult collection because the book is written with a teen audience in mind, and it is written in a similar style to that of other books on sexual education in the Young Adult collection. This classification mirrors the practices of other local and Ohio public libraries.

Although we have decided to retain the book, I want to sincerely thank you for voicing your opinion and submitting the Request for Reconsideration.

If you would like to appeal this decision, you may address the Board of Trustees at one of its regular meetings.

Please feel free to contact me should you have additional questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Kristi J. Hale  
Director