

# The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at [www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk) and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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## Contents List

### Did you see ...?

- *Information Professional* – page 2
- *Museums Journal* – page 4
- *ARC Magazine* – page 4
- *Books for Keeps* – page 5
- *NLISN News* – page 6

### Tackling social and digital exclusion – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

- Museums Change Lives Awards 2024 – page 6

### LGBTQ+ issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

- *LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums: an incomplete guideline* – page 10

### LGBTQ+ issues – Other Agencies

- “LGBT+ History Month 2025” – page 11
- Banning of LGBTQ+ books [continued]: “LGBTQ+ book classification to be reviewed after complaint by right-wing activist” – page 11

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 12

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## Did you see ...?

### *Information Professional*

The latest issue<sup>1</sup> includes:

- “MPs agree libraries change lives – including their own” [News], which briefly reports on the event held at the Houses of Parliament in Oct.<sup>2, 3</sup> [p6]
- “Gender stereotypes in children’s publishing – the role of the librarian” [News], which outlines the terrific-sounding Eurolis Seminar taking place on 22 Nov [p10]
- “Historical detectives win Little Rebels Award” [News], which reports on the latest winner of this award<sup>4</sup>; the winning title, *Portraits and poison*:

“[...] is the second instalment in Williams’ Lizzie & Belle middle grade detective series, set against a backdrop of real-life British Black history. The first in the series, *Drama and Danger*, was longlisted for the Little Rebels Award in 2023. *Portraits and Poison* explores the history of Black British activism in Georgian London, introducing young readers to real life eighteenth-century campaigners such as the Sons (& Daughters) of Africa. The novel also exposes the racist mechanisms at work in the conventions of Western portraiture.”<sup>5</sup>

- “Library card remains close to the government chest” [News Feature], which reports on the debate at the House of Lords Grand Committee on a national strategy for libraries<sup>6</sup> [p13]
- Tammye Huf “How black history survives outside of the archive” [“In Depth” column], which looks at Tammye Huf’s writing and argues “how important it is to keep family histories alive.”<sup>7</sup>
- Rob Mackinlay “Your mission is to connect” [“In Depth” column], which introduces CILIP’s new toolkit<sup>8</sup> [pp20-21]

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<sup>1</sup> *Information Professional*, Oct/Nov 2024.

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/685268/Libraries-Change-Lives-parliamentary-reception-unites-MPs-Lords-and-Library-Leaders-.htm#:~:text=CILIP%20launched%20the%20Libraries%20Change,and%20learning%20and%20social%20mobility..>

<sup>3</sup> For further info on the Libraries Change Lives advocacy week in June – and the collection of case studies – see: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/libraries-change-lives>.

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://littlerebels.org/2024/10/31/2024-winner-and-ceremony/>.

<sup>5</sup> Taken from: <https://littlerebels.org/2024/10/31/2024-winner-and-ceremony/>.

<sup>6</sup> The debate can be viewed at: <https://parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/2f683351-a1f2-4a25-8dbc-5359e3b475b2>.

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/684473/If-its-not-written-down-how-does-black-history-survive-beyond-the-archive.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/CILIP-connect>.

- Helen Rimmer “A revolution – introducing the kind librarian” [“In Depth” column] [pp24-26], which introduces her new book, *The kind librarian: cultivating a culture of kindness and wellbeing in libraries* – this “is a pioneering guide that addresses the critical need to foster kindness and wellbeing within library workplaces and promoting a more supportive and understanding working environment. In it, the author expertly blends the principles of positive psychology with practical strategies, making a compelling case for the role of kindness in enhancing workplace culture and community engagement.”<sup>9</sup>
- Ruth Carlyle, interviewed by Rob Mackinlay “Public libraries as a gateway to the NHS” [“Interview” column] [pp30-31], which introduces the new NHS app:

“The NHS is now offering the public support in how to access online health services including the NHS App at 1,400 libraries across England.

More than two in five public library services (64 out of 151) in England have already signed up to offer the service with several more expected to join in the coming months.

The NHS has been working with the National Health Literacy Partnership over recent weeks to provide public and NHS libraries with toolkits and information resources to enable them to support their service users.

This is particularly important for people from more deprived communities where they may not have access to the internet or a device at home.”<sup>10, 11</sup>

- “Grow your green credentials at the Green Libraries Conference” [“In Depth” column], which promotes the conference taking place on 25 Nov. [pp34-36]
- Ash Green “Defining and controlling our LGBTQ+ narratives” [“Insight” column], which highlights some examples of collections which “[...] have

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<sup>9</sup> Taken from: <https://facetpublishing.co.uk/page/detail/the-kind-librarian/?k=9781783307128>.

<sup>10</sup> Taken from: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2024/11/1400-libraries-now-offering-people-support-to-use-nhs-app/#:~:text=The%20NHS%20is%20now%20offering,join%20in%20the%20coming%20months>.

<sup>11</sup> There is also coverage in *Healthcare Leader* – see: [https://healthcareleadernews.com/news/1400-libraries-now-helping-patients-access-nhs-app/?utm\\_campaign=1357793\\_Fortnightly%20newsletter%2013%20November%202024%20-%20MEMBER&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20Chartered%20Institute%20of%20Library%20and%20Information%20Professionals&dm\\_i=6WFS,T3OH,9VBO9,3XYHX,1](https://healthcareleadernews.com/news/1400-libraries-now-helping-patients-access-nhs-app/?utm_campaign=1357793_Fortnightly%20newsletter%2013%20November%202024%20-%20MEMBER&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Chartered%20Institute%20of%20Library%20and%20Information%20Professionals&dm_i=6WFS,T3OH,9VBO9,3XYHX,1).

taken steps towards giving LGBTQ+ people the power to tell their own stories”<sup>12</sup> [pp40-41]

### ***Museums Journal***

The latest issue<sup>13</sup> includes:

- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Living history” (“Analysis” column) [pp4-5], which reports on the ratification of a UNESCO treaty on intangible cultural heritage (ICH, also known as ‘living heritage’). This includes:

Intangible cultural heritage categories:

- Oral traditions and expressions
- Performing arts
- Social practices, rituals and festive events
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- Traditional craftsmanship

Two further categories may also be added:

- Traditional games and sports
  - Culinary traditions and knowledge.
- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Picture of health” (“Analysis” column), which looks at how museums can contribute to the health agenda [pp8-9]
  - Jonathan Knott “Playing to the gallery” [pp22-27], which looks at how museums are engaging with people through music and includes an assessment of the British Library’s “Beyond the Bassline” exhibition [pp26-27]

### ***ARC Magazine***

The latest issue<sup>14</sup> includes:

- Miidong P Daloeng “Addressing stereotypes: Asia through the Lens (An Exhibition)” [“Opening Lines” column] [pp5-7], which looks at the impact of the recently-concluded exhibition at the National Library of Wales:

“According to the 2021 Census, 89,000 people identified as “Asian, Asian Welsh, or Asian British”, making them the second-largest ethnic group in Wales. At the same time, racism towards

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<sup>12</sup> Includes: the Surrey History Centre, <https://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/diversity/lgbt-history/whats-your-surrey-lgbtq-story/>;  
Goldsmiths “Liberate Zines” collection, <https://libguides.gold.ac.uk/zines/>;  
Bishopsgate Institute, <https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/peoples-pride-archive>;  
Museum of Transology, <https://www.museumoftransology.com/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Museums Journal*, Nov/Dec 2024.

<sup>14</sup> *Arc Magazine*, no 401, Nov/Dec 2024.

Asians in Wales has been a significant concern, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and most recently the riots in the UK. In the last four years, we have seen a notable increase in racist incidents targeting Black people, Asians, and other ethnic minorities.

To address these stereotypes particularly revolving around Asia, the National Library of Wales curated *Asia Through the Lens*, which ran from May to September 2024. This exhibition was part of the Library's work for the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, enacted to address and combat biases in the Library's collection through practical measures to foster community engagement, encourage dialogue and give visibility to underutilised diverse resources." [pp5-6]

- Deborah Mason "Explore Your Archive – 10 years (and more) of public engagement", which "[...] looks at the achievements of the Explore Your Archive campaign as it enters its second decade."<sup>15</sup> [pp16-19]
- "Indelible Identities: A Creative Response to The Archive of the Irish in Britain" [pp28-29]:

"In April 2024, students from the School of Art, Architecture and Design (SAAD) at London Metropolitan University (LMU) were invited to submit a proposal for our Artist in Residence programme in Special Collections. This four-week residency during June 2024 was designed to provide an opportunity for our undergraduate students to engage with and respond creatively to the Archive of the Irish in Britain: a collection that includes correspondence, posters, photographs and oral history about the Irish diaspora in Britain during the 20th century." [p28]

- "Backchat" column: "Ally McConnell chats to Heather Forbes, Gloucestershire County Archivist and Green Pledge Project sponsor, about the current Green Pledge project at Gloucestershire Archives."<sup>16</sup> [p34-36]

### ***Books for Keeps***

The latest issue<sup>17</sup> includes:

- Darren Chetty and Karen Sands-O'Connor "Beyond the Secret Garden: 'An Epic Continent' – Asia in children's and YA literature", which looks at a wide range of children's books, fiction, nonfiction, picture books [pp18-19]

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<sup>15</sup> See: <https://www.exploreyourarchive.org/>.

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/our-projects/the-green-pledge-project/>.

<sup>17</sup> *Books for Keeps*, no.269, Nov 2024, <https://booksforkeeps.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/BfK-269-Nov-2024-hi-res-single-pages.pdf>.

## NLISN News

The first issue of *NLISN News*<sup>18</sup> has been published by the Neurodivergent Library and Information Staff Network; it includes:

- Caroline Ball “Neurodiversity in Libraries: Creating a Supportive Space for All”, which introduces her article in *Information Professional*<sup>19</sup>
- “NLISN Buddying Scheme”, which “[...] is designed to foster a supportive community for neurodivergent library workers.”<sup>20</sup>
- A resources roundup, links to useful articles
- “Call for Participants: Play, A Research Project” – “NLISN Co-Chair Andy Walsh will be exploring the idea of ‘play’ and how this might differ for neurodivergent individuals [...]”

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## Tackling social and digital exclusion – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

### Museums Change Lives Awards 2024

The MA<sup>21</sup> has just announced the winners and runners-up:

#### Best Museums Change Lives Project

Winner: Manchester Art Gallery – Families of the World<sup>22</sup>

This is:

“[...] a gallery initiative, with a multi-agency approach, to provide creative activities for families from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Eritrea and Sudan. The families staying in a local hotel, particularly mothers and young children, participate in weekly art-based and artist-led sessions at the gallery, concluding with a meal shared together.

The initiative was born out of the Afghan crisis of 2021, when the gallery responded in 48 hours to an approach by the council and its Sure Start provision to provide recreation for families who had suddenly arrived in the city. Since then, the need has increased with families fleeing other conflict zones. Following a trial period, the gallery has gained funding from the Oglesby Trust to develop the activities with partners, bring other

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<sup>18</sup> *NLISN News*, Winter 2024, <https://nlisn.org/2024/11/24/nlisn-news-winter-2024/>.

<sup>19</sup> See: <https://nlisn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/neurodiversity-pp24-26.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> See: <https://nlisn.org/buddying-scheme/>.

<sup>21</sup> See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2024/#msdyntrid=4xPPzJR1jnVAuCEi4AO4EreFkvQ4GXyPygC0jJA8sn4>.

<sup>22</sup> See: <https://manchesterartgallery.org/families-of-the-world/>.

cultural venues on board and to develop an app and toolkit for participation.”

Finalists:

Birmingham Museums Trust – Dynamic Collections

“It is an exciting time for Birmingham Museums Trust as we introduce Dynamic Collections, a 10-year programme launched in 2022, aimed at transforming the accessibility of our collections. Using innovative methods centred around democratisation and digitisation, Dynamic Collections hopes to build a complete, searchable, and publicly accessible collection catalogue, in participation with the public.”<sup>23</sup>

Salisbury Museum – Fashioning Our World: Unpicking the past to thread together the future

“Fashioning Our World worked with young people (aged 11 – 25) to discover hidden stories of sustainability told by clothes and accessories in the past. The project worked in a collaborative way to share these powerful stories with the community, change attitudes to fashion in the future and help fight the climate crisis.”<sup>24</sup>

Best Small Museum Project

Winner: Hastings Museum & Art Gallery – Illuminating Invisible Histories: Flavours Without Borders

“In partnership with the Refugee Buddy Project, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is working on a three-year project, Illuminating Invisible Histories: Flavours Without Borders, to bring communities together and co-create meaningful programming that reflects the diverse heritage and histories in Hastings. The project sought to raise awareness of refugee experiences in Hastings, increase co-collaboration, and co-produce programming with community organisations to broaden the museum’s offering and draw in new audiences.”

Finalists:

ShIPLEY Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums – Recovery through Ceramics

“Recovery through Ceramics works with people in recovery to develop new creative and practical skills, many of whom had not been to the ShIPLEY before or were not regular visitors to cultural centres. Funded through an NHS Mental Health Transformation grant and in partnership with lived experience recovery organisation Recovery Connections and

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<sup>23</sup> See: <https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/about/what-we-do/dynamic-collections>.

<sup>24</sup> See: <https://fashioningourworld.org.uk/fashioning-our-world>.



Bensham Grove Pottery, the initiative takes place weekly, inspired by the gallery's ceramics collection."<sup>25</sup>

#### Museum of Free Derry – Conflict & Legacy Interpretive Network (CLIN)

"[This] project initiated by Museum of Free Derry, National Museums NI and Healing Through Remembering, [is] creating a network of museums and heritage organisations specifically covering conflict and legacy issues related to the conflict in or about Ireland."<sup>26</sup>

#### Championing Social Justice Award

##### Winner: Perth Museum, Culture Perth & Kinross – Unicorn

"When the new Perth Museum opened in March 2024, the team chose to centre local LGBTQ+ stories and voices in its first exhibition, [Unicorn](#). As part of an exploration of Scotland's national animal, the exhibition focuses on the unicorn as a LGBTQ+ symbol. Working in collaboration with community groups, the exhibition includes 5 newly-commissioned artworks by queer Scottish artists, local objects and oral histories, a queer-friendly family space, and a rich engagement programme. Unicorn has not only increased representation of LGBTQ+ communities in the museum's displays but also in its collections by accessioning objects, artworks and oral histories generated through the exhibition. Moreover, the museum has embedded new staff training to ensure it continues to be a welcoming and empowering place for queer workers and visitors alike."<sup>27</sup>

##### Finalists:

##### Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool – Carving Out Truths: Sculpture and Slavery

"[This project] researched and shared histories related to slavery, colonialism and empire linked to the Walker Art Gallery's neoclassical sculpture collection. This co-curated project worked with young people from Liverpool's Black and Global Ethnic Majority communities, who are typically underrepresented and misrepresented within museums."<sup>28</sup>

##### Ferens Art Gallery, Hull Culture & Leisure – Jason Wilsher-Mills: Are We There Yet?

"[This] was a high-impact exhibition with access at its heart, exploring artist Jason Wilsher-Mills' life as a working class disabled person, stories

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<sup>25</sup> See also: <https://twmuseumsandarchives.medium.com/recovery-through-ceramics-supporting-people-with-experience-of-addiction-b3dca46e2398>.

<sup>26</sup> See also: <https://conflictlegacy.org/>.

<sup>27</sup> See also: <https://perthmuseum.co.uk/inside-the-museum/unicorn/>.

<sup>28</sup> See also: <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/carving-truths>.



of disabled people and carers he has worked with, and his ongoing connection with Hull. <sup>29</sup>

### Radical Changemaker Award

Winner: Marian Gwyn

“Marian Gwyn has had a 30-year career in the museum sector, where she has focused on diversifying heritage practices, including producing the first exhibition on slavery at any National Trust property in 2007. More recently, with Welsh Government funding, she devised and led a transformative initiative to diversify and decolonise local museums in Wales.”<sup>30</sup>

Finalists:

Phillippa Heath, Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading

“Fostering significant relationships across Reading and delivering key partnership projects, over the last decade she has built her network of community organisations almost from scratch following joining the MERL in 2014. During the last year alone, 1,280 individuals in the community have participated in engagement activities.

Her work this year includes Together Stronger, partnering with younger people with dementia, and a programme of support and creative activities for young carers.”

Maria Hussain, freelancer (researcher), University of Leeds

“Maria Hussain led Muslims in the North, a research-led collaborative exhibition with Adam Jaffer at Leeds Museums & Galleries and Shames Maskeen at Leeds Trinity University.

Her research explores and investigates the value of cultural diversity in the workplace and civic spaces. The exhibition showcases the notable contemporary contributions of trailblazing British Muslims through their untold stories across four areas: commerce, healthcare, law and research. It enables the public to challenge negative stereotyping and recognise the significant and diverse contribution(s) of Muslims to the region and nation. The exhibition also nurtures a sense of belonging for Muslim communities both across the region and nationally.”

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<sup>29</sup> See also: <https://www.hullmuseums.co.uk/homepage/225/jason-wilsher-mills-are-we-there-yet>.

<sup>30</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXxEvB8Gdzw>.

## LGBTQ+ issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

### ***LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums: an incomplete guideline***

This important resource<sup>31</sup> has just been published:

“In this guideline, the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) addresses the critical issue of ensuring that all communities feel welcome in the museum by implementing LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies in museums. Building on insights gathered from museum professionals across Europe, NEMO aims to support institutions in becoming more inclusive spaces for everyone.”

The guide includes:

- A summary of key terms and concepts
- European and national policies, which “[...] offers a cursory overview of the relationship between Europe and LGBTQIA+ rights”, highlighting the significance of these policies to the cultural sector and to museums. Thirdly, it “[...] zooms in on case studies from six European countries, namely Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. For each of these countries, a brief sketch will be provided of the legal context for LGBTQIA+ rights, policies supporting LGBTQIA+ inclusion (if available), and examples of practices as they are taking place in museums.”
- The following chapter, “Scenarios”, “[...] consists of eleven scenarios, ten of which start with a dilemma that museum professionals in Europe might face when fostering LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Each dilemma is followed by advice on how to navigate a given situation and which ethical principles to keep in mind. The dilemmas reflect varying aspects of museum practice: from research, working with collections, and displaying objects to developing relationships with queer communities and responding to criticism.” The scenarios include what to take into account when deciding if an image is queer; issues around displaying images of queer people from the past; raising awareness with colleagues; defending queer exhibitions in a hostile political climate; fostering intersectional LGBTQIA+ representation in our exhibitions.
- Ethical guidelines covering: Working with collections; Developing exhibitions and displays; Professional environments; Interacting with audiences; Engaging in partnerships with communities.

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<sup>31</sup> *LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums: an incomplete guideline*. Network of European Museum Organisations, 2024, [https://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/Publications/NEMO\\_report\\_LGBTQIA\\_inclusion\\_in\\_European\\_museums-An\\_incomplete\\_guideline\\_2024.pdf](https://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/Publications/NEMO_report_LGBTQIA_inclusion_in_European_museums-An_incomplete_guideline_2024.pdf).

This fills a huge gap, particularly in the current difficult climate – highly recommended.<sup>32</sup>

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## LGBTQ+ issues – Other Agencies

### “LGBT+ History Month 2025”

Schools Out have recently launched<sup>33</sup> LGBTQ+ History Month 2025:

“In 2025 Schools OUT is celebrating its 50th year and 20 years of UK LGBTQ+ History Month.”

The theme will be **Activism and Social Change**. Each year, Schools Out also select five historical figures – the 2025 LGBTQ+ Historical Figures are:

- Octavia Hill, “Social reformer and co-founder of the National Trust”
- Ivor Cummings, “Celebrated civil servant known as the ‘gay father of the Windrush generation”
- Annie Kenney, “Fierce suffragette and advocate for women’s rights”
- Charlie Kiss, “Renowned LGBTQ+ activist and campaigner”
- Olaudah Equiano, “Abolitionist whose writings exposed the realities of the transatlantic slave trade”<sup>34</sup>

You can register on the website<sup>35</sup> to receive notification of when resources for next Feb are released.

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## Banning of LGBTQ+ books [continued]

### “LGBTQ+ book classification to be reviewed after complaint by right-wing activist”

According to a recent *PinkNews* story<sup>36</sup>:

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<sup>32</sup> Source: Queer Heritage & Collections Network *Newsletter*, Nov 2024.

<sup>33</sup> See: <https://lgbtplushistorymonth.co.uk/lgbt-history-month-2025/>.

<sup>34</sup> Additional info taken from: <https://lgbtijobs.co.uk/resources/news/schools-out-launches-2025-lgbt-history-month-them/762/>.

<sup>35</sup> <https://lgbtplushistorymonth.co.uk/lgbt-history-month-2025/>.

<sup>36</sup> Emily Chudy “LGBTQ+ book classification to be reviewed after complaint by right-wing activist”, *PinkNews*, 16 Oct 2024, [https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/16/lgbtq-book-classification-to-be-reviewed-after-complaint-by-right-wing-activist/?user\\_id=john@nadder.org.uk](https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/16/lgbtq-book-classification-to-be-reviewed-after-complaint-by-right-wing-activist/?user_id=john@nadder.org.uk).

“The Australian Classifications Review Board has been ordered to look again at its assessment of LGBTQ+ graphic novel *Gender Queer* after complaints by a right-wing activist.”

Last year, the book:

“[...] was ruled appropriate for a teen audience in Australia, with the review board refusing to restrict access to it despite more than 500 complaints [...]

After the review, during which the public was asked for comments, the board kept the classification as unrestricted, with the consumer advice of ‘M’, which meant it was not recommended for readers under the age of 15.

But now, the federal court has ordered the review board to reassess the book’s classification, after finding that there had been a ‘broad-brush dismissal’ of the complaints by labelling them ‘anti-LGBTQ+’ [...]”<sup>37</sup>

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ICH = intangible cultural heritage

MA = Museums Association

NEMO = Network of European Museum Organisations

NLISN = Neurodivergent Library and Information Staff Network

YA = young adult

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This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

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<sup>37</sup> The article also links to a story in *The Guardian*: Josh Taylor “Court orders review of *Gender Queer* book’s classification after challenge by Australian rightwing activist”, 14 Oct 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/oct/14/gender-queer-book-rating-classification-bernard-gaynor-ntwnfb>.