

3A— ON NEUTRALITY / QUESTIONING NEUTRALITY #3

Disassembling Neutrality: The Need for 'The Explicit'

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During LIS education, students are taught about the importance and significance of neutrality in our profession, yet by allowing the ideal of neutrality to infiltrate our institutions, we have neglected many groups living in fear and uncertainty, including our LGBTQ+ students. There have been modest attempts to address specific needs of the LGBTQ+ communities, including the addition of pulp fiction collections or building a “special collection”; however, policies that exclude “explicit” material in an attempt to be neutral can deny access to important materials for the LGBTQ+ community. Using the Sam Steward collection as an example, this talk will discuss how library policies are in conflict with our ethical responsibility to the LGBTQ+ community and how such collections are broken apart into “appropriate” pieces. While some library users may find the images, stories, and ephemera found in the Sam Steward Collection offensive, others may find them comforting and allow them a much-needed connection to their community. As academic units committed to academic freedom, librarians cannot let the ideal of neutrality pervade our collections as a means to limit LGBTQ+ material to that which is deemed “appropriate.”