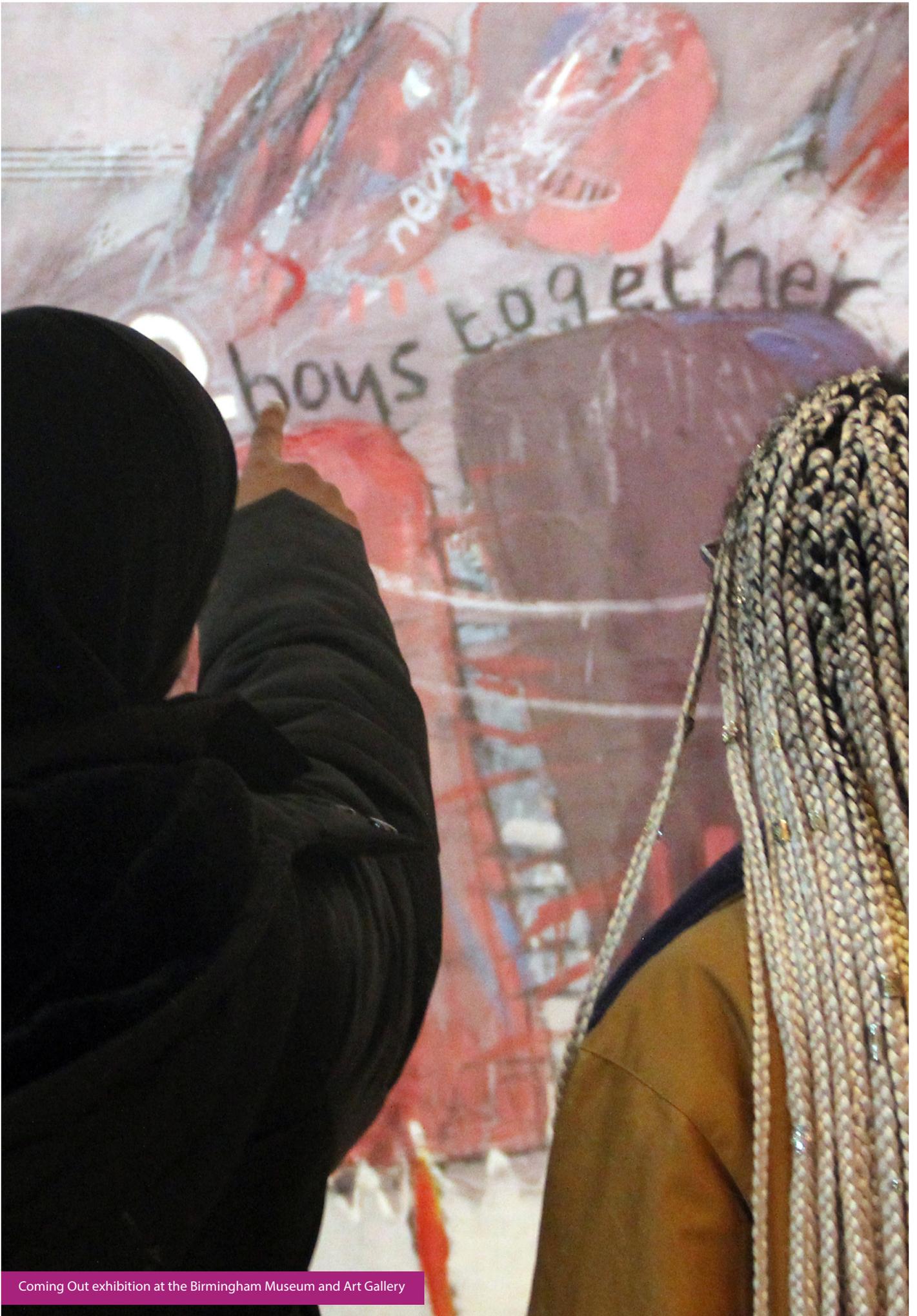


# Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, plus LGBTQ+ GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE for UK Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums





Coming Out exhibition at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

# Contents

## Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, plus (LGBTQ+) good practice guide for UK galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs).

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Cover photo: Museum Pride London 'We Are GLAM' at Pride in London (photograph by Chris Carpineti).  
Backcover photo: Talking Back Oral History Society conference at the London Metropolitan Archives.  
Photography throughout by Dan Vo except where specified.



# About This Guide

***GLAMs have a responsibility in shaping community and culture, and challenging intolerance and prejudice.***

This guide has been developed with the support of the Museums Association and Arts Council England and aims to support staff and volunteers in GLAMs in developing affirmative practices that are genuinely inclusive and able to create a welcoming environment as well as cater for the needs of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or non-binary. This guide is to be read as a living document that should be regularly updated as what is considered good practice may change over time.

The existence of LGBTQ+ heritage and culture is evident across place, time and culture. LGBTQ+ people belong at GLAMs because their stories have always existed and been embedded within the objects of historical and cultural significance stored and exhibited in various collections. The purpose of LGBTQ+ inclusive programming is to provide a safe space for non-binary and non-heteronormative stories to be shared. After all, GLAMs have a responsibility in shaping community and culture, and challenging intolerance and prejudice.

In the United Kingdom, around nine percent of the population are lesbians, gay, bisexual or transgender individuals, who come from diverse backgrounds. It is not uncommon for people from these communities to experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic discrimination, hate crime and intolerant behaviours towards them. It is possible for GLAMs to show LGBTQ+ visitors there are accepted, respected, welcome and, most importantly, celebrated in GLAMs.

According to Mind's LGBTQ+ Good Practice Guide 1 in 5 in the UK are LGBTQ+, yet 1 in 6 LGBTQ+ people are victims of homophobic bullying. Almost 50% of gay men, 70% of lesbians and up to 90% of lesbians from a BAME background suffer mental health issues. And 60% of trans people attempt suicide. In this context, it might be said that the museum's work and activities around the LGBTQ+ community has a real urgency. It is important and essential to promote of stories of difference and diversity alongside stories of unity and inclusion.

# About This Guide

Dan Vo is museum freelancer. As a Victoria and Albert ambassador he founded the permanent volunteer-led LGBTQ+ Tour at the museum in 2015. His team have won three awards and he was also the inaugural winner of the Museum Association's Museums Change Lives: Radical Changemaker award 2018. He has developed similar tours for the National Museum Cardiff and University of Cambridge Museums.

Dan promotes diversity, equality and inclusion in the museum sector as a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Museums Association Transformer. He is also a patron of LGBT History Month, Stonewall BAME Role Model and a member of the Historic England Expert Advisory Group.

He has trained museum staff across the sector on LGBTQ+ heritage and been a guest speaker at many universities and museums across the country, including the V&A, British Museum, and Fitzwilliam Museum.

# How This Guide Can Help You

***It is essential that affirmative practices are deployed and local members of LGBTQ+ communities are actively engaged.***

LGBTQ+ themed programming has been increasing recently within GLAMs, with a higher number projects and exhibitions being organised with the intention of appealing to diverse audiences from the LGBTQ+ communities.

This good practice guide aims to provide an additional set of tools to staff and volunteers at GLAMs, that can be used to assist in developing new programming or reviewing existing programming and ensure that planning is underpinned by equality and inclusion as well as an active pursuit of diverse audience representation. In order to achieve positive outcomes, it is essential that affirmative practices are deployed and local members of LGBTQ+ communities are actively engaged.

Typically, the projects with the best outcomes are those that are of the community, for the community, by the community. Such programming enables robust public discussion and exploration of complex topics like sexual orientation and gender identity. Several case studies have been selected that provide examples of how meaningful engagement can be achieved.





# LGBTQ+ Communities

***LGBTQ+ people do not exist in one group, but can define themselves in their own way.***

There is a great diversity that exists within the LGBTQ+ communities. Sexual orientation and gender identity are but only two ways people define themselves.

In the case of sexual orientation, some people might not be out, others may be in the process of coming out or in a stage of questioning, and some may choose not to come out. An individual's story and journey is their own to take and share as they wish to. LGBTQ+ people do not exist in one group but can define themselves in their own way and may fit into a range of different demographic groups.

The Equality Act 2010 states it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. However, LGBTQ+ people are still subject to stigma and discrimination as a result of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia and are at risk of becoming the victim of hate crimes that include verbal abuse and violent attacks.

Each person has their own set of characteristics, experiences and life circumstances. Age, cultural and ethnic background, physical or sensory differences, socio-economic status and many other aspects contribute to defining the complexity and unique identity of each individual.

It is possible for an LGBTQ+ person to experience multiple levels of discrimination relating to their sexual orientation and / or gender identity combined with other aspects of their life that may intersect with the other protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010. LGBTQ+ people are also at higher risk of mental health issues, substance abuse and homelessness.

Museums have a role in shaping community and culture. By challenging the homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and heterosexism that exists in society through a process of learning, reflection, analysis and planning it is possible to address some of these issues. Recognising the diversity and intersectionality within LGBTQ+ communities can lead to the development of truly inclusive programming.

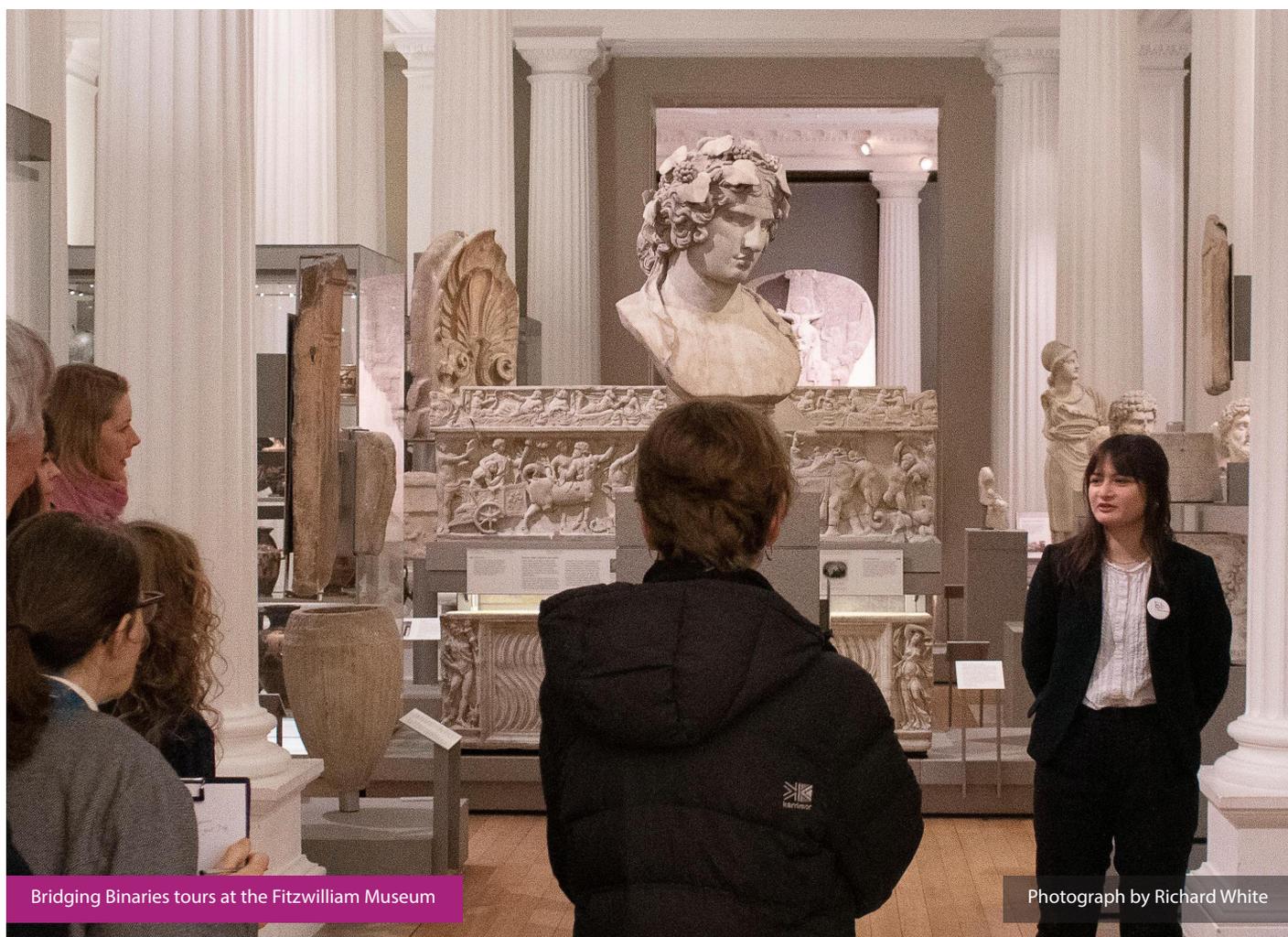
# Case Study

## University of Cambridge Museums, Cambridge Bridging Binaries

UCM assembled a team of volunteers to lead the 'Bridging Binaries' tours that share the stories of objects that speak to LGBTQ+ histories and themes within seven museums: the Fitzwilliam Museum, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Museum of Classical Archaeology, Polar Museum, Sedgwick Museum, Whipple Museum and Zoology Museum.

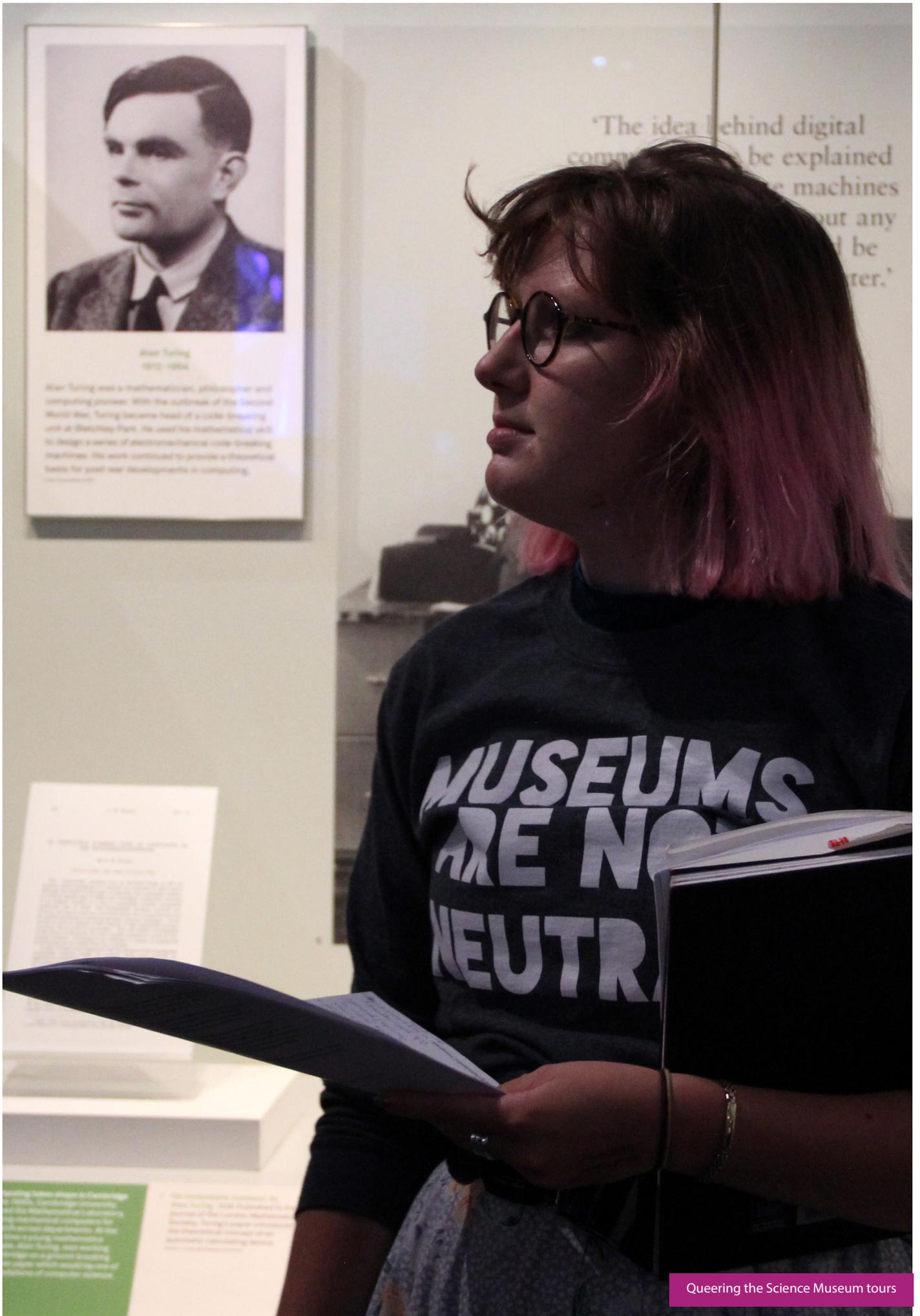
The free tours last up to 45 minutes and the volunteers were initially provided with modular content that had been approved by relevant museum curators. Volunteer guides were offered the chance to choose which stories they tell, or augment their own tours with additional research that covered objects of personal interest. The mixture of science, art and historical collections showed that stories of LGBTQ+ people can be found across place, time and culture.

In and around Cambridge are active LGBTQ+ community groups and it was crucial for UCM to involve them in the conversation too and the tours provided an opportunity to start the development of close working relationships with local LGBTQ+ networks and the building of a community around the tours.



Bridging Binaries tours at the Fitzwilliam Museum

Photograph by Richard White



# 10 Practical Actions You Can Take

***Flying the Rainbow Flag during LGBT History Month or Pride Month is a simple, yet highly effective way of showing support for the LGBTQ+ communities.***

## 1. Make A Statement

Make sure your organisation's equality and diversity statement is on display and staff and volunteers are aware of it. This should include a clear position on zero tolerance for homophobic, transphobic or biphobic language.

## 2. Use Inclusive Language

Listen to how people self describe their identity and the pronouns they may use to describe themselves, partners and relationships. Reflecting their choice of language is a meaningful step showing acceptance and acknowledging them. Take care to ensure any language used and behaviours exhibited does not assume people are heterosexual or cisgender. It is possible to do this by using gender neutral language.

## 3. Set Up an LGBTQ+ Working Group

Having a staff and volunteer network provides a valuable forum for issues to be discussed, opportunities for peer support and networking as well as a sounding board for proposals for the development of LGBTQ+ focussed programming. Through this group it is possible to develop sustainable relationships with local LGBTQ+ social and support groups.

## 4. Share The Stories

Identify stories from within your collection that speak to diverse LGBTQ+ histories and themes and post them onto your website or create a small trail based around the objects. It does not have to be extensive: some museums have simple trails of a handful of objects, while the British Museum probably has the gold standard offering in the form of a downloadable audioguide. Do make your staff and volunteers aware of the objects as they can be incorporated into existing tours or even developed into a specialist tour whether for a specific event or an ongoing basis.

## 5. Get Involved with LGBT History Month

Setting up a day of talks and inviting speakers to talk on LGBTQ+ history is an easy way to start engaging with the LGBTQ+ communities. Dedicated to "educating out prejudice", LGBT History Month has been celebrated annually in February since 2005. Recently, to support LGBT History Month in GLAMs an 'OUTing the Past' conference has also organised by Schools OUT UK which provides a diverse range of expert speakers on interesting topics which your museum can choose from.

## **5. Training**

LGBTQ+ history is not just relevant to February during LGBT History Month. As a means of ensuring year round engagement, do include diversity and inclusion training as part of staff and volunteer training. Stonewall UK, the LGBT Foundation or Gendered Intelligence will be able to provide recommendations if you would like to source speakers beyond your own LGBTQ+ Working Group. Ensure there is training and support for staff and volunteers to challenge discrimination if they witness it.

## **7. Fly The Flag**

Flying the Rainbow Flag during LGBT History Month or Pride Month is simple, yet highly effective, way of showing support for the LGBTQ+ communities. Do not underestimate the powerful impact of this gesture which can simultaneously signal acceptance, celebration and welcome to the LGBTQ+ communities.

## **8. Show Your Support**

Having information about local LGBTQ+ community social or support groups creates a welcoming atmosphere. Similarly, if staff are able to wear rainbow pins or badges on their lanyards it is possible for them to show solidarity as allies or members of the LGBTQ+ communities.

## **9. March With Pride**

You can support your staff and volunteers in marching at Pride in your local area, or having a community stall at a relevant event. This allows you to step out of the museum and directly engage with the diverse LGBTQ+ communities in your local area.

## **10. Monitor Your Progress**

Consider including questions that allow the collection of information about the sexual orientation and gender of staff and volunteers as well as visitors. This may be done in HR forms as well as feedback forms. It is important to allow optional disclosure and ensure information collected is kept strictly confidential. Remember it is crucial to ask for information in a way that is comfortable for everyone and is not too complex or alienates people. All public sector bodies have an Equality Duty under the Act which requires them to take into account the needs of people whose identity is covered by one or more of the nine characteristics protected by the Act. This means that collecting demographic data is a prerequisite to fulfilling this legal duty.



Science Museum participant with Museum Pride London at Pride in London

# Case Study

## Museum Pride London We Are GLAM

For three years running, the Museums Association has proudly supported staff and volunteers members from cultural institutions across London and beyond to march at Pride in London. The conglomerate includes people from national museums through to local and specialist institutions, recently coming together under one banner 'We Are GLAM: Representing LGBTQ+ Lives Throughout History', with previous banners reading 'Proud To Represent LGBTQ+ Lives'.

Within the approximately thirty GLAMs involved, it shows there is a vast resource of LGBTQ+ history that is accessible to all. There is a magical feeling involved in walking the streets of London being cheered on by hundreds of thousands of people. One member of the public once hilariously shouted "we love history!" at the group, while many GLAM staff and volunteers can recall intimate moments when members of the public sought them out to personally express their gratitude at being represented by the institution.

The presence of the many institutions involved at such a visible event highlights the strong connection that can be formed between collections and the public and just how important visibility is to the LGBTQ+ communities.



Jewish Museum participants with Museum Pride London at Pride in London

# LGBTQ+ Terminology

This list provides some short definitions for terms that are commonly used in association with the LGBTQ+ communities.

- Asexual – someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction. Asexual people may still feel romantic attraction.
- Bisexual – someone sexually attracted to people of more than one sex.
- Cisgender – a term for non-transgender people which describes someone as having a sense of gender identity that matches their biological sex.
- Coming out – a process by which someone shares their sexual orientation or trans status with others.
- Cross Dresser – someone who wears clothing associated with another gender, though they may have no desire to transition from their sex assigned at birth.
- Drag King / Queen – someone who dresses and acts as a member of the ‘opposite’ sex for public performance and sometimes this is accompanied by a character identity.
- Gay – someone sexually attracted to people of the same sex.
- Gender – a person’s sense of being male, female, or - for those who describe themselves as genderqueer - this may also mean a sense of being neither, both, or fluid.
- Genderfluid - someone who may be flexible about their gender identity.
- Genderqueer - someone who identifies outside the gender binary and may have two or more genders, no gender, or fluctuating genders (also see genderfluid).
- Gender reassignment – the process of transitioning from one gender to another.
- Heterosexual – someone sexually attracted to people of the ‘opposite’ sex.
- Heteronormativity – the assumption that people can be categorised within gender binaries that include sexual attraction to those of the ‘opposite’ sex.
- Homophobia / Transphobia / Biphobia – the irrational fear, hatred, abuse etc. of gay, transgender and / or bisexual people.
- Homosexual / Straight – someone attracted to people of the ‘opposite’ sex.

- Intersectionality – a term used to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) are interconnected and can impact marginalised people in society. It may also describe belonging to more than one oppressed minority identity group.
- Intersex – someone whose sex does not fit into binary gender categories.
- Lesbian – a woman sexually attracted to other women.
- LGBTQ+ – initials that stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer, while the plus sign recognises a spectrum of additional sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Non-binary – an umbrella term for people who do not identify within binary gender ideologies.
- Pansexual / Polisexual – someone sexually attracted to people regardless of their gender.
- Pronouns – gender pronouns that people may use to describe themselves: he, him, his, she, her, they, them, their (gender neutral).
- Queer – a reclaimed, umbrella term that describes a spectrum of sexual preferences and orientations.
- Sex – assigned at birth in relation to someone's hormones and external and internal sex organs.
- Sexual orientation – sexual attraction to people.
- Sexuality – the feelings and attractions felt by people towards other people.
- Transgender – someone of a different gender to the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Transsexual – usually someone who identifies as the 'opposite' binary gender to the one assumed due to sex assigned at birth, and who intends to undergo medical transition (although not always).
- Transition – the act of changing from one sex to another.
- Transvestite – someone who likes to dress in the clothes associated with the 'opposite' sex. They might not wish to transition.
- Unsure – someone who is not certain about their sexual orientation or gender identity.



V&A stall at Goldsmiths University Queer History Fair

# Case Study

## V&A Search The Collections Database A Rose By Any Other Name

In 2006, Oliver Winchester founded the V&A LGBTQ Network, a cross-museum group of staff members (and later also volunteers) who develop projects and programming that engaged with issues of sexual identity. The group focussed on three core areas of museum business – ongoing personnel training and management; public programming; and collections research.

In the third category, in the last two years there has been a quiet activity behind the scenes to revise the keywords that can be searched in the collections database. Initially, objects of LGBTQ+ significance were categorised under 'gender and sexuality' and there was a limited the number of users who used this label. Staff from the V&A LGBTQ Working Group, led by co-chairs Zorian Clayton and Dawn Hoskin, volunteered their time to relabel objects with more commonly used and contemporary terms, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.

A full set of terms that have been adopted within the database is available via the museum's website. It has greatly improved the ability for researchers as well as casual users of the database to find objects of queer interest. Interestingly, since its introduction, the term 'homoerotic' has remained a top ten most used term on the V&A database!





Gendered Intelligence training teddies at the Goldsmith University Queer History Fair

# LGBTQ+ Symbols

The Gilbert Baker 'Rainbow Flag' is widely accepted as an inclusive symbol of the LGBTQ+ communities, though there are new variations such as the Daniel Quasar 'Progress' design that emphasise inclusion and progress. Furthermore, there are a selection of flags and symbols that may be used to identify specific groups within the LGBTQ+ communities, which may represent a spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities.

Asexual



Bisexual



Genderfluid



Genderqueer



Intersex



Non-binary



Pansexual



'Progress' Rainbow (Quasar)



Rainbow (Baker)



Transgender



Female symbol



Gay symbol



Lesbian symbol



Male symbol



Transgender symbol



# Case Study

## British Museum Flying The Rainbow Flag

To coincide with Pride in 2017 and the launch of their exhibition *Identity, Love, Desire: Exploring LGBTQ Histories* the British Museum flew the rainbow flag atop the highest point of their building for the first time. The occasion was also marked with a blog post by George Benson on the museum website.

While other institutions had flown the rainbow flag before, the raising of the flag by the museum was recorded by national press because the symbolic gesture made by the august institution was considered meaningful and significant.

During the consultation and development phase for the exhibition, Head of Community Partnerships Laura Phillips identified there was clear desire from local LGBTQ+ community groups that the museum to make a 'bold' sign of acceptance and support. This led to the decision to nail their colours to the mast.

Phillips further explained it was a means of representing all the cultures throughout history, especially the societies whose history was denied them. As a sign of inclusivity, it flew for all the "unrecorded lives, the unwritten conversations, the unspoken romances".



The giant rainbow flag flown by the British Museum

Photograph by the British Museum



LGBT History Month at the British Museum



Pride of the People exhibition at Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life

# Further Reading and Resources

- **Bishopsgate** <https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/Library/Special-Collections-and-Archives/LGBTQ-History-and-Alternative-Sexuality-Collections->
- **British Library** <https://www.bl.uk/lgbtq-histories>
- **British Museum** <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/desire-love-identity-exploring-lgbtq-histories/>
- **English Heritage** <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/histories/lgbtq-history/>
- **Equalities and Human Rights Commission** <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/sexual-orientation-discrimination>
- **FFLAG** <https://www.fflag.org.uk/>
- **Gendered Intelligence** <http://genderedintelligence.co.uk/>
- **Historic England** <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/lgbtq-heritage-project/>
- **Imperial War Museum** <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/stories-of-lgbt-men-and-women-from-the-first-world-war>
- **Kaleidoscope Trust** <https://kaleidoscopetrust.com/>
- **LGBT Foundation** <https://lgbt.foundation/>
- **LGBT History Month** <https://lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/>
- **Liverpool Museums** <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/collections/lgbt/pride-and-prejudice/>
- **LSE Library** <http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/collections/collection-highlights/lgbt-collections>
- **Museum Detox** <http://museumdetox.com>
- **Museum of London** <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/discover/london-pride-london-lgbt-history-gay-rights>
- **Museum Pride London** <https://twitter.com/museumpridelon>
- **National Trust** <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/exploring-lgbtq-history-at-national-trust-places>
- **Natural History Museum** <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/>
- **People's History Museum**
- **Queer Britain** <https://queerbritain.org.uk/>
- **Stonewall** <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>
- **Tate Britain** <https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-britain/queer-walk-through-british-art>
- **Victoria and Albert Museum** <https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/lgbtq>
- **UK Black Pride** <https://www.ukblackpride.org.uk/>
- **UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group** <https://uklgig.org.uk/>

