

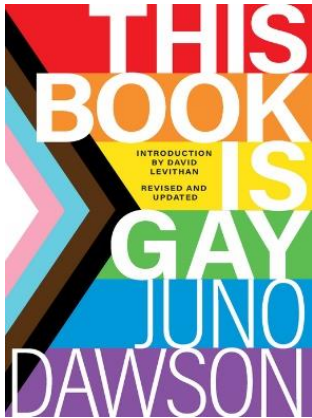


# OWWL LIBRARY SYSTEM

## BOOK CHALLENGE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING: THIS BOOK IS GAY BY JUNO DAWSON

### INTRODUCTION

#### Item Reviewed



**Title:** This Book Is Gay

**Author:** Juno Dawson

**Publisher:** Sourcebooks Fire

**Edition(s) Reviewed:** 2nd ed. (September 7, 2021); 1st ed. (June 2, 2015)

**Copies Owned:** OWWL Library System circulates one physical copy of the 2nd edition, one eBook copy of the 2nd edition, two eBook copies of the 1st edition, and one audiobook copy of the 1st edition.

**Shelving Location(s):** These items are discoverable in the System's Professional Collection, Teen OverDrive Collection, and Main OverDrive Collection. This title is also available through our OverDrive partnership with Southern Tier Library System and Finger Lakes Library System.

#### Reason for Review

This title was brought to the OWWL Library System Book Challenge Review Committee as a result of an individual's complaint to a Member Library and a spoken conversation with the OWWL Library System's Executive Director. The individual claimed this book should not be available in the school's SORA collection because of the "pornographic" content they believed it contained.

This title is one of ALA's Top 13 Most Challenged Books in 2022. The primary reasons for challenges include: "LGBTQIA+ content, providing sexual education, claimed to be sexually explicit."<sup>1</sup>

To date, no formal complaint has been filed with OWWL Library System.

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<sup>1</sup> American Library Association, Top 13 Most Challenged Books of 2022, <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>

## SORA AND PUBLIC LIBRARY CONNECTION

The connection between the school libraries and OWWL Library System's OverDrive collection is made possible by the Public Library Connect program. Each school district within OWWL Library System's service area can sign an agreement allowing students to access the System's OverDrive collection with a school ID/SORA login information. SORA is the school libraries' version of the Libby app.

The System's OverDrive collection has *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson, discoverable in the Main Collection and Teen Collection. This title is not discoverable in the Kids Collection.

These content settings do not translate to the school's SORA collection. The System has no control over the filtering or content displays in the outside collections.

## COMMITTEE REVIEW

### Committee Charge

A six-member committee comprised of Member Library Directors, a System Trustee, and the System Executive Director met on June 29, 2023 to discuss the book's content and identify any actions to respond to challenges for this title.

### Committee Discussion

The committee views this title as a worthwhile resource for anyone interested in learning about the LGBTQIA+ community.

The book includes definitions of terms, the history of homosexuality in culture, the dangers of bullying language and stereotypes, suggestions for coming out to different people, guidelines for staying safe when dating, a guide for parents of children who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and a glossary of terms used throughout the book and in the LGBTQIA+ community.

This book is also a positive resource for young individuals seeking information on sex education that may not be discussed in their school. The author encourages young people to understand their bodies, communicate with their partners, and learn the risks that come along with any sexual activity. Throughout the book, the author tells readers they should feel safe and practice safe sex and elaborates on the risks associated with promiscuity and descriptions of common STIs.

The committee acknowledges how this book would be challenged when specific chapters or passages are taken out of context. Isolating stand-alone phrases without considering how they relate to the entire work casts this book as overtly and needlessly sexual. However, reading the book in its entirety, or at the very least, reading the whole chapter the disputed phrase or phrases came from, shows this book as a resource that has the potential to be profoundly important to people.

*This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson, is an amusing approach to explaining traditionally uncomfortable topics to an audience that may have few places to find answers to their questions. While this book may be one of ALA's Top 13 Most Challenged Books of 2022, it is still a much safer and more informative resource than

unguided research on the Internet.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

### Appropriate Age Level

Sourcebooks Fire describes *This Book is Gay* as a Young Adult Nonfiction title for ages 14 to 17.

Reviews from Publishers Weekly, Kirkus, School Library Journal, and Booklist suggest similar appropriate ages ranging from 10 to 18.

OWWL Library System does not offer a recommended age range or title restrictions. We encourage parents and guardians and their children to discuss their reading habits in the context of their own goals to determine if this title is appropriate for them.

### Item Location

*This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson will remain in the Main Collection and Teen Collection in OverDrive. The physical copy will also remain in the System's Professional Collection, available to any patron interested in placing a hold on it through <https://owwl.org>.

OWWL Library System holds no control or authority over school district SORA collections or Public Library Connect content filtering available to students. While *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson will remain available to Teens and Adults in the Public Library OverDrive collection, individual school districts will decide the location for this title in their collections.

### Item Copies

To keep this book as up-to-date as possible in our collection, OWWL Library System will discard the two 1st edition eBooks in the OverDrive collection and order an additional copy of the 2nd edition version. We will retain the 1st edition audiobook until a new edition is released. At that point, we will update that item as well.

### Concerned Parent Actions

A minor's access to materials is the responsibility of that minor's parents or guardians. According to the American Library Association:

*The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize libraries and their governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. As "Libraries: An American Value" states, "We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services." Libraries and their governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Libraries and their governing bodies shall ensure that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children's—and only their children's—access to library resources. Parents and*

*guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their own children. Libraries and library governing bodies should not use rating systems to inhibit a minor's access to materials.*<sup>2</sup>

To aid parents and guardians in addressing title access in OWWL Library System's OverDrive collection, the default collection can be changed under account settings.

To accomplish this, log in to an OverDrive account at <https://owwl.overdrive.com/> > click on My Account > Settings > Content Preferences > Audience(s). An account can be limited to All Audiences, Juvenile, Young Adult, General Adult, and Mature Adult. When searching the OverDrive catalog, this will limit the titles that are displayed. As mentioned above, *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson does not appear in the Kids/Juvenile collection.

Physical collections will not be changed to restrict a minor's access to materials. Instead, please follow the American Library Association's recommendation noted above.

## CONCLUSION

### Future Reconsideration Requests

This report shall appropriately respond to any challenge or request for reconsideration of *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson until August 9, 2025. At that time, should a formal challenge or request for reconsideration be received by OWWL Library System, the Executive Director shall form a committee to review the title.

### System Policies and Resolutions

For additional information on the selection of System materials, please review the Selection and Reconsideration of Materials Policy and the Resolution on the Freedom to Read by visiting <https://owwl.org/bookchallenges>.

### Report Approval

OWWL Library System's Board of Trustees reviewed and approved this report on August 8, 2023.

*Approved: August 9, 2023*

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<sup>2</sup> Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights, <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>