# Libraries in Ireland face mounting pressure over LGBTQ+ materials



Libraries across Ireland have found themselves at the centre of a tumultuous debate, as they face increasing hostility over stocking LGBTQ+ material and hosting inclusive events. A recently released report, conducted by the School of Information & Communication Studies at University College Dublin (UCD), delves into this contentious issue, highlighting the significant stress and trauma experienced by library staff under such pressures.

Since 2022, a determined campaign has targeted several libraries throughout Ireland. Protesters have escalated their actions from verbal abuse to physical intimidation, with incidents of book burnings and threatening behaviour reported. Cork City Library, for instance, had to shut its doors in July 2023 amidst concerns for staff safety during an anti-LGBTQ+ protest.

The UCD study, titled Resisting Hate and Navigating Agitation, is set to be officially unveiled today in Dublin. It draws from comprehensive interviews with library staff conducted between June and October 2024. Participants revealed distressing accounts of harassment and verbal assaults, with some describing being labelled as dangerous predators. The sheer volume of threats, particularly in rural settings where staff often work alone, has prompted libraries to implement tougher security measures.

Dr Páraic Kerrigan, who spearheaded the research, emphasised the unwavering commitment of library staff to continue providing essential services to the LGBTQ+ community despite the challenges. However, Kerrigan noted the necessity for bolstered security protocols and staff training in conflict management, to mitigate incidents. In response, some rural libraries have established "buddy systems" with nearby counterparts, ensuring that staff are not left isolated during confrontations.

The aggressive nature of the agitators has added a layer of fear among librarians, with many reportedly anxious about being physically attacked. Footage of confrontations frequently uploaded by protesters has exacerbated these fears, showcasing the potential for violence. Relations with local police have been strengthened to offer additional support and assure the safety of library personnel.

The report suggests several measures to tackle these issues. It calls for the development and regular updating of security protocols at all public libraries, alongside comprehensive training for staff on handling disruptive encounters. It also urges social media platforms to adopt a stronger stance against groups inciting aggression towards libraries, given the amplification of these movements online.

The challenges faced by Irish libraries echo comments made by President Michael D Higgins earlier this year, advocating for collective action against intimidation from far-right groups. Richy Carrothers of Fórsa, the union representing affected library staff, affirmed the report's significance in validating the experiences of his members and underscoring the ongoing threat to their safety.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://gcn.ie/ireland-libraries-restricting-access-lgbtq-young-adult-books/> - Corroborates the restriction of access to LGBTQ+ young adult books in some Irish libraries and the reclassification of these books as adult content.
* <https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/03/15/cork-grand-parade-library-lgbtq-books-abuse-backlash/> - Details the intimidation and abuse faced by library staff in Cork, including incidents of verbal abuse and physical damage to LGBTQ+ books.
* <https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/03/15/cork-grand-parade-library-lgbtq-books-abuse-backlash/> - Confirms that Cork City Council has no plans to remove LGBTQ+ reading material despite the protests and intimidation.
* <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-41092459.html> - Reports on the abuse and intimidation faced by staff at Cork's central library over LGBT+ reading material.
* <https://gcn.ie/ireland-libraries-restricting-access-lgbtq-young-adult-books/> - Mentions the training received by library staff to support young LGBTQ+ people and the contrast with current restrictive policies.
* <https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/03/15/cork-grand-parade-library-lgbtq-books-abuse-backlash/> - Highlights the broader context of campaigning against LGBT+ reading lists in libraries across Ireland.
* <https://www.libraryassociation.ie/unshelving-voices-empowering-libraries-against-censorship/> - Discusses the international symposium on censorship and libraries, which includes topics relevant to the suppression of LGBTQ+ materials.
* <https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/03/15/cork-grand-parade-library-lgbtq-books-abuse-backlash/> - Notes the previous removal of LGBTQ+ books from libraries, such as Susan Kulkin’s 'Beyond Magenta', and the subsequent reclassification.
* <https://gcn.ie/ireland-libraries-restricting-access-lgbtq-young-adult-books/> - Describes the hostile working environment created for LGBT staff due to the reclassification and restriction of LGBTQ+ books.
* <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-41092459.html> - Details the horrific abuse and intimidation faced by library staff, including being called 'paedophile slurs'.