Since the 1970s, there has been a strong and active gay and lesbian press in the southern parts of Australia. This press emerged later in Queensland than in the southern states but today it reaches many queer Queenslanders and performs a vital and multifaceted role.\textsuperscript{1} While this press provides essential representation and visibility for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) population of Queensland, it also embodies a number of tensions inherent in this community. This article charts the development and history of the print media run by and for the queer community of Queensland, particularly focusing on the two major GLBTIQ periodicals currently available in Queensland. These are \textit{Queensland Pride}, published monthly, and \textit{Q News}, published fortnightly. The article explores the conflicts that exist in that queer print media, arguing that Queensland’s queer press has struggled to adequately represent what has become an increasingly multifarious and diverse GLBTIQ ‘community’.

These periodicals posit themselves as being driven by community service. This role is constrained, however, by their dependence on advertising revenue. This revenue is necessary for their survival but clearly limits the extent to which they can provide independent advocacy or representation for the GLTBIQ community. There are also potential conflicts of interest involved in running advertisements from what is still a small GLTBIQ business community. Problems of unequal representation are also inherent in this press. To a very large extent, Queensland’s queer press has targeted a gay male audience, as opposed to a lesbian, bisexual, transgender or broader ‘queer’ audience. Regional Queenslanders also do not receive equal coverage and some younger Queenslanders do not identify with the queer ‘scene’ as articulated by these periodicals. Moreover, the internet and mainstream media have challenged the primacy these periodicals once possessed. Despite these conflicts, these periodicals do provide a vital forum for the dissemination of health and welfare information particularly pertinent to the GLTBIQ community. Moreover, they also help to create some sense of community and culture by presenting codes of non-heterosexual behaviour to a queer audience. Thus, despite the friction present throughout the queer press, these periodicals play an extremely important role in queer Queensland life.

Although gay and lesbian publications have played an important role in furthering the gay liberation movement, there is still a paucity of material on these publications. The study of Australia’s homosexual past more generally is a recent
field and there are many areas that require further exploration. The release of Clive Moore’s valuable *Sunshine and Rainbows* in 2001 illuminated many aspects of Queensland’s queer past.² Due to the large scope of this book, though, the role that queer newspapers play in the Queensland GLTBIQ community was not explored in detail. Moore did devote some attention to the role and meanings of male-to-male personal advertisements in both the queer and ‘straight’ press, and has followed up this research with subsequent publications.³ Felicity Grace has also examined advertising in the GLTBIQ press of Queensland.⁴ Rather than exploring the rise and role of the queer press in this region, Grace was primarily concerned with the nature of commercialisation and advertising. The role of the queer press in constructing contemporary gay male identity has been adeptly explored by Yorick Smaal.⁵ The majority of work on GLTBIQ publications, though, has tended to focus on the southern queer press.⁶

**Origins**

The emergence of gay and lesbian newspapers has been integral to the success of the gay and lesbian liberation movement. The gay and lesbian press serves not only as the first point of reference for many GLTBIQ individuals but also provides a forum for the challenge and transformation of anti-gay policies and views. Denis Altman made this point in his groundbreaking 1982 text, *The Homosexualization of America*:

> One of the most important developments in the emergence of both gay culture and gay community has been the growth of a gay press; not surprisingly, gay movements often saw as one of their first priorities the creation of a gay magazine or paper.⁷

The history of such publications within the United States can be traced back to the period after World War II. Lisa Ben founded *Vice Versa* between 1947 and 1948 and a considerable number of other gay and lesbian publications were being produced by the mid-1950s. Similarly, within Europe, gay and lesbian newspapers were also being produced in significant numbers by the 1950s, according to Altman.

The first gay and lesbian periodicals to emerge within Australia were created during the 1970s and were a product of the gay liberation movement. *Camp Ink* was first published in 1971 in Sydney and was followed in that city by *Campaign* in 1975. *Gay Community News* was Melbourne’s first gay and lesbian periodical, beginning production in 1979. *OutRage* was launched in Melbourne in 1983, the same year that *Gay Community News* ceased production. In light of the fact that male-to-male sexual activity was not decriminalised in Queensland until 1990, it is unsurprising that the gay press developed later in Queensland than in the southern states. Nevertheless, organisations such as the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP), Australia’s major gay and lesbian rights association, promoted the development of a printed queer culture in Brisbane. From 1973
onwards, Campus Camp (an offshoot of the larger organisation, attached to the University of Queensland) released regular newsletters with guides to gay- and lesbian-friendly venues in Brisbane.8

Despite these early moves towards a queer print culture in Queensland, it was not until 1991 that the first official gay and lesbian newspaper was published in Queensland. The first edition of *Queensland Pride* was released in January 1991. This came mere months after the decriminalisation of male homosexuality in the state, strongly suggesting a link between the previous lack of printed culture and this repressive legislation.

The newspaper was initially released fortnightly but moved to a monthly format in 2004.9 In June 2007, it had an estimated circulation of 16,000 and an estimated readership of 49,600.10 Full editions are also available online for download. *Queensland Pride* was initially launched as an independent newspaper by founder Wally Cowin, with the support of his partner, Mick Tunin. In 2003, Robert Bradbrook took over as owner, and until May 2007 he released the newspaper under the Special Publications banner. Since then, *Queensland Pride* has been owned by Evolution Media, a media company which currently operates a total of five gay and lesbian periodicals in Australia. Apart from *Queensland Pride*, these include *SX National*, *Melbourne Community Voice*, *AX National* and *Fellow Traveller*.

In 1993, a second gay and lesbian newspaper, *BrotherSister*, was launched in Queensland. *BrotherSister* was a fortnightly newspaper published by Ray MacKereth, who had previously published the *Gay Times* in Adelaide. *BrotherSister* collapsed in 2000 due to the spectacular financial implosion of Satellite Media, the media group that owned it. Many other gay and lesbian publications folded when Satellite Media collapsed.11 In 2000, Ray MacKereth launched another fortnightly gay and lesbian publication in Queensland, *Q News*. In June of 2005, *Q News* had an estimated readership of 70,000. Full editions of *Q News* are also available online for download. Stylistically, *Q News* underwent a change from its original newspaper format to a magazine layout in mid-2005.

*Queensland Pride* and *Q News* are not the only GLTBIQ publications available in Queensland. A number of other free periodicals targeted at this readership are currently distributed throughout the state. These include *B News*, a Melbourne gay and lesbian monthly, and *Lesbians on the Loose (LOTL)*, a Sydney-based national lesbian monthly in magazine format. *Queensland Pride* and *Q News*, however, are the only newspapers with a primary focus on Queensland and editors located in Queensland.

**Format**

*Queensland Pride* is a monthly publication, printed on A3 size paper and usually around 40 pages in length. Since the early 2007 takeover by Evolution Media, it has been printed on magazine-quality full-gloss paper. In general, *Queensland Pride* takes a ‘highbrow’ or serious journalistic approach to issues, and tends to
examine issues in more depth than *Q News*. This approach is not always reflected in its covers, however, which regularly feature semi-naked young men. Its editor, Iain Clacher, has in the past written for *Campaign* on issues such as gay teenage suicide.\textsuperscript{12} *Queensland Pride* editions include several pages of state-based, national and international queer news at the front, a number of feature articles, film, television and music reviews, photographs taken at gay and lesbian venues and events, a women’s section, motoring section, classifieds and horoscopes.

*Queensland Pride* is distributed free of charge, and thus relies on advertising revenue for survival. Some advertisements come from GLTBIQ businesses such as gay.com, an internet chat site, gay male sex venues such as The Den, and nightclubs such as The Planet and The Beat in Fortitude Valley. A substantial proportion of advertisements in *Queensland Pride* come from companies with no immediately obvious connection to the gay scene. In a June 2007 issue, these included Southside Honda, SportsBet and the Village Centre Apartments at Kelvin Grove.\textsuperscript{13}

Although it is a fortnightly periodical, *Q News* has a similar format to the monthly *Queensland Pride*. It is an A4-sized publication, usually between 36 and 44 pages in length. It has a number of regular sections, including a headlines piece discussing the latest GLTBIQ news, music reviews, film reviews, performing arts reviews, a pet column, a property column and a gardening column. Occasionally, *Q News* includes a book review column. Every edition also features topical articles, social pictures taken at gay and lesbian venues and events, a ‘Q Map’ to gay and lesbian venues in Queensland and personal advertisements.

As with *Queensland Pride*, *Q News* is distributed free of charge and depends on advertising for revenue. Most of the advertising in *Q News* comes from similar sources to that in *Queensland Pride*. Typical advertisers include gay and lesbian venues such as the Wickham Hotel or Family nightclub in Fortitude Valley, which runs a GLTBIQ night, ‘Fluffy’, each Sunday. Gay and lesbian medical services and Queensland Health also run regular advertisements in *Q News*. Many smaller businesses also advertise regularly in *Q News*. These smaller companies include independent electrical contractors, optometrists, gyms, mortgage brokers and travel agencies. Other companies not specifically targeted at a gay audience, including Virgin Blue, Austral Volkswagen and the Professionals Real Estate Agency at Alderley, might also opt to advertise in an edition of *Q News*.\textsuperscript{14} There are two likely explanations for the presence of advertisements from ‘non-queer’ businesses in the queer press. First, the staff and owners of some of these businesses may identify as queer. Second, the placement of advertisements in the queer press may have evolved as part of a targeted national company campaign.

While there are some very financially successful businesses aimed entirely at a GLTBIQ market in Queensland, there are not enough of these businesses to support Queensland’s gay periodicals through their sponsorship alone. It seems that the financial future of Queensland’s queer press is dependent on its ability to attract mainstream advertisers. Both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* seem to have been very successful in convincing these advertisers to enter into the GLTBIQ market.
Figure 1: A Queensland Pride cover
GLTBIQ Advertisers and the Queer Press

The queer press in Queensland also provides an avenue for queer advertisers and businesses to reach a GLTBIQ audience. As has previously been discussed, both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* are free newspapers that depend on advertising for survival. It should be mentioned, though, that both newspapers devote a proportion of free and discounted advertising space to queer community health organisations. Small businesses aimed at the queer market do not receive discounted advertising rates, something that can often make their financial survival challenging.

One regular advertiser, who ran a fortnightly nightclub for same-sex attracted women in Brisbane, made the following statement:

> Small businesses aimed at the queer market do not receive discounted advertising such as some government organisations. It is the government organisations who are most able to wear the cost of advertising and it is small businesses who are least able to wear this cost. But, apart from the internet, the GLTBIQ press is the most effective way of reaching our intended audience, so we must advertise in this way.\(^15\)

There are problems inherent in both queer newspapers depending solely upon advertising revenue for survival. Neither newspaper is in a position to direct criticism at major advertisers for fear of losing valuable revenue. This leaves Queensland’s queer press vulnerable to conflicts of interest. If a major queer advertiser were to perform a disservice to the GLTBIQ community, it is difficult to know how the queer press would respond. Would this community media feel free to draw attention to any abuses or would it feel that its reliance on advertising revenue prevented it from discussing such matters?

Perhaps one of the best ways of avoiding such a situation would be for the queer press to feature advertisements from a diverse array of both mainstream and community sources. As was briefly discussed earlier, both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* have successfully captured a diverse array of advertisers, some from the ‘queer community’ and ostensibly ‘non-queer’ businesses which choose to advertise in the queer press for a number of reasons. Evolution Publishing, the company that owns *Queensland Pride*, makes a concentrated bid to attract ‘mainstream’ advertisers in its media kit. It asserts:

> Gay and lesbian consumers are very loyal to those companies who market directly to them. They are trend setters, well-educated and have high disposable incomes. They are readers who expect the best of what life has to offer in terms of where they go, what they do and how they do it.

Furthermore, Evolution Publishing tells prospective advertisers that:

*Queensland Pride*’s contemporary targeted content addresses and reflects the immediate concerns and interests of its readers. With a
mix of features, news, entertainment, lifestyle and community info, each month we provide GLTBIQ Queenslanders with all the tools they need to create well-lived, well-balanced lives.

While the more cynical advertiser may question any periodical’s ability to offer its readers a well-balanced life, the Evolution Publishing media kit certainly presents a convincing argument about the benefits of advertising in the queer press. It is interesting to note that the media kit concentrates on the ‘gay and lesbian’ consumer and does not mention the bisexual, transgender or more broadly ‘queer’ market. No attention is given to the differences between potentially different gay and lesbian patterns of consumption. In any case, advertising through Evolution Publishing is not cheap. In June 2007, a full-page colour advertisement in Queensland Pride cost the non-community advertiser $1384. Still, neither Queensland Pride nor Q News suffers from a shortage of either community or mainstream advertisers, meaning that the financial security of both Queensland Pride and Q News appears secure.

Conflicts Over Diversity

Representation is perhaps one of the most important elements of the queer press. Media theorist Larry Gross has argued that members of the GLTBIQ community, unlike members of racial and ethnic minority groups, are rarely born into minority communities where parents and siblings share their status. Instead, they are a self-identified minority whose very existence is often construed as controversial by the mass media. The dominant ‘straight’ media do not often include members of the GLTBIQ community in their world-view and when they do, images are often stereotyped and inaccurate. Nonetheless, members of the GLTBIQ community turn to GLTBIQ publications for representation and visibility. GLTBIQ periodicals such as Queensland Pride and Q News thus have a particularly important role to play in representing this community and in maintaining visibility. However, a disproportionate degree of the attention of the queer press has been focused on gay men, to the detriment of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer readers.

Within Queensland, out of the two GLTBIQ periodicals published, Queensland Pride has most explicitly argued that its main purpose is representing the views of the GLTBIQ community and publishing news and information that is pertinent to this audience. It maintains that it is:

committed to the coverage of issues and events of interest to Queensland LGBT community. QP celebrates the community’s achievements and victories. QP publishes articles which describe or assess events of the larger community.17

Q News carries no explicit statement of purpose but, like Queensland Pride, it provides a forum for the expression and discussion of news and events of relevance to the GLTBIQ community.
Figure 2: A *Q News* cover
Both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* are careful to assure readers that they represent the full diversity of the queer community. While both periodicals focus more on gay males than women or transgendered Queenslanders, *Queensland Pride* appears more inclusive than *Q News*. For the purposes of this exercise, a content analysis of both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* was undertaken. The content analysis involved the random selection of 12 editions of *Queensland Pride* and 24 editions of *Q News* from March 2005 to March 2007. The selected editions, which represented 33 per cent of the total published amount of both periodicals in that period, were catalogued from cover to cover. Articles, pictures and advertisements were categorised according to emphasis on ‘gay male’ issues, ‘lesbian’ issues, ‘mixed’ issues, ‘transgender’ issues, ‘bisexual issues’ and ‘straight’ issues. Pieces were also catalogued according to regional focus.

Content analysis of the covers themselves from 2005 to 2007 reveals that, during this period, *Q News* almost always featured a young male on its cover. During the same timeframe, images of men also dominated the covers of *Queensland Pride*. Throughout the year, though, transsexual people and women were represented a number of times. *Queensland Pride* devoted 41 per cent of covers to males, 25 per cent to transgender people, 16 per cent to females and 16 per cent to mixed covers featuring crowd scenes and images of males and females together. Of the transgender people on the cover, all were male-to-female, with no female-to-male transgender people appearing. Although the coverage of all groups was not equal, it is clear that *Queensland Pride* has made some significant attempts to represent the diversity of the community on its covers.

In comparison, 91 per cent of *Q News* covers featured men, while the other 9 per cent were mixed. There were no covers solely devoted to women or to transgender people. Furthermore, most of the male cover models on the front of *Q News* were aged between the ages of 18 and 30. There was some attempt to feature non-Caucasian men, with a male of Asian appearance being featured on one cover. There were no cover models of Aboriginal appearance.

*Queensland Pride* also represented the diversity of the GLTBIQ community more effectively than *Q News* between the covers. Gina Mather, president of the Australian Transgender Support Association, began writing a monthly column in *Queensland Pride* in 2007. *Queensland Pride* also contains more lesbian content than *Q News*. It features a regular women’s section that was started by former advertising sales manager Monique Forrest in 2004. Typically, the women’s section is between two and four pages in length and contains advertisements and short feature articles of particular interest to same-sex-attracted women. These might include advertisements for Mint, the lesbian cocktail night held at the Wickham Hotel every second Friday, and Club Phoenix, a social club for Brisbane lesbians. There is also usually a selection of photographs taken at women-only venues in Brisbane. Forrest is the convenor of a Brisbane lesbian social group, City Lickers, and left her position at *Queensland Pride* at the end of 2006 to concentrate on that organisation. The women’s section has continued since her departure.
Lesbian Controversy and Consumption

It is interesting to note that *Queensland Pride*’s initial moves to include more lesbian content initially provoked some controversy. In January 2005, Clive Donmag of Everton Park wrote a letter to the editor of *Queensland Pride*, complaining that lesbians had ‘invaded’ and ‘taken over’ the pages of *Queensland Pride* and were ‘destroying the male homosexual culture’. The next month, two women wrote in response, raising some valid criticisms about Donmag’s letter. One respondent, Liz, wrote:

The LGBTQ community, as the name suggests, is not made up entirely of men. So why should *QP* cater solely to men as you suggest? I applaud *QP* for challenging the sexism present in almost every facet of our society to attempt to make a positive contribution to genuine inclusivity [sic] in their magazine, reflecting the diversity of the LGBTQ community.

Lesbians have not ‘invaded’ or ‘taken over’ the gay (male) scene. They are taking their rightful place in their own community, in which they have been sidelined, and made silent and invisible for too long.

We are stronger together, and share the struggles and oppression of out gay/bi/trans brothers and sisters. It is in this unity, demonstrated in *QP*’s pages, which can only lead to greater understanding and acceptance. We hope.

More recently, in March 2006, *Q News* also attracted controversy when it ran a feature article entitled ‘Fag Hag: Friend or Foe?’ The author of the piece, writing under the pseudonym Marvin Marvel, described a fictional situation where a young gay man first explores Brisbane’s gay scene with a straight female friend. Some gay men refer to straight women friends as their ‘fag hags’ and the writer of this piece refers to the woman in this piece with this terminology. The piece described the woman as an overweight female wearing clothes from Tents R Us with unrequited feelings for her gay friend. The author gave young gay men the following advice:

She’s good for the long walk down Wickham Street but once that job is over cut her free … Boys like me like boys like you. Sadly, I bond with women like I do with the 2003 bikini edition of *FHM* … Ditch the fish and make the switch!

The next edition of *Q News* featured two letters from correspondents both highly offended by the article. One respondent, Fag Hag, wrote:

Wouldn’t one be a hypocrite to have fought so hard to gain equality only to with the other hand take away the equality of someone else — us Fag Hags out here!
The other, Samuel Walker, wrote:

The article was extremely sexist. It denigrated women and belittled the role that many women play in supporting gay men, especially during the critical period of coming out … I realise the article was a rough stab at comedy, but stereotypes of women who are friends of gay men as fag hags, including the wildly sexist body fascism displayed by the author who even goes so far as to refer to women as ‘fish’ is deeply offensive and has no place in a LGBT publication in 2006. Sexism is a burden on our community, and I would have thought a publication like *Q News* would be more progressive in its views.

Les Smith, the editor of *Q News*, defended the use of the term ‘fag hag’, declaring that the term was often used within the GLTBIQ community and by many heterosexual female friends of gay men as well. He did not respond to the criticisms that *Q News* had exercised sexism and poor judgment by publishing the piece.24

The treatment of women — straight, gay and bisexual — in the queer press is obviously still evolving. Felicity Grace has argued that perhaps the GLTBIQ press has not focused so much on women because women are not the major readers of these periodicals. Reader surveys show that gay men make up around 75 per cent of readers of Brisbane’s GLTBIQ press, while women constitute just 25 per cent.25

The lack of representation could also be attributed to the fact that recognition of the buying power of the homosexual consumer has focused much more on gay men rather than on lesbian consumers.26 Certainly, when mainstream advertising agencies refer to the so-called ‘pink dollar’, there is not a great deal of discussion about the lesbian market. Merryn Johns, editor of the Australia-wide magazine *Lesbians on the Loose* (*LOTL*), maintains that:

The pink dollar is focused on gay men who are perceived to earn more and spend more than lesbians, who have an image of frugality. This is changing although *LOTL*’s advertiser base is still local and niche businesses who understand they have a specific product or service for lesbians/women.

Johns points out that the perception of the lesbian consumer as a low income earner is quite inaccurate. Readership surveys of *LOTL* found that readers were most likely to be ‘lesbians in their 30s with professional backgrounds’.27 One would assume that this would be a very desirable market for advertisers to target.

There is no question that women would be more likely to read the queer press if it included them equally. An informal survey that I conducted found that *Queensland Pride* was read by many more Queensland lesbians than *Q News*. The typical refrain was that *Queensland Pride* was much more likely to include events and news of interest to lesbians than *Q News*.
Overall, lesbian readers might also be victims of the problematic treatment that women experience in both the straight and gay media. Anne Scahill has noted that ‘lesbian/female invisibility is a feature of both straight and gay media’. This is starting to change, though, with the dominant mainstream media devoting more attention to lesbians in recent years. Catharine Lumby argues in *Bad Girls* that lesbians should not take this as a sign that they are receiving validation and recognition from the broader community:

> Articles on lesbian chic aren’t necessarily about lesbians in the first place. More plausibly they’re about nominally straight women and men and the reorganisation of gender politics attendant on the growing sexual and political assertiveness of women. Articles about lesbian chic, in other words, can act as a funnel for male anxieties about being made redundant and for female pleasure in testing newfound sexual power.

Lumby also claims that this lesbian visibility has come at a cost:

> After years of complaining about their ‘invisibility’, the lesbian community is discovering that media visibility comes with its own price tag, the chief cost being a loss of control over which images of lesbian identity circulate.

The solution to this misrepresentation would, of course, be to have more lesbian involvement in the mainstream media. In the meantime, within the Queensland GLTBIQ press, it does seem that moves are being taken to include more lesbian-oriented content. Furthermore, this content has not been drafted to address the anxieties of heterosexual men in an era of changing gender roles. Instead it has evolved out of a genuine desire to include an oft-neglected audience.

### Representing Regional Queensland

The issue of representing members of the GLTBIQ community in regional Queensland is also something with which both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* appear to struggle. Both are Brisbane-based publications targeted at the statewide GLTBIQ population, but they contain a preponderance of Brisbane-based news and information. Neither newspaper has the financial resources to maintain regional staff and, as a result, there is much more of a focus on Brisbane nightlife and issues impacting on the Brisbane GLTBIQ community. The emphasis on Brisbane can also be attributed to the sheer size of the queer scene in Brisbane compared with cities such as Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns. These regional cities do have sizeable GLTBIQ communities and queer venues or venues that are occasionally queer. Unfortunately, the GLTBIQ community is still much smaller in these locations than it is in Brisbane and there are not many queer venues.
On occasion, *Queensland Pride* will print social pictures from queer venues in regional locations such as Maryborough, but this does not occur with regularity. Iain Clacher, the editor of *Queensland Pride*, does seem aware of the need for further coverage of these areas and in the June 2007 edition of *Queensland Pride* he appealed for ‘new contributors from around the state …we want to hear from you’. The use of volunteer journalists and photographers from regional locations would do much to boost the regional representation in Queensland’s queer press.

**Representing Younger Readers**

While Australia’s queer press initially emerged as a very political force, many younger readers do not identify with the GLTBIQ rights movement or with the queer ‘scene’ as outlined in queer periodicals. There is some degree of tension between the interests of these younger readers and older readers, who have perused the press since it first emerged. There is certainly more ambivalence amongst young GLTBIQ individuals about identifying as queer and reading queer-targeted publications. Some of these young Queenslanders believe that social networks and identities should not be forged along the lines of sexuality and that queer publications do not have anything to offer them.

Further challenges to the Queensland queer press have come from a world that could be evolving ‘beyond gay’. There has been much talk in both the mainstream and queer press about post-gay societies. As the GLTBIQ community manages to achieve social and legal reform, some have questioned the continued significance of the community press. In particular, some have pointed to younger GLTBIQ Queenslanders who do not wish to be as actively engaged with the community as the preceding generation.

Research conducted by Rob Cover would appear to show that these fears are largely unfounded as significant numbers of younger GLTBIQ Australians still use the queer press to assist with identity formation. Cover maintains that:

> Lesbian/gay magazines could be said to provide the dual role of making available particular images, particular ways of behaving, as well as providing a ritual sense of belonging to a community in its virtuality as a social space.

So long as the queer press recognises that Australian society is in a state of flux and that ideas about sexuality and identity politics are constantly evolving, younger Queenslanders will still read queer periodicals to gain a sense of awareness about the GLTBIQ scene.

**Contending with the Internet**

The rise of the internet has also challenged the primacy of the queer press in GLTBIQ Queensland lives, particularly amongst younger, highly technologically
literate consumers. Anne Scahill argues that ‘the most significant advance in world media in the 1990s has been the internet, and gay and lesbian sensibility and vulnerability has caused gay men and lesbians to lap up the cyber age’. Furthermore, Scahill notes that:

the anonymity of the internet is highly attractive to both rural and urban gays and lesbians, all of whom can obtain a gamut of life services from the privacy of a PC. We can now date, shop, mortgage, invest and simply chat via the internet without running the gauntlet of homophobia.

Within Queensland, sites such as www.gaydar.com, www.gaydargirls.com and www.pinksofa.com are popular with members of the GLTBIQ community who wish to communicate and network. Clive Moore has noted that the queer press has lost significant advertising revenue in the form of personal advertisement fees since the internet became ubiquitous in many queer lives.

Both Queensland Pride and Q News appear to recognise that the traditional press needs to feature an online presence to maintain currency and immediacy in the internet era. Both newspapers have websites that feature current full editions of their periodicals for download. There are some flaws with their web presence. Neither newspaper maintains previous editions in an archiving facility online. Furthermore, the Queensland Pride website is nowhere near as Queensland-focused as the actual hard-copy print newspaper. Instead, the browser who logs on to the website at www.queenslandpride.com is forwarded to the Evolution Publishing website. Although it is possible to read the latest edition of Queensland Pride online, the reader who logs on to the website is initially presented with default information which is about Melbourne. Still, the internet is able to reach many more Queenslanders than the traditional printed newspaper. Building a strong online presence is vital if community newspapers are to survive.

Queer Issues and the ‘Straight’ Media

The mainstream press has also threatened the queer press in recent years. It has certainly become more aware of GLTBIQ issues since Queensland Pride was founded in 1991. Brisbane’s Courier-Mail indisputably features more queer content than it has done previously. One of the more interesting manifestations of this, as Moore explains, was the popularity of male-to-male personal advertisements in this newspaper throughout the 1990s.

The increased emphasis on homosexual news in Queensland’s mainstream press has not been entirely positive. Often, the information that is presented is not accurate or can appear homophobic. For example, in October 2006, the Sunday Mail newspaper carried a story about a 13-year-old student at Windaroo State High School who ‘had been given a failing grade because she had refused to write an assignment about “living as a heterosexual in a mostly homosexual colony on the moon”’. The article indicated that the girl had failed a school subject due to her refusal to undertake this exercise for ‘religious reasons’.

Queensland Review
The following month in *Queensland Pride*, Iain Clacher addressed the inaccuracies of the original *Sunday Mail* report. Perhaps most importantly, the exercise the student had refused to participate in did not count towards her final assessment. Instead, it was an exercise designed to help students think critically and empathetically about the impact of homophobia and the position of minorities in society. Furthermore, Clacher pointed out that the *Sunday Mail* had ‘reduced and misrepresented’ the exercise and had failed to discuss the duty of care of that Queensland schools also owe to GLTBIQ students.\(^{38}\)

While the mainstream press publishes inaccurate and misleading articles, there will still be a role for community GLTBIQ newspapers and an enthusiastic readership.

### A Continuing Role for the Queer Press

The queer press in Queensland obviously contends with divisions and contradictions. Despite this, it is clear that these periodicals do still fulfil functions in GLTBIQ lives. Both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* have played an important role in promoting the health and welfare of the GLTBIQ community. Both newspapers are able to reach isolated and lonely members of the community who may not feel comfortable being ‘out’ in the gay scene. They are also able to play a vital part in targeting the GLTBIQ community with health information that is particularly pertinent to their needs. The Queensland government has advertised quite frequently in the queer press, recognising that it provides a direct link to a community with specific health and welfare needs.

*Queensland Pride* and *Q News* both make efforts to promote the health and welfare of the queer community. In 2006, both *Q News* and *Queensland Pride* devoted considerable column space to the issue of violence against the GLTBIQ community in Brisbane’s Fortitude Valley nightclub precinct. By publishing articles and helpline phone numbers, the queer press has been able to raise awareness of this problem and provide support to those members of the community who have been affected by hate crimes.\(^{39}\)

Also in 2006, *Q News* promoted the health of the GLTBIQ community by designing and running a campaign called ‘Stop AIDS’ with the Queensland AIDS Council and the AIDS Council of New South Wales. As part of this campaign, *Q News* created a series of advertisements and posters promoting safe sex and the use of condoms. The posters featured real people who had contracted HIV through unsafe sex. The ‘Stop AIDS’ campaign drew a positive response from the Queensland AIDS Council with spokesperson Paul R. Martin asserting:

> We welcome the series of advertisements produced by *Q News*. This is another example of the community taking ownership and doing their bit in the fight against HIV. It’s important that all parts of the community play their role and we are very pleased that *Q News* has taken the initiative in producing these advertisements.\(^{40}\)
The Press as Promoter of GLTBIQ Community and Culture

Although these queer newspapers do not offer a fully representative overview of the GLTBIQ community, they do help to create some sense of community and culture. Benedict Anderson has argued that mainstream newspapers help provide the images that bind a nation together.\textsuperscript{41} Similarly, at least to some extent, queer periodicals provide and disseminate the information and ideas that forge and bind a queer community together.\textsuperscript{42} Rodger Streitmatter has argued that providing this sense of community and culture is one of the most important roles that the GLTBIQ press plays:

Because we exist everywhere but each of us must consciously identify himself or herself as a gay person, newspapers and magazines are uniquely important in our social movement. The writers and publications ... have, in other words, served an oppressed minority first by helping gay people identify themselves and then by speaking up and striking back against the powerful forces of prejudice and bigotry.\textsuperscript{43}

Their specific focus on the GLTBIQ community allows \textit{Queensland Pride} and \textit{Q News} to sponsor GLTBIQ events, provide opportunities for members of the GLTBIQ community to form social links and also provide a forum for the struggle for the advancement of GLTBIQ rights.

Every edition of \textit{Queensland Pride} includes advertisements for the Brisbane Gay and Lesbian Business Network, a ‘fast meet’ personals section and a section listing community support contacts and GLTBIQ venues. \textit{Q News} also includes personals and a listing of GLTBIQ venues in the state. Members of the GLTBIQ community are able to use these listings to promote their businesses, network within the community, meet others for sexual or romantic contact and also access organisations providing the community with support.

The events listings that both newspapers print show the scope of the GLTBIQ scene in Queensland. The ‘What’s On’ listing in \textit{Queensland Pride} in November 2006 included Boot Co’s Dancing Boots Party at the Sportsman Hotel, Brisbane; a breakfast in Cairns for same-sex-attracted men; a Townsville women’s Christmas Party; a Big Lesbian New Year’s Eve Party in Brisbane; the Miss Sportsman Hotel Pageant; a drag dance show at the Wickham Hotel; and a cabaret at the Caro Mio Café in Brisbane.\textsuperscript{43} The ‘Q Map’ of GLTBIQ venues in the late December 2006 edition of \textit{Q News} also revealed a diverse mix of GLTBIQ venues and listings. In Brisbane, these included the Wickham Hotel, Sportsman Hotel, Mint cocktail bar at the Wickham Hotel for same-sex-attracted women, The Beat nightclub, The Den Men’s Club, Wet Spa and Sauna and Klub Kruise Men’s Club.

Both newspapers also create an ‘imagined community’ by including photographs taken at GLTBIQ venues and events in each edition. A scan of the social pages in both periodicals reveals the vibrancy and diversity of the ‘gay scene’ in Queensland. \textit{Queensland Pride} usually includes about four pages of photographs taken at GLTBIQ venues. This includes women-only venues such as the monthly night at Scarlett on St Paul’s Terrace and Mint fortnightly at the Wickham.
also includes photographs taken at events such as Gold Coast Gay Day. Similarly, *Q News* includes about four pages of photographs taken at Queensland’s GLTBIQ venues. While there is an obvious bias towards Brisbane venues, a diverse mix of venues catering to different elements of the GLTBIQ community is shown in both periodicals. These photographs, as much as anything else included in these newspapers, help create a sense of unity and community.

Apart from assisting GLTBIQ Queenslanders to form social links and feel part of Queensland’s queer ‘imagined community’, both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* heavily promote fundraising and charity events for the GLTBIQ community. Most significantly, these include Big Gay Day, an annual street party held by the Wickham Hotel to raise money for GLTBIQ charities, and the annual Brisbane GLTBIQ Pride Festival, held each June. Typically, both newspapers will devote at least one cover to promoting Big Gay Day and another cover to the Brisbane GLTBIQ Pride Festival. Schedules of events, reviews of performers and information on cost, location and what to expect are also included in *Q News* and *Queensland Pride* before both events. Follow-up editions of both newspapers include reviews of events and information on money raised for charity.

Streitmatter has argued that the GLTBIQ community press has a vital role to play in promoting GLTBIQ equality and the push for GLTBIQ rights. The amount of column space devoted to these issues in both *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* reveals that both periodicals are aware of this responsibility. Recent editions of *Queensland Pride* have included editorials and feature articles on same-sex civil unions, homophobia, violence against members of the GLTBIQ community and managing AIDS. *Q News* also has published articles with particular political importance to a GLTBIQ readership.

**GLTBIQ Newspapers and the Presentation of Non-Heterosexual Codes of Behaviour**

As previously mentioned, members of the GLTBIQ community almost always are born into heterosexual environments. GLTBIQ publications play a vital role in circulating normative codes of non-heterosexual behaviour. This is closely linked to the role that these publications play in promoting a sense of queer community and culture. GLTBIQ publications therefore help to articulate GLTBIQ identities by providing information that ‘makes sense’ to the queer reader.

As Larry Gross argues, the mass media generally present images that define GLTBIQ individuals as controversial and in opposition to ‘normal’ societal conceptions of masculinity, femininity and the roles of men and women. Given this environment, it can be difficult for the GLTBIQ individual to form a queer identity and sense of self-worth.

By presenting GLTBIQ culture as ‘normal’ and proving information about the GLTBIQ scene, publications such as *Queensland Pride* and *Q News* equip the GLTBIQ reader with the information and confidence they need to approach and enter into a non-heterosexual environment. Gross maintains that the confirmation
of GLTBIQ identities through exposure to GLTBIQ media provides an essential introduction to a culture that in many ways is different from mainstream culture.45

The casual or first-time reader of either *Queensland Pride* or *Q News* would be exposed to a world where same-sex attraction is accepted as the norm and where the GLTBIQ community is no longer constructed as deviant or as the ‘other’. The importance of such an environment to young and ‘coming out’ GLTBIQ individuals cannot be overstated.

The queer press in Queensland has evolved and grown substantially since 1991. Although it has faced challenges from mainstream publications and from the internet, it still plays a role that cannot be subsumed by these heterosexual-focused publications. As legal and social reforms happen, some younger Queenslanders opt not to define themselves by their sexuality. This choice was not available to earlier generations who found their sexuality impinged substantially upon their life experiences and opportunities. Overall though, while there is still prejudice and inequality, GLTBIQ Queenslanders will continue to want to read community newspapers. Although both newspapers are run as commercial businesses, they provide invaluable representation and visibility for the GLTBIQ community. They also provide a platform where health and welfare information particularly pertinent to the GLTBIQ community can be discussed. These newspapers also play an invaluable role in creating a sense of community and culture. Moreover, by presenting codes of non-heterosexual behaviour, these periodicals enable queer readers to understand their sexual desires as normal and natural and equip them to take a place with confidence in the GLTBIQ community.

Notes

1 The term ‘queer’ has been used throughout this article as it is the inclusive term commonly used by Queensland GLTBIQ community newspapers to refer to GLTBIQ individuals and the GLTBIQ community. Furthermore, the use of the word ‘queer’ is a political act which aims to subvert its previously negative connotations. See Teresa de Laurentis, ‘Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities — an Introduction’, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3(2) (1991): 296–316.


9 Grace, ‘Sexuality Sells’: 89.


12 Iain Clacher, ‘Silence is Where the Hare Grows: Gay Teenagers and Frightening Final Solution’, *Campaign*, Sydney, September 1997: 27.

13 Advertisements featured in *Queensland Pride*, June 2007: 236.


15 Samantha Looker, email to author, 1 June 2007.


19 All statistics and observations are based on content analysis conducted by author. For further information on results, categories used and editions catalogued, consult author.


27 Merryn Johns, email to author, 9 March 2007.


30 ibid., 92.

31 *Queensland Pride*, 236, June 2007: 38.


33 Cover, ‘Engaging Sexualities’: 127.


37 *Sunday Mail*, 9 October 2006: 1.


This topic is discussed further in Rob Cover, ‘Engaging Sexualities: Lesbian/Gay Print Journalism, Community, Belonging, Social Space and Physical Place’, *Pacific Journalism Review* 11(1) (2005), 113–32.


*Queensland Pride*, 229, November 2006: 27.