




# Challenges to Library Resources



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# Challenges...in the News

- Harry Potter challenge (GA)
  - Parent request to remove series
  - "Personal religious views," "Glorify witchcraft"
  - Reconsideration committee recommendation
  - Media coverage
  - School Board decision

# Challenges...in the News

- "Vamos a Cuba," or "A Visit to Cuba"
- 2 Reconsideration Committees' decisions
- 2 School Board decisions
- "The fight for freedom in Cuba cannot be waged as a war on the First Amendment in Miami."  
(ACLU)
- U.S. District Court injunction
- Picture book on life in Cuba
  - Challenged & removed

# Challenges...the News

- "Serial challenges" in Fayetteville, AR
  - It's Perfectly Normal + 2 others
    - 3 Committees' decisions
    - Legal counsel warned of high standard to remove books
    - Appeasement: moved 3 to parent library
  - Request committee to review ALL books
  - Challenge after challenge filed
  - Reconsideration Procedures revised

# Challenges... the News

- Missouri trustees remove 2 graphic novels
  - No selection policy
  - Books removed from circulation
    - Fun Home By Alison Bechdel
    - Blankets By Craig Thompson
- Ohio Minutemen
  - 3 oral complaints: Remove "public library smut" from children's department
  - Examples
    - It's So Amazing, Robie Harris
    - The Family Book, Todd Parr
    - Tango Makes Three, Justin Richardson



# "Challenging" Statistics

- 2005 challenges
  - 547 formal challenges
- 1990-2000 challenges
  - +6,000
  - 71% schools & school libraries
- "Stealth" censorship
- Selection decisions as censorship



# 10 most challenged books of the 21st Century (2000-2005)

- 1. Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling
- 2. "The Chocolate War" by Robert Cormier
- 3. Alice series by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
- 4. "Of Mice and Men" by John Steinbeck
- 5. "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou
- 6. "Fallen Angels" by Walter Dean Myers
- 7. "It's Perfectly Normal" by Robie Harris
- 8. Scary Stories series by Alvin Schwartz
- 9. Captain Underpants series by Dav Pilkey
- 10. "Forever" by Judy Blume



# Top Reasons for Challenges

- Sexually explicit language
- Gay and lesbian themes
- offensive language
- Witchcraft & occult
- Age unsuitability

# Censorship Trends

- Use of websites by national parent groups to publish lists of suspect books
  - Challenges once local
  - Parents Against Bad Books in Schools (PABBIS)
    - <http://www.pabbis.org>
- Legislation to control library collections
  - Law to require "Review Board" to recommend books for library [US House bill]
  - Segregation of sexually explicit or gay materials to adult collection [OK bill]
  - Prohibit use of public funds to purchase resources on homosexuality [AL bill]



# The First Amendment

- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

# Minors' First Amendment Rights Case Law

- **Board of Education v. Pico (1982)**
  - "the right to receive ideas"
  - No removal because ideas offensive to some
  - Removal because "educationally unsuitable" or "pervasively vulgar"
- **Billy Ray Counts, et al. v. Cedarville School District (2003)**
  - May not require signed permission slip
  - Cannot abridge 1<sup>st</sup> Amend. Rights because fear or disagreement with ideas



# Quote

- [Students do not] “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”
  - Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District

# ALA Library Bill of Rights

- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.



# ALA Code of Ethics

- II. "We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources."

# ALA Code of Ethics continued


- VII. "We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources."

# Steps to take in a challenge

- Review selection policy & reconsideration procedures
- Discuss concern with complainant
- Discuss situation with your principal/supervisor\*
- Contact CCBC in Madison \*
- Review the formal written complaint
- Review ALA policy statements
- Gather resources
- Read/review the questioned item
- Maintain the item in the collection

# Key Question

- Does your district or public library have a materials selection policy with reconsideration procedures?
  - Adopted by the Board of Education
  - Adopted by the Board of Trustees
- Importance of policy
  - Criteria/defense for selection of materials
  - Legal documents which represent due process
  - Strong IF case law result of not following policy
  - Don't become footnote in law textbook



# What you can do to oppose censorship?

- Make IF key to the library's mission
- Educate others
- Subscribe to intellectual freedom lists & news services
- Celebrate Banned Books Week
  - <http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/bannedbooksweek/bannedbooksweek.htm>
- Support others in challenges



# Top IF Resources



# Answers for Your IF Questions

- Cooperative Children's Book Center
  - **What If?**
    - <http://www.soemadison.wisc.edu/ccbc/freedom/whatif/default.asp>
  - **Sample questions**
    - Principal asks LMS to remove book
    - Selecting books on gay/lesbian issues
    - Selecting books compatible with personal beliefs



# American Library Association Resources

- ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom
  - <http://www.ala.org/oif>
- IFAction
  - <http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/ifgroups/ifan/ifactionb/ifaction.htm>
- Graphic Novels: Suggestions for Librarians
  - [http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/ifissues/graphicnovels\\_1.pdf](http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/ifissues/graphicnovels_1.pdf)

# IF Poster

- **“Censorship Causes Blindness”**
  - **Poster from Random House**
    - Leila Lee, Academic Marketing Dept  
Random House Inc  
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New York, NY 10019  
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