

## Welcome! From your hosts...



Sara McFarland  
Library Development  
Coordinator/Bibliographic  
Service Manager,  
Southwest Kansas Library  
System



Angela Maycock  
Assistant Director,  
Office for Intellectual  
Freedom,  
American Library  
Association



Cindi Hickey  
WebJunction  
Kansas Coordinator,  
State Library of Kansas

## Collection Development, Diversity, and Self-Censorship in Libraries

Angela Maycock  
Office for Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association

## Goals for Today

- Understand key concepts of intellectual freedom and collection diversity
- Consider difficult issues of self-censorship in selecting materials
- Discuss gray areas and ethical dilemmas around collection development
- Take away information to help evaluate potentially controversial library materials

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## Our Areas of Focus

- Intellectual freedom: what it is and how it affects your library
- Selection policies: key considerations and sample policies
- Controversial materials: selection vs. censorship
- Recent issues, events, and resources

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## What is Intellectual Freedom?

- The freedom of individuals to seek, receive, and disseminate information from all points of view without restriction
- Provides free access to all expressions of ideas so any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored
- Necessary for informed citizenry and civic participation; basis of our democratic system

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## What is Intellectual Freedom?

*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.

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## Intellectual Freedom

- *Library Bill of Rights*
  - Basic ALA policy on free access to libraries
  - <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/intfreedom/librarybill> (and Interpretations)
- ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom
  - Established 1967 to support *Library Bill of Rights*
  - Goal: educate librarians and the general public about the nature and importance of intellectual freedom in libraries
  - [www.ala.org/oif](http://www.ala.org/oif)

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## Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- 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.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

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## Questions?

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## How IF Issues Can Affect Libraries

- Internet access and filtering
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Restrictions on access based on age, sex, etc.
- Access to meeting rooms and displays
- **Our focus today:** Collection development decisions and requests for reconsideration (challenges)

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## How Do Libraries Choose?

- Selection (or collection development) policies
  - Policies must be written, not informal
  - Approved or endorsed by Library Board
  - Ensures that work is done consistently, according to professional standards
  - Provides a mechanism for voices to be heard and considered when concerns arise

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## Selection Policy Components

- Objectives (why do we select?)
- Responsibility for selection (who selects?)
- Criteria (how do we select?)
- Procedures (what steps do we take to select?)
- Special areas (how do we handle gifts, etc?)
- Intellectual freedom and reconsideration policies (how do we handle concerns?)

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## Sample Policies

- <http://stevenscountylibrary.com/SCLPolicyManual.htm>
- [http://iola.mykansalibrary.org/?page\\_id=74](http://iola.mykansalibrary.org/?page_id=74)
- [http://www.nortonvillelibrary.org/?page\\_id=9](http://www.nortonvillelibrary.org/?page_id=9)
- <http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kckpl/cdpolicy.html>
- <http://www.kclibrary.org/200-collection-development>

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## Why Controversial Material?

- Libraries strive to meet the information needs of everyone in the community
- Our communities are increasingly diverse
- What one person finds objectionable or offensive may be invaluable to another
- Libraries provide choice; individuals choose for themselves and their own families

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## Selection vs. Censorship

- “Selection’s approach to the book is positive, seeking its values in the book as a book, and in the book as a whole. Censorship’s approach is negative, seeking for vulnerable characteristics wherever they can be found—anywhere within the book, or even outside it. Selection seeks to protect the right of the reader to read; censorship seeks to protect—not the right—but the reader himself from the fancied effects of his reading. The selector has faith in the intelligence of the reader; the censor has faith only in his own.”  
— Lester Asheim, “Not Censorship but Selection,” 1953

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## What About the Gray Areas?

- We don’t have any gay parents in our community, so why should I buy *And Tango Makes Three*?
- Is it censorship if I don’t select *Twilight* for my elementary school library?
- If I personally disagree with homosexuality or abortion, why should I promote those issues in my library collection?

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## What About the Gray Areas?

- If I know a book will be controversial in my community, why should I risk ruffling feathers?
- What if I agree that a book is sexually or racially offensive?
- Can’t I just argue that those books are low quality and don’t meet our standards?

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## Questions?

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## Ethical Dilemmas

- Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict, e.g. personal vs. professional
- ALA Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed
  - Article 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.

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## Collection Diversity

- “Library collections must represent the diversity of people and ideas in our society.”
- “Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan.”
- “Examples of censorship may include removing or not selecting materials because they are considered by some as racist or sexist; not purchasing conservative religious materials; not selecting resources about or by minorities because it is thought these groups or interests are not represented in a community; or not providing information or materials from or about non-mainstream political entities.”

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/diversitycollection.cfm>

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## What is a Challenge?

- A formal, written complaint filed with a library or school about the content or appropriateness of material
- Request for materials to be removed or restricted – impacting the rights and access of others in the community

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## What Does OIF Do?

- Track challenges to library materials
  - Over 11,000 challenges recorded since 1990
  - Average: more than 1 challenge every single day
  - 513 challenges recorded in 2008 alone
  - 60% of challenges are brought by parents
  - Most challenges take place in school libraries or around materials for young people

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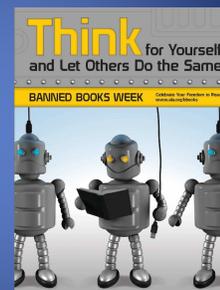
## What Does OIF Do?

- Challenge support: provide information and guidance to librarians
  - Book reviews, advice, support, contacts
- Design educational programs, publications, and awareness campaigns
  - Training, newsletter, monographs, website
  - National advocacy campaigns

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## Banned Books Week

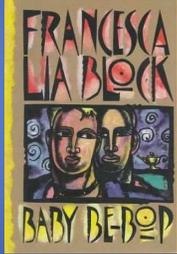
- Ongoing initiative, started in 1982
- Observed during the last week of September
- Highlights censorship efforts and harms
- Celebrates the freedom to read



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### Recent Issues and Events

- West Bend, Wisconsin
  - Challenge to nearly 100 books with GLBT themes
  - Separate request for public burning of *Baby Be Bop*
  - 4 Library Board members removed
  - Library retained all books in YA collection



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### Recent Issues and Events

- Nicholasville, Kentucky
  - Two library workers fired for violating policy
  - Personally objected to library materials and denied access to users
  - “Child protection or censorship?”
  - Library chose to retain it but created new section for graphic novels



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## Questions?

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### Which Books Get Challenged?



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### 10 Most Challenged Books of 2009

1. TTYL, TTFN, L8R, G8R (Series), Lauren Myracle
2. “And Tango Makes Three,” Justin Richardson/Peter Parnell
3. “The Perks of Being A Wallflower,” Stephen Chbosky
4. “To Kill a Mockingbird,” Harper Lee
5. Twilight (series), Stephenie Meyer
6. “Catcher in the Rye,” J.D. Salinger
7. “My Sister’s Keeper,” Jodi Picoult
8. “The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things,” Carolyn Mackler
9. “The Color Purple,” Alice Walker
10. “The Chocolate War,” Robert Cormier

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### Why? Reasons include...

1. TTYL, TTFN, L8R, G8R (Series): Offensive Language, Sexually Explicit, Unsuitable to Age Group
2. “And Tango Makes Three”: Homosexuality, Sexism, Anti-Family, Religious Viewpoint, Unsuitable to Age Group
3. “The Perks of Being A Wallflower”: Drugs, Homosexuality, Nudity, Offensive Language, Sexually Explicit, Suicide, Unsuitable to Age Group
4. “To Kill a Mockingbird”: Racism, Offensive Language, Unsuitable to Age Group
5. Twilight (series): Sexually Explicit, Religious Viewpoint, Unsuitable to Age Group

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## Why? Reasons include...

6. "Catcher in the Rye": Sexually Explicit, Offensive Language, Unsuitable to Age Group
7. "My Sister's Keeper": Sexism, Homosexuality, Sexually Explicit, Offensive Language, Religious Viewpoint, Unsuitable to Age Group, Drugs, Suicide, Violence
8. "The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things": Sexually Explicit, Offensive Language, Unsuitable to Age Group
9. "The Color Purple": Sexually Explicit, Offensive Language, Unsuitable to Age Group
10. "The Chocolate War": Nudity, Sexually Explicit, Offensive Language, Unsuitable to Age Group

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## Avoiding Self-Censorship

- Take an inclusive, not exclusive, approach to selecting materials
  - Could this benefit someone in my community?
- Distinguish personal vs. professional values
  - Strive to provide access to diverse material
- Be prepared – have a strong selection or collection development policy in place

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## Questions?

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## Thank You!

Angela Maycock  
Assistant Director, ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom  
312-280-4221, 800-545-2433 ext. 4221  
oif@ala.org, amaycock@ala.org  
www.ala.org/oif, twitter.com/oif

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