

TO: ALA Council

DATE: June 16, 2023

RE: (select one)

ACTION REQUESTED

X INFORMATION

X REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT: (add below)

Report: ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee (CD#19.1)

Information: Challenges to CRT and Diversity Training Toolkit (CD#19.2)

Information: Intellectual Freedom Q & A (CD#19.3)

Action requested from Councilors is to cast their vote to: (if applicable)

None. Two information items.

ACTION REQUESTED BY: (add committee name)

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**ALA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE
REPORT TO COUNCIL
2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) is pleased to present this update of its activities and the activities of the Office for Intellectual Freedom since the ALA LibLearnX Meeting in January 2023:

IFC PRIVACY SUBCOMMITTEE

Since January 2023 the IFC Privacy Subcommittee continued to amplify and highlight the new Privacy Field Guides. Following LibLearnX, the Privacy Field Guides were promoted in a series of blog posts called [7 Guides in 7 Days](#) which began on Data Privacy Day, which is traditionally observed around January 28. IFC Privacy Subcommittee Chair, Julie Oborny, also presented an online session at Pennsylvania Library Association's conference, called "[Easy-to-Use Privacy Guides for Every Library Worker](#)" highlighting the utility of this resource to over 50 participants.

The Privacy Subcommittee continued to work with the members of the Vendor and Library Privacy Community of Practice, which will meet during ALA's Annual Conference. The Community of Practice, formed in September of 2022, is an opportunity for library workers and vendors to address shared concerns related to privacy, as well as those concerns that are specific to library workers and vendors.

The IFC Privacy Subcommittee has developed resources on protecting user privacy in the provision of information about reproductive health and abortion. They will present a program, "Protecting the Freedom to Access Reproductive Health Information," on Sunday, June 26 during ALA's Annual Conference.

Preliminary work on what will either be a field guide or toolkit pertaining to Artificial Intelligence and Library Privacy has begun.

CHALLENGES TO CRT AND DIVERSITY TRAINING TOOLKIT

The Intellectual Freedom Committee has approved the Challenges to CRT and Diversity Training Toolkit, which will be published this summer on the ALA website. We thank Rhonda Evans and the members of the working group who brought this project over the finish line. The toolkit will be a targeted resource for library workers addressing censorship resulting from challenges to materials claimed to include "critical race theory" and will also support library workers addressing challenges to anti-racist materials and staff training addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion. A copy of the toolkit is attached for information.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM Q & A

Erin Berman, past Chair of the IFC Privacy Subcommittee, volunteered to lead an IFC taskforce to update the Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Q&A, a guideline document maintained by the Intellectual Freedom Committee. The update is complete, and a copy is attached to this report for information. This document continues to be used by library workers as a learning tool for their own knowledge base and as a way to respond to the many questions they receive on these topics. We thank Erin and the members of the taskforce for their work on the Q & A.

JOINT PROFESSIONAL VALUES PROGRAMMING SUBGROUP

The Joint Professional Values Programming Subgroup, comprised of members from the Intellectual Freedom Committee, IFC Privacy Subcommittee, COPE, IFRT, and FTRF, meets regularly to share resources and planning for conference programs addressing intellectual freedom and privacy. Through their combined efforts, intellectual freedom programming was at the forefront at ALA Annual. Intellectual Freedom and Privacy programming at the ALA Annual Meeting included the following programs: :

- [A Rally for the Right to Read: Uniting for Libraries & Intellectual Freedom](#), Thursday, June 22, 2023, 6:00 pm, Hilton Chicago Grand Ballroom
- [News You Can Use—Changing the Narrative, ALA Policy Corps Takes On Book Banners](#), Saturday, June 25, 9:00 am,
- [News You Can Use—Fighting Censorship in a Changing Landscape](#), Saturday, June 25, 2023, 4:00 pm, McCormick Place West, W180.
- [Protecting the Freedom to Access Reproductive Health Information](#), Sunday, June 26, 2023, 9:00 a.m., McCormick Place West, W185CIntellectual Freedom Round Table
- [Make the Most of Banned Books Week](#), Sunday, June 26, 2023, 1:00 p.m., McCormick Place West, W194a
- [News You Can Use—Activating Community Support with Unite Against Book Bans](#), Sunday, June 26, 2023, 2:30 p.m., McCormick Place West, W179a.

NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK / TOP THIRTEEN MOST CHALLENGED BOOK LIST

During National Library Week, the Office for Intellectual Freedom released the list of books that were most frequently challenged and banned in 2022. The list was released as part of the State of America’s Libraries Report. While the list usually identifies the top ten most challenged books, in 2022, there were multiple books that received the same number of challenges, resulting in the expansion of the list to 13 titles.

National Library Week also saw the inauguration of Right to Read Day, which called on ALA members, library workers, library supporters, and readers across the country to take action to support the right to read, and the release of a list of specific and low-bar-to-entry action items

from the campaign. With the release of the Top Thirteen Most Challenged Book list, Right to Read Day generated enormous engagement, with #RighttoReadDay trending on Twitter and nearly 1,800 individuals joining the Unite Against Book Bans campaign over the course of the week.

Here are the top thirteen most challenged and banned books for 2022:

1. “Gender Queer,” by Maia Kobabe
Reasons: LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit
2. “All Boys Aren’t Blue,” by George M. Johnson
Reasons: LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit
3. “The Bluest Eye,” by Toni Morrison
Reasons: depiction of sexual abuse, claimed to be sexually explicit, EDI content
4. “Flamer,” by Mike Curato
Reasons: LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit
5. (TIE) “Looking for Alaska,” by John Green
Reasons: Claimed to be sexually explicit, LGBTQIA+ content
5. (TIE) “The Perks of Being a Wallflower,” by Stephen Chbosky
Reasons: Claimed to be sexually explicit, LGBTQIA+ content, depicts sexual abuse, drugs, profanity
7. “Lawn Boy,” by Jonathan Evison
Reasons: LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit
8. “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian,” by Sherman Alexie
Reasons: Claimed to be sexually explicit, profanity
9. “Out of Darkness,” by Ashley Hope Perez
Reasons: Claimed to be sexually explicit
10. (TIE) “A Court of Mist and Fury,” by Sarah J. Maas
Reasons: Claimed to be sexually explicit
10. (TIE) “Crank,” by Ellen Hopkins [(#24 in 2021)
Reasons: Claimed to be sexually explicit, drugs
10. (TIE) “Me and Earl and the Dying Girl,” by Jesse Andrews (#10 in 2021)
Reasons: Claimed to be sexually explicit, profanity
10. (TIE) “This Book is Gay,” by Juno Dawson (#8 in 2021)
Reasons: LGBTQIA+ content, sex education, claimed to be sexually explicit.

BOOK CHALLENGES AND CENSORSHIP

OIF documented 1,269 attempts to censor library, school, and university materials and services (a 68% increase from 2021). These efforts targeted 2,571 unique titles (a 38% increase from 2021). Children's and YA books and graphic novels were challenged far more frequently than titles for adults. Collectively, children's and YA materials comprised 84% of the unique titles targeted and accounted for 86% of book challenges. Most challenges (57%) were to books in school libraries, classroom libraries, or school curricula.

The vast majority of the titles challenged were written by or about members of the LGBTQIA+ community and people of color. LGBTQIA+ content and objections to content reflecting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) efforts, such as allegations of "Critical Race Theory," were given as reasons for 61% of challenges overall and 72% of challenges involving multiple titles. Nineteen of the 20 most frequently challenged titles explore themes of race, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Starting in 2021, the number of challenges received per title escalated astronomically. In the decade before 2021, the most frequently challenged title received an average of 8 challenges during the year it topped the list. In 2022, 144 titles received 9 or more challenges and the most targeted title received 151 challenges.

Incidents where multiple titles were challenged at one time occurred more frequently than ever before. 32% of cases where books and graphic novels were challenged involved more than one title and 10% involved 10 or more titles. An average of 7 titles were challenged per case. OIF tracked 11 cases last year where more than 100 titles were challenged. We have no record of an instance in which more than 100 books were part of a single challenge prior to 2021.

Multi-title challenges accounted for 90% of the overall volume of books and graphic novels challenged. While this is in keeping with what OIF tracked in 2021, it is a significant change from how book challenges occurred previously. From 2011-2020, only 15% of the total volume of books and graphic novels challenged were part of multi-title challenges.

Organized efforts to restrict access to reading materials are the most significant contributing factor to these trends. Use of target lists developed by extremist organizations and hate groups is increasingly commonplace. These lists, furnished with excerpts and talking points on sites like booklooks.org, are shared online through social media groups maintained by extremist anti-government organizations, including Moms for Liberty, No Left Turn in Education, and MassResistance.

Between March 1st and May 31st, the Office for Intellectual Freedom received requests from 104 library workers, educators, and library supporters requesting and receiving direct support from OIF staff. In addition, OIF staff proactively provided support to 14 other library workers,

while responding to an additional 30 requests for support for proposed policy changes or to proactively prepare for challenges.

Personal attacks against librarians, teachers, and board members who oppose censorship have grown increasingly common on social media. The attacks share a vocabulary—accusations of grooming, pedophilia, and distribution of pornography—and often originate outside of the school or library’s service area.

Pressure groups are also urging elected officials and governing boards to abandon the standards and best practices developed by ALA and aligned with constitutional precepts. In one example, the board of the Campbell County Public Library (WY) voted 4-1 on October 24 to change their mission statement and remove all references to ALA and the Wyoming Library Association from their policies. Efforts like these cut staff off from professional development opportunities and professional networks. Removing core ethical documents such as the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement from policies creates a chasm between local practice and professional standards grounded in First Amendment principles.

ALA POLICY CORPS CADRE FOR PROACTIVE ADVOCACY ON BOOK BANNING

The Office for Intellectual Freedom, in partnership with ALA’s Public Policy & Advocacy (PPA) Office launched a new Policy Corps Cadre in March, 2023. The goal of the new Policy Corps cadre is to showcase how libraries and library workers provide essential information resources to their communities while increasing awareness about the importance of intellectual freedom and its centrality to American democracy and society. Cadre members will be working to expand ALA’s ability to advocate on key policy issues on behalf of the library community and to support the Unite Against Book Bans grassroots advocacy campaign.

ALA Senior Fellow Kent Oliver, a past Chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, leads the cadre with ALA Senior Fellow Christopher Harris as advisor. IFC member Becky Calzada is a member of the volunteer cadre.

UNITE AGAINST BOOK BANS

[Unite Against Book Bans](#), ALA’s public facing grassroots advocacy campaign that is conducted in partnership with the Public Policy and Advocacy Office, continues to grow its comprehensive program of advocacy and outreach intended to mobilize and empower individuals and community groups fighting to protect the right to read in their communities.

Support provided through the Unite Against Books Bans campaign now goes beyond the toolkit provided on the website. UABB staff have provided direct and customized advice on grassroots organizing, building coalitions, and responding to opposition messaging. In addition, information about utilizing open meeting laws, open records laws, and freedom of information

act requests to support community activism has been shared with community anti-censorship groups, along with guidance on privacy issues and social media safety.

UABB staff have also begun using a dedicated email platform to help local advocates engage with community members at the local and state level. These actions have had a high engagement rate and have been successful in raising awareness of censorship actions in targeted communities. For example, UABB staff worked with local advocates to devise a substantive call to action in Llano, Texas, rallying advocates to attend a board meeting where county commissioners were poised to adopt a resolution to shut down the county's public library system in response to a court decision forcing the board to reshelve several books that had been removed. As a result of local and UABB calls to action, the community showed up in successful defense of the libraries.

UABB also provided support to community organizers in Arkansas; California, Florida; Indiana; League City, Texas; South Dakota; Virginia; and Wisconsin.

Your support – and the support of your colleagues, neighbors, and networks – is crucial to continuing to grow UABB and its powerful leverage for grassroots advocacy opposing book bans and censorship. If you have not joined, please do so at this link, and invite your neighbors, community groups, or networks to join.

In closing, the Intellectual Freedom Committee thanks the division and chapter intellectual freedom committees, the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, the unit liaisons, and the members of the OIF staff, recognizing the tireless work of the Office for Intellectual Freedom and the Freedom to Read Foundation. In particular, we thank Joyce McIntosh, Karen Gianni, Eric Strohshane and Betsy Gomez for their support of our members and colleagues who are fighting censorship and other challenges to intellectual freedom in their communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

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Challenges to CRT and Diversity Training Toolkit

Introduction

This document was created in response to community and legislative challenges to staff training, library materials, and programming that have, often incorrectly, been labeled as critical race theory (CRT). These challenges seek to restrict access to resources that are described as including what the challengers describe as “divisive concepts.” Challengers, legislators, and others seek to force the removal of these items and to enact policies and legislation that includes provisions that threaten possible retribution for library staff who provide access to such materials. Many of these challenges stem from attacks on the concept of critical race theory (CRT). However, the challenges often arise from a misconception of CRT and library practices, policies, and programming. Realistically, it must also be acknowledged that some challenges do originate from an underlying ethos of centering white comfort and prominence in certain historical narratives of the United States. Regardless of the conceptions or misconceptions about the targeted materials, the goal of community and legislative challenges is to actively deny the stories and experiences of historically marginalized communities.

While publicity around these attempts at restricting access to materials are largely focused on educational institutions — K-12 and higher education — there are also growing calls to restrict access to materials within library settings. In many of the challenges, some seek to restrict materials vaguely described as divisive. In other challenges specific materials are mentioned. Many of the challenges and subsequent actions are vaguely worded, causing confusion about implementation and protections for the freedom to read, equal access to information, and access to stories from and about historically marginalized communities.

Description/Use of the Resource

The American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom is concerned about these challenges, their impact on libraries, and the communities being served. Libraries are charged with supporting their communities and making available materials that reflect the true history and experience of the whole of that community. To support that mission, this toolkit has been created to help librarians and staff to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in their collections, policies, and programs and to help them create effective arguments against policy and legislative actions that hinder access to information.

Information and resources about the benefits of diverse resources can equip library workers to defend resources and proactively advocate for their inclusion.

Call to Action

As library workers, we want to add our voices to those calling for clarity in the way society views human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institutions over time and to insist that this clarity is a vital and urgent element in providing for the information needs and

well-being of all in society. We commit ourselves and our organizations to work toward ensuring that:

1) The library profession trains and sustains a workforce that fully reflects the diversity of society. Representation within the profession is a basic step toward equity. Library service providers, as well as the larger community, must be engaged to help reshape education and how information resources are provided.

2) Our libraries are inclusive, responsive, empowering, and safe for all people but particularly for anyone facing discrimination. This safety means that it is possible for individuals to obtain the resources they need without restriction and that libraries provide an environment for all people to call out injustice without fear of reprisal.

3) We question, challenge, and counter the biases and assumptions built into special interest groups, community, political, and legislative actions that restrict in any way how information and educational resources are provided. We support social justice actions and recognize that, as library workers, we are responsible for the collective good of society, not simply our own individual interests.

4) Library professionals should be actively involved in any election that involves the selection of library boards or library directors to the extent allowed by local laws. Library professionals should be aware of who is running for office, especially public library boards and school boards of education, and their stance on intellectual freedom and related library issues as well such information as registration deadlines and polling places.

Visit "[Libraries Respond](#)" for more ways to reframe the conversation around CRT and support diversity, equity, and inclusion in libraries.

Assistance/Consultation

The staff of the [Office for Intellectual Freedom](#) and the [Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services](#) are available to answer questions or provide assistance to librarians and library workers, trustees, and educators about diversity training, legislation, and intellectual freedom. Areas of assistance include policy development and staff training. Inquiries can be directed via email to diversity@ala.org, oif@ala.org, or via phone at 1-800-545-2433.

Definitions

There are multiple locations where EDI definitions are found on ALA's websites.

- [ODLOS Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Libraries Respond: Black Lives Matter](#)
- [Hateful Conduct in Libraries: Supporting Library Workers and Patrons](#)
- [Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity: A Framework](#)

Anti-Racism: Anti-racism is "the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts." ([National Education Association - Racial Justice in Education](#), p 31)

BIPOC: "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The term BIPOC is used to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context." ([BIPOC Project](#)) We use the term BIPOC in this resource to identify opportunities that are for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Black Lives Matter: #BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, they are winning immediate improvements in their lives. ([Black Lives Matter](#))

Critical Race Theory: Critical Race Theory (CRT), an academic concept used for analysis at the undergraduate and graduate levels. CRT asserts that racism is real, that race is socially constructed, and that racism is not solely a matter of individual beliefs but rather is embedded in and perpetuated by the social, political, and legal structures of our society. CRT is intended for advanced analysis of systems and cultures and should not be confused with factual acknowledgements of the impact of race and racism on people's everyday lives.

As an academic concept, it does not purport to be applicable to all published works that deal with issues of race and racism. Therefore, books that handle subjects such as factual issues of societal inequalities or the history of race relations are not necessarily CRT publications. Teaching and learning about societal inequities—past and present—through readings is not an automatic application of CRT.

Racial Justice: "The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond "anti-racism." It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures." ([Race Forward](#), page 31)

White Supremacy: White supremacy is "the belief system that rationalizes and reproduces white advantage in the political, social, and cultural institutions of society. This belief system holds that white people, white culture, and things associated with whiteness are superior to those of other racial groups." ([Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, page 138](#))

Framing the Conversation

ALA Core Documents

The American Library Association has [acknowledged](#), “that the founding of our Association was not built on inclusion and equity, but instead was built on systemic racism and discrimination in many forms.” Fortunately, as the library profession has evolved over the past centuries ALA now unequivocally [affirms](#) that “equity, diversity, and inclusion are central to the promotion and practice of intellectual freedom. Libraries are essential to democracy and self-government, to personal development and social progress, and to every individual’s inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To that end, libraries and library workers should embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything that they do.” The documents included in this section present the core values of ALA and how they should be incorporated into the library profession.

[American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights](#)

“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.”

[ALA Code of Ethics](#)

“We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.”

[Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, or Sexual Orientation: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*](#)

“The American Library Association stringently and unequivocally maintains that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.”

“The American Library Association holds that any attempt, be it legal or extra-legal, to regulate or suppress library services, materials, or programs must be resisted in order that protected expression is not abridged. Librarians have a professional obligation to ensure that all library users have free and equal access to the entire range of library services, materials, and programs. Therefore, the Association strongly opposes any effort to limit access to information and ideas. The Association also encourages librarians to proactively support the First Amendment rights of all library users, regardless of sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.”

[Diverse Collections: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*](#)

“Library workers have an obligation to select, maintain, and support access to content on subjects by diverse authors and creators that meets—as closely as possible—the needs, interests, and abilities of all the people the library serves. This means acquiring materials to address popular demand and direct community input, as well as addressing collection gaps and unexpressed information needs. Library workers have a professional and ethical responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan where offered.”

[Equity, Diversity, Inclusion: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*](#)

“The American Library Association affirms that equity, diversity, and inclusion are central to the promotion and practice of intellectual freedom. Libraries are essential to democracy and self-government, to personal development and social progress, and to every individual’s inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To that end, libraries and library workers should embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything that they do.”

Resources

[Ensuring a Diverse Collection: Promoting Equity of Access and Free Expression](#)

“There is a wealth of resources that can help us develop our skills in recognizing culturally authentic work. [Diverse Book Finder](#) is a good place to start. We can also look to publishing houses that specialize in diverse titles and authors: [Lee & Low](#) and [Lantana](#). Selectors can consult these resources for reviews and information: [The Brown Bookshelf](#), [We Need Diverse Books](#), [American Indians in Children’s Literature](#), and [Reading While White](#). There are many recently created lists: [Booklist Antiracism Titles](#), [50 Board Books Diverse Faces](#), and [Black Lives Matter Graphic Novels](#).”

[Freedom to Read Statement](#)

“The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label “controversial” views, to distribute lists of “objectionable” books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.”

“Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large. It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is not freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive.

It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. “

Situations and Advocacy

Public and Staff Engagement

Talking Points and Resources

- Librarians, library staff, and educators are dedicated to developing collections and resources for young persons with "mirrors, windows, and doors," that allow a child to see themselves and their families reflected in instructional and library materials and provide a means to understand themselves and the world around them.
- School educators and librarians are professionals who are trained to not impose their own thoughts and opinions on which ideas are right, but to make knowledge and ideas available so that people have the freedom to choose what to read. Further, librarians and educators respect the rights of parents to decide which book their children are exposed to. Libraries provide access to books that offer teachable moments for readers of all ages and expand our understanding of people with different backgrounds, ideas, and beliefs. (from Unite Against Book Bans [“Answers to Common Questions About Book Bans”](#))
- Access to books – including and, perhaps, especially those that raise difficult questions – is integral to healthy development for young people and our communities. When we ban or restrict access to books, we deprive young people of the opportunity to see themselves reflected in stories, to fully engage in their learning, and to grapple with the complexity of the real world in which they live and must learn to navigate. In our pluralistic and democratic society, every book has its reader, and professional educators and librarians connect youth with those books that nurture literacy, critical thinking, and other skills and dispositions necessary for future success. (from: [“Empowered by Reading”](#)).

Collections and Book/Materials Challenges

Examples, Talking Points, and Resources:

- Books, serials, and audio and moving image materials are the most commonly challenged items.
- Challenges can be presented:
 - In-person / verbally.
 - Through the formal library challenge process.
 - Written to the library, press, or board.
 - Presented to a school board, library board, or community board meeting.
 - By special interest groups or individuals.
- Examples:
 - Curriculum:
 - On April 19, 2022, the Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools voted against the purchase of *Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy*, a new social studies textbook, after some residents complained it included CRT. The textbook was intended to be used in Virginia Studies, AP U.S. History, AP U.S. Government and Politics, and AP Economics. At their next meeting on May 4, they overturned this decision by a vote of 4-3.
 - On May 10, 2021, Northwest Allen County Schools (IN) rejected a precalculus textbook because of complaints that it included word problems depicting “interracial marriages.” The textbook was eventually approved for use.
 - On November 22, 2021, and again on January 10, 2022, the Pennridge School Board (PA), delayed votes to adopt new social studies textbooks. One board member advocated for adopting the Hillsdale College 1776, instead of the proposed Social Studies Alive curriculum.
 - School and classroom library materials:
 - In January, 2022, Duval County Public Schools (FL) removed the Essential Voices collection from classroom libraries. Titles included *Thank You, Jackie Robinson*, and *The Life of Rosa Parks*, among others.
 - In April, 2022, a community member challenged *How to be an Antiracist* in the Cody High School Library (WY), claiming that it was “Marxist,” “liberal,” and “non-colorblind.”

- *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness, Ghost Boys, and Something Happened in our Town* were all challenged in Whitefish Bay School libraries (WI) by a group of residents claiming the books were “indoctrination material,” teach that “White people are inherently privileged,” and that “White police officers shoot Black man [sic] intentionally.”
- *Stamped for Kids: Racism, Anti-Racism, and You* was challenged but retained at Salem-Keizer Public Schools in March, 2022.
- Reading lists:
 - Beginning in August, 2021, the Read Woke Challenge at Isle of Wight County Schools (VA) faced challenges from community members who argued the books “disparage white people” and “instill the feeling of discomfort and guilt upon white children.” Opposition to *The Hate U Give* was particularly vocal.
- [The Intellectual Freedom News](#) provides a number of specific examples.

Talking Points

- Librarians and educators use their training, expertise, and book reviews to critically evaluate and select materials that have “serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value” for students.
- Parents and guardians can guide children and young people’s use of library resources. However, removing materials from libraries restricts access for all library users.
- Concerns regarding library materials by library users are always taken seriously and need to be explored thoroughly and thoughtfully. The library user can be directed to the institution’s formal process to challenge materials.

Resources

- [“How to Respond to Challenges and Concerns about Library Resources”](#) created by the Office of Intellectual Freedom
- [Intellectual Freedom Manual](#). Tenth Edition. Garnar, Martin, and Trina Magi. Chicago: ALA Editions. 2021
- [Intellectual Freedom Stories from a Shifting Landscape](#). Office of Intellectual Freedom. Nye, Valerie. ALA Editions. 2020.
- [Challenge Support and Reporting Censorship](#) from *Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries*
- [Action Toolkit](#) from Unite Against Book Bans.

Policies

Talking Points and Resources

- Though efforts to protect young people from images, language, or ideas that someone finds offensive may be well intentioned, the result undercuts students’ abilities to understand their complex worlds of school, family, and country.
- Efforts to limit access to the full account of American history are incompatible with democratic principles and a disservice to all students, particularly those whose stories are ignored or minimized.

Resources

- [Diverse Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)
- [Library Policy Development](#)
- [Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries](#)

Programming and Displays

Examples and Resources

Programming examples:

- In September, 2021, a group of parents alleged that Jerry Craft’s graphic novels *New Kid* and *Class Act* were critical race theory. In response the district removed the books from school libraries and canceled a virtual author visit with Jerry Craft. After review, the books were returned, and the author visit was rescheduled.
- In November, 2021, the High Plains Library District (CO) canceled their “Anti-Racism Workshop for Teens”; staff were also instructed to rename the “Read Woke Book Club.”

- In April, 2021, the Manitowoc Public Library (WI) received numerous challenges and complaints regarding the program “Privilege and Power.”

Display examples:

- The 2022 Banned Book Week slideshow was challenged at Delaware City Schools (OH) for encouraging reading of challenged EDI and LGBTQIA+ materials.
- Black History Month displays were challenged at an Oregon school district for promoting a pro-Black Lives Matter/Critical Race Theory agenda.
- A library board member for ImagineIF Libraries (MT) challenged the library’s Black History, Pride Month, and Banned Book Week displays, alleging they represented a “liberal leftist” agenda.
- Bulletin boards with excerpts from *The Undeclared* and the poem “Change Sings” were challenged at a middle school in the Somers Central School District (NY) because their authors “support critical race theory.”
- Black History Month posters were removed from display at the East Valley High School (WA) by administrators who claimed they were “too political.” (the posters in questions stated: “Honor Black Lives. Read Black Stories”)

Resources

- [Display & Program Challenges: Texas Library Association](#)
- [Program Challenges at the Public Library](#)
- [Material and Program Challenges in the Public Library: Indiana State Library Association](#)
- [Managing Censorship Challenges by Books by Kristin Pekoll for the Department of Education](#)

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- The American Library Association supports, without reservation, the work that librarians are undertaking to implement the education and resources necessary to ensure that libraries are a welcoming and inclusive space for students.
- We are heartened by local and state efforts to engage in dialogue around this important topic and we fully endorse continued community conversation that will ensure all library users are treated with dignity and that the library addresses the needs of a diverse community.
- Giving students the opportunity to see themselves in the resources they come across is an important aspect of growing up. It gives them a chance to see their identities and experiences reflected in mainstream media which helps them with self-esteem, cultural pride, and connection. Diverse resources benefit readers significantly and show kids of

any ethnicity, religion, and background that their stories matter. It gives them characters that they can relate to, learn from, or look up to in ways that resonate with them on a different level.

- Resources with diverse characters also benefit readers from the dominant culture, showing kids that all backgrounds matter.

Core Values

- Attempts to censor information and limit the telling of American history are antithetical to the core values of librarianship.

How can library workers and libraries work towards proactive reframing the conversation about CRT?

[5 Things Educators Can Do in the Middle of a CRT Controversy](#) - “Rather than take any more time defending a historical framework, here’s a different approach. Five things you can do to reframe inflammatory arguments about CRT.”

Plan for Action

Commit to doing everyday actions:

- Educate yourself about anti-racism and racial equity efforts within the profession.
 - [Anti-Racism Work and Women in Librarianship](#)
 - [Advancing Racial Equity in Public Libraries](#)
 - [University of Madison-Wisconsin - Disrupting Whiteness in Libraries and Librarianship: A Reading List](#)
 - [Scaffolded Anti-Racist Resources](#)
 - [Publishers Weekly - Reading Is Only a Step on the Path to Anti-Racism](#)
 - [Bazar - Why we need to engage with Black literature beyond racial politics](#)
- Familiarize yourself with police reform and abolition efforts.
 - [Campaign Zero](#)
 - [Autostraddle - How to Never Call the Cops Again: A Guide with a Few Alternatives to Calling Police](#)
 - [The Marshall Project - Police Abolition](#)
 - [Autostraddle - Police and Prison Abolition 101: A Syllabus and FAQ](#)
 - [The Library Project - It’s not enough to say Black Lives Matter — libraries must divest from the police](#)
 - Identify grassroots abolition efforts in your community and consider how you can get involved.
- - Are Black Lives Matter groups considered 'protesters,' 'rioters,' 'looters,' or 'thugs'? The language used to describe this movement is [rooted in white supremacy](#).
 - Do you invoke the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when describing effective ways to protest? Acknowledge that [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s messages have been diluted and co-opted](#).

- Speak about injustices done to Black people specifically. Black people and People of Color (POC) are not interchangeable as all racial identities groups [have different experiences and different needs](#).

Center and Support Black voices in LIS

- Amplify the voices of Black library workers and support their community spaces through donations and membership.
 - [BCALA](#)
 - [Black Excellence in LIS Syllabus \(edited by T-Kay Sangwand\)](#)
 - [Black Librarians](#)
 - [The Washington Post - The Black women who launched the original anti-racist reading list](#)
 - [The Blackivists](#)
 - [WOC+Lib](#)
 - [We Here](#)
- Read about and promote the historic contributions of Black LIS workers and add books to your collection.
 - [Book Riot - Pioneering Black American Librarians](#)
 - [E.J. Josey - Transformational Leader of the Modern Library Profession](#)
 - [The 21st-Century Black Librarian in America](#)
 - [Regina Anderson Andrews, Harlem Renaissance Librarian](#)
 - [The Association for the Study of African American Life and History \(ASALH\)](#)
 - [American Libraries - Blazing Trails - Pioneering African American librarians share their stories](#)

Staff development

- Train *all* staff on topics related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
 - [Consider hiring a local facilitator to speak to your staff about EDI.](#)
 - [ALA - Webinars on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)
 - [We Here Community School](#)
- Commit to hiring Black library workers, connecting paraprofessionals to scholarship opportunities, and supporting residents and interns.
 - [BCALA Job List](#)
 - [Spectrum Scholarship Program](#)
 - [We Here Job List](#)
 - [COVID Residents Open Letter](#)
- Consider your workplace retention strategies.
 - [Ground your equity, diversity, and inclusion plan in anti-racism – see, for example, Oregon Library Association EDI Task Force\)](#)

Evaluate policies.

- Ensure that the public knows the library's stance. Understand that it is not a political stance to state that Black Lives Matter.
 - [Black Lives Matter at School](#)
 - [Chicago Public Library - Black Lives Matter - A Booklist](#)
 - [Oakland Public Library - OPL Responds: Working toward Racial Justice](#)
 - [Penn State University Libraries - Black Lives Matter Libguide](#)

- [The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County - Back Joy Booklist for Children and Young Adults](#)
- [Schomburg Center Black Liberation Reading List](#)
- [University of Indiana-Purdue University Indianapolis - Black Lives Matter Libguide](#)
- [Be prepared to respond to an All Lives Matter stance](#)
- Be aware of the ways your library may not seem welcoming.
 - Do you highlight materials featuring Black authors and main characters throughout the year (and not just during Black History Month or MLK Day)?
 - Do you have a security guard in place? Understand that [Black library users may not feel comfortable with library security](#).
 - Consider how your [library fine policies present an economic barrier to access of library materials and services](#).
 - Rethink Codes of Conduct for library users.

Articles and Resources

Background and Understanding

- [American Bar Association \(ABA\) - "A Lesson in Critical Race Theory"](#)
- [What is Critical Race Theory? Resources for Educators](#) : The William & Mary School of Education has authored an article which explains the definition of critical race theory and provides a list of resources to gain a better understanding of the theory.
- [Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Guide](#)
- [Critical Librarianship: Critical Race Theory](#)
- [How a Conservative Activist Invented the Conflict Over Critical Race Theory](#)
- [Schools, Libraries, and Universities](#)

Supporting Resources

- [American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights](#)
- [The Importance of Addressing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Schools](#) : The National Association of School Psychologists has published a statement that speaks to the importance of having this discussion and the reasons.
- [Challenge Support](#)
- [Project Ready: Reimagining Equity & Access for Diverse Youth](#)

ALA Statements

The American Library Association issues statements in response to events and emerging issues that impact libraries and the communities they serve. While these statements often take the form of resolutions when issued by the ALA Council (see below), statements may also be issued on behalf of the association by the president, executive board, or executive director, especially when issues arise when Council is not in session. The statements below are a representative sample of the stances taken by ALA on matters of race and racism.

[ALA Executive Board Opposes Censorship of Programs Addressing Racial Injustice, Black American History, and Diversity Education](#)

“At present, efforts to censor any consideration or discussion of racism, slavery, Black American history, and related issues and concerns in our schools, colleges, and universities pose a real and present threat to libraries’ ability to fulfill their role as trusted community institutions that provide factual and accurate information that reflects the breadth of the American experience about these topics.”

[ALA Statement on White House Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping](#)

“It is the longstanding role of libraries to foster intellectual freedom by ensuring access to the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by those in power. The pursuit of social justice and equity, diversity, and inclusion is equally a core value of the American Library Association.”

[ALA takes responsibility for past racism, pledges a more equitable association](#)

“We recognize that the founding of our Association was not built on inclusion and equity, but instead was built on systemic racism and discrimination in many forms. We also recognize the hurt and harm done to BIPOC library workers and communities due to these racist structures. We commit to our core values, particularly equity, diversity, and inclusion, and will demonstrate this commitment by reassessing and reevaluating our role in continuing to uphold unjust, harmful systems throughout the Association and the profession.” [ALA Chapters Condemn Racism](#)

[ALA Executive Board stands with BCALA in condemning violence and racism towards Black people and all People of Color](#)

“The ALA Executive Board stands in solidarity with the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), with library workers, with library users, and with members of the communities we serve and support who are susceptible to acts of prejudice, threats of violence, and even death based solely on their race or ethnicity. The pervasive racism present in our nation denies its residents equal rights and equal access and as such is a barrier to the goals of this association and to the wider profession.

Wherever it resides, racism leads to degradation. It weakens our institutions and destroys our communities and is one of the greatest obstacles to the American Library Association’s mission ‘to enhance learning and ensure access to information to all.’”

[ALA Executive Board stands with APALA in condemning xenophobia, racism](#)

“The ALA Executive Board recognizes that ALA members, library workers, and our library communities are experiencing bigotry and attacks based on racial and ethnic heritage and we must stand in solidarity to work to stop these acts.”

[ALA and affiliates issue joint statement on libraries and equity, diversity, and inclusion](#)

“Equity, diversity, and inclusion are core values of our associations, as we believe that as a profession, we must continue to support the creation of a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive society. On June 27, 2017, the Council of the American Library Association approved a new

interpretation of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the ALA Library Bill of Rights. The interpretation (developed by the Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom) reaffirms our shared commitment to the role that libraries of all types – public, academic, school, and special – must play in effecting equity, diversity and inclusion in the communities and institutions they serve. It also provides a concrete framework for ensuring that all library's policies and practices, collections and programs reflect these values."

[ALA President Julie Todaro releases statement on Libraries, the Association, Diversity and Inclusion](#)

"As an association representing these libraries, librarians and library workers, ALA believes that the struggle against racism, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination is central to our mission. We will continue to support efforts to abolish intolerance and cultural invisibility, stand up for all the members of the communities we serve, and promote understanding and inclusion through our work."

ALA Resolutions

During its business meetings, the Council of the American Library Association can adopt resolutions on matters related to libraries and library services. Resolutions may originate from individual councilors, committees of Council, or through referral from the ALA Membership Meeting. Below is a representative sampling of recent resolutions related to race and racism.

[Resolution to Promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\) Efforts in AASL While Addressing Historical Effects of Racism](#) (2022)

[Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work](#) (2021)

[Resolution to Honor African Americans Who Fought Library Segregation](#) (2018)

[Resolution Against Islamophobia](#) (2016)

Statements from Ally Organizations

Concerns about the deliberate misuse of Critical Race Theory and the related attacks on the principles of equity, diversity, and confusion are shared by other professions and organizations. Below is a list of statements from other organizations in support of teaching and learning about diversity.

- PEN America/AACU/AAUP/American Historical Association (60 orgs signed on, including ALA and the National Council of Teachers of English): <https://www.historians.org/divisive-concepts-statement>
- [National Coalition Against Censorship](#)
- American Federation of Teachers/Florida Education Association: AFT and FEA Leaders Criticize Florida Ban on Teaching About Systemic Racism: <https://www.aft.org/press-release/aft-and-fea-leaders-criticize-florida-ban-teaching-about-systemic-racism>
- National Education Association (statement in support of National Day of Action to Teach the Truth): <https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/national-day-action-educators-join-together-and-pledge-teach>
- National Council for the Social Studies: <https://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/saving-american-history-start-teaching-american-history>

Intellectual Freedom and Censorship Q & A

Definitions

Ban

The removal of materials from a library based on the objections of a person or group.

Censorship

Limiting or removing access to words, images, or ideas. The decision to restrict or deny access is made by a governing authority. This could be a person, group, or organization/business. Censorship by the government is illegal.

Challenge

An attempt to have a library resource removed, or access to it restricted, based on the objections of a person or group.

Collection Development Policy

Guidelines libraries use for the selection, purchasing, and deselection of materials. The policy assists library workers in building a collection that aligns with the Library's mission and can be made public to inform library users of the guidelines. It also has procedures for handling challenges.

Harmful To minors

Sexually explicit materials that adults have a legal right to access, but that lack any serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors. It is illegal to knowingly distribute these materials to any minor. The fact that a work has topics addressing sex, or contains sexual content, does not make the material "harmful to minors." Whether materials are considered "harmful to minors" is determined by a court using the same three-part test for obscenity.

Intellectual Freedom

Intellectual freedom gives people the right to think for themselves. It respects individual dignity and self-rule. This freedom allows people to form their own ideas and opinions by questioning the world around them. Every person has the right to access information from all points of view, in all formats, and without restriction. Privacy is required for true intellectual freedom. Protection of this freedom assures every person's right to form their own ideas and opinions.

Obscenity Or Obscene Material

Sexually themed speech or expressive materials that are not protected by the First Amendment. The legal test for obscenity includes the following criteria: (1) whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to “prurient interest,” (2) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and (3) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. Only a judge or jury can find that a work is legally obscene.

Pornography

Written or visual materials that are designed to cause sexual excitement. Under U.S. law, “pornography” has no legal definition. Instead, courts and legislatures identify illegal sexually themed content as “obscenity,” which is defined by statute in federal and state law.

For more definitions, see the [Intellectual Freedom Manual](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

What Are Examples of Censorship...

...at an academic library?

- Collections not reflecting the wide range of research and pedagogical needs of their campus community.
- Removing exhibits and unique collections (such as archives, special collections, and digital repositories) without following established reconsideration policy/procedure.
- Faculty being restricted from teaching and researching potentially controversial topics.

...at a public library?

- Deciding not to purchase a popular title because they personally object to the content or author.
- Requiring a user to ask for access to regularly circulating materials (e.g., reshelving, behind a desk).
- Library boards require library staff to pull materials without following established reconsideration policy/procedure.

... at a school library?

- Requiring a parent/guardian's signature to check out material within the student's regular school library.
- Creating guidelines to restrict materials based on the age, reading level, or grade of the student.
- School administration or community members removing materials from the library without following established reconsideration policy/procedure.

...at a business?

- A company may choose to not sell certain materials. Censorship by the government is unconstitutional. Private companies are allowed to set their own rules and regulations about what they will or won't carry or allow on their platform.

What Materials, Resources, Or Services Are Frequently Challenged In Libraries?

The types of materials, resources, and services challenged in libraries can differ based on factors such as library type, locale, user base, and more. Therefore the response to this question will be broad-based. Currently, the topics/themes of the most frequent challenges deal with the subjects of the LGBTQ+ community, sex education, race, racism, activism, and/or persecution of religious minorities.

Additional Resources: [Top 10 Most Frequently Challenged Books](#)

Are There Any Laws Against Censorship?

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution protects the freedom of speech and expression against all levels of government censorship. "The First Amendment does not allow the government to get rid of or limit the use of books or ideas because they are controversial, unpopular, or offensive." (ACLU Advocacy Toolkit)

Additional Resources: [ACLU Advocacy Toolkit: Censorship and Banned Books](#)

Can Some Censorship Be Legal?

Private entities can determine what materials they will or will not disseminate. Do not confuse this with censorship as it applies to government entities. There are currently attempts in some states to legalize government censorship through the passage of bills that restrict teaching and learning activities. This [Pen America article](#) links to a spreadsheet indexing education gag orders. This index is updated weekly. Though geared toward teaching, these laws can also affect school and academic libraries.

What's The Difference Between Selection And Censorship?

Selection is following a collection development policy. Library workers use their expertise to select items for the community they serve. There are various constraints and factors that library workers consider when they are purchasing materials for their communities' collections. Censorship occurs when a library worker strays from the collection development policy to not select certain materials based on personal beliefs or fear of controversy.

Additional Resources:

- [Not Censorship, But Selection](#) by Lester Asheim

What Is Unilateral Censorship By A Library Worker?

Unilateral censorship is when a library worker chooses to exclude or restrict access to materials or services without consulting anyone. This may occur by not selecting material for purchase that otherwise follows the budget and collection development policy. Additional examples of library worker unilateral censorship include redacting information from materials by blacking out words or cutting out photos, labeling materials, or restricting access to avoid a challenge before it occurs.

Additional Resources:

- [NYLA Self-censorship Test](#)
- [Ex Post Facto Self-Censorship: When School Librarians Choose to Censor](#)

How Can Our Library Prepare Before A Challenge?

Being prepared before a challenge can help you feel confident in responding when one occurs.

- Understand your policies. Have printed copies and any associated forms available for easy access. If you do not have a reconsideration form or collection development policy, use the [ALA Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit](#).
- Ensure all administrators and user-facing staff are aware of the policies and where to access them.
- Apply the policies. Everyone who would like to challenge materials should go through the pre-approved policy procedures.
- Familiarize yourself with the materials being challenged that are in your collection. Read as many as you can. Consider making "[report cards](#)" for materials that have been challenged in neighboring libraries or districts.
- Reserve judgment. Do not form opinions on materials based on provocative passages presented out of context.
- Practice what you will say if someone challenges material. Role playing with others can be an effective method to prepare.
- Share information about challenges with neighboring libraries and districts, including your response.
- Learn more about the First Amendment: [Notable First Amendment Cases](#), [First Amendment FAQ](#)

- [Report Challenges](#) to ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom.

Additional Resources: [Materials Concern Checklist](#)

What Can I Do If Someone Makes A Challenge At My Library?

- First, listen to the person to understand their concerns. Use active listening skills to facilitate a resolution.
- If a resolution is not possible, explain the library's reconsideration policy.
- If their behavior disrupts the library, refer to your library use policy.
- At all times, follow your library's reconsideration policy. Following the policy ensures a consistent process, respects the rights of everyone in the community, and upholds expectations.

Sometimes, library staff, teachers, or board members may be the ones to file the challenge. Direct them through the same reconsideration policy, connecting them with the appropriate contact within the library.

Additional Resources:

- [How to Respond to Challenges and Concerns about Library Resources](#)
- [Formal Reconsideration](#)
- [Beyond Banned Books: Defending Intellectual Freedom throughout Your Library](#)
- [Most Important Thing in Responding to Materials Challenge](#)
- Contact the [Office of Intellectual Freedom](#)

How Do I Respond To Complaints Of Providing Inappropriate Materials Or Services In The Library?

When responding to complaints online, first check your social media policy and/or check with library leadership to determine if you can block or delete posts that are defamatory or become harassing. Do not engage.

When responding to complaints in person, listen and attempt to gather more information. Try to determine the situation, materials, or services of concern. Like many challenges, it may not be directed to you personally.

If this feels like an attack on you or your institution, keep the conversation focused on the library. For example, you might say, "That accusation is not true. Our library believes in the freedom to read and the right of every individual to make their own choice." Always have access to your Reconsideration Policy available so they can file their objections formally.

Refer to your Behavior Policy if necessary.

Additional Resources:

- [Concern Library Attempting to "Indoctrinate" Children](#)
- [Accusations of Providing Pornography](#)

How Can Libraries And Library Workers Defend Themselves Against Organized Efforts At Censorship?

All libraries should have in place a current [selection and reconsideration policy](#). This should include procedures on how to address challenges. Consider including requirements that the individual have standing of some kind, such as: living in the library's district, having a library card, or having a child attending the school. Libraries may also consider allowing only one active challenge per person during a certain time frame.

Uniting communities in support of the freedom to read is also vital to facing these well organized and well-funded groups challenging materials across the country. Unite Against Book Bans has an [Action Toolkit](#) that anyone can use to develop talking points, contact decision makers and media, organize, and spread the word through social media.

Additional Resources:

- [Fight Censorship](#)
- [Grassroots 101: How to Save Your Library From Organized Censorship](#)
- [Unite Against Book Bans Action Toolkit](#)

Where Can Library Workers Go For Support?

- [ALA Fight Censorship](#) includes numerous resources for library workers, including advice on how to prepare for a challenge.
 - [State and Local Resources](#)
- [Freedom to Read Foundation \(Legal & Financial Assistance\)](#) protects and defends the First Amendment to the Constitution and supports the right of libraries to collect and individuals to access information.
- [LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund](#) provides financial support to library workers who have been denied employment rights for defending intellectual freedom or who have been discriminated against on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, age, disability, or place of national origin.
- [National Coalition Against Censorship Resource Guide](#) provides help to librarians, educators, students, and anyone else who seeks to promote free expression and challenge censorship.
- [PEN America Online Harassment Guide](#) offers strategies on how to defend yourself and others.
 - [Pen America Tip Sheet](#)
- [Unite Against Book Bans Action Toolkit](#) includes help on grassroots organizing, talking points, and advice on how to contact politicians and the media.