



CENSORSHIP_[censor2]

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The Definition

Censorship is derived from the Latin censere, meaning "to declare formally," "to describe officially," "to evaluate," or "to assess." In the heyday of the Roman Empire, Roman Censors were charged with the responsibility of counting the population. This responsibility eventually evolved into the administration of Roman morality and behavior.

Censorship continues to be an issue of imposing morality and behavior. According to Henry Reichman, a staff member and author for AASA, censorship is "the removal, suppression or restricted circulation of literary, artistic, or educational materials--of images, ideas, and information--on the grounds that these are morally or otherwise objectionable in light of standards applied by the censor".ⁱ In 1966, *Ginsburg vs United States*, Justice Potter Stewart stated that "censorship reflects a society's lack of confidence in itself. It is a hallmark of an authoritarian regime...".ⁱⁱ

These two definitions can reflect an adversarial approach to the issue of censorship, one that polarizes those involved with the censorship issue. Reichman also cautions that "the challenge process itself is a legitimate and very important avenue of communication" between professional educators, parents, citizen/parent groups and school boards.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Debate

Reichman identifies four primary motivations which underpin the censorship debate: family values, political views, religion, and minority rights. These categories are often based on a profound fear and distrust of pluralism, and an unexpressed desire to homogenize society. Suppression of information may also issue from a misunderstanding of the roles and purposes of education.^{iv} As motivation moves into action, censorship becomes more than an intellectual debate. Material challenges often lead to litigation, embroiling the issue into the judicial system.

The Law

As a legal issue, censorship is addressed in the first amendment to the United States Constitution. Yet the seemingly clear and concise legal direction of the first amendment is interpreted through the emotional and political views of teachers, administrators, parents, and school library media specialists. Interpretation invariably opens heated debate concerning censorship and access in school media centers, which is then reflected through the court systems.

The large body of judicial opinion concerning censorship and intellectual freedom "is somewhat inconclusive and contradicting."^v However, three basic principles can be drawn from court records:

- * An individual's personal beliefs may not be used to justify the removal of school resources.
- * Resources may be removed for reasons of space, obsolescence, lack of educational suitability, or "pervasive vulgarity."
- * School board policies and procedures must be followed in all reviews of library and instructional materials.^{vi}

In light of inconclusive court decisions, many scholars feel that the courts may no longer be the most effective means to ensure intellectual freedom in the school library media center.^{vii} School library media specialists must be aware of the challenges inherent in censorship litigation and develop policies and procedures which protect the rights of the information user, and yet provide a framework for handling challenges and selection considerations.

The Policy

Intellectual freedom is promoted through a recognition of the value of information in a variety of formats. But even the most carefully chosen materials are subject to question.

School library media centers should have an official board approved policy for the selection of materials. This policy should include: a statement of policy which outlines the objectives of selection and responsibility for selection; a statement of selection procedures which outlines the criteria and procedure for selection; and, importantly, procedures for the reconsideration of challenged materials. This policy, formulated through the efforts of many, should reflect the philosophy of the school district and define the role of selection in supporting this philosophy.

Hopkins states that "as the first library that many children and young adults are introduced to and use on a continuing basis, school library media centers play a vital role in promoting intellectual freedom."^{viii} The policies and procedures for the selection and evaluation of materials are central to the development of the library media center collection. At the outset, sound policy and defined procedures act as the best defense against censorship.

Notes

1. Henry Reichman, **Censorship and Selection: Issues and Answers for Schools** (Chicago: American Library Association and the American Association of School Administrators, 1993), 2.
2. Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, comp., **Intellectual Freedom Manual**, 4th ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1992), ix.
3. Reichman, 5.

4. Reichman, 16.
5. Herbert N. Foerstel, **Banned in the U.S.A.** (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 66.
6. Reichman, 89.
7. Foerstel, 96-97.
8. Dianne McAfee Hopkins, "Toward a Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing the Outcome of Challenges to Library Materials in School Settings," **Library and Information Science Research** 11 (1989):248.

Books

Branin, Joseph J. "Collection Management and Intellectual Freedom." In **Collection Management for the 1990s**, edited by Joseph J. Branin. 148-55. Chicago: American Library Association, 1993.

Discusses the issue of self-censorship and library collections. His article suggests policies and procedures that, if followed, would strengthen collection development practices and guard against self-censorship by information specialists responsible for acquisitions.

Eberhart, George M., comp. "Issues." In **The Whole Library Handbook: Current Data, Professional Advice, and Curiosa about Libraries and Library Services**. 380-405. Chicago: American Library Association, 1991.

The American Library Association provides general reference information and discussion of intellectual freedom and access issues in chapter nine of this practical handbook. This section includes the ALA Library Bill of Rights with related interpretations and proceeds to outline and analyze specific "freedoms" including the freedom to read and the freedom to view. The handbook presents practical information concerning case studies of challenged books, what to do when the censor comes, and coping with law enforcement inquiries.

Foerstel, Herbert N. **Banned in the U.S.A.: A Reference Guide to Book Censorship in Schools and Public Libraries**. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. 231p. \$45.00. LC93-29095. ISBN 0-313-28517-9.

In the introduction of his book, Foerstel offers a concise history of censorship, reminding the reader that one can find evidence of censorship throughout human history. He surveys this issue by examining some of the major cases involving censorship and legal precedence. The authors of some of the most frequently banned books offer their comments as well. An excellent source for a synopsis of fifty of the most frequently challenged books of the 90's and the repercussions of retaining them in libraries. Several appendices list the People for the American Way's most frequently challenged books, materials, and authors as well as states with the highest occurrences of challenges.

Green, Jonathan. **The Encyclopedia of Censorship**. New York: Facts on File, 1990. 400p. \$45.00. ISBN 0-8160-1594-5.

An encyclopedic organization to the components of censorship. The encyclopedia includes the history, development, and present day state of censorship issues, and includes some limited international scope. **The Encyclopedia of Censorship** consists of comprehensive entries about specific trials, legal decisions, and important individuals involved in the censorship debate and general articles on intellectual freedom's philosophical questions. Many banned or challenged works are also discussed with information about the history and resolution of each challenge. The work also provides a cross-reference index and a bibliography of other censorship resources.

Harer, John B. **Intellectual Freedom: a Reference Handbook**. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1992. 315p. \$39.50. LC92-35565. ISBN 0-87436-669-0.

A general discussion of the definition of intellectual freedom and an examination of the philosophical approaches to this issue. The text further provides insight into legislation and case law, and includes sections on relevant biographical sketches and organizations-both for and against censorship restraint. A valuable aspect of this monograph is the extensive bibliography of related resources. This bibliography provides nearly 100 annotated pages of print and nonprint materials relating to censorship and intellectual freedom.

Marsh, Dave. **50 Ways to Fight Censorship and Important Facts to Know About the Censors**. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991. 128p. \$5.95. LC91-3209. ISBN 1-56025-011-9.

Effective and creative methods to support intellectual freedom. Suggestions enlist readers to take direct action based on knowledge of what censorship and intellectual freedom entails. This resource includes many practical features of interest, including addresses and phone numbers of various music, bookstore, and video retailers; and related bibliographies of organizations specific to certain censorship issues. Each mini-chapter provides a discussion of specific ways to fight censorship and the concrete information necessary to put words into action.

Noble, William. **Bookbanning In America: Who Bans Books? -And Why**. Middlebury, VT: Paul S. Eriksson, 1990. 349p. LC90-3413. ISBN 0-8397-1080-1.

Historical background on the history of book banning and censorship in the United States, as well as how and why it happens. Through anecdotes, interviews, and actual trial transcripts, Noble shows how censorship affects politics, religion, social status, education and publishing. Included is a bibliography, source notes, and lists of books and authors that have been banned or challenged.

Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, comp. **Intellectual Freedom Manual**. 4th ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 1992. 300p. \$27.00. LC92-10699. ISBN 0-8389-3412-9.

Lists the official statements and interpretations concerning intellectual freedom as put forth by the ALA. An essential source for developing policy statements for all types of libraries. A list of organizations that offer assistance to professionals involved in censorship challenges is also included.

Reichman, Henry. **Censorship and Selection: Issues and Answers for Schools**. Chicago: American Library Association and the American Association of School Administrators, 1993. 172p. \$18.00. LC93-19711. ISBN 0-87652-129-4.

A comprehensive examination of censorship in the schools. Topics included in this monograph range from a basic definition of censorship to current issues in censorship and developing selection/reconsideration policies that address this critical issue.

Simmons, John S. **Censorship: a Threat to Reading, Learning, Thinking**. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1994. 279p. ISBN 0-87207-123-5.

This collection of essays provides an overview of current issues in censorship. The authors included are professionals from universities, public schools, and the American

Library Association. Topics include discussions about the components of the problems, some current challenges and complaints, and how to react to challenges when they occur. Each essay includes references for further reading. This text also provides a comprehensive bibliography, and subject and author index.

Articles

Boardman, Edna, et al. "Censorship and Intellectual Freedom in the Schools." **Book Report** 11 (March-April 1993): 14-27, 65.

Includes seven articles that discuss censorship and intellectual freedom in junior and senior high schools. Highlights include access to appropriate information; library material selection; dealing with complaints; a list of potentially controversial titles and topics; a history of book burning; the censorship of fiction; weeding versus censorship; and resources on censorship.

Caywood, Carolyn. "Censorproof Your Library." **School Library Journal** 40 (December 1994): 44.

Offers practical advice for handling challenges and advises librarians to be prepared, get the community on the side of Intellectual Freedom, and to avoid overreacting. The librarian is advised to seek a win-win solution.

Ellison, Kerry L. "Satan In the Library: Are Children In Danger?" **School Library Journal** 40 (October 1994): 46.

Uses Halloween, magic, and occult books to offer a general discussion about censorship issues. Several recently challenged or banned books are discussed, and the author offers persuasive arguments for libraries to respect different needs and beliefs by standing firm on censorship issues.

Flanders, Bruce. "A Delicate Balance (Internet access)." **School Library Journal** 40 (October 1994): 32-35.

A discussion of Internet access provided to students, and covers such topics as access to questionable materials, parental role and involvement, and policies and procedures. Provides an example Code of Conduct, and a list of references which includes Internet addresses.

Hicks, Robert D. "The Devil In the Library." **School Library Journal** 37 (April 1991): 53.

Discusses the controversy of occult books in the school library. Encourages librarians to require extraordinary evidence, to back extraordinary claims, before removing challenged material.

Hielsberg, Amy. "Self-censorship Starts Early." **American Libraries** 25 (September 1994): 768-770.

Discusses the concept of self-censorship, or how librarians resolve conflicts between personal beliefs and intellectual freedom. Written in first person and recounts an

experience which confronted the author with her own self-censorship. A bibliography is included.

Hopkins, Dianne McAfee. "Factors Influencing the Outcome of Challenged Materials in Secondary Schools." **School Library Media Annual** 11 (1993): 167-168.

Summarizes the results of a national study of library media material challenges in secondary public school libraries that was conducted during the 1989-90 school year. Hopkins also identifies key factors that influence whether challenges to library media materials resulted in retention, restriction, or removal of the materials from the library media center.

Hopkins, Dianne McAfee. "Perspectives of secondary Library Media Specialists about Material Challenges." **School Library Media Quarterly** 39 (January 1993): 26-30.

This national study identified and discussed the factors that affected the retention, restriction, or removal of library materials in secondary public schools. The author also offers recommendations. Included in the article are extensive statistical tables, charting the results of the study.

Hopkins, Dianne McAfee. "Put It In Writing: What You Should Know About Challenges to School Library Materials." **School Library Journal** 39 (January 1993): 26-30.

Concentrates on the six outcome factors which were found to influence the outcome of challenges to library media center materials. The article specifically focuses on the differences between oral and written challenges, using the national intellectual freedom study. Includes a bibliography.

Hunter, Dorothea and Winifred Madsen. "The Enemy Within." **School Library Journal** 39 (March 1993): 140.

Presents an example of a censorship attempt in the Detroit Public School System. The titles that were challenged are listed. The role of the book selection committee is discussed. Help from outside organizations, as well as, tips for dealing with censors are discussed.

Kimball, Dale. "How To Arm For Battle With Pressure Groups: Two Superintendents Detail Their Strategies." **The School Administrator** 49 (April 1992): 14-18.

Two superintendents discuss the challenges that their districts had faced and strategies for dealing with them. The second administrative report deals specifically with a legal challenge to a school-wide reading program. This article provides an administrative view of censorship through a case study approach, offering practical advice and guidance for obtaining community support.

LaRue, James. "Reading With the Enemy." **Wilson Library Bulletin** 68 (January 1994): 43-45.

LaRue lists three premises of censorship to further develop his own experiences with censorship issues. He specifically warns against dehumanization in the censorship debate.

Manley, Will. "The Manley Arts: Madonna, How Do I Love Thee, Let Me Count the Ways," **Booklist** 89 (January 1, 1993): 773.

Offers a commentary on the dilemma faced by librarians over the controversial book, **Sex**, by Madonna. Manley offers 20 good reasons for librarians to acquire the book, and suggests that even "timid" librarians should be ready to "fight the good fight".

Marsh, Dave. "Fifty Ways to Fight Censorship," **Emergency Librarian** 20 (September-October 1992): 26.

A list of fifty ways to fight censorship. Provides a beginning point for staff discussion and development.

Pico, Steven. "An Introduction to Censorship." **School Library Media Quarterly** 18 (Winter 1990): 84-87.

A personal account of the 1982 landmark Supreme Court Case on censorship of library materials, Pico vs Island Trees. Pico, who was a seventeen year old student at the time of the case, relates his experiences through a speech to the Missouri Association of School Librarians.

Sadowski, Michael, ed. "41% Of Censorship Attempts Successful, New Report Says." **School Library Journal** 39 (October 1993): 10-11.

Relates a growing success trend in library material challenges as outlined by two primary national organizations that monitor censorship, the People for the American Way and the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom. The article includes a list of most frequently challenged books in schools, 1992-93, and phone numbers for more information.

Stover, Mark. "Libraries, Censorship, and Social Protest." **American Libraries** 25 (November 1994): 914-916.

Stover provides an intellectual debate which stresses the position of the librarian between two important freedoms, the freedom to protest and the freedom from censorship. This article will challenge the reader to reconsider their own censorship and selection approaches, and to consider the validity of social protest through material challenges.

ERIC Reports

DuPree, Vi. **Restrictive Access to Books in School Library Media Centers in Georgia**. 62p. 1993. EDRS Price-MF01 Plus Postage. ED357755.

Grigg, Karen. **Censorship and Selection**. 63p. 1993. EDRS Price-MF01/PC03 Plus Postage. ED360955.

Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse: Fourth Annual Report. July 1, 1990-June 30, 1991. 37p. 1992. EDRS Price-MF01/PC02 Plus Postage. ED344607.

Selection Policies and Reevaluation Procedures: A Workbook. Stillwater, MN: Minnesota Educational Media Organization (MEMO), 1991. 98p. EDRS Price-MF01/PF04 Plus Postage. ED356804.

Kit

People For the American Way. "An Activist's Guide To Protecting the Freedom To Learn." Washington, D.C.: People For the American Way, 1994.

Listservs

Subscribe to ALAOIF. Send and e-mail request to: listserv@uicvm.cc.vic.edu

This listserv provides an ongoing forum for discussion of intellectual freedom questions and challenges. It is organized through the American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom.

Subscribe to LM_NET firstname lastname. Send and e-mail request to: listserv@suvvm.syr.edu

Open to all school library media specialists and can be used for the sharing of ideas and information, to link programs, to make contacts and to ask for input.

Video

Columbia University. **Censorship Or Selection: Choosing Books For Public Schools.** Alexandria, VA: Public Broadcasting Service, 1992. (58 minutes).

Organizations

American Library Association
Intellectual Freedom Committee
50 E. Huron St.
Chicago, IL 60611

National Coalition Against Censorship
2 S. 64th St.
New York, NY 10023

Center for Constitutional Rights
666 Broadway, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10012

People for the American Way
2000 M. Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Council of Teacher of English
1111 Kenyon Rd.
Urbana, Il 61801

American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

First Amendment Lawyer's Association
c/o Wayne Giampietro
125 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2700
Chicago, Il 60606

National Education Association
1201 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

American Association of School Librarians
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Il 60611

Freedom of Information Center
University of Missouri
20 Walter Williams Hall
Columbia, Missouri 65211

National Education Association Commission
on Professional Rights and Responsibilities
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

ⁱ.Henry Reichman, Censorship and Selection: Issues and Answers for Schools (Chicago: American Library Association and the American Association of School Administrators, 1993) 2.

ⁱⁱ.Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, comp., Intellectual Freedom Manual, 4th ed., (Chicago: American Library Association, 1992) ix.

ⁱⁱⁱ.Reichman 5.

^{iv}.Reichman 16.

v. Herbert N. Foerstel, Banned in the U.S.A. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994) 66.

vi. Reichman 89.

vii. Foerstel 96-97.

viii. Dianne McAfee Hopkins, "Toward a Conceptual Model of Factors Influencing the Outcome of Challenges to Library Materials in School Settings," Library and Information Science Research 11 (1989): 248.