

Censorship in American Schools and Libraries:
A Local Survey

By

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A Local Survey

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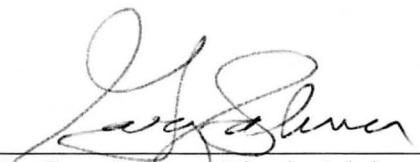
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ABSTRACT

The research involves more than fifteen local high schools, middle schools, and public libraries. The research's aim is to investigate on the actual state of censorship in children's literature in local educational institutions and in the entire public library system of the Mahoning Valley. After historical and sociological analyses of the censorship phenomenon as a whole, the statistics on the most frequently banned books at a local area are compared with the national survey compiled by the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom. A subsequent local vs. national comparison of the reasons why such books cannot enter classrooms, school libraries and public libraries is done. Finally, the YSU English Festival is taken as an example of best practice against censorship. The results of the survey clarify what Youngstown students grow up reading, why it is so, and how this affects society as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These past two years have been a long journey for me. I have come from far away, not knowing where I was headed, and I have covered a distance I never thought possible. Now that it is time to leave, I know I couldn't have done it without the help and support of many people who believed in me and have never left my side. My first thought goes to my husband Simone, who with enormous patience and love, has helped me go through the good and the bad times, the disappointments and the achievements, the loneliness and the fear, never letting me give up. Thanks for making me strong, always. My biggest gratitude goes to Dr. Salvner, for ALWAYS being there for me, for guiding me and helping me in any possible way, and for giving me the chance to be part of a wonderful group and an exciting team – you are really the best! Thanks to all the Gas, Professors and students at the English Department, who have accepted me and have made me smile every single day. Thanks also to Dr. Sarkissian and Dr. Locatelli, for encouraging me all along and for giving me precious advice. Finally, thanks to all the American friends who were there for me when I most needed them – you have made this an adventure that I will never forget!

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*"Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation
must begin by subduing the freeness of speech."
Benjamin Franklin*

INTRODUCTION

Walk into any American library or public school, and mention to English teachers and librarians your intent to read, and maybe even debate in class, novels such as *The Chocolate War*, *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Harry Potter*, and watch what happens. You will notice fading smiles, furrowing brows, a sudden twitching in their faces - sometimes even fear in their eyes. The reason for all this stirring is because they, as educators, are nowadays standing on the front lines of a harsh battle against censorship.

These same librarians and teachers have agreed to voice their opinions and, most importantly, report their first-hand experiences with censorship. Thanks to individual teachers and a network of dedicated librarians, my research involved sixteen local high schools and middle schools, twenty-two teachers, eleven school librarians and sixteen public libraries. Through their recounting of positive and negative experiences of censorship, I was able to map the actual state of censorship, pertaining to children's and young adult literature in the Mahoning Valley.

The first chapter introduces the censorship phenomenon, by considering it from an historical and sociological point of view; it should help the reader understand and interpret the results of the following chapter.

The second and third chapters, which can be considered the core of this thesis, compare the statistics on the most frequently banned books in a local area, with the results of a national survey compiled by the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom. A subsequent local versus national comparison of the reasons why such books cannot enter classrooms, school libraries and public libraries, has also been done. In these

two chapters the focus was respectively on schools, school librarians and the public library system of the Mahoning Valley.

The fourth, and last chapter examines an example of positive response to censorship. Thanks to the English Festival of YSU, many challenged books have indeed the chance of being read by local young readers. It is an event that repeats itself year after year and has a tremendous impact on the community.

In the end, my hope is that the results of the survey will help clarify what Youngstown students grow up reading, why they read what they do, and how what they read or don't read affects society as a whole, and most importantly, what is being done locally, to challenge censorship.

"The history of censorship is one of inhumanity, of lives and livelihoods lost, talent or genius snuffed out, work unfinished, withheld, deleted or destroyed. Literary history and the present are dark with silences. It is also a history of rebellion, of defiance in the face of mortal danger and perseverance against harassment, discouragement and disdain". Tillie Olsen

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WHO CENSORS WHAT, AND WHY?

Introduction

Censorship is nothing new. For centuries, books have been banned, suppressed and censored because of political, religious, sexual and social reasons, according to the tastes and beliefs of a given time or place. When we think of censorship, we may believe that it is a relatively recent phenomena. In reality, it is as old as the written word, as the following historical incidents reported in *120 Banned Books; Censorship Histories of World Literature*, demonstrate:

- In 399 B.C., Socrates was accused of introducing new divinities and corrupting the young;
- In 387 B.C., Plato suggested purging Homer for immature readers;
- In 250 B.C., All teachings of Confucius were banned;
- In 35 A.D., Caligula tried to suppress *The Odyssey* because it promoted Greek ideals of freedom;
- In 1644, at the height of the English Civil War, John Milton published *Areopagitica*, the first major treatise on freedom of the press.

As times changed, such formerly banned books and authors have become "classics" and have entered the curriculum of studies of generations of students around the world, as James Joyce's *Ulysses* and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* demonstrate. On the other hand, once-acceptable books have been deemed as

inappropriate, as the history of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* shows us. In many cases, the same book has been banned at different times for different reasons, as was the case with Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, Voltaire's *Candide* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Sometimes, the same people who defended Duong Thu Huong's *Paradise of the Blind* condemned Walter Dean Myers's *Fallen Angels* and many who defended works by academics such as C.S. Lewis (*The Chronicles of Narnia*), and J.R.R. Tolkien (*The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*), condemned J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series as promoting Satanic worship, occult rituals and witchcraft. It has also happened that all books by an author were condemned, as was the case of Honore' de Balzac and, more recently, of Judy Blume. Also, an author's lifestyle or political ideas may result in the banning of his/her works, as occurred for Oscar Wilde, P.P. Pasolini and Leonard Beltier. Finally, threats to authority in general are also sure to spike challenges, as it has happened to such diverse books as J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. (Dawn B. Sova, IX)

These scattered examples throughout history demonstrate that the reasons for which books have been banned, suppressed and censored are often highly subjective and are closely linked with the religious, historical and cultural background of the censor. Also, the success or failure of the censor depends more upon how 'strong' his voice is, than upon the merits or faults of the book on trial. In short, it can be said that if books do not change, the social climate sure does. Censorship therefore cannot possibly be defined once and for all: it is an ever-changing beast that multiplies, grows and changes its form. Censorship is part of history and will never disappear;

what we can do, is understand what patterns censors follow and define who these censors really are.

What is censored?

The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, has reported that between 1990 and 2000, of 6,364 challenges¹:

- 1,607 were challenges to “sexually explicit” material (up 161 since 1999);
- 1,427 to material considered to use “offensive language” (up 165 since 1999);
- 1,256 to material considered “unsuited to age group” (up 89 since 1999);
- 842 to material with an “occult theme or promoting the occult or Satanism” (up 69 since 1999);
- 737 to material considered to be “violent” (up 107 since 1999);
- 515 to material with a homosexual theme or “promoting homosexuality” (up 18 since 1999);
- 419 to material “promoting a religious viewpoint” (up 22 since 1999);
- 317 challenges to material which included “nudity” (up 20 since 1999);
- 267 challenges to material with “racism” (up 22 since 1999);
- 224 challenges to “sex education” material (up 7 since 1999);
- 202 challenges to material considered “anti-family” (up 9 since 1999). (ALA Website)

If we read *Censorship in the 1970's; Some Ways to Handle It When It Comes (and It Will)* by Donelson, we can add 6 other reasons for censoring a material:

- it is seen as an attack on the American dream or the country;
- it is labeled as peacenik or pacifist;
- it is irreligious or against religion or, specifically, un-Christian;

¹ Please note that the number of challenges and the number of reasons for those challenges do not match, because works are often challenged on more than one ground.

- it promotes racial harmony or stresses civil rights or the civil rights movement;
- it is identified as drug-book, pro or con;
- it presents inappropriate adolescent behavior and therefore is likely to cause other young people to act inappropriately. (27)

Ed Jenkinson's article *Dirty Dictionaries, Obscene Nursery Rhymes and Burned Books*, and other later articles by him, add several likely targets such as:

- works of "questionable" writers;
- texts promoting role playing;
- texts using improper grammar;
- books with sexist stereotypes;
- books that do not promote the Protestant ethic;
- books that do not promote patriotism;
- texts containing "depressing thoughts". (16)

Depressing thoughts really do fill our mind once we finish reading this list. In reality, as Nicholas J. Karolides, Margaret Bald and Dawn B. Sova explain in *120 Banned Books; Censorship Histories of World Literature*, the list can be shortened to four simple points: literature suppressed on political grounds, on sexual grounds, on social grounds and finally, on religious grounds. Together, these four points include all of the above-mentioned reasons for censorship and if we analyze the historical development of each one of them, we are given a panoramic far more exhaustive than any existing list. Most of all, we come to realize that censorship, besides being as old as the world, it also has no geographical boundaries whatsoever.

Censorship for political reasons

As Nicholas J. Karolides explains, when we hear a phrase such as “suppressed on political grounds”, we automatically associate it with historical dictatorships such as Hitler’s Nazi Germany, Mussolini’s Fascist Italy, Stalin’s communist Soviet Union, Suharto’s Indonesia, Pinochet’s Chile and Abacha’s Nigeria. We shouldn’t let our mind drift too far, though, because the governments of today’s democracies still censor certain critical material and are openly (or covertly) against freedom of expression. Such is the case of, among others, post-communist Ukraine, Russia, Turkey, and surprisingly, United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.

We should also understand that censorship for political reasons does not only generate from national governments: the second common source of such activity, especially in the United States, is at the local community level. School board members or citizens, individually or in groups, attack the material used in schools or available in school libraries because, as substantial tax payers, they feel their political (and national) ideas should be reflected in the community schools they support financially. In contrast to censorship challenges at a national level, challenges at a local level are aimed at the political values and images that children are receiving. Until the Cold War of the ‘80s, the chief targets were socialism, communism, and the portrayal of the Soviet Union. The portrayal of the United States was no less important, for if the Soviet Union was not to be viewed positively, the United States certainly was not to be viewed negatively. Today, critics still think it is unpatriotic to examine the flaws of the American society and they become particularly concerned when past and present policies of their government are questioned in school textbooks and library books. Needless to say, if the country is *also* at war, certain texts necessarily become the target of challenges.

What also distinguishes some challenges made on political grounds is the fact that not all of the attacks are openly made on such grounds; it is easier to start a challenge based on offensive language, rather than on the political elements of a text. This is mask is the 'hidden agenda' of political censorship (qtd in Karolides, Bald and Sova, 2).

Many books, such as *Animal Farm*, *I Am the Cheese*, *My Brother Sam is Dead* and *1984* fall under this category.

Censorship for sexual reasons

Dawn B. Sova states that "Changing social mores have moved many books formerly forbidden because of explicit sexual content out of locked cabinets and onto the open shelves in libraries and bookstores. Many such books have also entered high school and college classrooms to be read by students who little realize their notorious past" (311). Little do students know in fact, of the turbulent history of books such as D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* or Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. They don't know for example, that in 1961 the United States Supreme Court pondered if such books were lewd or literary and it wasn't until 1969 that they became reading requirements in college literary courses. The same can be said for James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and Voltaire's *Candide*.

So what makes a book "erotic" and "classic" instead of "obscene" and "pornographic"? The difference is still not clear today, or better – the borderline changes with the times, so that a novel considered pornographic and obscene slowly becomes acceptable and maybe even enters the realm of the classics.

What is sure is that dirty words alone are not enough to make a work "obscene"; in the 19th and 20th century many books were banned because they discussed or alluded to prostitution, premarital sex and adultery. Among them we find

Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. Neither of them can be defined as an erotic or pornographic work, yet both books were banned for their sexual content. It wasn't until 1957, when the U.S. Supreme Court changed its definition of obscenity to works that had sexual content but no "redeeming social importance", that the validity of such novels was seriously pondered (311).

We see therefore that society's view of sex has changed and many books that would once have been condemned as pornographic or obscene, now become best-sellers. One is left to hope that for those many books that today are facing the same trial, will eventually follow a similar fate. This is the case, among many, of Judy Blume's *Forever*, Marion Dane Bauer *Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence* and Chris Crutcher's *Athletic Shorts: Six Short Stories*.

Censorship for religious reasons

If censorship as a phenomenon was born together with the written word, censorship for religious reasons began when the first religion saw the light of day.

Unfortunately, the problem hasn't just been religion in itself—from the earliest times religion has been undeniably connected with politics, and it still is today. Manipulation of religious sensibilities for political purposes has a long and sordid history, with recorded examples dating to the trial of Socrates in 399 B.C (Bald, 198).

No country is excluded from censorship based on religious grounds; wherever religion is fervent, censorship sprouts and develops intricate foliage. One of the most successful and enduring censorial devices in history is *The Index of Forbidden Books* dating back to four centuries ago, which was finally abolished by the Vatican in 1966. In the 42nd and final Index issued in 1948 and in print until 1966, a total of 4126 books were still prohibited to Catholics: 1331 from the 17th century or earlier, 1186

from the 18th century, 1354 from the 19th and 255 from the 20th century. Though many were obscure theological titles or works that were controversial in their day but had been forgotten for centuries, literary and philosophical classics by dozens of authors of the western world were also included. Among them were Defoe, Descartes, Diderot, Flaubert, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Locke, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Pascal, Rousseau, Spinoza, Stendhal, Voltaire and Zola. Rather than banning books, the church's post-Index book censorship has focused primarily on sanctioning dissident Catholic theologians for their writing or pressuring (with every mean) the occasional Catholic author to hew to orthodoxy (198).

If this has been the case for Catholic countries, authors in Muslim countries still face today increasing threats to their freedom of expression and safety by governments that censor or prosecute those whose writing offends Islamic religious authorities. Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, for example, is the most notorious international case of book censorship of the 20th century: the author was sentenced to death by the Ayatollah Khomeini, for blasphemy against Islam. (197)

In the United States, although the First Amendment prevents government authorities from practicing religious censorship, individuals and organized religious fundamentalists have successfully pressed to remove books viewed as anti-Christian from public and school libraries and curricula. The majority of these instances have focused on perceived immorality, profane language or treatment of sexuality, rather than religious content per se. But their targets also have included textbooks that teach evolution without presenting the alternative theory of "creationism", books said to promote the religion of "secular humanism" and, in a growing trend, material with references to Eastern religions, "New Age" thought, witchcraft or the occult, such as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books. It is a phenomenon as old as history and now

more than ever, with the current wave of religious fundamentalism, it has become daily news (198).

Censorship for social reasons

Censorship for social reasons is the hardest phenomenon to define because the broad nature of obscenity laws has made possible a wide interpretation of what constitutes an "obscene" literary work, and therefore what is fit or unfit for society. The label 'obscene' is the one most used by censors because virtually everything can fall under this umbrella. As a rule, a book that contains a subject matter and characters that do not conform to the social, racial or sexual standards of their censors is banned for social reasons. Usually this happens when the subject matter is drug use, gangs or simply when slang and "vulgar" language appears in the text (Sova, 395).

Novels that deal with interracial/homosexual relationships, child abuse, rape and domestic violence are considered unacceptable to the standards of a given community. They are unacceptable not because of sex but because they bring certain social problems into the spotlight. These are social factors distinct from erotic, religious and political content.

Literary works such as Nancy Garden's *Annie on My Mind*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Walter Dean Myers' *Fallen Angels* are an example of such literary censorship.

Who are the censors?

Who is the average censor? The censor is usually the average Joe Citizen. Someone who firmly believes he or she is doing right. Many believe that certain materials are so offensive, or present ideas that are so hateful and destructive to society, that they simply must be shed from the rest of the community. Others worry that younger or weaker people will be negatively influenced by bad ideas put forth in

some literature. Some believe firmly that there is a very clear distinction between right and wrong and they are the ones who can point the difference.

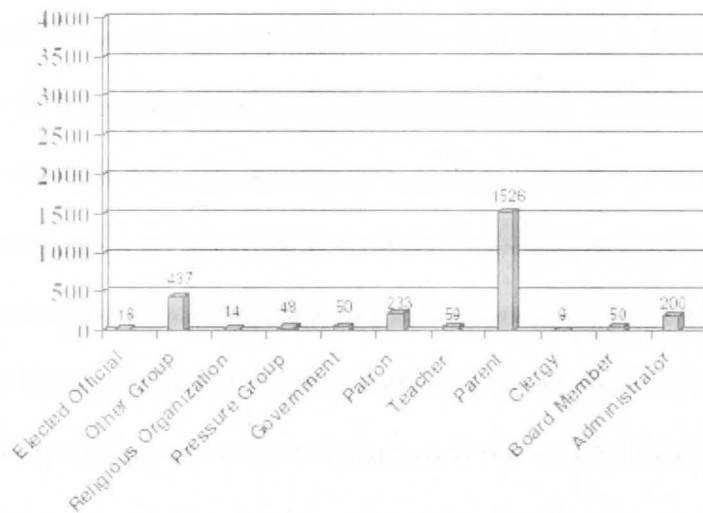
As mentioned earlier in the chapter, censorship can sometimes generate from a government, a political party or a particular religious or cultural institution. Most of the times however, the local citizens are the ones who will take upon themselves the responsibility of 'keeping an eye' on the rest of us.

Kenneth L. Donelson and Alleen Pace Nilsen list three different kinds of censors and pressure groups: 1) those from the right, the conservatives; 2) those from the left, the liberals; and 3) an amorphous band of educators, publishers, editors and distributors who we might assume be opposed to censorship (381).

Three things should be said about them: first of all, whatever the political ideals behind the censors, the censorial rhetoric, messianic fervor and the coercive methods are similar. Second of all, such censors and pressure groups can attack from the outside, as single parents or organizations against a certain school or library, or they can come from within the school and library system. A teacher, principal or administrator can condemn the use of a book, (because of peer pressure, fear or personal ideals) and limit its use in classrooms and the school library. Finally, censors can be unorganized single individuals, or very organized groups or associations such as Save Our Schools (SOS); People of America Responding to Educational Needs of Today's Society (PARENTS0; Citizens United for Responsible Education (CURE); Let's Improve Today's Education (LITE); American Christians in Education (ACE) and Let Our Values Emerge (LOVE).

The OIF Censorship Database for 2000-2004 clearly demonstrates this situation. As we see from the following chart, the vast majority of challenges are brought by parents, followed by 'other groups', patrons and administrators.

OIF Censorship Database 2000-2004 Initiator of Challenge



Why is it so? The OIF thinks this is caused by the steady erosion of family, church and neighborhood communities, which traditionally passed down information and moral guidelines about sex, drugs and crime. Because these values are no longer present in family units and living environments, there is a reactionary influence from parents, teachers, and even students who urge schools to fill in the gaps. Public institutions are called upon to 'educate', 'set an example' and 'reproach' when necessary. They are asked to take upon themselves the role of parents. This is why the majority of challenges today, in the United States, occur in schools, school libraries and public libraries.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the reasons for banning or censoring books and authors are highly subjective, and depend on the historical and sociological background of the censor. Each community has its own censors and the following chapter demonstrates how the reasons behind censorship change, as well as its modality, as we focus more and more on a specific community.

The city of Youngstown is an ideal setting for this survey: it is a small Midwestern city that was once a prosperous steel town, but was later plagued by a recession during the 80s. Youngstown can in fact be seen as a microcosm, because it is representative of all the social and cultural problems that the US is facing as a nation. Youngstown is struggling with unemployment, poverty, criminality and provincialism, but at the same time, its community is striving for a better future and hopes the city will soon see a rebirth of local industries and businesses. In such a problematic social context it is extremely interesting to see how education is affected, and how it reacts to local pressures. It is also interesting to see how, in such an environment, literature suddenly becomes very important, if not vital for local youth.

*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.
The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*

2

BANNED BOOKS IN MAHONING VALLEY SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Introduction

The purpose of the survey was to collect recent data on the censorship phenomenon, from local schools and public libraries. I collected personal responses, reports of challenges, reading lists and official policies from 14 public schools, 2 private schools, and 16 public libraries. In total, 22 teachers, 11 school librarians, and the entire library system of the Mahoning Valley was involved in the research.

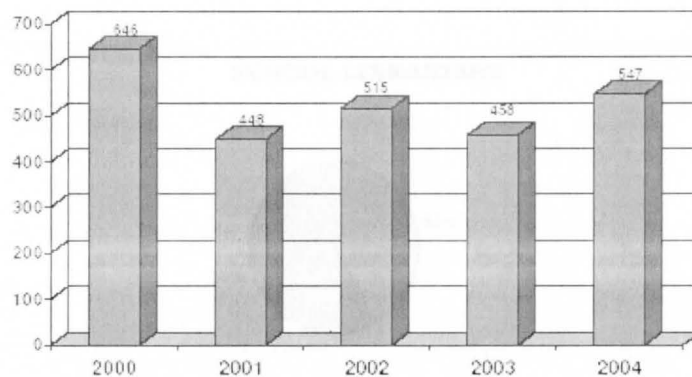
As a comparison for my field survey in the Mahoning Valley schools, school libraries and public libraries, I have used the most recent Office for Intellectual Freedom national censorship database, covering the years 2000-2004. In particular, I have taken into consideration the statistics available on the type of challenges, on the number of challenges by year, on the institutions being challenged and finally, on the initiator of challenges.

While polling local teachers and librarians, my focus was to obtain the necessary data to create the equivalent of the OIF censorship database, at a regional level. In the next two chapters I will compare the national survey with my local one, and I will determine which books are censored and which, on the other hand, are mostly read by middle school and high school students. I will also demonstrate that there are other important factors that the OIF has not yet considered.

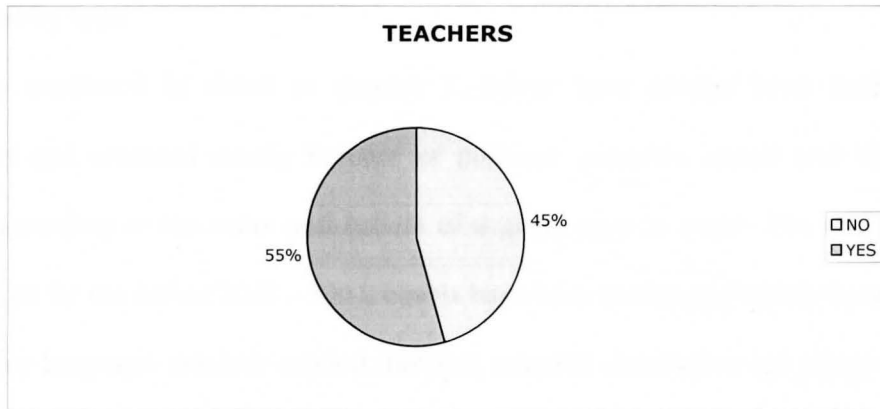
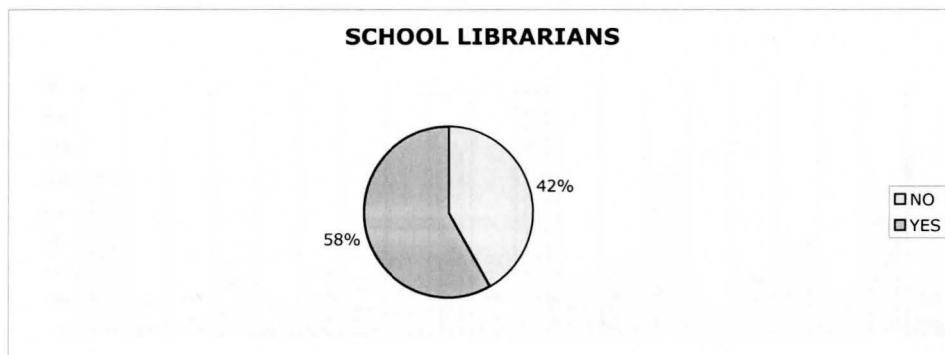
Challenges by year

Between 1990 and 2000 alone, 6364 challenges were reported to, or recorded by the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom. That number is growing at a fast pace, and what is even worse, the National Council of Teachers of English officials have recently stated that the phenomenon of challenged books is no longer limited to the lower grades of instruction, but is extending itself to college classes as well. As the OIF chart demonstrates, if there has been a slight decrease in the amount of challenges in 2001 and 2003, the numbers have risen once again in 2004.

OIF Censorship Database 2000-2004
Challenges by Year



As we see from chart 1 and 2, the Mahoning Valley certainly reflects this situation: 55% of the polled teachers and 58% of the school librarians have been challenged at least once.

Table 1: Percentage of teachers challengedTable 2: Percentage of challenged School Librarians

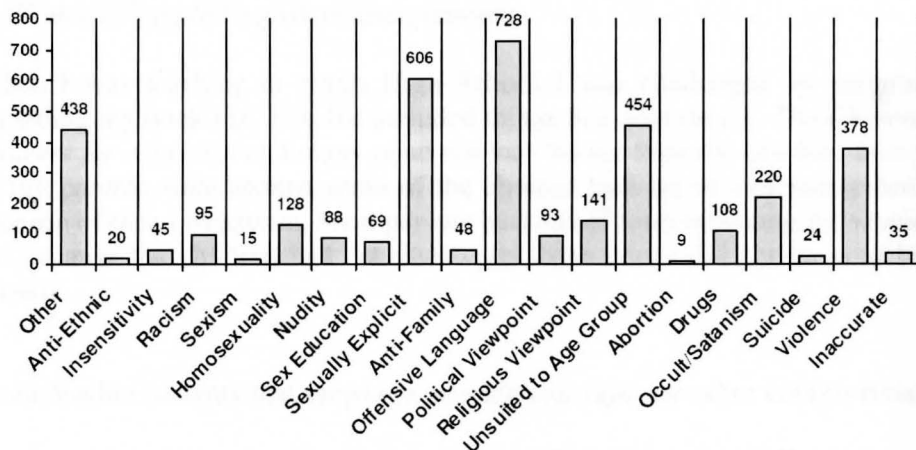
Surprisingly, none of the challenges reported by the subjects followed a formal procedure: either the parent withdrew the challenge or the teacher/librarian eliminated the book from the reading list or, in some cases, offered alternative readings. The OIF believes that for each challenge reported, there are as many as four or five which go unreported. In my survey, out of 26 challenges, only 6 have been formalized and they have all occurred at the public library. None of the schools, both

private and public, seem to have formalized a challenge. If any action was taken, it has been done discretely and informally.

Challenges by type

As explained in detail in chapter 1, books have always been banned, suppressed and censored mainly because of political, religious, sexual and social reasons, according to the tastes and beliefs of a given time or place. The OIF has reported that for the period 2000 – 2004, novels have been challenged mainly because of offensive language, sexually explicit material, material unsuited to age group and violence. Homosexuality, racism, occult/satanism and religious viewpoints also appear as possible reasons, but are much less frequent.

OIF Censorship Database 2000-2004 Challenges by Type



In the Mahoning Valley, the reasons for parents challenging books are quite the same, ranging from racial issues to violence, language, occult/satanism, sexually explicit material and poverty.

As many teachers and librarians have confirmed, the most frequent issue that troubles local parents and teachers is the racial one. Although an 11th grade teacher says that “Sometimes there is concern about the use of the word ‘nigger’ in texts, but

this is rare and usually doesn't result in a full challenge of the text", many others have proved the opposite. An 11th and 12th grade teacher, for example, reports:

Although I have never been formally challenged, I have had one parent question my assigning *Othello* to my Honors English 12 class. She was very offended by the interracial marriage of Desdemona and Othello. I assured her that the marriage of these main characters was not a major theme that would be emphasized. In fact, I informed her, many Shakespearean scholars believe that the marriage was not an interracial one. Desdemona, the fair, was from a Northern region of Italy and Othello, the black Moor, hailed from a Southern region, where inhabitants are dark complexed. Even though she conceded to her daughter's reading of the play, I was disheartened by the prejudice.

Another High School teacher writes:

This year a parent told me by phone that her African American student was uncomfortable viewing the miniseries *Roots* in class and reading the Reader's Digest Condensed version of the novel. The student was excused from class and given two young adult literature novels to read independently and take test on each. These two novels were *Heart of a Champion* and *The Trouble with Lemons*. The student was still required to do scrap booking journals along with the other students, however. This student did his independent reading in the library, with the permission of the principal and the librarian.

Finally, a 9th and 10th grade English teacher, reports:

When I was teaching at North High School I was challenged by parents, regarding my book list. This list included things like *Soul on Ice*, *The Chosen*, *Flowers for Algernon* and many other relevant books from the late 60s. Many of my parents were against some of the choices because of violence, others because of racial overtones. Most parents backed off from removing the whole list because the children had "choices" and these books did not have to be chosen.

A 10th grade teacher laments that language, suicide and rape are other controversial matters that have forced her to offer an alternative to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and face several conferences with parents for the novel *Heroes* by R. Cormier.

A private school teacher says that she was challenged for teaching a book called *Shadow Spinner*. Apparently, a parent objected to the violence against women in the book because it made her daughter upset (the book is set in ancient Persia and is based on *The Arabian Nights*).

Another teacher denounces the issues that language can sometimes raise:

I used to teach in a white, suburban district and was doing a film study of Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. Another teacher was covering my class and she complained to the principal about the film's content and language and I was ordered to stop the viewing. Which I did, as I was only a second or third year teacher. Now I think I might fight for the right to show it. It actually became quite a teachable moment and the students learned quite a bit from the experience. Many were quite upset and angered by the experience.

The incident reported by a suburban high school librarian is also very interesting:

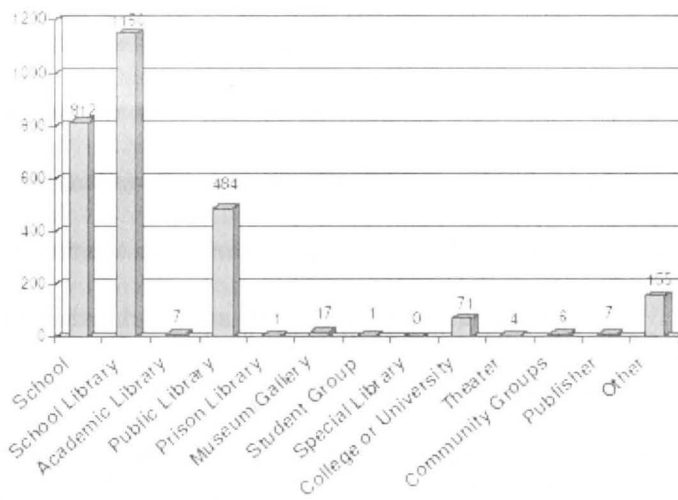
I have had two complaints since I have been here: the first was a student who returned a book to me and said his grandmother, who was his guardian, did not want him to read the book and said it should not be in our library because of the bad words. I asked him which book and he said *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. I told him I would like to speak with his grandmother and explained to him that he could choose another book to read. He said his grandmother did not like the "N word" being used in the book. I asked him if he knew who Toni Morrison was and he said no. I tried to telephone his grandmother but was not able to reach her. He chose another book and I did not hear from her or from him again. The second incident was a parent who objected to her daughter reading *America* by E.R. Frank. She found several incidences of the "F word" in the book and did not want her daughter to read it. I explained to her that it was a very realistic fiction and that the book was recommended as a best book for young adults, but that her daughter could choose another book, which she did.

The only difference between the national survey and the local one is the issue of poverty, which is not considered by the first, but present in the latter. Although OIF's statistics do not mention it as a possible cause for challenges, poverty is indeed one of the major concerns of local parents and guardians. An example of this type of challenge is the one reported by a 9th and 11th grade English teacher from a poor suburban school: "The subject matter in Frank Mc Court's *Angela's Ashes* was questioned by a mother, regarding the extreme poverty being difficult for some students who may be living under the same conditions".

Institutions challenged

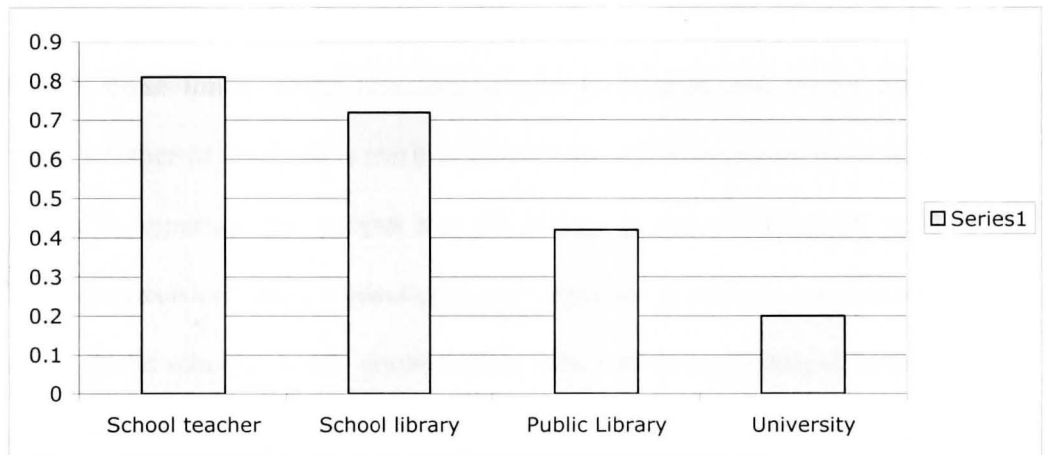
As the following chart by the OIF demonstrates, school libraries are nationally the most targeted subjects, followed by schools in general, public libraries and, quite disturbingly, Colleges and Universities.

OIF Censorship Database 2000-2004 Institution Being Challenged



In the Mahoning Valley, the tendency seems to be different to the one reported by the OIF: school teachers are the target of most challenges, followed by school libraries, public libraries and the University. The Chair of the English Department at Youngstown State University, Dr. Gary Salvner, reports that there has been more than one incident in the past 30 years, regarding freshmen readings.

Table 3: Percentage of incidents per institution



Because schools are the ones mostly targeted by censors, I was curious to know their opinion on the matter. When I asked teachers and school librarians what they thought of the involvement of parents in the choice of books for the curriculum and the library, I found out that they have very different points of view.

The opinion of school teachers varies quite a lot: some are completely supportive of the involvement of parents, some others are cautious and would like to involve them but have the final word, and some others believe that the decision making should be left entirely to teachers. An 8th grade teacher from a rich suburban school district, for example, writes “[...] I think parents might help the district out, since they are viewing things from both sides”. Another echoes her: “I believe that parents being on the school board is a good idea. These parents hear from their children what is going on in the school and are in a position to make positive changes”. A teacher from a poor suburban school bluntly adds, “Parents have a right to question. If I cannot justify why I am teaching a certain piece of literature, then maybe I need to rethink why I chose it”.

A suburban teacher instead, takes a more moderate stand when he says: "I believe parents have the right to voice their opinions to school board members. I also believe that in these times, board members should investigate and weigh those opinions as to whether or not there is merit in them." Another echoes him by writing "I think that it is important that parents and the School Board are involved, yet I believe that major decisions about student education should be left to the teachers and administration of the school." A 10th grade teacher, who has been challenged several times, sadly admits, "I believe parents have a right to be involved in their children's education; however, they often have no idea about the educational value of the materials and books the teachers are utilizing. I have no idea how we can remedy that problem." Some other comments are a bit more heated, such as the one by a middle school teacher who says, "I believe parents on the school board should look out for the good of ALL children and not just theirs. They should also trust the teachers. We went to school to learn the proper techniques to teach children – school board members did not," and another, more ironic, by a suburban high school teacher who wrote "I believe parental involvement is necessary, but to protect teachers."

If the opinion of teachers differs very much, the school librarians instead were unanimous in saying that parents' involvement in the school curriculum and book selection should be limited, if any. They all believe that such a role is a tremendous responsibility and only professionals in the field should be the decision makers. Parental input is welcomed of course, but also limited. One of the many feedbacks I received is the following, by a suburban school librarian: "If they [the parents] have good titles to suggest, then I'm all ears. Listening promotes good PR – though it is the primary responsibility of the librarian to select and purchase materials that support the school's curriculum". Other librarians add that they, as professionals, should be

trusted("Parents should always 'suggest' books, but trust the librarian to choose") and that they are open to suggestions only from peers ("If they have a library school background I'd be glad to have their input, otherwise no").

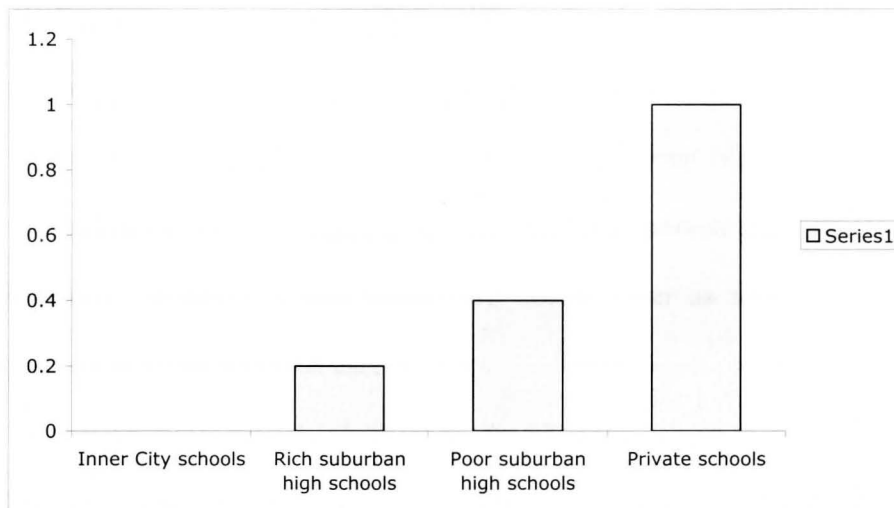
Why are librarians so hostile towards external input? They themselves have responded to the question by writing that "Very few parents understand the connection of literature to the curriculum or the necessity of a well-rounded library collection", and that it is impossible for them to be objective: "I appreciate parental input, but what one parent may see as objectionable, another may not even notice". Also, librarians seem to automatically associate the involvement of parents with censorship. A school librarian noted vehemently, "They may restrict their own children's selections but have no rights as far as dictating what other children may or may not read", and another concluded by openly stating "[The involvement of parents is a] Potential creation of a monster! Untrained people doing something they shouldn't allow a few people to push their agenda to all involved".

Challenges by class

In addition to identifying the local institutions that are mostly affected by censorship, I wanted to determine if censorship is any way affected by class. More specifically, I was curious to discover if rich schools are more prone to challenges than poor ones, if inner city schools are more or less under control for what concerns the curriculum and finally, if there are any differences between private and public schools on this matter. The result of the survey is the following table, where we see that private schools are definitely the most challenged institutions, followed by poor suburban schools and rich suburban schools. Inner city schools, not surprisingly, are hardly ever challenged, probably because parents who are economically disadvantaged tend to be less involved with their children's education. An inner city

teacher confirmed this hypothesis: “(...) most of our students’ parents” she says, “are unavailable for conferences, parent meetings, athletic events, etc. Out of 110 students, only 9 parents came to conference night. I sent home 60 failing progress reports last month; not one parent called to question their child’s deficiencies! This might explain why I’m never challenged!”

Table 4: Challenges by class in schools



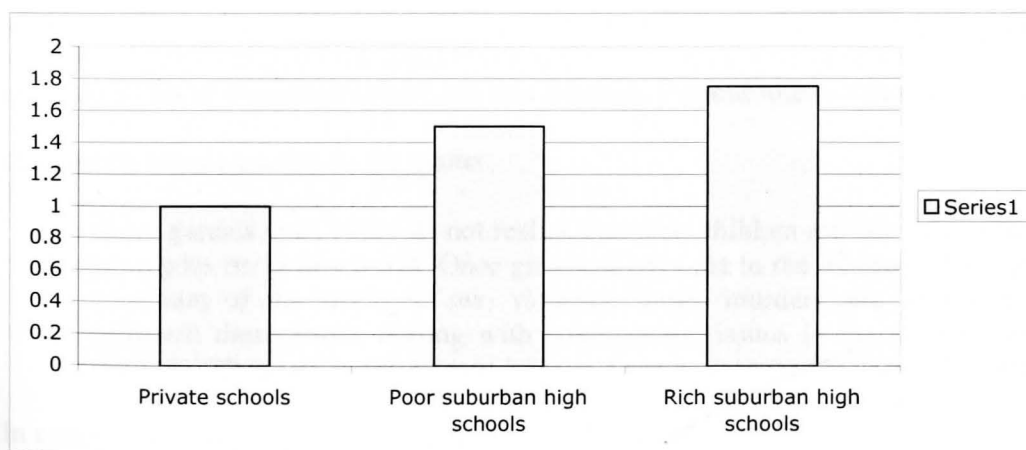
On the other hand, poor suburban schools statistically do receive more challenges than their rich counterparts, and are only surpassed by private schools, whose teachers have all been challenged at least once, if not several times.

The private school situation is quite peculiar: the teachers interviewed have all praised the fact that their environment was very open to discussions, with little or no interference from parents and administrators. A teacher from an all-girls private school, for example, says that “[Our school] is a private independent school for girls and our curriculum is designed to provide mirrors and windows: students should see themselves in some of the books we read and be introduced to other ways of living and thinking in other selections. Parental and administrative interference generally

does not occur.” A teacher from a local Parochial School also says “What better place to discuss dilemmas of humanity and morality that my students encounter in their everyday lives or in the world at large than in a parochial, Catholic environment? There is no safer way to handle difficult and delicate issues than through the voice of fictional characters.” Yet, the polled teachers of the two private schools I visited have all faced one or more challenges during their career. Also, if we look at the upper level reading lists of one of the two private schools, we see that among 65 proposed readings for grades 9 to 12, only two are commonly controversial novels: *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain. Does it mean that private schools are more under the control of parents and administrators, and that their ‘windows to the world’ are not as open as they like to think? Apparently, this seems to be the case.

For what concerns school libraries, the situation seems to be reversed: rich suburban schools face many more challenges and issues concerning the books in their libraries, than poor suburban schools and private schools.

Table 5: Challenges by class in school libraries



Challenged books

Before I began this research, I thought that each school had a list of materials that are considered inappropriate to enter classrooms: a sort of formal list of banned novels and authors. I soon found out that I had asked the wrong question. The answer of one teacher, in particular, made me understand that instead of asking teachers and librarians which material cannot be used, I should have asked them which books and authors CAN be used: "As far as I know" she wrote, "there aren't banned books at our school. But if you want to teach something not on the curriculum list, you'd have to get approval". Each teacher, therefore, has his or her own reading list and approved curriculum. As another instructor added, sometimes these curricula can be changed, but unfortunately, sometimes they cannot: "There are many books I would like to teach but the curriculum is already set for the most part, especially because we don't have class sets of most of the books on the list. Some banned books I really would like to use include: *The Giver*, Robert Cormier's books, *I know why the Caged Bird Sings*, etc."

Do schools avoid compiling a list of banned material because it would be illegal? Or because it is easier to censor, if one is not too overt about it? I favor the second option and consider a list of 'permitted material' as equally dangerous and unfair as a 'list of banned material'. On this instance, I would like to report the words of a middle school teacher on the matter:

Some parents even today do not realize that their children are not naïve about what goes on in this world. Once girls and boys get to the 9th grade, they are cognizant of the world of sex, violence, drugs, murders, etc. If teachers approach these books dealing with controversial issues in the proper way—dealing with morality and lessons learned, I see no reasons for banning books!

In conclusion, what books are challenged in the Mahoning Valley? From my survey, I was able to identify 15 books that have been challenged or banned in the past years,

in local schools and school libraries. The first six also appear in "The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2001" and are listed here by the number of challenges reported against them, locally. In parenthesis, I have included their position in the national list compiled by the OIF, which can be found in Appendix B.

1. *Harry Potter* by J.K.Rowling (7th place in the national list)
2. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (5th place)
3. *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger (13th place)
4. *The Giver* by Lois Lowry (14th place)
5. *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes (47th place)
6. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier (4th place)

Aside from the previous list of commonly challenged books, another series of novels have raised issues. The following books do not appear in the OIF national list of challenged books, and can be considered 'local' phenomenon.

7. *Roots* by Alex Haley
8. *Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
9. *Heroes* by Robert Cormier
10. *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt
11. *Shadow Spinner* by Susan Fletcher
12. *Othello* by Shakespeare
13. *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok
14. *Collected Stories* by Saul Bellow
15. *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

What do local students read?

Thanks to the data collected, it was possible to understand which books, statistically, are read more by local students. The following list shows in descending order the novels mostly read by local middle and high school students. These novels are also the ones that are challenged the most, both nationally, as well as locally. This is possible because, even if they are controversial, many teachers continue to bravely include them in their curriculum and in their summer reading lists. These are also the books that school librarians select as reading material, and refuse to put on restricted shelves.

- 1) *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- 2) *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- 3) *Of Mice and Men*
- 4) *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
- 5) *The Giver*
- 6) *The Catcher in the Rye*
- 7) *Fallen Angels*
- 8) *Beloved*
- 9) *Flowers for Algernon*
- 10) *The Chocolate War*
- 11) *Bridge to Terabithia*
- 12) *The Color Purple*
- 13) *A Wrinkle in Time*
- 14) *Lord of the Flies*
- 15) *Harry Potter*
- 16) *The Outsiders*

- 17) *A Day No Pigs Would Die*
- 18) *Julie of the Wolves*
- 19) *The Pigman*
- 20) *Brave New World*
- 21) *Ordinary People*
- 22) *Are You There, God? It's Me. Margaret*
- 23) *Native Son*
- 24) *Summer of My German Soldier*
- 25) *Running Loose*
- 26) *Go Ask Alice*
- 27) *My Brother Sam is Dead*
- 28) *Goosebumps*
- 29) *The Great Gilly Hopkins*
- 30) *We All Fall Down*
- 31) *The Bluest Eye*
- 32) *A Light in the Attic*
- 33) *Athletic Shorts*
- 34) *Slaughterhouse-Five*
- 35) *Carrie*
- 36) *The Drowning of Steven Jones*

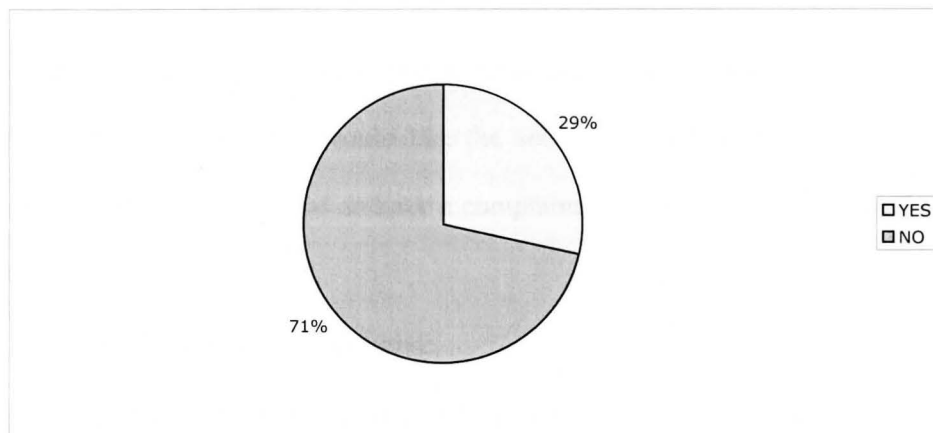
Are schools prepared for challenges?

I wanted to understand if local schools are prepared for challenges, how they face them and what the formal procedure is. Surprisingly, as we see from Table 8, 71% of the subjects involved in the survey (mostly teachers) answered that there is no

formal procedure to follow, and if there is, they don't know anything about it. When they do receive a complaint, they resolve the matter informally, without involving the school board or superintendents. This probably explains why none of the challenges has followed formal procedures and therefore, has not been recorded anywhere.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Office of Intellectual Freedom believes that for each challenge reported there are as many as four or five which go unreported. Given the results of this local survey, I believe that the number of unreported challenges is much greater.

Table 8: Percentage of schools prepared for challenges



School librarians, on the other hand, seem better organized and much more informed on the procedures to follow, in case of a challenge. All of the librarians interviewed have not only answered that yes, there is a standardized procedure, but they have also given me copies of the policies, which can be found in Appendix C.

The Formal policies for challenging educational material are all quite similar and mainly ask the complainant to file a written, formal 'Reconsideration Form'. These 'Reconsideration Forms' ask specific questions and force the parent or guardian to reflect deeply on the issue, and write extensive answers, before continuing the challenge. An example of questions found in such forms, are the ones

compiled by the Poland Seminary High School:

- Cite specifically what you find objectionable;
- What do you believe to be the results of a student's usage of this book/material?
- Is there anything good about this book/material?
- Did you read the entire book or view the entire video? If no, what parts did you review?
- Are you aware of the judgment of this book/material by literary critics and or experts in the field?
- What do you believe is the theme of this book/material?

The main difference between complaint forms lies in one of the questions, which asks the complainant what they would like the school to do with the challenged book. Almost all of the schools that do have a complaint form, give the parent the following choices:

- Do not assign this to my child;
- Withdraw it from all students as well as my child;
- Restrict it to more mature students;
- Send it back for re-evaluation.

Only in one case, the option of withdrawing the material from all students was excluded.

If most of the forms force the reader to think deeply about the answer and require the complainant to formulate an articulated reply, in the case of the all-girls private school, the form is much more reader-friendly and requires only yes/no answers. There is no doubt that such forms make it much easier for parents to file a complaint, and perhaps this could be one of the reasons why this particular school has

*"Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment
of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment."
Article 3, of the Library Bill of Rights*

3

CENSORSHIP IN MAHONING VALLEY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Introduction

Public libraries, like schools and school libraries, have a tremendous responsibility towards the community they serve: they are called upon to treasure the knowledge of the past and promote education, generation after generation. Libraries, even more than schools, have the duty to guarantee free access to books, ideas, resources and information, and for this reason, should be free from any type of censorship. If a book has been censored in the classroom, it should be rendered available in public libraries, because a citizen, no matter the age, should never be deprived the access to a particular piece of communication through the action of someone else. Unfortunately, reports say that public libraries too, like schools, are sometimes the object, if not the promoters, of censorship. In particular, libraries are at the center of a heated debate that sees the librarian alternatively as a selector and a censor. The following chapter will clarify the debate, considering all the opposing views. Finally, the results of the survey on the public library system of the Mahoning Valley will clarify if the local library system is affected by censorship, and what is done against it.

The debate

As Lester Asheim wrote in his article "Not Censorship but Selection", when librarians discuss the matter among themselves, they are quite satisfied with the distinction between censorship and selection, and are in smug agreement that the

librarian practices the latter, not the former (63). Non-librarians instead, are less disposed to be so generous in their interpretation of the librarian's action. The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, for example, points out that "Libraries and booksellers have sometimes undertaken to censor books, declaring that they would not circulate scandalous, libelous, immoral, or other wise disagreeable books" and Morris Ernst, in his article on censorship, is even more outspoken:

The subterranean censorship may appear in the public library as well. . . . Do public libraries attempt to supervise the tastes of their readers by making it a fixed policy not to buy "objectionable" books? It is a simple expedient and has often been applied. The public librarian often has the plausible excuse that as the funds of a library are limited, he must pick and choose, and naturally the more "wholesome" books are to be preferred. He insists that he is exercising not censorship but the prerogative of free selection. Nevertheless, the character of this choice is often suspicious. (Morris L. Ernst and William Seagle, *To the Pure: A Study of Obscenity and the Censor*)

Of course, the librarian is not at fault when he is merely carrying out an obligation placed upon him by law. Books that are legally considered unfit for circulation should not be included in library collections. The real question of censorship versus selection arises instead when the librarian, exercising his own judgment, decides against a book, which has every legal right to be on the shelves. In other words, we should not have been concerned with the librarian who refused to buy *Ulysses* for his library before 1933—but we do have an interest in his refusal after the courts cleared it for general circulation in the United States.

So, what are the principles followed by librarians, to add a book to a collection, or eliminate it? When is it right to reject a book? When does the rejection of a book, become an act of censorship, instead of selection?

Librarians do not deny that rejection occurs, but they claim that the ideal of absolute equality for all books is unattainable. To demand that all books be equally accessible, says Lester Asheim, is to demand that all books occupy the same place on

the same shelf—a task physically impossible. And as soon as we defer to the laws of physics and place each book in a different place, some books will be less accessible than others, and we will be - in a sense - discriminating against the least accessible.

If equal accessibility is unattainable, can all books be available, at least? Again we have to face a physical impossibility, as no library in the world is large enough to store even only one copy of every printed publication. Besides running into a physical problem, we would also run into financial limits, as any librarian knows from bitter experience. Because complete representation of every title ever published is a mere dream, some titles will necessarily not be purchased, and therefore, rejected. Many librarians would like to stop the discussion at that point, arguing that since we can't afford to buy all the books, and there is not enough space to stock them, it is necessary to select.

Financial considerations, however, do not influence alone the purchase or rejection of a book. The librarian also feels an obligation to select in terms of standards, and without doubt, there are some books that he would not buy, even if money were not an issue. Unfortunately, some of our standards are sufficiently subjective, sufficiently vague, and sufficiently imprecise to serve the uses of the censors as well as of the selectors.

Even if libraries take upon themselves the duty to represent all ideas and points of view, there is always the danger, impossible to avoid, that a point of view shared by the reader will be defended more sincerely than one he disagrees with. When a book attacks a basic belief or a way of life to which we are emotionally attached, its purpose will seem to us to be vicious rather than constructive; dangerous rather than valuable; deserving of suppression rather than of widespread dissemination.

If we consider literary excellence as a criterion of selection, we must not forget that a reader who does not like a book usually considers it to be badly written; on the other hand, a book whose ideas please him will seem to be well written. "Try to convince", says Asheim, "an Edgar Guest devotee that his poetry is poor, or that the poetry of Dylan Thomas is better; try to make a case, to a constant reader of the Lutz books, that there is stronger moral fiber in a book like *Catcher in the Rye*" (65). We will undeniably fail in our attempt.

Another criterion for selection is the presumed effect of a book upon the reader: librarians seem to agree with the courts that the time and the custom of the community are important elements to be considered, when judging the value and effectiveness of a book. Such practice, however, favors censorship and limits greatly the development of a literature and the propagation of thought and ideas. Almost all of the great classics, after all, have one time or another, said something new or said something different, ahead or not with the custom and traditions of the community.

If the standards employed by the librarians are essentially the same as those used by the censor, how can we distinguish the two practices? The distinction will have to be found in the way the standards are applied. More precisely, the atmosphere in which the decision to reject or not a book is reached can make the difference between censorship and selection. We can say that if a selector's approach is positive, the one by the censor is definitely negative. For to the selector, the important thing is to find reasons to keep the book. Given such a guiding principle, the selector looks for values, for strengths, for virtues, which will over shadow minor objections. On the other hand for the censor, the important thing is to find reasons to reject the book; his guiding principle leads him to seek out the objectionable features, the weaknesses, the possibilities for misinterpretation. The selector thinks of the possible reaction of the

average reader towards the content of a work; the censor instead, fears for the reaction of the weak, the warped, and the irrational. As Asheim suggests, the selector is someone who says "If there is anything good in this book let us try to keep it"; the censor instead, is someone who says, "If there is anything bad in this book, let us reject it". And since there is seldom a flawless work in any form, the censor's approach can destroy much that is worth saving.

The selector should judge the 'internal' values of the book: it is the content of the book that should be weighed, not the publisher or the author. By extension, then, the librarian, if he is truly a selector and not a censor, should not be swayed by the prejudices of his own background or the pressures of his library's patrons. Unfortunately, like some school teachers, many librarians have been known to defer to anticipated pressures, and to avoid facing issues by suppressing possible issue-making causes. This is the subtlest kind of censorship existing: the one guided and alimented by the fear of losing one's job or position.

The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County

Keeping in mind the debate between censorship and selection, I surveyed the Public Library system of Youngstown and Mahoning County to understand what principles and policies are currently in use, and if the local public system was also, like schools and school libraries, subject to challenges. The results are interesting and are certainly an eye opener to the struggles and achievements of local communities.

The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County, comprising 15 branches and a Main Library, follows a detailed book selection process. The main document available to staff members is the "Staff Instruction Bulletin 300", which contains the Book Selection Policy. This document is not available to the public, and can be viewed only upon request.

The Book Selection Policy features the 'Library Bill of Rights' adopted by the ALA Council, which features the following major points:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. 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.

Aside from these points, common to most public libraries, the Mahoning Library also set up a series of standards that deal with the issues raised by Lester Asheim's debate. For example, the issue of limited budget and space is addressed by the following statement on page 5 of the Book Selection Policy:

Not all books and other materials can be purchased; not all items on any given subject can be purchased; not all items of a particular genre can be purchased. By using professional librarians, professionally compiled bibliographic tools and techniques, and the time, money, and space available, the Public Library will do its best to select the items of greatest use and value.

Literary excellence seems to be a criterion of selection: "The library recognizes its duty to maintain copies of the classics, those titles of proved and recognized importance and influence. Where possible the library will provide varying editions or

versions of such books and in sufficient numbers for reasonable use". If the so called 'classics' have earned a space on the shelf, other kind of works, deemed inferior in quality and prestige, are subject to budget and space availability, as well as to the demand of the public: "Recreational materials will be added as budget and space permit. Best seller fiction of lesser or low literary quality, with sections devoted to sex and/or violence, may be added because of public demand".

The Mahoning Public Library strives to promote and protect diversity of opinion and religious/political views. The following passage, in particular, addresses the issue:

The public library does not promote particular beliefs or views. It provides a resource where the individuals can examine issues freely and make their own decisions. This implies the necessity for the library's collection to contain various opinions expressed on important and/or controversial questions, including unpopular and unorthodox positions. [...] Subscribing as it does to the Library Bill of Rights, the Library must resist efforts of groups to deny access to other members of the community or to force inclusion or exclusion of materials representing political, economic, moral religious or other vested positions. (Staff Instruction Bulletin 300, Book Selection Policy, June 2003)

On this instance, it is also indicative that books donated by the public may be accepted, but not necessarily included in the collection: "Gift books may be accepted by the Library. Their inclusion in the collection will be subject to the usual methods of bibliographical investigation. In no case will an item be added simply because it is a gift".

If the previous points already demonstrate some of the ethical principles the local Library tries to follow, it is with the standards for children's books and material that a precise code is set. This section begins by stating, "The parent or guardian determines age level borrowing privileges of children", thereby making the parents responsible for what their children read. Thanks to this statement, the librarian of the children's section will not have to put certain books on a restricted shelf, something

that happens instead in certain school libraries. This is confirmed by the survey compiled by the Library, wherein we read: "There are no restricted shelves. Quantities of materials that may exceed our shelving capacity may from time to time be shelved in areas not open to the public. These titles appear in the catalog and are available to any patron".

The Children's Section follows six major guidelines for book selection:

- Literary and artistic distinction;
- Mental and emotional maturity levels;
- Suitability of content and vocabulary to the age of the readers;
- Contribution of the book to the balance of the total collection;
- Tolerance for diversity of viewpoints;
- Objective evaluation.

Again, not only artistic quality but also diversity of viewpoints is sought: "The honest expression of view acceptable to some but not to all has a place in the library. The public library must not be used to promote or exclude any particular religion or political creed". Also, an objective evaluation of the material available is highly encouraged, probably to discourage challenges: "A book must be judged by its totality not by its parts. Individual details and incidents must be put in their proper place, not lifted out of context so as to distort the total intention and spirit of the book".

A clarification on page 5 of the Book Selection Policy, is also very important to avoid making the public library dependant on local school curriculums:

In general, textbooks are added not to satisfy school demands, but to provide information on subjects when there is little or no material available in any other form, or when the textbook makes a significant contribution to the collection. Curricular demands are considered insofar as they do not obscure the public library's general contribution to the community or attempt to substitute for the development and use of school library resources.

By stressing the fact that school textbooks can be present in the collection, but they are not to obscure the rest of the collection, the Library affirms its independence from the influence of local schools and possible pressure groups.

My only objection would be the book selection policy based on the mental and emotional maturity level, which states:

Since children lack experience and are learning about the world for the first time, their books should present a clear, simple, normal picture of life. Children need stories, which present a positive view of human relationships, undistorted by either sentimentality or sordidness. In the children's collection it is of special importance that attitudes of cruelty, violence, intolerance or social prejudice are not fostered. The treatment of problems should be in terms appropriate to the child's level of understanding.

Because the children's section of the Mahoning Valley library addresses the needs of children from pre-school to age fourteen, I expected a different approach, at least for what concerns YA novels. Teenagers do read (and respect) authors that present negative aspects of life, as well as certain attitudes of cruelty, violence, intolerance or social prejudice. As stated repeatedly in this thesis, creating a cocoon for children is not the right solution, and certainly it does not prevent challenges.

Considering the selection policies adopted by the Mahoning Public Library, it is interesting to see which books, featured in the "100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2001", have been excluded from the collection:

1. *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris
2. *Sex* by Madonna
3. *The New Joy of Gay Sex* by Charles Silverstein
4. *Bumps in the Night* by Harry Allard
5. *Annie on my Mind* by Nancy Garden
6. *The Boy Who Lost His Face* by Louis Sachar
7. *Sleeping Beauty Trilogy* by A.N. Roquelaure (Anne Rice)

8. *The Anarchist Cookbook* by William Powell
9. *Boys and Sex* by Wardell Pomeroy
10. *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis
11. *Women on Top: How Real Life Has Changed Women's Fantasies* by Nancy Friday
12. *Curses, Hexes and Spells* by Daniel Cohen
13. *Jack* by A.M. Homes
14. *Arizona Kid* by Ron Koertge
15. *Family Secrets* by Norma Klein
16. *Mommy Laid An Egg* by Babette Cole
17. *Sex Education* by Jenny Davis
18. *The Drowning of Stephen Jones* by Bette Greene
19. *Girls and Sex* by Wardell Pomeroy

When questioned on the missing books, the librarian in charge of the children's section answered:

The books on the list that we do not own were considered by the book selection committee when they were reviewed in professional sources. If they were not added to our collection, the books either received unfavorable reviews or the committee determined that the title was not needed in our collection. Also, in some cases, titles that are on the list were once part of our collection but have been discarded due to lack of use. For example, we did not reorder *Bumps in the Night* by Harry Allard because of very low use.

Unfortunately, she didn't specify the reasons for discarding some of the titles, but we can see that the subject of sex is a reason for not selecting some of the books. What she did say by voice, is that some of the books that are challenged locally as well as nationally, are frequently stolen or lost and have to be replaced continually.

From 1998, the Mahoning Library has received a few formal complaints regarding the choice and placement of children's and young adult books. The following is a statement by an administrator, who recalls the objections:

Since 1998, we have has six formal requests by patrons to remove a book from the children's collection. In three of these cases, the patrons asked that we move the book from the children's collection to a collection suitable for older readers or to the adult collection. None of the books was transferred from the children's collection. In three cases, patrons asked that we remove the book entirely from our collection. These books too, were retained. Prior to 1998, I recall a patron asking us to review a book concerning adoption of children from foreign countries. Her concern was that the information was dated and did not represent current practices. After reviewing the book and checking standard reviews, we agreed with the patron, discarded the book, and updated our collection.

When asked to specifically recount the novels that were challenged, and explain the reasons for the complaints, the polled librarian answered:

Three patrons asked that we completely remove a book from the collection. One mother objected to *Asher and the Capmakers* (Eric Kimmel) because of scary illustrations and the suggestion of spiritual concepts that she did not want her child to encounter. Another mother asked that we remove the book *Tucking Mommy In* by Morag Loh. It is the story of children tucking a very tired mom into bed and one illustration shows them removing her top. This offended the patron. A third mother felt that Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park* contains language that is not suitable for a young child and pictures that are frightening. We still own all of these titles. One concerned mother asked that we move the book *African American Folktales for Young Readers* to an area with books for older readers because she found the stories too scary for young children. Another mother felt that William Steig's *Grown-Ups Get to Do All the Driving* is unsuitable for a children's collection because, in her opinion, the humor is adult oriented and the pictures depict mean, ugly adults who are sometimes drinking. Most recently, a teenage boy asked that we move all Harry Potter materials to the adult collection so that parental consent be required before children could check out the materials. He felt that the subject matter - sorcery, violence, and the occult - are not suitable for children. These books have remained in the children's collection.

Two things should be pointed out: first of all, none of the challenged books mentioned above are present in 'The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2001'; second of all, only formal complaints have been taken into consideration. The library has a specific policy concerning the questioning of books by patrons, which doesn't leave any space to verbal complaints. The Review and Re-Evaluation section of The Book Selection policy states that "Should a patron object to

the inclusion or exclusion of a particular group of titles he or she will be asked to write a letter to the Director of the Library". A patron is also asked to:

1. Specify their name, address and telephone number;
2. Include a statement that the patron has read the complete book;
3. Include a specific complaint or recommendation;
4. Suggest a substitute;
5. Suggest a course of action;
6. Sign the complaint.

The fact that all the complaints are forwarded and handled by the same administrator in charge also helps maintain a certain coherence and definitely discourages superficial, random complaints. When questioned on this aspect, she wrote, "Patrons may initiate a challenge at any library at the Mahoning County, but all formal challenges are forwarded to me. Informal challenges, i.e. verbal complaints only, are not considered". I can also add that, all questions relating to censorship (such as this survey) are also forwarded meticulously to the same person. Not one of the librarians I spoke to personally or on the phone, answered my questions: they all referred me to the Manager of Children's Services, who very kindly agreed to participate in the survey, only after having read the questions and after having them approved by her supervisor. I can only hope that local censors face the same screening, as it is most effective.

Conclusion

We delegate the authority to our librarians to judge favorably, or negatively, a book. Because of this, I consider the profession of librarianship very important for our communities: librarians have the duty and the professional capacity to enrich (and unfortunately, also to impoverish) our communities. We can only confide in them if

they remain true to the ideals for which their profession stands. In the profession of librarianship, these ideals are embodied, in part at least, in the special characteristics, which distinguish selection from censorship. If librarians are to gain the esteem they seek for their profession, they must be willing to accept the difficult obligations, which those ideals imply. I found those obligations entirely met by the Public Library of the Mahoning Valley, and I truly hope they will continue to serve the public as well as they have done so far.

*"Books and ideas are the most effective
weapons against intolerance and ignorance."
Lyndon Baines Johnson*

4

BEST PRACTICE AGAINST CENSORSHIP: THE ENGLISH FESTIVAL

Introduction

There are numerous programs, associations, committees and writers that are actively involved in the movement against censorship. I could have described here the efforts of associations such as ALA (American Library Association), ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents), SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English) and of writers such as Chris Crutcher and Judy Blume, but these are efforts, which are already quite renowned. I preferred instead, to dedicate the last chapter of this thesis to the Youngstown State English Festival, an outstanding program against censorship that has remarkable outcomes year after year and manages to involve an entire community in its mission to promulgate literature among the young.

The English Festival

The Festival saw the light of day in the fall of 1978, when Professor Thomas Gay and Dr. Carol Gay of the YSU's Department of English established a memorial fund in memory of their thirteen-year-old daughter, Candace McIntyre Gay, who died of cancer in 1977. Because of their life long involvement in the teaching of writing and literature, they decided to involve junior and senior high school students in a writing contest based on selected readings, and present the awards at the University.

The English Department supported the idea and a committee was formed. Soon, an entire program of activities was conceived, an advisory board of area

educators and community leaders was formed, and an English Festival day was scheduled for the spring of 1979. The response was so overwhelming that, within three years, the one-day program was expanded to three days (Information Booklet 15).

Since then, the YSU English Festival became a unique annual event that still reaches out to almost 200 middle and high schools, reaching almost a total of 3,000 students, from Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana counties in Ohio, and Mercer and Lawrence counties in Pennsylvania. Their teachers, school librarians, parents, as well as local public libraries and other members of the community, who are interested in promoting and cultivating reading and writing, also take part in the yearlong preparation of the Festival (14).

It is not an easy ride for the students, nor the teachers: to attend, the students must read seven books that have been selected for their age group, and teachers have to monitor their reading progress throughout the year. As the Festival approaches, several hundred students will write essays for the Candace Gay Memorial Essay Contest. Others will prepare original artwork for the Festival Art Contest. Meanwhile, the teachers prepare for their jobs as writing judges or session leaders. The week before the Festival, over 200 teachers, parents, and librarians will come to campus to receive final Festival materials and to be trained to assess students' writing, to lead a particular session or simply to monitor students during the activities. (14)

The YSU English Festival sees separate groups of nearly 1,000 students (10th–12th graders on one day, 7th–9th graders on two others) attend each day, for three consecutive days. Excited and happy to be among college students for a day, they roam the campus grounds and fill every available room in the University's student center and several campus auditoriums. They listen to the authors of some of

the books they have read, participate in "insight" book discussions, write impromptu essays, collaborate on writing games and workshop activities, attend dramatic or artistic performances, and try their skills at language games and "not-so-trivial pursuit" competitions (14)

Attending teachers too, are kept busy during the event. They have the opportunity to hear the featured authors and other speakers (including national and international experts on young adult literature or English teaching), assist with or lead student sessions, besides evaluating the many student compositions written that morning. By mid afternoon, all of the nearly fifty separate daily sessions end, about 750 student writings are evaluated, and everyone gathers for the final awards ceremony.

Because the English Festival wants to encourage and reward reading and writing among many students rather than just select few outstanding ones, each day's awards ceremony recognizes more than 200 worthy prizewinners, almost all of whom will come to the stage to shake the hand of Festival authors and committee members and to receive certificates and prizes such as books, Festival T-shirts, gift certificates, savings bonds, and cash awards.

I myself have participated in the English Festival and have found it to be a tremendously motivating experience for teenagers. I will never forget the excitement in the air and the dedication of both the organizers and the students attending. Because it has been such an enriching and pleasant experience for me, I was not surprised to receive a comment from a high school librarian saying "I think that activities such as the English Festival, which promotes good young adult literature, does an outstanding job in bringing the issues of young adult literature subject-matter,

intellectual freedom and the extent and nature of current subject matter to the community, making it easier for us to offer these excellent choices to our students”.

None of this would be possible without the hard work of a group of people in the English Department. Their dedication is admirable and stands on solid beliefs and precise aims. Like schools and public libraries, the English Festival has its own Committee as well as its own ‘code of ethics’ and purposes. Precisely, the Committee strongly believes that:

- Reading and writing are activities that, in themselves, provide pleasure and satisfaction for young people.
- Reading and writing can help young people discover themselves and the world.
- Reading and writing are language activities for everyone, and that all students—not just the very best—should be encouraged to develop them.
- Reading and writing, while both intensely personal, are effectively learned in social contexts, in the interaction of student with student and student with teacher. (16)

Also, the Committee’s purpose each year is to:

- Provide an exciting and stimulating setting for enjoyable and worthwhile reading and writing activities.
- Support teachers who emphasize reading and writing in the classroom.
- Offer models for effective classroom activities.
- Involve the whole community in fostering good reading and writing skills.
- Recognize and reward distinctive writing.
- Introduce students to a wide variety of superior books of broad interest.
- Encourage parents to help their children obtain Festival books, to read the

books, and to discuss them with the children.

- Bring to the community authors who can help teachers, librarians, and parents stimulate children's interest in reading and writing.
- Build through the Festival Booklists a common body of shared reading experiences.
- Help students become lifelong readers. (16)

Besides having a list of aims and beliefs, the Committee of the English Festival follows a specific book selection policy, that is different from any selection policy used by local schools and school libraries and certainly does not face the same censorship vs. selection dilemma of public libraries.

The selection process is done in two steps: each spring the English Festival Book Selection Subcommittee recommends a list of 18–20 books to be read by the English Festival Committee for the following year's Festival. At the beginning of fall, the Festival Committee makes the final selection and chooses seven books for 7th–9th graders and seven for 10th–12th graders, with some duplication of titles. It is a long and sometimes difficult process that follows a clear goal: the students should not attend the Festival to accumulate a particular body of knowledge, nor study the standard classics of English or American literature, which are usually present in most school curricula. The English Festival wants to be a totally different experience: it wants to show kids that “literature” doesn't have to be just something taught in school – it can also become a very important, and amusing, part of their lives.

The idea is to make students discover the pleasure of reading by selecting high quality young adult books that are also fun, and have an appeal for junior- and senior-high school students. Teachers and librarians have long recognized, in fact, that if students enjoy what they read, they will read more. And the more they read, the better

they read: they develop larger vocabularies, a greater sensitivity to language, and a keener sense of form, all qualities that result in greater effectiveness in writing. (16)

Works by the guest author and by other noted authors in the field of young-adult literature are included in the booklist, together with several contemporary works or seldom-taught "classics". The members of the Committee, in fact, want to impress upon students that "literature" is not composed merely of works from the past but is being created now. Other important factors considered are literary quality, cultural diversity, gender of authors and protagonists, historical period, genre, reading level and yes, also the cost of books. Finally, the Festival Committee makes sure to draw upon such standard sources as the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English and on recommendations made by YSU faculty, area teachers, and students. (19)

When the choices are made and the final list is ready, the entire community is involved: schools are contacted, volunteers are sought, local bookstores and area libraries are given a copy of the Festival Booklist. Also, in an effort to reach as many kids as possible, the Youngstown and Warren public libraries, as well as many school libraries, decide each year to purchase extra copies of the Festival books.

Censorship at the English Festival

Even such fervent cooperation and common efforts, did not prevent the English Festival from becoming (more than once) the battlefield of harsh controversies. In the past, for example, complaints were made about Chris Crutcher's *Running Loose* because of sexual references, Catholics protested against Cormier's *The Chocolate War*, the gender and class issues raised by M.E. Kerr were not considered appropriate, and a number of disagreements were had over language,

themes and subject matter. These complaints never resulted in the withdrawal of schools, of books or in any serious self-censorship. This, until the 1997 Festival came around. (Salvner 46)

In the fall of 1996, the novel *Letters from the Inside* by Australian author John Marsden was included in the Booklist for that year. The book contained some swearing, a few sexual references and a chilling ending but it was also a beautiful story of friendship, and it raised very interesting cross-Anglo comparisons. About a month after the Booklist was mailed to schools, teachers, especially those from local Catholic schools, began to express concern about the novel's subject matter and, particularly, for the use of the word "fuck". The Catholic Diocese itself became involved, but because the Festival is a completely voluntary activity, they initially limited themselves to informing parents of the controversy, so that they could choose for themselves whether to let their children attend or not. The Festival Committee thought the controversy was going to end right there, but in reality it had just begun, and it soon became a real 'war', one that will be long remembered and will leave a mark on the many people involved.

As the controversy became public, the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Youngstown requested the withdrawal of *Letters from the Inside* from the reading list. As the Committee stood its ground, school officials and parents started withdrawing their kids from the Festival. Citizens suddenly became experts in a book they had not even read, fragments of *Letters from The Inside*, with swearwords highlighted, were delivered to school administrators, television stations and small regional newspapers. By the time the Festival began, complaints were made about nearly every title on the list, including *Harris and Me* by Gary Paulsen, *The Last Mission* by Harry Mazer, and *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This* by Jacqueline Woodson. (Salvner 47)

It was clear that the intentions of the complainants were to boycott the Festival, by causing a large-scale withdrawal of students. They did not succeed in their intent, because several new schools joined the 1997 Festival and replaced the ones that had withdrawn. The Festival itself went on smoothly, and special "open discussion" sessions were held for teachers, parents and librarians on the controversy; when asked, the students merely responded with an "unqualified shrug of the shoulders", as if nothing had happened. (qtd. in Salvner 47)

One of the teachers I interviewed from a Catholic School in the area, remembers the incident very well:

A few parents and several administrators from the Diocese of Youngstown have brought to my attention the subject matter or content of particular pages in some of the English Festival books over 25 years. I read all the books [...], I know the passages and I am aware of the concerns. Although some Catholic Schools have pulled out of the Festival in particular years because of certain books, I have never been forced to withdraw by any of my principals or pastors. They, like I, know that the quickest way to guarantee the reading of a book by most students, is to ban it.

The books mentioned so far are not the only ones that raised issues in the history of the English Festival. Other authors have been challenged, and their novels were put under a microscope by the local community. John Donovan's *Wild in the World* for example, was challenged in 1981 and William Sleator's *House of Stairs* raised issues in 1984 because of the act of urination described in the novel. *The Yearling* by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was questioned in 1987, because of the death of an animal and Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* was challenged in 1988 because of the negativity of the story and the pessimistic ending. Chris Crutcher's *Running Loose* and *Staying Fat For Sarah Byrnes*, raised issues during the 1992 and 1998 Festival, because of the violence depicted. Sue Ellen Bridgers' *Home Before Dark* was challenged in 1989, because of the act of sex described, and Avi's *Nothing But the Truth* was questioned in 1994, ironically, because of the censorship issues that it

raised. Finally in 1998 and 2002, M.E.Kerr's *Gentlehands* and Joan Abelove's *Go and Come Back* were challenged: the first because of the brutal actions of Nazi SS in the story, the latter because of its open views of sex. None of the above mentioned novels have been withdrawn from the Festival list or censored in any way. Parents, teachers and local religious groups were listened to, of course, but the goal of the Committee of "Introducing students to a wide variety of superior books of broad interest" has always prevailed.

Another remarkable fact is that several books challenged across the country for various reasons, were bravely proposed by the Committee in later or previous booklists. For example, the novel *My Brother Sam is Dead* by J. L. Collier and C. Collier, *The Master Puppeteer* by Katherine Paterson, *Stranger With my Face* by Lois Duncan and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, are all books that figure in *The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2001*. Also present in both lists are Louis Sachar's *Holes*, *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, *The Pigman* by Paul Zindel, *A Day No Pigs Would Die* by Robert Newton Peck, *The Outsiders* by S.E.Hinton, *Celine* by Brock Cole, *The Clan of the Cave Bear* by Jean M. Auel and *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers.

The only two novels that have been challenged both at a national level as well as a local level, through the English Festival activities, are *Running Loose* by Chris Crutcher and *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier, demonstrating once again that the reasons for censoring a book change, depending on the social, cultural, economical and religious background of the local community.

Conclusion

In my opinion, the YSU English Festival can be considered one of the best existing practices against censorship, for several reasons. First of all, no matter the challenges, the debates and protests, the Committee of the English Festival never gave in to local pressure: all of the books selected in the past twenty-eight years were never withdrawn or censored. Not even once, has the Festival renounced a novel because of pressure groups. Second of all, the Festival gives the chance to its young readers to decide by themselves what to make of a novel. They read books that have 'shaken' the locals from their torpor, and are free to form their own idea on the issues raised by the authors, and if the author himself is present, they can even dialogue directly with him or her. What better way could there be to confront the delicate issues that these novels raise? On this instance, one of the teachers who participated in the survey intelligently notes that:

There is no safer way to handle difficult and delicate issues than through the voice of fictional characters. [...] There hasn't been anything in a book I haven't been asked to deal with in real life. Fiction is just that, and nothing to fear. I am amazed at the controversy that can occur over the printed word that is never even an issue in song lyrics or in movie dialogue or in tech messages between students.

Even more importantly, the Festival's Committee gives the chance to its young readers to read books that are commonly banned from school classrooms. When local school administrators and parents fail to recognize the importance of a novel, or when a novel for some reason falls into the cracks of the selection process of libraries, it is at the YSU English Festival, that that book and its author have a chance of being represented, read and finally understood. In a way, we can consider the Festival as the 'safety net' of local youth: when everyone else fails, the Festival delivers...

*As good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself.
Milton - Areopagitica*

CONCLUSION

Never before has children's and young adult literature been under such ferocious attack from censors: between 1990 and 2000 alone, 6364 challenges were reported to, or recorded by, the ALA's office for Intellectual Freedom. That number is growing at a fast pace, and what is even worse, the NCTE has recently reported that the phenomenon of challenged books is no longer limited to the lower grades of instruction, but is extending to college classes as well.

Of course, censorship is a phenomena as old as the written word and books have been banned, suppressed and censored because of political, religious, sexual and social reasons, according to the tastes and beliefs of a given time or place.

A perfect example of mixed reactions is given by the readers of Lois Lowry's *The Giver*: a Trappist monk wrote from his monastery that he and his brothers were reading the book as a Christian metaphor and finding it profoundly significant as a message of redemption; at about the same time, a parent in California demanded that it be taken off the library shelves of her child's school because of its immorality. A private school in Michigan instead, made it a required reading not only for all the upper-school students, but for their parents as well. At the same time, a teacher wrote to the author that the Newbery committee should be chastised for awarding the 1994 medal to a sensationalistic "piece of trash". The children of Belgium and France, on the other hand, chose the book, in translation, as their favorite reading of the year (ALA Website).

These scattered examples demonstrate that the reasons for which books are banned, suppressed and censored are often highly subjective and are closely linked not only to a given time and place, but also to the religious, historical and cultural background of the censor.

Having said this, why do Americans censor authors such as Lois Lowry, Robert Cormier, Judy Blume, Gary Paulsen, Mark Twain, John Steinbeck and J.D. Salinger? If Judy Blume's books are perfectly acceptable in the living rooms of Italians, French and Germans, why are they looked upon with suspicion by the British, recently by the Canadians, and are definitely banned from many American households?

It is not only language and sexuality that will make adult readers shake their heads disapprovingly. It's Satanism, New Age-ism, Evolutionism and a hundred other "isms," some of which would make us laugh if the implications weren't so serious. Evidently even the act of laughing is now becoming unacceptable, because books that make kids laugh often come under suspicion; so do books that encourage kids to think, or to question authority. Finally, books that don't hit the reader over the head with moral lessons are considered dangerous.

Bigotry is not the only culprit, though. I believe that censorship also grows out of fear, and because fear is contagious, some parents are easily swayed into censorship. Book banning satisfies their need to feel in control of their children's lives. Fear is often disguised as moral outrage and many parents want to believe that if their children don't read about something, their children won't know about it. And if they don't know about it, it won't happen. But as Robert Cormier once said, "The world intrudes, whether through classmates or books and movies and television". We

cannot protect our children from the world, and all of its wonderful and frightening facets. Lois Lowry's comment on this aspect of the question is a significant warning:

I sympathize with the fear that makes some parents not want that to be true. But I believe without a single shadow of a doubt that it is necessary for young people to learn to make choices. Learning to make right choices is the only way they will survive in an increasingly frightening world. Pretending that there are no choices to be made - reading only books, for example, which are cheery and safe and nice - is a prescription for disaster for the young. Submitting to censorship is to enter the seductive world of *The Giver*: the world where there are no bad words and no bad deeds. But it is also the world where choice has been taken away and reality distorted. And that is the most dangerous world of all. (Judyblume Website)

The OIF thinks that another reason for all this apprehension is the steady erosion of family, church and neighborhood communities, which traditionally passed down information and moral guidelines about sex, drugs and crime. Because these values are no longer present in family units, there is a reactionary influence from parents and teachers, who urge schools to fill in the gaps. Public institutions are asked to take upon themselves the role of parents. This is why the majority of challenges today, in the United States, occur in schools, school libraries and public libraries. This is also the reason why challenges are usually initiated by parents and very well organized groups such as 'Save Our Schools' (SOS), 'People of America Responding to Educational Needs of Today's Society' (PARENTS), 'Citizens United for Responsible Education' (CURE), 'Let's Improve Today's Education' (LITE), 'American Christians in Education' (ACE) and the all-time-favorite 'Let Our Values Emerge' (LOVE).

Whatever the religious, moral and political ideals behind the censors, the censorial rhetoric, messianic fervor and coercive methods are similar. Censors simply don't want children to be exposed to ideas different from their own. What's even worse is that they not only prohibit certain books to their children, they prohibit them to everybody else. They take upon themselves the responsibility of 'keeping an eye'

on the rest of us, and if the choice of books was left entirely to them, the shelves in school libraries would be close to empty.

I share Judy Blume's idea when she says: "It's not just the books under fire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written. The books that will never be read. And all due to the fear of censorship. As always, young readers will be the real losers" (Judyblume Website)

What can be done to avoid all this? Maybe teachers and educators should be trusted more; maybe the authority of parents and pressure groups shouldn't be so overwhelming; perhaps schools should be funded at a national level, instead of a local level, to avoid single taxpayers wanting to see their personal political and religious ideas reflected in the community schools they support financially. Maybe activities such as the YSU English Festival should be promoted all over the country, with the same ideals and principles that have so well served our local community. Schools and libraries should also be prepared for challenges, because a school without a formal complaint procedure is a disaster waiting to happen. Finally, as the ALA President Carol Brey-Casiano said, censors should realize that yes, not every book is right for every person, but providing a wide range of reading choices is vital for learning, exploration and imagination. The abilities to read, speak, think and express ourselves freely are at the core of American values.

Unless they are defended, American students will lose something precious, because they will never have a complete view of the world and "the facts of life". American students will then look for the answers to their questions elsewhere, because as Montaigne said, "To forbid us anything is to make us have a mind for it," but they may not be sufficiently equipped to face what they find, and will probably blindly accept whatever is "different", just because it is a novelty.

I am aware that this survey does not fully cover and explain an issue that touches deep into the core of American ideals and moral values and has enormous implications, not only from the point of view of literature, but also from a sociological and political point of view.

However I hope to have contributed to focus on the growing phenomena of censorship in children's and young adult literature, because I consider this issue one of the most relevant and, at the same time disturbing questions in contemporary literature. This is undoubtedly an issue worthy of public attention, and I wish to recall Supreme Court Judge William O. Douglas's words: "Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one un-American act that could most easily defeat us".

When we think of America, we automatically associate it with 'The Land of Freedom' - the one place where Freedom of Thought and Freedom of Expression are considered a citizen's undeniable right, and are protected by the Constitution, thanks to the First Amendment. Unfortunately such freedom is threatened whenever severe and fierce censorship attacks are perpetrated. It is here, and now, in the land of free speech and free thinking, that academic freedom is mostly challenged. Finally, it is here, where democracy is held as a national emblem, that our children's literature is put on unfair trial, and is sometimes unfairly condemned. Luckily, I am one of many voices advocating more complex responses to children's education than the crass suppression of children's fiction.

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APPENDIX A

1. Where do you teach?

2. What grades have you taught?

3. What grades do you currently teach?

4. What subject do you currently teach?

5. How many years have you taught this subject?

6. At the school where you teach, is there a list of material and books that cannot be used in classrooms?

(If yes, please attach list)

Yes

No

7. If yes, who has contributed mostly in writing the list of banned books and material? (Teachers/ Parents / Principal/ School Board/ ...)

8. Can you name a few titles that are currently banned from your school, but that you would like to be able to use with your students?

9. Can you name a few titles that you are currently using, but have been banned at a national level (see the 100 Hit List of Banned Books)?

10. Can you name a few titles that you would like to use with your students, but have been banned at a national level (see the 100 Hit List of Banned Books)?

11. If a book was banned from other schools, but not yours, would you use it?

Yes No

12. If the answer is no, can you explain why not?

13. Do you feel your teaching has been limited in any way, because of the existing list of banned books and material at your school?

Yes No

14. Have you ever been challenged? How many times? For what reasons? What were the outcomes of the challenges?

15. Has any teacher ever been challenged at your school? For what reason?

16. Is there a formal complaint procedure parents have to follow?

17. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the minimum and 5 the maximum), how much are parents involved with the instruction of their children and the School Board?

1 2 3 4 5

18. What is your personal opinion on the involvement of parents in the School Board?

19. Would you define the school where you teach as liberal or conservative?

20. Has your school ever attended the English Festival at YSU?

Yes No

Please feel free to use this space for any additional comments:

1. In what school do you work?

2. How many years have you worked as a school librarian?

3. At the school library where you work, is there a list of material and books that have been banned, or had to be moved to a restricted section?
(If yes, please attach list)

Yes

No

4. Can you name a few books that have been banned from your school library?

5. Can you name a few books that had to be removed from the library, after a complaint?

6. Can you name a few books that were put on a restricted shelf?

7. Who has contributed mostly in writing the list of banned books and material? (Teachers/ Parents / Principal/ School Board ...)

8. Can you name a few titles that are currently banned from your library, but that you would like to include in your section?

9. Can you name a few titles that are currently in your library, but have been banned at a national level (see the 100 Hit List of Banned Books)?

10. Can you name a few titles that you would like to include in your library section, but have been banned at a national level (see the 100 Hit List of Banned Books)?

11. If a book was banned from other school libraries, but not yours, would you use it?

Yes No

12. If the answer is no, can you explain why not?

13. Do you feel that your duties and as a school librarian have been limited in any way, because of the existing list of banned books and material?

Yes No

14. Have you ever been involved in the challenge of a book? For what reasons? What was the outcome of the challenge?

15. How are complaints processed? Is there a formal complaint procedure?

16. Has the school board or superintendent printed specific instructions for the library, concerning book selection procedures and/or complaint procedures?
(If yes, please attach a copy of the procedures)

17. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the minimum and 5 the maximum), how much are parents involved with the choice of books in your library?

1 2 3 4 5

18. What is your personal opinion on the involvement of parents in the choice of books for the school library?

19. Would you define the school where you teach as liberal or conservative?

Please feel free to use this space for any additional comments:

1. In what library do you work?

2. In what section of the library do you work?

3. How many years have you worked for the public library?

4. At the library where you work, is there a list of material and books that have been banned, or had to be moved to a restricted section?
(If yes, please attach list)

Yes

No

5. Can you name a few books that have been banned from your library?

6. Can you name a few books that had to be removed from the children's section of your library, after a complaint?

7. Can you name a few books that were put on a restricted shelf?

8. If yes, who has contributed mostly in writing the list of banned books and material? (Teachers/ parents / public/ supervisor/ ...)

9. Can you name a few titles that are currently banned from your library, but that you would like to include in your section?

10. Can you name a few titles that are currently in your library, but have been banned at a national level (see the 100 Hit List of Banned Books)?

11. Can you name a few titles that you would like to include in your library section, but have been banned at a national level (see the 100 Hit List of Banned Books)?

12. If a book was banned from other libraries, but not yours, would you use it?

Yes No

13. If the answer is no, can you explain why not?

14. Do you feel that your duties and as a librarian have been limited in any way, because of the existing list of banned books and material?

Yes No

15. Have you ever been involved in the challenge of a book? For what reasons? What was the outcome of the challenge?

16. Has any librarian where you work ever been involved in the challenge of a book? For what reasons? What was the outcome of the challenge?

17. Has the library superintendent printed specific instructions for the library, concerning book selection procedures and/or complaint procedures?
(If yes, please attach a copy of these procedures)

18. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the minimum and 5 the maximum), how much is the public involved in the choice of books in your library?

1 2 3 4 5

19. Would you define the area where you work as liberal or conservative?

Please feel free to use this space for any additional comments:

APPENDIX B

The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990–2001¹

1. *Scary Stories* (Series) by Alvin Schwartz
2. *Daddy's Roommate* by Michael Willhoite
3. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
4. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier
5. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
6. *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
7. *Harry Potter* (Series) by J.K. Rowling
8. *Forever* by Judy Blume
9. *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson
10. *Alice* (Series) by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
11. *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newman
12. *My Brother Sam is Dead* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier
13. *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
14. *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
15. *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris
16. *Goosebumps* (Series) by R.L. Stine
17. *A Day No Pigs Would Die* by Robert Newton Peck
18. *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
19. *Sex* by Madonna
20. *Earth's Children* (Series) by Jean M. Auel
21. *The Great Gilly Hopkins* by Katherine Paterson
22. *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle
23. *Go Ask Alice* by Anonymous
24. *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers
25. *In the Night Kitchen* by Maurice Sendak
26. *The Stupids* (Series) by Harry Allard
27. *The Witches* by Roald Dahl
28. *The New Joy of Gay Sex* by Charles Silverstein
29. *Anastasia Krupnik* (Series) by Lois Lowry
30. *The Goats* by Brock Cole
31. *Kaffir Boy* by Mark Mathabane
32. *Blubber* by Judy Blume
33. *Killing Mr. Griffin* by Lois Duncan
34. *Halloween ABC* by Eve Merriam
35. *We All Fall Down* by Robert Cormier
36. *Final Exit* by Derek Humphry
37. *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
38. *Julie of the Wolves* by Jean Craighead George
39. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
40. *What's Happening to my Body? Book for Girls: A Growing-Up Guide for Parents & Daughters* by Lynda Madaras
41. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

¹ Out of 6,364 challenges reported to or recorded by the Office for Intellectual Freedom, as compiled by the Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association. (See Background Information: 1990–2000 under The Most Frequently Challenged Books of 2000.) The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom does not claim comprehensiveness in recording challenges. Research suggests that for each challenge reported there are as many as four or five which go unreported.

42. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
43. *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton
44. *The Pigman* by Paul Zindel
45. *Bumps in the Night* by Harry Allard
46. *Deenie* by Judy Blume
47. *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes
48. *Annie on my Mind* by Nancy Garden
49. *The Boy Who Lost His Face* by Louis Sachar
50. *Cross Your Fingers, Spit in Your Hat* by Alvin Schwartz
51. *A Light in the Attic* by Shel Silverstein
52. *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
53. *Sleeping Beauty Trilogy* by A.N. Roquelaure (Anne Rice)
54. *Asking About Sex and Growing Up* by Joanna Cole
55. *Cujo* by Stephen King
56. *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl
57. *The Anarchist Cookbook* by William Powell
58. *Boys and Sex* by Wardell Pomeroy
59. *Ordinary People* by Judith Guest
60. *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis
61. *What's Happening to my Body? Book for Boys: A Growing-Up Guide for Parents & Sons* by Lynda Madaras
62. *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* by Judy Blume
63. *Crazy Lady* by Jane Conly
64. *Athletic Shorts* by Chris Crutcher
65. *Fade* by Robert Cormier
66. *Guess What?* by Mem Fox
67. *The House of Spirits* by Isabel Allende
68. *The Face on the Milk Carton* by Caroline Cooney
69. *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut
70. *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
71. *Native Son* by Richard Wright
72. *Women on Top: How Real Life Has Changed Women's Fantasies* by Nancy Friday
73. *Curses, Hexes and Spells* by Daniel Cohen
74. *Jack* by A.M. Homes
75. *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo A. Anaya
76. *Where Did I Come From?* by Peter Mayle
77. *Carrie* by Stephen King
78. *Tiger Eyes* by Judy Blume
79. *On My Honor* by Marion Dane Bauer
80. *Arizona Kid* by Ron Koertge
81. *Family Secrets* by Norma Klein
82. *Mommy Laid An Egg* by Babette Cole
83. *The Dead Zone* by Stephen King
84. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain
85. *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison
86. *Always Running* by Luis Rodriguez
87. *Private Parts* by Howard Stern
88. *Where's Waldo?* by Martin Hanford
89. *Summer of My German Soldier* by Bette Greene

90. *Little Black Sambo* by Helen Bannerman
91. *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follett
92. *Running Loose* by Chris Crutcher
93. *Sex Education* by Jenny Davis
94. *The Drowning of Stephen Jones* by Bette Greene
95. *Girls and Sex* by Wardell Pomeroy
96. *How to Eat Fried Worms* by Thomas Rockwell
97. *View from the Cherry Tree* by Willo Davis Roberts
98. *The Headless Cupid* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder
99. *The Terrorist* by Caroline Cooney
100. *Jump Ship to Freedom* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier

APPENDIX C

Policies on Challenged Materials

Intellectual Freedom:

1. Freedom of inquiry and access to information--regardless of the format or viewpoints of the presentation--are fundamental to the development of our society. These rights must not be denied or abridged because of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, or social or political views.
2. Children have the right to freedom of inquiry and access to information; responsibility for abridgement of that right is solely between an individual child and the parent(s) of that child.
3. The need for information and the interests, growth, and enlightenment of the user should govern the selection and development of educational media, not the age, sex, race, nationality, politics, or religious doctrine of the author.
4. Attempts to restrict or deprive a learner's access to information representing a variety of viewpoints must be resisted as a threat to learning in a free and democratic society. Recognizing that within a pluralistic society efforts to censor may exist, such challenges should be met calmly with proper respect for the beliefs of the challengers. Further, since attempts to censor sound and image material frequently arise out of misunderstanding of the rationale for using these formats, we shall attempt to help both user and censor to recognize the purpose of dynamics of communication in modern times regardless of the format.

Challenged Materials—Procedures

Although every effort is made to review thoroughly each piece of material purchased for the libraries, honest differences of opinion may arise. These differences should be handled in an impartial and factual manner. The following procedure shall be followed for any complaint dealing with library materials:

1. Any staff member receiving a complaint about library materials shall report it immediately to the library personnel.
2. The library personnel shall inform the complainant of the selection procedures used within the school.
3. The complainant shall be requested to submit a formal "Request for Reconsideration of Learning Materials" (see attached letter to complainant and form) before consideration will be undertaken.
4. The Head of School and other appropriate personnel shall be informed of the complaint.
5. Challenged material shall remain on the shelves during the reconsideration process.
6. Upon receipt of the completed form, the Head of School, in conjunction with the librarian, shall arrange for a review committee consisting of the librarian, the head of the division within whose age range the material falls, one representative classroom teacher and the head of the school. Additional committee members may be called if deemed appropriate.
7. The review committee shall take the following steps after receiving the challenged material:
 - a. The committee shall read, view, or listen to the material in its entirety.
 - b. The committee shall check general acceptance of the material by reading reviews and consulting recommended lists.
 - c. The committee shall determine the extent to which the material supports the curriculum.
 - d. The committee shall complete the Checklist (see attached form, judging the material on its strength and value as a whole and not in part.
 - e. The committee shall present to the Head of School a written recommendation within three weeks, stating whether the material shall be:
 - (1). Retained
 - (2). Retained with restrictions on use.
 - (3) Removed from the collection.
8. The Head of School shall receive the evaluation of the review committee and determine the status of the material in question.

Sample Letter to Complainant

Dear _____:

We appreciate your concern over the use of _____ written
by _____ in our school.

Laurel School has developed procedures for selecting materials, but realizes that not everyone will agree with every selection made.

To help you understand the selection process, we are sending copies of our school's:

1. Libraries' Mission Statement
2. Materials Selection Policy statement
3. Statement on Intellectual Freedom
4. Procedure for Handling Challenged Materials

If you are still concerned after you review this material, please complete the Request for Reconsideration of Material form and return it to me. You may be assured of prompt attention to your request. If I have not heard from you within two weeks, we will assume you no longer wish to file a formal complaint.

Sincerely,

Head of School

LAUREL SCHOOL

Request for Reconsideration of Learning Materials

Author _____ Title _____

Publisher _____ Copyright Date _____

Request initiated by _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Material Located in: Lake _____ Crile _____

Person Making Request Represents: Himself/Herself _____ Group _____

Organization _____

1. To what do you object? _____

2. What do you feel might result from the use of the material? _____

3. Would you recommend this material for any age group? _____

Explain. _____

4. Did you read or view the entire material? _____

What parts? _____

5. Are you aware of the judgment of this material by experts in the field? _____

6. What do you believe is the theme or purpose of the material? _____

7. What materials can you recommend in place of the above? _____

Name _____

Date _____

LAUREL SCHOOL

Checklist for Review Committee's Reconsideration of Challenged Material

NONFICTION

Author _____ Title _____

A. Purpose

1. What is the overall purpose of the material? _____

2. Is the purpose accomplished? Yes _____ No _____

B. Authenticity

1. Is the author competent and qualified in the field? Yes _____ No _____

2. What is the reputation of the author and publisher/producer in the field? _____

3. Is the material up-to-date? Yes _____ No _____

4. Are information sources well-documented? Yes _____ No _____

5. Are translations and retellings faithful to the original? Yes _____ No _____

C. Appropriateness

1. Does the material promote the educational goals and objective of the school curriculum?
Yes _____ No _____

2. Is it appropriate to the level of instruction intended? Yes _____ No _____

3. Are the illustrations appropriate to the subject and age levels? Yes _____ No _____

D. Content

1. Is the content of this material well presented by providing adequate scope, range, depth, and continuity?
Yes _____ No _____

2. Does this material present information otherwise unavailable? Yes _____ No _____

3. Does this material give a new dimension or direction to its subject? Yes _____ No _____

E. Reviews

1. Source of Review _____

Favorable? _____

Unfavorable? _____

2. Does this title appear in one or more reputable selection aids?

Yes _____

No. _____

If yes, please list titles of selection aids.

Additional Comments:

Recommendation by Library Review Committee for Treatment of Challenged Materials:

Date _____

Signatures of Review Committee Members:

LAUREL SCHOOL

Checklist for Review Committee's Reconsideration of Challenged Material

FICTION

Author _____ Title _____

A. Purpose

1. What is the purpose, theme, or message of the material? How well does the author/producer/composer accomplish this purpose?
-
-

2. If the story is fantasy, is it the type that has imaginative appeal and is suitable for children?

Yes _____ No _____

for young adults?

Yes _____ No _____

If both are marked no, for what age group would you recommend this material?

3. Will the reading/viewing/listening to material result in more compassionate understanding of people?

Yes _____ No _____

4. Does it offer an opportunity to better understand and appreciate the aspirations, achievements, and problems of particular groups of people?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Are any questionable elements of the story an integral part of a worthwhile theme or message?

Yes _____ No _____

B. Content

1. Does a story about modern times give a realistic picture of life as it is now?

Yes _____ No _____

2. Does the story avoid an oversimplified view of life, one which leaves the reader with the general feeling that life is sweet and rosy or ugly and meaningless?

Yes _____ No _____

3. When factual information is part of the story, is it accurate? Yes _____ No _____
4. Is prejudicial appeal readily identifiable by the potential reader? Yes _____ No _____
5. Are concepts presented appropriate to the ability and maturity of the potential readers?
Yes _____ No _____
6. Do characters speak in a language true to the period and section of the world in which they live?
Yes _____ No _____
7. Does the material offend in some special way the sensibilities of a particular group by the way it presents either the main character or any of the minor characters?
Yes _____ No _____
8. Is there preoccupation with sex, violence, cruelty, brutality, or aberrant behavior that would make this material inappropriate for children?
Yes _____ No _____
9. If there is use of offensive language, is it appropriate to the purpose of the text for
children? Yes _____ No _____
for young adults? Yes _____ No _____
10. Is the material free from derisive names and epithets that would offend particular groups?
Yes _____ No _____
11. Is the material well-written or produced? Yes _____ No _____
12. Does the story give a broader understanding of human behavior without stressing differences of class, race, color, sex, education, religion, or philosophy in any adverse way?
Yes _____ No _____
13. Does the material make a significant contribution to the history of literature or ideas?
14. Are the illustrations appropriate and in good taste? Yes _____ No _____
15. Are the illustrations realistic in relation to the story? Yes _____ No _____

C. Additional Comments:

D. Recommendation by Library Review Committee for Treatment of Challenged Materials:

Signatures of Review Committee Members:

Date _____

LIBRARY MATERIALS SELECTION AND ADOPTION

The Board believes that the responsibility of the school library is to:

1. provide materials which will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interest, abilities and maturity levels of the students served;
2. provide materials which will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values and ethical standards;
3. provide a background of information which will enable students to make intelligent judgments in daily lives;
4. provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues so that young citizens may develop, under guidance, the practice of critical reading and thinking;
5. provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage and
6. place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials of the highest quality in order to ensure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the users of the library.

Initial purchase suggestions for library materials may come from personnel. Students may also be encouraged to make suggestions. The librarian will be responsible for evaluation and recommendation of all library materials recommended to be included in the school library. Authority for distribution of funds will rest with the building principal, subject to the approval of the Superintendent.

Gifts of library books will be accepted in keeping with the above policy on selection as well as the Board's policy on accepting gifts. Complaints about library books will be handled in compliance with Board policy on complaints about the curriculum or instructional materials.

[Adoption date: August 15, 1995]

LEGAL REFS.: ORC 3329.05; 3329.07
OAC 3301-35-03

CROSS REFS.: IIA, Instructional Materials
KLB, Public Complaints About the Curriculum or Instructional Materials

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CURRICULUM OR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The Board recognizes the need and right of students to free access to many different types of books and materials. It also recognizes the right of the certificated staff to select books and other materials supportive of the District's educational philosophy and goals.

Criticism of a book or other materials used in the school may be expected from time to time. In such instances:

1. If a parent requests that his/her own child not read a given book, the teacher and/or school administrator should resolve the issue, perhaps by arranging for use of alternative material meeting essentially the same instructional purpose.
2. The Board will not permit any individual or group to exercise censorship over instructional materials and library collections, but it recognizes that, at times, a re-evaluation of certain material may be desirable. Should an individual or group ask to have any book or other material withdrawn from school use:
 - A. The person who objects to the book or other material will be asked to sign a complaint on a standard form documenting his/her criticism.
 - B. Following receipt of the formal complaint, the Superintendent will provide for a re-evaluation of the material in question. He/She will arrange for the appointment of a review committee from among the faculty and community to consider the complaint.
 - C. The Superintendent will review the complaint and the committee's re-evaluation and will render a decision in the matter. Should the decision be unsatisfactory to the complainant, it may be appealed to the Board.

The Board assumes final responsibility for all books and instructional materials which it makes available to students, and it holds its certificated staff accountable for their proper selections. The Board also recognizes rights of individual parents with respect to controversial materials used by their own children and will provide for the re-evaluation of materials in library collections upon formal request.

[Adoption date: August 15, 1995]

LEGAL REFS.: ORC 3329.07; 3329.08; 3329.09

CROSS REFS.: IIA, Instructional Materials
IIAA, Textbook Selection and Adoption
IIAC, Library Materials Selection and Adoption
INB, Teaching About Controversial Issues
KL, Public Complaints
KLD, Public Complaints About School Personnel

CITIZEN'S REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF
LIBRARY/CURRICULUM MATERIALS

Type of material (book, film, pamphlet, etc.) _____

Author _____

Title _____

Publisher (if known) _____

Request initiated by _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Complainant represents: Self _____

Organization _____

Other _____

1. To what do you object? (Be specific, cite pages, frames) _____

2. What do you believe might be the result of reading or seeing this material? _____

3. For what age group do you recommend this material? _____

4. Is there anything good about this material? _____

5. Did you read or see the entire material? _____

What parts? _____

6. Are you aware of the judgment of this material by professional critics? _____

7. What do you believe is the theme of this material? _____

8. What would you like your school to do about this material? _____

- Do not assign it to my child.
- Withdraw it from all students as well as my child.
- Restrict it to more mature students.
- Send it back for re-evaluation.

Signature of Complainant

8260

LIBRARY BOOKS/MEDIA CENTER MATERIALS

All types of materials for the Poland Schools' libraries and Media Center shall be recommended for purchase by the professional personnel of the district. Consultation may take place with the administration, consultative staff, faculty, and students.

All materials selected shall support state objectives of school library service, be consistent with stated principles of selection, and meet stated specific selection criteria. Gifts to the library may be accepted only with the understanding that the disposition of such gifts becomes the prerogative of the Board.

In order to always provide a current, highly usable collection of materials in every library, media specialists shall provide for constant and continuing renewal of the collection, not only by the addition of up-to-date materials, but by the judicious elimination of materials which no longer meet needs or find use.

Challenged Material

A procedure for processing and responding to criticism of approved materials shall be established and followed. This procedure shall include a formal, signed complaint of standard format and an appointed committee to re-evaluate the material in question. Virtually all material that is challenged belongs to one of these basic categories: religion, ideology, or profanity/obscenity. Board policy regarding these areas is as follows:

1. Religion--factual, unbiased material which represents all major religions shall be included in the library collections.
2. Ideologies--the libraries shall, with no thought toward swaying reader judgement, make available basic primary and factual material and information on the level of their reading public, on any ideology or philosophy of government which exerts or has exerted a strong force, either favorably or unfavorably, in government, current events, politics, education, or any phase of life.
3. Profanity/obscenity--materials shall be subjected to a test of literary merit and reality by the media specialist and teachers who will take into consideration their reading public and community standards of morality.

THE POLAND SCHOOLS

MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY FOR LIBRARY-MEDIA CENTERS

#8500

I. PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of the Poland Local School District Library Media Centers is contained in and conforms to the Philosophy of Education of the Poland Schools and the Library Media Statement of Philosophy contained in the Mahoning County Course of Study for Media Services.

II. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the library media centers of the Poland Schools are to make available to faculty and students a collection of materials that will enrich and support the curriculum and meet the needs of the students and faculty served.

III. SELECTION PERSONNEL

The Poland Board of Education is the legal body in which rests the ultimate responsibility for the selection of materials for the media centers. The responsibility for the actual selection of materials for the media centers is delegated to the professional library media specialist who will choose the materials best suited to the needs of each school based on the curriculum.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR SELECTION

In selecting materials, the library media specialist will evaluate available materials in relationship to curricular needs and will consult professionally recognized current and retrospective selection sources as well as other special bibliographies, many of which have been prepared by educational organizations for specific subject areas. The actual materials should be examined whenever possible.

Recommendations for purchase should be encouraged from teachers, students, administrators, and community persons. Additional suggestions may result from reading lists from other libraries, visits to professional exhibits and displays and bibliographies from texts and courses of study approved for use within the district.

V. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The following criteria shall be used as guidelines in selecting materials for the library media centers in the Poland schools:

- a. educational significance
- b. contribution the subject matter makes to the curriculum and to student interests
- c. favorable reviews from standard selection sources
- d. favorable recommendations based on examination of materials by professional personnel
- e. authoritativeness, reputation, and significance of the author, producer, and publisher
- f. validity, accuracy, up-to-datedness, and appropriateness of material

- g. contribution the material makes to breadth of representative viewpoints on controversial issues.
- h. high degree of readability and potential user appeal
- i. high artistic quality and/or literary style
- j. quality format and logical organization
- k. appropriate level of reading difficulty
- l. value commensurate with cost and/or need
- m. timeliness of permanence
- n. consideration of the work as a whole, not isolated passages

VI. REEVALUATION OF THE COLLECTION

Weeding the media center collections by withdrawing and discarding materials is as important in maintaining a useable collection as is the careful selection of new materials. Materials that are factually inaccurate, out-of-date, instructionally useless, or of doubtful literary quality are all candidates for removal from the collection. Weeding is a continuous process depending on considerations of space, budget, curriculum requirements, and user needs unique to each library media center.

Some suggested criteria for consideration to discard:

- a. record of use
- b. currency. If the subject matter is out-of-date, inaccurate, or no longer relevant to the educational program.
- c. physical condition
- d. dispensability. If it is an unneeded duplicate copy, present material no longer needed, or if it has been supplanted by superior resources.

Some reasons for not discarding materials even if they meet the above criteria:

- a. if it is a work of historical significance
- b. if it has unusual illustrations or illustrations by a well-known artists or illustrator
- c. if it is a work by a local author, illustrator, or editor
- d. if it describes local history or personalities

VII. GIFT POLICY

Community organizations and individual citizens often wish to contribute funds in the form of gifts and memorials. The Poland Board of Education welcomes such involvement. however, the gifts and memorials must meet the same criteria as those applied to the selection of other materials.

Materials contributed shall be integrated into the library media center collections at the discretion of the library media specialist. Gifts of money will be used for the purchase of educational materials. The library media specialist will select the specific items.

The Board of Education shall accept gifts and memorials with proper resolutions recognizing the donors for their generosity. Every effort shall be made to place labels of recognition in the materials contributed.

The library media center personnel may accept commercially sponsored materials, provided they meet the same criteria as those applied to the selection of other materials.

VIII. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING CHALLENGED MATERIALS

See Poland Board of Education Policy #8260 and #8270

#8270

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CURRICULUM OR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The Board recognizes the need and right of students to have free access to many different types of books and materials. It also recognizes the right of the professional staff to select books and other materials supportive of the Board's educational philosophy and goals.

Criticism of a book or other materials used in the District may be expected from time to time. In such instances, the following guidelines shall apply.

1. If a parent requests that his/her own child not read a given book, the teacher and/or school administrator should resolve the issue, perhaps by arranging for use of alternative materials meeting essentially the same instructional purpose.
2. The Board does not permit any individual or group to exercise censorship over instructional materials and library collections, but it recognizes that, at times, a re-evaluation of certain materials may be desirable. Should an individual or group ask to have any book or other materials withdrawn from school use specific steps are to be followed.
3. Constructive criticism of the schools is welcomed by the Poland Board of Education whenever it is motivated by a sincere desire to improve the quality of the educational program or to equip the schools to do other tasks more effectively. The Board has, however, confidence in its professional staff and desires to support their actions in order that they be free from necessary, spiteful, or negative criticism and complaint. Therefore, whenever a complaint is made directly to the Board as a whole or to a Board members, as an individual, it will be referred for study and possible solution, utilizing the standard form and procedure for such complaint resolution.

The Board assumes final responsibility for all books and instructional materials which it makes available to students, and it holds its professional staff accountable for their proper selections. The Board also recognizes rights of individual parents with respect to controversial materials used by their own children and provides for the re-evaluation of materials in library collections upon formal request.

The Board will consider hearing a public complaint only when the matter cannot be resolved by the format or procedure as outlined in the following policy. Matters referred to the Board must be in writing and should be specific in terms of the action desired. The Board will not consider or act on complaints that have not been explored at the appropriate levels and until the following procedure has been utilized.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF A BOOK, VIDEO, OR
OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL(S) SUCH AS COMPUTER SOFTWARE

1. Request initiated by _____ Phone _____
(Name)
2. Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
3. Author of material/book in question _____
4. Publisher (if known) _____
5. Cite specifically what you find objectionable _____

6. What do you believe to be the result of a student's usage of this book/material: _____

7. For what age would you recommend this book/material? _____
8. Is there anything good about this book/material? _____
9. Did you read the entire book or view the entire video? ___Yes ___No.
If no, what part/s did you review? _____

10. Are you aware of the judgement of this book/material by literary critics and or experts in
the field? ___Yes ___No
11. What do you believe is the theme of this book/material? _____

12. What would you like your school to do about this book/material? _____

Do not assign it to my child. Utilize alternate material.
Send it back to the Department office (ie library, academic department).
13. Would you suggest a book/material of equal literary quality/academic merit? If so, please
list. _____

Date: _____

Signature of Complainant

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PROCEDURES

Complaints must be discussed first informally with the teacher in order to resolve the matter at the lowest possible level. If the matter is not resolved, an informal discussion with the building principal must then be held.

If informal means have not resolved the matter, a citizen may request a "Reconsideration Form" from the building principal and file a written formal complaint. Within five (5) days of receipt of the written complaint the principal must take action to either remediate or affirm the situation.

If a citizen is still not satisfied, the matter within five (5) days may be submitted to the Superintendent who will within five (5) days upon receipt of said complaint, form a review committee comprised of: one PTA officer from that building, one administrator from the district other than the building principal, one teacher appointed by PEA, one representative from the County Office Education, (since that office is responsible for book adoptions), and one other community citizen, (usually a physician, minister or elected official since most complaints belong to categories such as profanity, obscenity, religion or ideologies), one librarian, one board member and two parents from that building where the complaint originated.

The committee within fifteen (15) days shall render an advisory recommendation to the Superintendent and the citizen complainant as to the appropriateness of the instructional material. The Superintendent then within five (5) days of receipt of the committee's recommendation shall forward a decision to the complainant.

If the citizen is still not satisfied, within five (5) days after the receipt of the Superintendent's decision, he/she may submit the matter to the Board. Upon reviewing the matter as submitted in writing by the complainant, the Board (or its designee) shall render a decision and that decision shall be final.

Book Selection Policy of the Warren City Schools Libraries

The Book Selection of the Warren City Schools Libraries shall be based on the "Library Bill of Rights" which was officially adopted by the Council of the American Library Association of June 18, 1948. The Library Bill of Rights applies to all materials and media of communication used or collected by libraries.

Library Bill of Rights

The council of the American Library Association reaffirms its belief in the basic policies which should govern the services of all libraries:

1. As a responsibility of library service, books and other reading matter selected should be chosen for values of interest, information and enlightenment of all the people of the community. In no case should any book be excluded because of the race or nationality or the political or religious views of the writer.
2. There should be the fullest practicable provision of material representing all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times, international, national, and local; and books or other reading matter of sound factual authority should not be proscribed or removed from library shelves because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
3. Censorship of books, urged or practiced by volunteer arbiters of morals or political opinion or by organizations that would establish a coercive concept of Americanism, must be challenged by libraries in maintenance of their responsibility to provide public information and enlightenment through the printed word.
4. Libraries should exist the cooperation of allied groups in the fields of science, of education, and of book publishing in resisting all abridgment of the free access to ideas and full freedom of expression that are the tradition and heritage of Americans.
5. The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his race, religion, national origins or political views.

6. As an institution of education for democratic living, the library should welcome the use of its meeting rooms for socially useful and cultural activities and discussion of current public questions. Such meeting places should be available on equal terms to all groups in the community regardless of the beliefs and affiliations of their members.

Adopted June 18, 1948, amended February 1, 1951 by the ALA Council. By Official action of the Council on February 3, 1951, the Library Bill of Rights shall be interpreted to apply to all materials and media of communication used or collected by libraries.

Selection of Library Materials

It shall be the responsibility of qualified librarians to supervise the selection and ordering of all print materials that are to be used in the libraries of the school system. It shall be the responsibility of qualified media specialists to supervise the selection and ordering of all non-print materials that are housed in the libraries or media centers of the school system. All materials shall be selected from lists submitted by teachers and other instructional staff members and from lists prepared by the American Library Association, the State Department of Public Instruction, and other recognized sources.

Formal Complaints Against Library Materials

Any parent has the right to lodge a complaint and request that materials be removed from a library collection. The form entitled "Citizens Request for Reconsideration of a Book" must be completed in its entirety, signed accordingly, and submitted to the librarian. An appointment will then be

scheduled between the librarian and the parent to discuss the matter. If the issue remains unresolved a committee appointed by the principal, comprised of the principal, the librarian and two other staff members will read and discuss the selection, hear formal presentations from interested parties, and recommend appropriate action.

If after this committee completes its assignment the issue is still unresolved, it will be taken before the Director of Curriculum for a final decision.

Complaints concerning non-print materials shall be directed to the media specialist and handled in a similar manner.

CITIZEN'S REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF A BOOK #

Author _____ Paperback _____ Hardcover _____

Title _____

Publisher (if known) _____

Request initiated by _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

City _____ Zip code _____

Complainant represents:

_____ Himself

_____ (name organization)

_____ (identify other group)

1. To what in the book do you object? (Please be specific; cite pages)

2. What do you feel might be the result of reading this book?

3. For what age group would you recommend this book?

4. Is there anything good about this book?

5. Did you read the entire book? _____ What parts? _____

6. Are you aware of the judgment of this book by literary critics? _____

7. What do you believe is the theme of this book? _____

8. What would you like your school to do about this book?

_____ do not assign it to my child

_____ withdraw it from all students as well as from my child

_____ send it back to the Committee for reevaluation

9. In its place what book of equal literary quality would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of our civilization? _____

Signature of Complainant

Date _____

* This form will also be used for reconsideration of non-print material.

Please insert type of material in place of book throughout the form.

**CITIZEN'S REQUEST FOR
RECONSIDERATION OF A BOOK**

Author _____

Title _____

Publisher _____

Request initiated by _____

Telephone _____ Address _____ City _____

Complainant represents: (Check one)

Herself/Himself _____ Organization (Please name) _____

Other Group (Please Identify) _____

1. To what in the book do you object? (Be specific, cite pages.) _____

2. What do you feel might be the result of reading this book? _____

3. For what age would you recommend this book? _____

4. What educational benefits might this book have? _____

5. Did you read the entire book? If not, what pages were read? _____

6. Are you aware of the judgement of this book by literary critics? _____

7. What do you believe is the theme of this book? _____

8. What would you like the school to do about this book? (Check one)

Do not assign it to my child. _____

Do not assign it to any student. _____

Send it to a committee for re-evaluation _____

Challenges of Educational Materials
Page 5

9. In its place, what book of equal literary quality would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and prospective of our civilization? _____
-

Your Signature/Date

Adopted: November 1984
Effective: November 1984
Revised: January 24, 2000

Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Work

Paperback _____
Hardcover _____

Author _____
Title _____
Publisher (If known) _____
Request initiated by _____
Telephone _____ Address _____
City _____ Zip Code _____

Complainant represents
 Himself/Herself
 (Name organization) _____
 (Identify other group) _____

Have you been able to discuss this work with the teacher or librarian who ordered it or who used it?
 Yes No

What do you understand to be the general purpose for using this work?
a. Provide support for a unit in the curriculum?
 Yes No
b. Provide a learning experience for the reader in one kind of literature?
 Yes No
c. Other _____

Did the general purpose for the use of the work, as described by the teacher or librarian, seem a suitable one to you?
 Yes No
If not, please explain. _____

What do you think is the general purpose of the author in this book? _____

In what ways do you think a work of this nature is not suitable for the use the teacher or librarian wishes to carry out? _____

Have you been able to learn what is the students' response to this work?
 Yes No

7. What response did the students make? _____
8. Have you been able to learn from your school library what book reviewers or other students of literature have written about this work?
 Yes No
9. Would you like the teacher or librarian to give you a written summary of what book reviewers and other students have written about this book or film?
 Yes No
10. Do you have negative reviews of the book?
 Yes No
11. Where were they published? _____
12. Would you be willing to provide summaries of the reviews you have collected?
 Yes No
13. What would you like your library/school to do about this work?
 Do not assign/lend it to my child.
 Return it to the staff selection committee/department for reevaluation.
 Other—Please explain. _____
14. In its place, what work would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject treated? _____

Signature _____
Date _____

APPENDIX D

Public Library of Youngstown & Mahoning County

Staff Section

STAFF INSTRUCTION BULLETIN 300
SUBJECT: BOOK SELECTION POLICY
June 2003

BOOK SELECTION POLICY

The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County provides free service to all individuals and groups in the County, both children and adults. Basic to this service is the judicious selecting, servicing, and supplying of books and other materials. These books and materials are intended to aid any person in the pursuit of education, search for information, and in creative use of leisure time. If one of these purposes must be emphasized, the library recognizes its role as an educational institution for the public, and the library affirms that its major concern must be contributing toward the removal of ignorance.

The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County endorses the **Library Bill of Rights**, the text of which is herein printed:

The Council of the American Library Association reaffirms its belief in the following basic policies which should govern the services of all libraries:

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.

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.

Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

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.

Adopted June 18, 1948. Amended February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980, and January 23, 1996 by the ALA Council.

STANDARDS

1. The library recognizes its duty to maintain copies of the classics, those titles of proved and recognized importance and influence. Where possible the library will provide varying editions or versions of such books and in sufficient numbers for reasonable use.
2. The public library does not promote particular beliefs or views. It provides a resource where the individuals can examine issues freely and make their own decisions. This implies the necessity for the library's collection to contain various opinions expressed on important and/or controversial questions, including unpopular and/or unorthodox positions. This does not necessarily imply numerical balance since this is seldom possible. Subscribing as it does to the Library Bill of Rights, the Library must resist efforts of groups to deny access to other members of the community or to force inclusion or exclusion of materials representing political, economic, moral, religious or other vested positions.
3. The public library recognizes its duty to maintain an up-to-date reference collection in the main library and at designated branches utilizing strategies that make the optimal current use of resources in both print and electronic formats. Items added to the reference collection will meet high standards in quality, in content and, where possible, in format. Continuous review of older reference materials and comparison with the new sources in both print and electronic formats are major factors in maintaining reference collections.
4. All items of local history that can be preserved for possible future use will be filed by the library. Major responsibility for these items, as for all reference items, will be lodged in the main library's reference collection. Books, pamphlets, clippings, tapes, etc. will be preserved and made available. All materials relating to Youngstown and Mahoning County will be procured whenever possible. Items relating to Ohio will be added as usefulness indicates.
5. The best possible titles on individual subjects and the best works of individual authors will be added. A selection of items which may not be original contributions will be added if vocabulary or treatment are such that they can be useful to sections of the public requiring such materials.

6. Recreational materials will be added as budget and space permit. Best seller fiction of lesser or low literary quality, with sections devoted to sex and/or violence, may be added because of public demand.
7. The library attempts to maintain within the confines of space and budgetary limitations significant representation of periodicals in most subject fields at the Main Library with smaller though still balanced collections in designated Branches. Since retrieval of information in periodicals is a critically important factor in the usefulness of periodical collections, the presence of periodical indexing services, will be a major consideration in determining a periodical's inclusion in the collection.
8. Because of the special nature of medical and legal materials and the necessity for professional training in interpretation, only the most general and "popular" titles can be supplied by the public library. Popular health books, monographs written for the general public on various diseases, books for the layman on aspects of the law, and the U.S. and Ohio codes will be available in the library, all in the latest edition and formats possible.
9. Gift books may be accepted by the Library. Their inclusion in the collection will be subject to the usual methods of bibliographical investigation. In no case will an item be added simply because it is a gift. Gifts are accepted by the library with the provision that it may dispose of them as it deems fit; through adding to the collection, storing, selling, etc. In general, material of local history or books written by local authors may be added regardless of quality. Gifts of magazines cannot be accepted, in general. Specialized periodicals and journals may be considered for acceptance subject to approval.
10. Rental items. Certain materials may be rented by the library - e.g., current best-selling books, media, or items deemed essentially of temporary value to the collection. The chief purpose for renting such materials is to provide multiple copies quickly of items that may not continue to be in demand. Since various options for renting materials are available, some items obtained may not adhere to the library's usual selection guidelines. However, these items are rented and thus are not part of the library's permanent collection. Such items, of course, are subject to purchase for the permanent collection.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND OTHER MATERIALS

The library maintains collections appropriate for children. The parent or guardian determines age level borrowing privileges of children.

In selecting books for children, the library's objective is to make available a collection that satisfies the informational, recreational, and cultural reading needs and potentials of children from pre-school age to age fourteen. Books are included which meet the general demands of the majority of children, along with books whose special qualities make them valuable to children with special needs, talents, problems, or interests.

Six major considerations for book selection are kept in mind:

- a. **LITERARY AND ARTISTIC DISTINCTION.** Outstanding picture books, folklore, poetry, fantasy, and fiction form the child's literary and artistic taste and develop his imaginative and emotional life.
- b. **MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY LEVELS.** Since children lack experience and are learning about the world for the first time, their books should present a clear, simple, normal picture of life. Children need stories which present a positive view of human relationships, undistorted by either sentimentality or sordidness. In the children's collection it is of special importance that attitudes of cruelty, violence, intolerance or social prejudice are not fostered. The treatment of problems should be in terms appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- c. **SUITABILITY OF CONTENT AND VOCABULARY TO THE AGE OF THE READERS.** Bearing in mind the many levels of reading ability at every stage of development, from the beginning reader to the adolescent, books are provided for the slow, the average, and the gifted reader.
- d. **CONTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK TO THE BALANCE OF THE TOTAL COLLECTION.** Duplication of titles within the collection is contingent on budget as well as on demand to the extent that the collection remains balanced in all its goals. Because of the wide range of children's subject interests and reading abilities, some titles in the young adult collections are duplicated. Fiction such as career or sports stories for older children, and books on such subjects as coin collecting, physics, and flags represent samples of this duplication. A few titles for adults about children's books and reading are duplicated in some children's collections.
- e. **TOLERANCE FOR DIVERSITY OF VIEWPOINTS.** The honest expression of views acceptable to some but not to all has a place in the library. The public library must not be used to promote or exclude any particular religion or political creed.
- f. **OBJECTIVE EVALUATION.** A book must be judged by its totality not by its parts. Individual details and incidents must be put in their proper place, not lifted out of context so as to distort the total intention and spirit of the

book.

In general, textbooks are added not to satisfy school demands, but to provide information on subjects when there is little or no material available in any other form, or when the textbook makes a significant contribution to the collection.

Curricular demands are considered insofar as they do not obscure the public library's general contribution to the community or attempt to substitute for the development and use of school library resources. To satisfy the needs of children learning to read, a limited number of primers, first, second, and third grade readers are purchased, but the greater emphasis is on providing picture books and books for beginning readers which meet library standards of literary and artistic quality.

SUMMARY

The very words "book and materials selection" mean that not all items can be purchased, stored or made available. From the thousands of items produced annually, from the millions that have been produced, the library can only select those that will help it to achieve its stated mission;

The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County is a dependable source of reliable information and of guidance in locating and evaluating the information people need to be successful in all aspects of their lives. The library is a center of community life that provides all residents, regardless of income, age, or race with ample opportunities for personal growth and satisfying recreation.

Not all books or other materials can be purchased; not all items on any given subject can be purchased; not all items of a particular genre can be purchased. By using professional librarians, professionally compiled bibliographic tools and techniques, and the time, money, and space available, the Public Library will do its best to select the items of greatest use and value.

REVIEW AND RE-EVALUATION

As the people for whom the library exists, the members of the public have a right to question any decision made by the library. Should a patron object to the inclusion or exclusion of a particular title or particular group of titles, he or she will be asked to write a letter to the Director of the Library. This letter should include the following:

1. Patron's name, address and telephone number.
2. Statement that the patron has read the complete book or viewed the complete tape, etc.

3. Specific complaint or recommendation.
4. Suggested substitute.
5. Suggested course of action.
6. Patron's signature.

All such letters will be answered fully and promptly by the Director of the Library or by someone he/she shall designate.

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES SEPTEMBER 22, 1987
AMENDED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES JUNE 12, 2003

Go Back	Staff Home	Library Home
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