

Intellectual Freedom

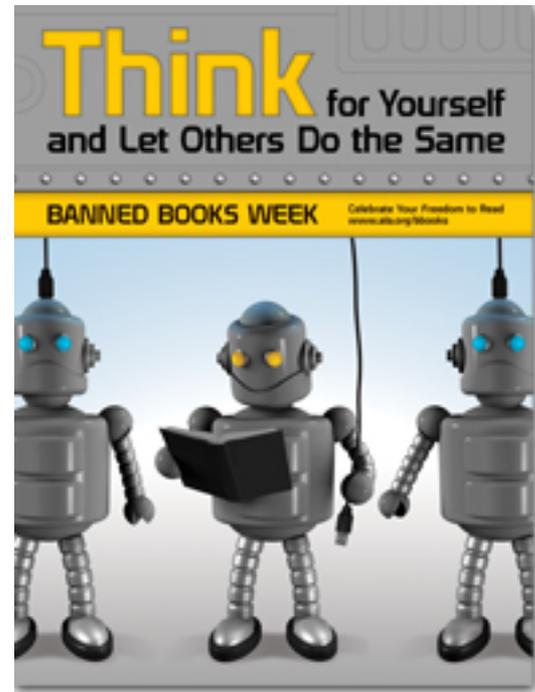
Beginning Workshop

May 15, 2014

Bellaire, Michigan

Jill Porter

- Asst. Director for Public Service, Traverse Area District Library
- Grand Traverse County Law Library
- Law Librarian
- New York Public Library



What do we mean by Intellectual Freedom?

- Freedom to impart information
 - Writing
 - Publishing
 - Broadcasting
 - Internet transmission
 - Speaking
- Freedom to receive information
 - Reading
 - Listening
 - Viewing

In libraries, this means everything from...

Petitioners to...

Meetings to...

Bulletin Board items
to...

Our collections.



Defend intellectual freedom by resisting censorship



- Library Bill of Rights – reviewed and reaffirmed by the ALA six times since 1939
- Adopted in many public library policy manuals

Library Bill of Rights

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

Library Bill of Rights

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

Library Bill of Rights

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

Library Bill of Rights

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

Library Bill of Rights

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

Library Bill of Rights

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

Library Bill of Rights

VI. Libraries that 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.

Use of a library is protected

- Libraries do not espouse ideas, library managers must not either

Budget and space are constraints

- Even the largest libraries are limited what they can collect
- Collections policies must be fair to all residents and ideas, whether or not you personally agree

What gets challenged?

- Sexually explicit materials
- Offensive language
- Materials that espouse non-mainstream religions
- Sexuality
- Violence

Prepare yourself and your library

- Materials Selection Policy
- Request for reconsideration form
- Train staff

Resources:

<http://www.ala.org/bbooks/challengedmaterials>

Materials Selection Policy

- Defines who is responsible for selection – e.g. the Library Director
- Sets Priorities and Criteria – for all age groups; diverse in scope; education, information and recreational
- Parents are responsible for their children
- Gifts are judged the same as purchases
- Weeding/withdrawal –Age of content or item or reduced demand
- Procedure for handling challenges – must be in writing
- Attach the Request for Reconsideration Form

Typical criteria for selection

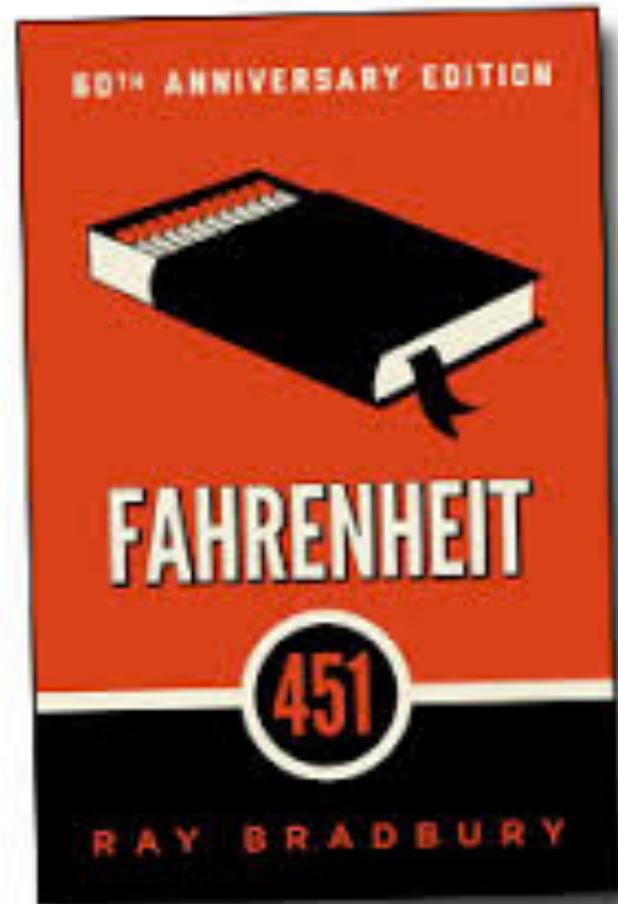
- Quality
 - Reviews and awards
 - Literary acclaim
- Demand
 - Best seller lists
 - Local Interest
- Collection Balance

Selection Policy Examples

- [Charlevoix Public Library](#)
- [Chippewa River District Library](#)
- [Kalamazoo Public Library](#)
- [Kent District Library](#)

What is a “challenge”?

- Formal request to remove
- Documents specific complaint
- Requires name of challenger
- You must respond in writing
- You must provide a process for appeal to the board



Request for Reconsideration

- [ALA Template](#)
- [TADL Materials Selection Policy and Reconsideration Form](#)
- [Chippewa River District Library](#)

Staff Training

- What to do when someone complains about content
 - Who is responsible for speaking with the patron
 - What is the policy (Materials Selection Policy)
 - Where is the form (Request for Reconsideration)
- Talk it through with staff
 - Address their personal concerns
 - Discuss concerns patrons bring up
 - Personal beliefs cannot dictate library policy

Handling the complaint

- Engage the Patron
 - Allow them to vent
 - Respect their opinion
 - Inform them of Library policy and practice
- Are they still unhappy?
 - Have them fill out the form completely and sign
 - Act by investigating and understanding
 - Respond
 - Allow for an appeal to the Board

Resources

- American Library Association
 - [Office of Intellectual Freedom](#)
 - Support for Dealing with Challenges
- [Library Bill of Rights](#)
- [How Brooklyn Public Library has Responded to Book Challenges.](#)
NYTimes.com

Break time



Break Out Groups

- Side A – make a challenge
- Side B – defend the title (or not)
- Report back to everyone

"A truly great library
contains something in it to
offend everyone."

Jo Godwin