



**Censorship
Awareness:**
Be Ready BEFORE
Material is Challenged





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**“A truly great library
contains something in it
to offend everyone.”**

- Jo Godwin



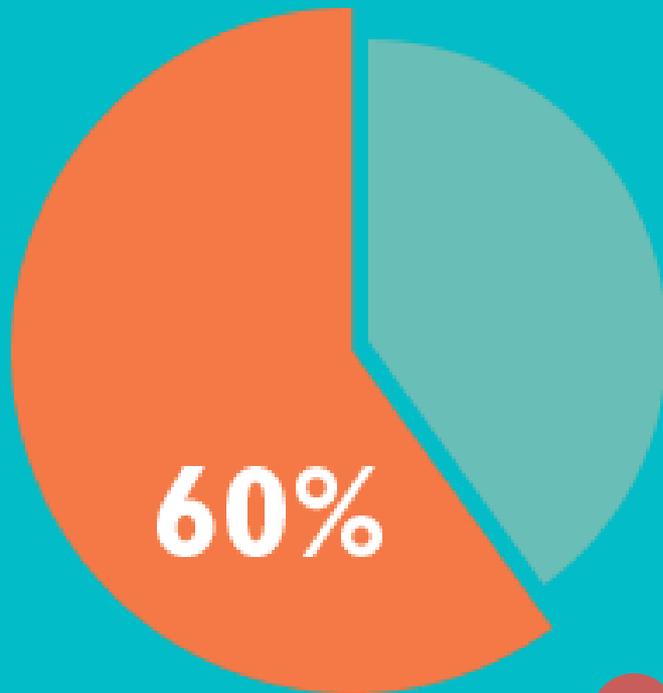


● 2021-2022 school year

11 people

made 60% of all book challenges
in the US

Individuals who filed 10 or more complaints
were responsible for two-thirds of all challenges.



NUMBER OF UNIQUE TITLES CHALLENGED 2021-2023

1,651 —2021

2,571 —2022

4,240 —2023



OFFICE FOR
Intellectual Freedom
American Library Association

"Now, as result of an organized political movement and sharing book lists compiled by various groups, the overwhelming majority of tracked challenges come from groups and involve multiple titles."



What's essential for this work?

PREPARED STAFF

- Know talking points
- Rehearse responses
- Ready for interactions

PROCEDURES

Established methods of responding to:

- Complaints
- Formal challenges

POLICY

- Clearly written
- Board-approved
- Includes acquisition & weeding criteria



**Acknowledge
feelings &
reflect back to
customer**



Validate/reflect +

Use value-neutral language+

Offer professional RA services



Using Neutral Language

- Follows our professional practices of non-judgmental guidance
- Gives staff examples of how to describe material without assigning value
- Avoids labeling other books as lesser or unworthy as compared to other books



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“**You’re right**, it sounds like this title isn’t a **good fit** for your family. Let’s find something with **different content** that better meets your family’s needs.”

“We have many different tools to find the books that you’d like to see.”

“Our collection is very diverse because **inclusion is one of our values**. Every reader should be able to find something they like at the library. **Not every book will be for every person.**”





“**I agree**, it appears this book wasn’t what you expected or wanted. Can I help you find an item that does?”

“Tell me more about what you’d like to see in your next read.”

“We empower families to **make their own decisions** and let their children know what is and isn’t ok **in their house.**”





Ratings

MPAA ratings are not law

Libraries don't rate materials

Libraries are not obligated to enforce industry-specific ratings for books or movies





Ratings 2 Electric Boogaloo

Texas HB 900

September 1, 2023

[R]equires all **book vendors** serving Texas public schools to give any book with references to gender identity, sexual orientation or intimate relationships **a rating of either “sexually explicit” or “sexually relevant.”** The ratings, which are not clearly defined and are not required to be standardized, convey little information to schools.

Vendors also are prohibited from selling a book to public schools that **“describes or portrays sexual conduct...in a patently offensive way.”**

But the bill does not define “patently offensive.”



Ratings 2 Electric Boogaloo

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For example, a children's story having nothing to do with gender identity, sexual orientation or intimate relationships but set in a home with two mothers may be material rated by one vendor as sexually explicit, by another as sexually relevant and understood by educators to simply be an example of inclusive literature that does not warrant a caution label.



Idaho HB 710

July 1, 2024

Children or their parents can file a claim for \$250 against a public or school library if they obtain materials deemed "harmful to minors."

If libraries don't move materials "to a section designated for adults only" within 60 days of receiving a request, children or parents could receive \$250 in statutory damages, along with actual damages and other relief, such as injunctive relief [...]

(Read: the court will make them move the materials)

The
Ratings
Threequel



Idaho HB 710

The
Ratings
Threequel



Label or List?



Labeling

- Can discourage readers by advertising their reading to others
- Helping people **avoid** books doesn't fit with our professional values – we help them **find** things
- Can be overly broad or narrow, depending on use

Lists/Tags/Headers

- Can improve discovery in the catalog
- Can help readers connect between categories
- More dynamic way of presenting information





MILD & FREE

CONTENTS:
**BOOKS WITHOUT SEXUAL
CONTENT, EXCESSIVE LANGUAGE
OR EXCESSIVE VIOLENCE***

*KISSING AND HEAVY TENSION MAY BE PRESENT



TEEN
ALL FALL DOWN
BOOK ONE OF EMBASSY ROW

MILD & FREE
YA F CAR

TEEN
Don't Judge a Girl by Her Cover

MILD & FREE
YA F CAR

TEEN
Out of Sight, Out of Tim

MILD & FREE
YA F CAR

TEEN
United We Spy

MILD & FREE
YA F CAR

TEEN
United We Spy

MILD & FREE
YA F CAR

TEEN
Gross My Heart and Hope to Spy

MILD & FREE
YA F CAR

TEEN
THE SIREN

MILD & FREE
YA F CAS

TEEN
THE HELL

MILD & FREE
YA F CAS

TEEN
THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE POE BLYTHE

MILD & FREE
YA F CON

TEEN
FIRETRAP

MILD & FREE
YA F DAL

TEEN
WINDCHASER

MILD & FREE
YA F DAL

TEEN
WINDFALL

MILD & FREE
YA F DAL

TEEN
WATER CROSSING

MILD & FREE
YA F DAL

TEEN
WATERFALL

MILD & FREE
YA F DAL

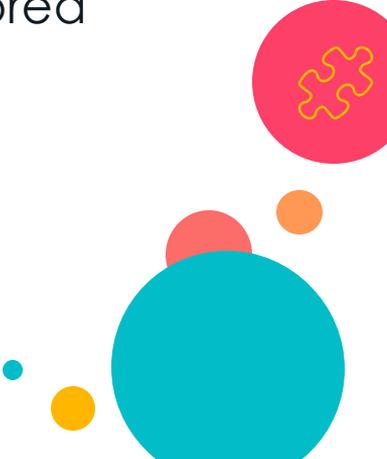
MILD & FREE



Soft Censorship in the Wild

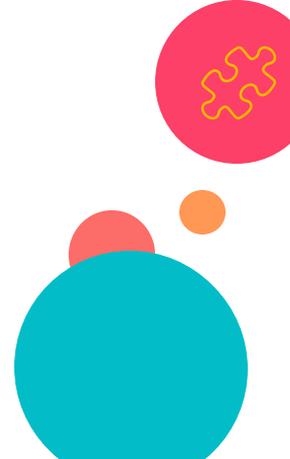


Display Sabotage

- “Today I discovered a booklet left on our display in the CP entitled “God and Sexuality”. It was very recently placed there in place of one of our books. I just wanted to bring it to everyone’s awareness because they might be back with more. I only skimmed through it, but it is definitely anti-LGBTQ+. Whoever left it also attached a rainbow-colored clothespin to draw attention to it.”
- 



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 - “We just found two books on Capital Punishment and the Death Penalty “added” to our Rainbow Friends display in kids.”
- 



Misdirection & Meddling

- Purchased books not making it to the shelves
 - “Forgetting” to catalog titles
 - “Disappearing” from shipments
 - Being mis-cataloged to incorrect collections
 - Suddenly, many books on a subject are lost or missing*
 - Finding books hidden in the library (example)
- 



Christina Soontornvat:

“[C]ensorship is motivated by fear - fear of letting kids feel each other's humanity and step into someone else's heart...

**[W]hen you become another person,
you cannot hate that person.”**

#alsc22 [@teacher2library](https://www.instagram.com/teacher2library)





THANKS!

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