

Literacies and Issues of Intellectual Freedom in the Digital Age

How Librarians Are Coping with New Challenges

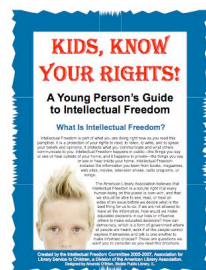


S-11
BC Library Conference Saturday, April 24, 2010

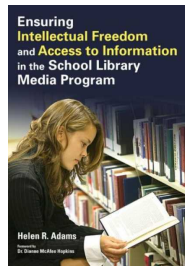
Overview

- Introduction:
Janet Mumford, S.D. #42, UBC
 - Public Libraries:
Deb Thomas, Burnaby Public Library
 - School Libraries:
Richard Beaudry, S.D. #35, U of A
- Co-sponsored by the Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Young Adult and Children's Services Section of the BC Library Association*

Children, Teens & Intellectual Freedom



<http://thesenlamberproject.files.wordpress.com/2007/07/kids1.jpg>



<http://www.coverbrowser.com/image/books-about-media/375-1.jpg>



"It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate....In our system, students may not be regarded as closed-circuit recipients of only that which the State chooses to communicate."

Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas, 1969,

in [Tinker v. Des Moines Community School District](#)

<http://vantech.vsb.bc.ca/ss/pm/ss11/online/ss11/government/Charter.gif>

<http://ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/iffissues/censorshipschools.cfm>

<http://www.band-of-rights.org/bandimages/armbands.jpg>

Intellectual Freedom, Canadian Library Association

- "All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the nation's Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom, under the law, is essential to the health and development of Canadian society."

http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/PositionStatements/Statement_on_intell.htm

American Library Association 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.
- 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.

• <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/librarybill/index.cfm>

American Library Association 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.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas (e.g. Web 2.0 technologies)

Canada: Student's Bill of Information Rights

- "We believe that all students should have the right to: *access a wide range of print, non-print and electronic learning resources at an appropriate level; explore materials expressing a variety of opinions and perspectives; and freely choose reading, viewing and listening materials for recreational and study purposes.*"
- Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada and the Canadian School Library Association, 1995

<http://www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Publications2&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2713>

ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee--ALSC & YALSA

- Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC)
- Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)
- Each association has 8 representatives that sit on the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association
- In sum, Intellectual Freedom is of great concern to librarians who serve children and teens

Intellectual Freedom includes Privacy

- "The right to be left alone--the most comprehensive of rights, and the right most valued by a free people."
- USA Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, [Olmstead v. U.S.](#), 277 U.S. 438 (1928)

Rationale

- Why is Intellectual Freedom essential for supporting Literacy in a Digital World?
- The New London Group:
- Literacy: "one could say that its fundamental purpose is to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life." (1996)

<http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/literacy/ricsland.htm>

New London Group (1996) Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures

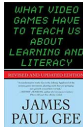
- New Literacies:
- "the **multiplicity of communications channels** and **increasing cultural and linguistic diversity** in the world today call for a **much broader view of literacy** than portrayed by traditional language-based approaches.
- Multiliteracies, ...overcomes the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how **negotiating** the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic, and private lives of students."

http://www.static.kern.org/filer/blogWrite44ManilaWebsite/paul/articles/A_Pedagogy_of_Multiliteracies_Designing_Social_Futures.htm

James P. Gee: What Video Games Teach Us About Literacy

- Literacy--semiotic domains, "any set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g., oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artifacts, etc.) to communicate distinctive types of meanings"
- "because new literacies are multiple and attached to social and cultural practices,...people need to (1) be literate in many different semiotic domains, and (2) be able to become literate in other "new" semiotic domains throughout their lives"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Paul_Gee



Literacies of the Digital Age



<http://www.intermedia.uio.no/download/attachments/23037190/closing.jpg>

<http://i.zdnet.com/blogs/brick-wishful.jpg>

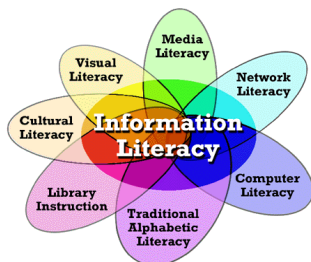
<http://www.secularmuslims.com/hijabgir4a.jpeg>

<http://themobilelearner.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/child-with-iphone.jpg>

<http://www.essence.com/images/m/african-american-boy-drawing.jpg>

<http://i540.photobucket.com/albums/gg331/Aine82/Books/twillight.jpg>

Literacies of the Digital Age



<http://librarynext.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/litchart.gif>

Sonia Livingstone, PhD

- Definition: "Media literacy is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts." (2003)

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/mellon-program/seminars/2003-2004/abstracts/livingstone.shtml>



(2009)

<http://www.policypress.co.uk/localjackets/I/9781847424389.jpg>

Critical Multicultural Information Literacy

Communication Across Cultures

"Through critical multicultural information literacy both users and librarians can look critically at the culture that has shaped them and, furthermore, librarians can teach information literacy as critical engagement with the world around them which influences both the acts of knowing and learning."

Dr. Clara M. Chu 2010

Chair and Professor, UN Greensboro, LIS School



Sum: New Literacies Connect all Aspects of Young People's Lives

- Home, Community, School, etc



<http://mobileweb.files.wordpress.com/2009/01/teen-girl-sending-sms.jpg>

http://www.simplyhomemade.ca/images/events/so_banner_84.jpg

Literacies and Issues of Intellectual Freedom in the Digital Age

How Public Librarians Are Coping with New (and Old) Challenges



Introduction

Why do we defend Intellectual Freedom in public libraries?

- What happens when we do
- What happens when we don't
 - Which is not to say it's easy ...

Source: What's that doing in my library?

<http://tinyurl.com/yfdqdt2>

New literacies, Intellectual Freedom & Youth

- Audio Media – Music CD, MP3, Spoken Word
- Visual Media – Comic books, graphic novels, video, DVD, E-books
- Public computers – Word processing, games, Internet...

The Internet

"The Internet has been the most fundamental change during my lifetime and for hundreds of years."— Rupert Murdoch

Common concerns:

Children using unfiltered public computers
 Children playing violent games
 Children accessing sexual images or information
 Children accidentally seeing content viewed by older patrons
 Children encountering online predators
 Others?



"The 'Net is a waste of time, and that's exactly what's right about it."— William Gibson

Common Types of Challenges in Public Libraries & Examples

- Collection content - books, DVDs, graphic novels, and so on
- Free materials
- Internet content
- Use of library spaces
- Posting on bulletin boards



Attempts at censorship have been around for a long time...

Brief history of BC Censorship 1950-1979

- In 1954, the Junior Chamber of Commerce asked the Victoria Public Library to serve as a depot for crime comics with the intent of publicly burning them in order to keep them out of circulation. The library refused to participate in their plan. [*The Vancouver Sun* 27 November 1954]
- *Little Black Sambo* by Helen Bannerman. In 1964, there was a request that this book be removed from Vancouver Public Library shelves. The library moved it to a restricted area, available upon request. [*Canadian Compromise for Little Black Sambo, The Province* 21 June 1966, p. 21]
- *Uncle Remus* by Joel Chandler Harris. In March 1964, the BC Association for the Advancement of Coloured People asked for this book's removal from the Abbotsford school libraries, as it was considered "offensive to Negroes"; the request was refused. [*Remus Book Censorship Bid Shelved, The Province* 20 March 1964, p. 25]

From *Censorship in British Columbia: A History*

<http://www.bcla.bc.ca/IFC/Censorship%20BC/intro.html>

Brief history of BC Censorship 1980-2000

- *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Robin Muller. In February 1987, protestors demonstrated outside the New Westminster Public Library during Muller's talk to elementary students. They objected to the witchcraft and black magic in the book. He chose another book to talk about. [*Foe of Occult Raps Talk by Writer, The Vancouver Sun 20 February 1987, p. C5*]
- *The Last Battle* by C.S. Lewis. Challenged in 1993 at the Port Coquitlam Public Library, because it "puts animals down." [*Protecting the Right to Read, Coquitlam Now 2 March 1994*]
- *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz. In 1994, Coquitlam library's children's librarian Deborah Duncan stated that *Scary Stories* "is always getting challenged" because it talks about the occult." [*Protecting the Right to Read, Coquitlam Now 2 March 1994*]

From *Censorship in British Columbia: A History*
<http://www.bccla.bc.ca/JFC/Censorship%20BC/intro.html>

Challenge Examples by type

Collection content

Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. *Outrageously Alice*. (2000)

A patron of the Toronto Public Library complained about this novel for young readers about a 13-year-old girl growing up and learning about sex.

Vigna, Judith. *Black Like Kyrá, White Like Me*. (2000)

A patron of the Toronto Public Library complained about this children's picture book about a black family moving into an all-white neighbourhood and encountering racial prejudice.

Willhoite, Michael. *Daddy's Roommate*. (2005)

During Freedom to Read Week, the Lethbridge Public Library displayed books that had been challenged in North America. The inclusion of *Daddy's Roommate* in the display prompted one library patron to request the removal of the book from the library

Examples from www.freedomtoread.ca

Challenge Examples by type

Free materials

- Xtra West
 - Burnaby Public Library - request by parent to remove from free materials because of suggestive images on cover.
 - Fraser Valley Regional Library – complaint that the newspaper contained sexually explicit ads and could corrupt children if they had access to it.

Challenge Examples by type

Internet Content

- Burnaby Public Library – Parent complained because her child viewed inappropriate material accidentally by walking behind a two older boys on a public Internet station.
- Vancouver Island Regional Library adopted an acceptable use policy in 2001 stating that viewing suggestive material is unacceptable on the library's Internet stations. Patrons found violating the policy would be banned for the week. [*Library Board Adopts its Porn Policy, Cowichan Pictorial 11 April 2001; Policy Keeps Porn Out, Ladysmith-Chemainus Chronicle 10 April 2001*] Current policy on <http://www.virl.bc.ca>

Challenge Examples by type

Posting on Bulletin Boards

- Vancouver Public Library – Complaints received about a Walk for Palestine poster. Manager asked for the poster to be removed from branch bulletin boards. Staff questioned the decision. Intent of policy revisited by Board.



Challenge Examples

Use of Library Spaces

- Vancouver Public Library – Exit International denied use of meeting room after legal counsel advised that portions of the presentation were in violation of Section 241 of the Criminal Code.

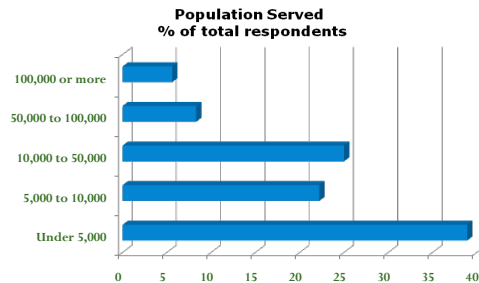


Survey of BC Public Libraries

- Focused on issues for children and teens
- Conducted through Director's and Children's librarians listserves in BC
- From January 25 to February 28, 2010
- 42 respondents
- Flaws in methodology



Survey Results Population Served



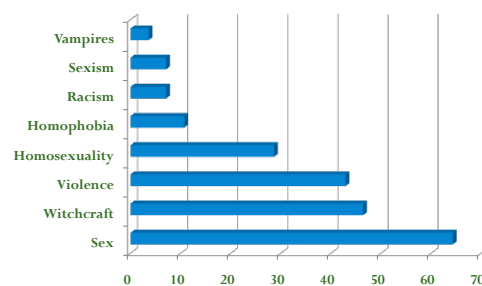
Survey Results Challenges in last 5 yrs

To children's or teen materials:

Yes	23.8%
No	61.9%
Don't know	14.3%



Survey Results Topics most likely to be challenged



Survey Results Examples of items challenged

Graphic Novel collection - content not suitable for children.

Zombie Butts from Uranus / Just Disgusting by Andy Griffiths - 2 responses

Game Informer magazine - parent thought "sexually loaded graphics" inappropriate for 10 yr old son

Poster of ABCs in the Childrens area - objection to W for Witch and Y for Yoga

Survey Results Other books challenged

- *The Stupids Take Off* by Harry Allard and James Marshall
- *King Stork* by Howard Pyle
- *Deadline* by Chris Crutcher
- *Falling* by Christopher Pike
- *Dangerous Days of Daniel X* by James Patterson
- *Left Behind: A graphic novel of the Earth's last days*
- *Catch That Cat* by Monika Beisner
- *The Best of Shel Silverstein*
- *Adventures of Tin Tin: Cigars of the Pharaoh* by Herge

Survey Results Internet Issues: Filtering

Do you offer Internet access to children 14 and under?

Yes, with parental permission only	35.8%
Yes, on filtered stations only	23.0%
Yes, choice of filtered/unfiltered stations	20.5%
Yes, no filter and no parental permission	17.9%
No	2.5%



Survey Results Internet Issues: Complaints

- Children viewing inappropriate material on public Internet stations 62.5%
- Children accidentally seeing inappropriate material being viewed on public Internet stations 56.3%
- Children playing violent games on public Internet stations 31.3%
- Other – children & youth using Chat

Survey Results Internet Issues: Responses

- Ask children using computers in children's area not to play violent games. Can play on adult stations.
- If a patron complains about the content another patron is watching, ask them to exit the site and reinforce the need to use discretion on public computers.
- Remind parents that it is the parent's responsibility to monitor their child's Internet use.
- Suggest to parents that they should talk to their children about Internet safety and set limits on what they view.

Survey Results Questions raised

- How do you respond to complaints about free materials such as Xtra West?
- At what age can a child be granted privacy in their library use?
- Should parental permission be required for a child's library card?
- Should libraries go beyond the official rating system to protect children from inappropriate material in DVDs?
- How do you respond to pressure from evangelical Christians to remove materials from the library?

In summary...

- Where can I find resources when I face a challenge?
- Where can I discuss intellectual freedom issues?



Resources for further information

- Book & Periodical Council's www.freedomtoread.ca
- BCLA Intellectual Freedom Committee www.bcla.bc.ca/IFC
(Join the listserv!)
 - What's that doing in my library?
 - Censorship in British Columbia: A history
- ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom
www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/index.cfm
 - 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of the Decade (2000-2009)
<http://tinyurl.com/top100kb>
 - ALA's Banned Books Week www.ala.org/bbooks
- CLA Advisory Committee on Intellectual Freedom
<http://www.cla.ca/source/members/committeelist.cfm?committee=IF&Section=Committees>

Intellectual Freedom Courses & Contacts

- Dr. Toni Samek, University of Alberta
 - <http://www.slis.ualberta.ca/faculty.cfm#toni>
 - <http://www.slis.ualberta.ca/592outline.cfm>
- WISE, Web-based Information Science Education, Online Courses
<http://www.wiseeducation.org/> (selection varies)
- Intellectual Freedom and Library Services for Youth,
 - Online -developed by Loretta Gaffney, GSLIS/University of Illinois
<http://www.lis.illinois.edu/>
- Miriam Moses, Burnaby Public Library & Micheal Vonn, B.C. Civil Liberties Association
 - SLAIS, UBC, in person course (has been offered every 2 years)
 - <http://www.slais.ubc.ca/courses/coursesdes/libr/libr563.htm>

Literacies and Issues of Intellectual Freedom in the Digital Age

Challenges in BC School Libraries: looking at two fronts in the battle

Intellectual Freedom in BC Schools

Intellectual Freedom issues in BC School Libraries have to contend with two fronts:

1. Outside challenges by parents and specific groups
2. Challenges from within from the school boards, district administration, school administrators, or teachers.

Types of Challenges in school libraries

- Book leveling or recommendations
- Content
- Curriculum
- Genres

Book Leveling

- Reviews of children's books almost always include age guidance, such as for ages 6–8, 9–12, 12 up, or 14 up. It's important that librarians use these recommendations judiciously.
- One of the roles of a librarian is to offer youngsters a wide range of reading materials—without placing any restrictions on them.
- Many school districts recommended strict guidelines based on book leveling or publisher recommendations, especially in elementary and middle schools.

Book Leveling and School Library Collections

- At their April 2009 AGM, the BCTLA voted on a position statement looking concerning book leveling and library collections in BC school libraries.
- <http://bctf.ca/bctla/pub/documents/Book+Levelling+and+School+Library+Collections.pdf>
- “The practice of leveling books, used to support guided reading instruction in classrooms, is not consistent with the values of teacher-librarians and should not be applied in part or in whole to school library collections.”

© BCTLA 2009

Content

- A more contentious issue in BC libraries, and one that we have dealt with recently, is removing books from collections based on specific content such as magic, horror, lust.
- There have been attempts to curtail copies of books such as the Harry Potter and New Moon series because of the magic and vampire story lines. While the books may not be used as teaching materials, they have been available in the school libraries.
- Our recent challenge included books like The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants series and the Shopaholic series.

Curriculum

- One of the most important court cases pertaining to school libraries in Canada occurred within the Surrey School District.
- One Dad Two Dads Brown Dads Blue Dads by Johnny Valentine, Asha's Mums by Rosamund Elwin and Michel Paulse, and Belinda's Bouquet by Leslea Newman and Michael Willhoite. In January of 1997, James Chamberlain, an elementary school teacher at Latimer Road Elementary School in Surrey, submitted the three books for Board approval for use in his grade one class. Chamberlain had used the books in his previous classes.

Chamberlain v. Surrey District School Board No. 36, [2002] 4 S.C.R. 710, 2002 SCC 86

- On December 21, 2002 the Supreme Court ruled that the ban on books about gay and lesbian parents has no place in a public school system that claims to promote diversity and tolerance.
- Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin wrote in the 7-2 ruling that "parental views, however important, cannot override the imperative placed upon the British Columbia public schools to mirror diversity of the community and teach tolerance and understanding of difference."
- The Chief Justice repeatedly stressed the importance for a secular school board to avoid caving in to pressure from religious parents to the point of excluding the values of other members of the community.

Chamberlain v. Surrey District School Board No. 36, [2002] 4 S.C.R. 710, 2002 SCC 86

- Chief Justice Beverly McLachlin dismissed the board's concerns that children would be confused or misled by classroom information about same-sex parents.
- She pointed out that "Tolerance is always age-appropriate, children cannot learn unless they are exposed to views that differ from those they are taught at home."
- The legal fees ended up costing Surrey taxpayers over \$1,200,000.
- <http://csc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/2002/2002scc86/2002scc86.html>

Genres

- In a recent issue that involved a teacher librarian in BC, a small group of concerned parents presented a list of book genres that they wished removed from the school library.
- These included art books, photography books (that would include nudes), dark, horror or evil books. And books that would include recurring swearing and explicit sexual content.

Genres

- The dilemma for the teacher librarian in BC schools is making an assessment based on a specific group of parents requests versus the entire population of the school.
- The teacher librarian, with the assistance of the local teacher's union and the support of the BCLA, the BCTLA, and the CLA has kept the collection in place.

Censorship in BC school libraries

- Teacher-librarians must understand the legal ramifications of censorship by reviewing school selection policies in light of the recent challenges to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.
Courts continue to rule that schools are not exempt from upholding students' human rights under the charter. These rights include the freedom to information and the freedom to read.

Censorship from within

- In 2009, a teacher librarian in B.C. filed a human rights complaint against another teacher, a principal and the board of education based on her religious beliefs.
- There were issues about the handling of books about gay and lesbians in the school library.
- The teacher librarian and a teacher who was sponsor on the gay-straight alliance club clashed on several issues.
- The Human Rights Tribunal determined that the teacher librarian's case was not proven and dismissed it.

Important points that teacher-librarians need to take into account, if they perceive that censorship issues have arisen in their libraries

Local policies can assist teachers, parents, and administrators as a first step in looking at challenging materials in a school library. Here is a local example from my school district.

"SD 35 Policy No. 5062—Date Approved: December 2, 1973—Date Amended: May 15, 2001

1. That the final decision for controversial reading, listening or viewing matter shall rest with the Board after careful examination and discussion of the reading, listening or viewing matter with school officials or anyone else the Board may wish to involve.
2. That no parent or group of parents has the right to determine the reading, listening or viewing matter for students other than their own children."

The BC School Act

The BC School Act also offers instructions for challenges
Section 76

1. All schools and Provincial schools must be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles.
2. The highest morality must be inculcated, but no religious dogma or creed is to be taught in a school or Provincial school.

The BC Civil Liberties Union (BCCLU)

- "In our Association's view, there must be sufficient evidence of significant opposition to the material before the review process is commenced. For example, evidence of widespread concern sufficient to invoke the process could be presented in a petition. It should not be enough for the subjective views of one person to invoke an expensive and time-consuming process (as was the situation in this case—(another case in BC)). Evidence of communal concern is, of course, not enough in itself to prohibit any particular material since the views of the majority should not automatically determine access to ideas and information, even for youth."

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Canada in 1990

- "It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable..."
- Libraries should resist all efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups."

The Canadian Library Association (CLA) Statement on Intellectual Freedom

- “All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the nation's Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom, under the law, is essential to the health and development of Canadian society.”

How can school districts in BC remain vigilant against censorship issues?

- 1. Teacher autonomy. Before parents can enter a school library and remove a book, they must go through a process based on district policies. School administrators need to let parents know that their district has a policy in place and that it needs to be followed. As well, administrators and district managements need to understand when parents are putting pressure on teacher-librarians to simply remove books, and assist the teacher-librarian in explaining the policies in place.

How can school districts in BC remain vigilant against censorship issues?

- 2. Each school district must have a “Request for Reconsideration” document in place (updated regularly) that permits parents to question if a book should be in the library and lets the district decide whether it should be removed. If no document or updated version is in place then one should be adopted as soon as possible

How can school districts in BC remain vigilant against censorship issues?

- 3. A selection policy for school libraries should be in place. A group consisting of members of the local teacher-librarians, administrators, and, possibly, board management should get together and decide on such a policy to suit all schools in the district.

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Thank you!



To find our presentation online, go to
<http://www.slideshare.net/casllibrarian/literacies-and-issues-of-intellectual-freedom>