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Intellectual freedom clearinghouse challenges and the internet

MaryKay Dahlgreen
Oregon State Library

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The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse was established in May of 1987 to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon. The tasks of the Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse are:

(1) to provide a central clearinghouse to collect and disseminate reports about challenges to intellectual freedom in all types of Oregon libraries;

(2) to provide information about challenged materials to public, academic, and K-12 school librarians when requests for reconsideration of materials are formally registered;

(3) to provide assistance and information to public, academic, and K-12 school librarians about establishing appropriate policies and procedures before a challenge to intellectual freedom occurs; and

(4) to cooperate with other persons and groups concerned with intellectual freedom and related issues.

The data collected is limited to formal challenges to any type of library material in any type of Oregon library. A formal challenge is defined here as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library. The Clearinghouse will report informal (not written) challenges when such challenges are of interest because they have received significant public debate.

The library community in Oregon, as in other parts of the United States, has been focusing on intellectual freedom issues surrounding the Internet. Many Oregon libraries were developing policies about Internet access in 1996-97 due to several grant opportunities for acquiring Internet workstations. Policy development was complicated by the challenge to the Communications Decency Act at the federal level and discussion about the use of filtering software. On June 26, 1997 the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the CDA.

Despite the Court's ruling the issue is definitely not resolved. Articles in journals ranging from *Consumer Reports* to *Time* magazine have discussed the use of

Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse Challenges and the Internet

by MaryKay Dahlgreen
Youth Services Coordinator and
Clearinghouse Coordinator
Oregon State Library

BREAKDOWN OF CHALLENGES REPORTED DURING 1996-97 REPORTING YEAR:

Total Challenges	18
MEDIA	
Books	18
LIBRARY TYPE	
In Public Libraries	13
In School Libraries	5
TARGET AGEGROUP	
Material designated as Adult	4
Material designated as Children's or Young Adult	13
REASON FOR CHALLENGE	
Scary or violent content	1
Graphic sexual content or explicit language	11
Witches or occult themes	2
Homosexual content	1
Other content	3
ACTION TAKEN	
Material retained in collection	18
Reclassified material	1
Restricted access to material	1

filtering software in libraries. Libraries across the country and in Oregon are discussing whether to install filtering software and, if so, which software and which machines to install it on. Information and discussion on listservs, web sites and professional meetings informally provide opportunities for a great number of individuals and organizations to participate in the ongoing debate. On July 2, 1997 at its Annual Conference in San Francisco, the American Library Association (ALA) Council adopted a Resolution on the Use of Filtering Software in Libraries that concluded with: "The American Library Association affirms that the use of filtering software by libraries to block access to constitutionally protected speech violates the Library Bill of Rights."

However, this resolution is not the only effort of ALA to forestall widespread filtering. There is much agreement that librarians play a critical role in guiding parents and children to sites that they can recommend. To that end, a number of librarians who work with children have provided web sites for inclusion in the ALA publication, *The Librarian's Guide to Cyberspace for Parents and Kids*.


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The 50+ *Great Sites for Kids and Parents* have been selected for their quality, content, accessibility, currency, uniqueness and appeal to children. It is available at <http://www.ala.org/parentspage> or by calling the ALA Public Information Office at 1-800-545-2433 ext. 5044/5041.

"The American Library Association affirms that the use of filtering software by libraries to block access to constitutionally protected speech violates the Library Bill of Rights."

Due to underreporting, the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse Annual Reports are not an absolute picture of the status of intellectual freedom in Oregon. To help us obtain a better picture we invite every library in Oregon to report challenges to intellectual freedom, and we have posted information about the Clearinghouse, the information request form, the reconsideration report form and other intellectual freedom resources on the Oregon State Library Web site at <http://www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html>. Please communicate with us about concerns and challenges that you receive, so we can maintain contact with libraries in Oregon and are able to fulfill our roles as the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse. *You can contact MaryKay Dablgreen, Clearinghouse Coordinator, by e-mail at marykay.dablgreen@state.or.us or by telephone 503-378-2112, extension 239.* 

BREAKDOWN OF CHALLENGES REPORTED DURING INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM CLEARINGHOUSE'S TEN YEARS OF OPERATION:

Total Challenges 378

LIBRARY TYPE

In Public Libraries 253
In School Libraries 125

TARGET AGEGROUP

Material designated as Adult 136
Material designated as Children's or Young Adult 242

REASON FOR CHALLENGE

Scary or violent content 59
Graphic sexual content or explicit language 146
Witches or occult themes 50
Homosexual content 60
Other content 63

ACTION TAKEN

Material retained in collection 325
Reclassified material 10
Restricted access to material 18
Replaced material 3

Interview

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DB: I would just like to say that, although my boss doesn't agree with my views, she has been very understanding and I appreciate that. My boss recognizes that whatever political activities I may have are outside of my work, and she has never done or said anything to indicate to me that she holds [my views] against me nor has she treated me any differently than in a professional way because of them, and I appreciate that.

CP: David, thank you very much. I'm sure this conversation will be very much of interest to our colleagues. I would like them all to know that you are an amiable guy and great to work with. We, on the staff of the Lake Oswego Public Library, have found you a real asset to our staff—whether we agree with you on filtering or not. 