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## Censorship by librarians in public senior high schools in Virginia

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VIRGINIA

*The College of William and Mary*

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CENSORSHIP BY LIBRARIANS IN  
PUBLIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the School of Education  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
Laura Smith McMillan  
February, 1987



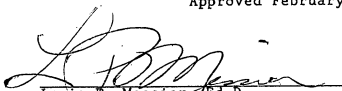
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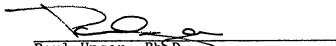
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### Dedication

This report is dedicated to my parents,  
Mattie and Joseph Smith, in the fiftieth year  
of their marriage.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree requires a dream on the part of one and much dedication, hard work, and support on the part of many others. My deepest appreciation is extended to the following individuals who helped me to pursue my dream:

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of humankind, it has been the desire of some individuals to control the thoughts and actions of others. Nevertheless, it would seem reasonable to assume that in the emerging American nation, founded on the desire of a people to escape tyranny and oppression, any naturally present proclivities to censor would have been tempered by a desire to establish and maintain in the new land the principles of a free and democratic society. Still there is every indication that this was not the case. As Leonard Levy stated in Legacy of Suppression:

The persistent image of colonial America as a society in which freedom of expression was cherished is an hallucination of sentiment that ignores history. . . . The American people simply did not understand that freedom of thought and expression means equal freedom for the other fellow, especially the one with the hated ideas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard W. Levy, Legacy of Suppression: Freedom of Speech and Press in Early American History (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 18, quoted in Charles H. Busha, The Attitudes of Midwestern Public Librarians Toward Intellectual Freedom and Censorship, p. 34.



Nor has this lack of understanding improved with the passage of time. Despite the adoption of a federal constitution dedicated to the safeguarding of human rights and of an amendment to that Constitution specifically aimed at protecting the free exchange of ideas, censorship in America has persisted, even flourished over the years, until in the 1980's it has come to be described as a threat that is "real, nationwide, and growing."<sup>2</sup>

Among the institutions in this country most seriously affected by censorship pressures are the schools and the libraries housed therein. This is due in great measure to the fact that "while censorship is sufficiently controversial in society at large, it is exacerbated in schools by state compulsion to attend, by the relative immaturity of students, and by the diversity of publics served by the schools."<sup>3</sup>

In view of the fact that the American Library Association and the American Association of School Librarians have both adopted a code of ethical conduct

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<sup>2</sup>I. David Welch, Donald C. Medeiros, and George A. Tate, "Education, Religion, and the New Right," Educational Leadership 39 (December 1981): 204.

<sup>3</sup>Louis Fischer and Gail Paulus Sorenson, "Censorship, Schooling, and the Law," High School Journal 62 (May 1979): 321.

that stands clearly and vigorously in opposition to censorship on the part of librarians, it would seem reasonable to assume that these individuals would not be among those implicated in the spate of censorship activity that is currently affecting this nation. Research focusing on library service, however, indicates that librarians do function as censors and that they do this regularly and with a remarkable degree of impunity. The reality of the situation is that despite a professional mandate that renounces censorship activity on the part of librarians, pressures to violate that mandate abound.

School librarians, in particular, are caught up in this dilemma. On the one hand, they are bound by the ethics of their profession to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom. On the other, as purveyors of literature to a clientele composed almost exclusively of immature and inexperienced readers, they are frequently subjected to pressures to shield that readership from information or ideas considered to be inappropriate for use by such individuals. It is found in research that when librarians are forced to choose between behavior that supports the right of the individual to read what he or she wishes to read and behavior that protects their

clientele from exposure to information or ideas deemed inappropriate by the librarian or someone else for that readership, librarians frequently resort to the latter. Apparently, for many librarians, pressures to censor are more powerful than is the desire to protect those rights guaranteed by the First Amendment.

#### Statement of the Problem

It is the major purpose of this study to examine the censorship practices engaged in and the censorship patterns developed by head librarians in senior high school libraries in Virginia. In general, this report addresses the following main issues: (1) What subject matter is either denied or made available only in a limited fashion to students in senior high school libraries in Virginia as a result of censorship on the part of the librarians in charge of those libraries, (2) as a matter of general practice, what restrictions are applied by librarians to the acquisition and use of materials in high school libraries in Virginia, and (3) what is the rationale for proscriptions applied by librarians to the acquisition and use of materials in high school libraries in Virginia?

Based on the above statement of the problem, the intent of this research is to test the following hypotheses:

1. Head librarians in senior high schools in Virginia are more restrictive in their treatment of fictional materials than they are in their treatment of nonfictional materials.

2. The method most commonly used by head librarians in senior high schools in Virginia to restrict the acquisition and use of materials in their libraries is to deliberately avoid purchasing those materials.

3. The librarians' own personal convictions regarding what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries are more influential in causing head librarians in senior high schools in Virginia to censor than are pressures to censor, either real or imagined, that are generated by persons or groups in the school or community.

#### Theoretical Concerns of the Study

Being social creatures, human beings spend a large proportion of their lifetimes interacting in one way or another with other human beings. When people interact, they do so as members of a social or organizational system. Each member of the system occupies a special

position or status within that particular group. The behavior an individual displays as he acts out his position in a social system or organization is termed a role.

Role theory is a major analytical tool used by sociologists "to explain the ways in which individuals participate in all forms of social life."<sup>4</sup> According to this theory, "a social position is an identity that designates a commonly recognized set of persons."<sup>5</sup> Thus, the terms doctor, teacher, mother, student, and librarian all refer to a particular set of persons, each of which constitutes a social position.

For every social position a characteristic role has been developed based on the expected patterns of behavior for persons occupying that position. Most theorists adhere to the belief that role expectations emanate from three separate sources: (1) the formal organization, or society, (2) the person or persons with whom the role incumbent, that is, the person holding the

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<sup>4</sup>G. William Bullock, Jr. and Clifton F. Conrad, Management: Perspectives From the Social Sciences (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1981), p. 123.

<sup>5</sup>Bruce J. Biddle, Role Theory: Expectations, Identities, and Behaviors (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. 5.

position interacts, and (3) the role incumbent himself.<sup>6</sup> When these sources hold incompatible expectations for a particular role, conflict results.

Role conflict represents a common cause for concern for librarians, particularly in respect to their behavior in handling controversial materials. Frequently, the expectations generated by the librarians themselves, the expectations held by parents or other community members, and the expectations articulated by the professional community with respect to the handling of such materials are in no way compatible.

Role conflict gives rise to psychological conflict of some kind and degree within the focal person. As a consequence, some sort of conflict resolution is generally sought. Biddle cites three strategies for the resolution of role conflict: (1) conforming to one or another of the polarized expectations, (2) compromising between polarized expectations, and (3) avoidance of the issue.<sup>7</sup>

How, then, do the head librarians in senior high school libraries in Virginia deal with conflicting

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<sup>6</sup>Billy J. Hodge, and Herbert J. Johnson. Management and Organizational Behavior A Multidimensional Approach (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1970), p. 219.

<sup>7</sup>Biddle, Role Theory, p. 200.

expectations regarding the treatment of controversial materials in their libraries? Do they conform to one or another of the opposing views on censorship? Do they compromise? Or do they merely avoid the issue by failing to purchase controversial material? The manner in which librarians resolve the role conflict that is characteristically associated with the censorship issue is a major topic of concern in this investigation.

#### Significance of the Study

It has been the aim of this study to investigate the patterns of self-censorship by librarians in senior high schools in Virginia. A study of this nature is significant for several reasons:

1. Censoring by school librarians is a critical concern, for this type of censorship can be pervasive and yet remain virtually unnoticed. In most cases, school librarians are free to adapt a collection to meet their own objectives, and if they choose either to exclude or to limit access to material, their actions are seldom questioned. For although it is not uncommon for protesters to object to the presence of certain materials in school libraries, it is rare for anyone to take exception to their exclusion. Although numbers of studies have been undertaken to determine the impact of

censorship by individuals or groups apart from the library staff, surprisingly few such efforts have focused on those individuals who are frequently the most motivated and the most unrestricted censors of all, the librarians themselves. This study should most certainly help to decrease that void.

2. There is a need for surveys of censorship by public school librarians in each state in order draw a broad national picture of such activity. Although studies focusing on the school librarian as censor are rare, one such effort was undertaken by John Farley in a study of high school librarians in Nassau County, New York in 1964. In his report, Farley suggested that similar studies conducted in a variety of communities throughout the United States might shed some light on the phenomenon of censorship in American high school libraries.<sup>8</sup> The present study will most certainly contribute to that picture.

3. An examination of censorship in high school libraries in Virginia seems particularly appropriate in view of the fact that in one of the few studies of censorship activity across the nation, L. B. Woods

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<sup>8</sup> John Farley, "Book Censorship in the Senior High School Libraries of Nassau County, New York," (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1964), p. 339.



investigated censorship in America from 1965 through 1975 and found that the rate of censorship attacks in Virginia was 42 percent higher than the national average.<sup>9</sup> This situation prompted Woods to pose the question "Is Virginia then an area where censorship submerges the First Amendment guarantee of intellectual freedom -- a freedom [for] which, in view of its history, Virginia has demonstrably paid the price?"<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Virginians have been involved in the struggle for freedom from the beginning of the nation's history. Therefore, it seems particularly important to seek an answer to Woods' question. The present study should help to bring about an awareness of such an answer.

4. A study of self-censorship by librarians in high school libraries is significant in terms of its relationship to the broader issue of censorship and American education in general. Much of the renewed interest in the problem of censorship in schools has resulted from evidence that censorship is increasing. This finding was stated by the Association of American Publishers (AAP), the American Library Association (ALA),

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<sup>9</sup>L. B. Woods, "Censorship in Virginia (Or, Banned South of Boston)," Virginia Journal of Education 74 (September 1980): 25.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in their publication, Limiting What Students Shall Read. This document was a report of a nationwide survey of the effects of censorship in the schools which was conducted by the group in the spring of 1980. Censorship by librarians in high schools in Virginia represents but one small segment of this very large problem. Nevertheless, conclusions reached in a study of this segment could very well impact on the resolution of the problem as a whole.

5. This study provides an anonymous forum for librarians in which they may freely reveal their concerns about and their methods of dealing with censorship. School librarians in particular are caught up in a paradox. On one hand they are expected to accept and uphold the principles of intellectual freedom while on the other they are often pressured to do otherwise. Librarians must walk a fine line when they attempt to maintain the integrity of intellectual freedom commitments and the rights of young people to read and to know, and at the same time recognize their own concerns and those of parents, administrators, and other interested individuals with regard to the effect of the

reading experience on a clientele composed primarily of young and immature library users.

### Design of the Study

As has been stated, it is the purpose of this study to examine in some depth the censorship practices of librarians in senior high schools in Virginia and to derive from that investigation some valid generalizations regarding both the pattern of restrictiveness that has developed in this milieu and the rationale for the imposition of those restrictions.

The study is descriptive in nature. The data presented within the investigation was derived from two major sources. The first was the literature pertaining to the issues of censorship and librarians in general and censorship and school librarians in particular. In this regard, books and journal articles used for background and comparative information were obtained from libraries associated with the following educational institutions: the College of William and Mary, Old Dominion University, Virginia Wesleyan College, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Other sources include the Hampton, Newport News, Virginia Beach, and Norfolk public library systems, personal resources, and University Microfilm Service. Additionally, two database services,

LISA and ERIC, were used in seeking informational sources for this investigation.

The second major source of data for this study was a survey of the censorship practices engaged in and the censorship patterns developed by head librarians in senior high schools in the state of Virginia.

With regard to the survey, the research design was composed of a mailed questionnaire. Since the study involved head librarians in senior high schools throughout the entire state, this was considered to be the most expedient and productive method for gathering the objective evidence necessary to complete the investigation. A copy of the questionnaire and the cover letter that accompanied it are found in appendix A. The questionnaire was addressed to the head librarian in every accredited senior high school in Virginia. As of March, 1986, there were 281 such institutions. Names and addresses of the schools were obtained from the Virginia High School League Directory which lists all accredited public high schools in the state. In view of the fact that the librarians could be reached only through their school addresses, it was decided that in order to provide an adequate amount of time for the questionnaire to be delivered to the respondents, completed by these

individuals, and returned to the researcher within the regular school term, it would be necessary to distribute the questionnaires by May 1, 1986.

A portion of the information requested on the survey was of a sensitive nature, therefore, it was necessary to preserve anonymity and to convey to the respondents a sense of security in this regard. Open and honest answers could be expected only if the respondents were convinced that confidentiality would not be breached. Consequently, no attempt was made to identify any respondent nor to determine who had or had not responded. Rather, it was planned that when a reasonable length of time had elapsed following the mailing of the questionnaire, a follow-up postal card would be sent to each librarian containing a general statement of appreciation for all of those who responded and a gentle reminder for those who did not. Responses were received from 192 or 68 percent of the librarians surveyed.

The survey instrument was designed following an intensive review of available reports on previous studies of censorship practiced by librarians. The demographic and personal information requested in part I of the questionnaire is reflective of those characteristics that have proven to be related to the frequency and degree of

copyright activity as practiced by librarians in other studies. The subject matter categories and restrictive measures listed in part two of the instrument are representative of those most often cited as being pertinent to studies of censorship practices by librarians, and the pressures to censor that are described in part three of the questionnaire are those that are most frequently referred to in the literature as a cause for censorship activity on the part of librarians. No element was introduced into the questionnaire unless there was reasonable evidence for considering it to be relevant to this study based on information gained through reports of similar investigations or other literature dealing with the issue of self-censorship by librarians.

The survey instrument was designed to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Obtain demographic information pertaining to the schools and school districts represented in the study
2. Obtain personal information pertaining to the librarians represented in the study
3. Identify subject matter that provokes censorship activity on the part of the librarians

4. Identify the methods by which librarians control the acquisition and use of materials in their libraries

5. Identify those factors that are most influential in causing librarians to engage in censorship practices based on their own personal convictions

6. Identify those factors that are most influential in causing librarians to engage in censorship practices based on the convictions of others

The data gathered by the questionnaire was used to investigate three major questions: (1) What subject matter did the librarians censor, (2) by what means did these individuals censor, and (3) what factors were influential in causing them to censor?

In order to determine the subject matter or types of subject matter that the librarians censored, the respondents were requested to indicate the degree to which they were restrictive in dealing with twenty-five categories of subject matter. The librarians were asked to respond in terms of one of six answer choices provided on the questionnaire, each of which was assigned a numerical value. A restrictiveness index (R.I.) score was computed for each subject category. Based on these scores, the categories were ranked in order from most to least restricted.

In addition to ranking and comparing the R.I. scores for each subject category, the mean R.I. score for all fictional categories was computed as was that for all nonfictional categories. These were compared by means of a t test.

In order to determine the methods used by the librarians to restrict the acquisition or use of material in their libraries, respondents were asked to indicate the manner in which they most often dealt with the subject matter listed on the questionnaire. The librarians were provided with six answer choices representing a range of behavior categorized as highly restrictive to nonrestrictive. An analysis was made of the extent to which each of the methods was used by the respondents, and the findings were reported in terms of frequencies and percentages.

In order to determine whether certain personal, community, or institutional characteristics might have influenced the extent to which the librarians were restrictive in their handling of the twenty-five categories of subject matter listed on the questionnaire, the librarians were grouped according to the characteristic under consideration, a mean R.I. score was established for each group, and a one way analysis of variance was used to test for significant differences



between group means.

In order to identify the factors that were influential in causing the librarians to censor, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each of thirteen factors was influential in causing them to avoid purchasing certain materials or to place restrictions on their use. The librarians were requested to respond in terms of one of four answers provided on the questionnaire, each of which was assigned a numerical value. Influence index (I.I.) scores were then computed for each factor. Based on the I.I. scores, the factors were ranked from most to least influential in causing the librarians to censor.

In further examining why the librarians censored, the thirteen factors were classified as internal or external motivators, internal motivators being those factors that were based on the librarians' own personal convictions regarding what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries and external motivators being those factors that were based on the convictions of others in this regard. Mean I.I. scores were computed for all internal motivators and for all external motivators. These were then compared by means of a t test.

In all cases, the data generated by the

questionnaire was processed with the use of the Virginia Beach City Schools computer using the SPSS program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Throughout the study, when statistical comparisons were made, if a difference was not significant at least at the .05 level, it was reported that there was no significant difference.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. This study is specifically concerned with the practices of head librarians in accredited public high schools in Virginia during the 1985-1986 school year.

2. The schools included in the study are limited to those serving grades eight, nine, or ten through twelve.

3. The study is confined to an investigation of censorship as it applies only to printed materials in school libraries. No attempt has been made to study textbook selection, supplementary classroom materials, or audiovisual materials.

#### Definition of Terms

1. Censorship is used in this study to mean (1) to reject for purchase, or (2) to restrict the use of

library materials on the basis of value judgments, prejudices or concerns of the librarian.

2. The term head librarian refers to that member of the public school's library staff who is officially designated as the individual responsible for the administration of library resources and the selection and purchase of library materials within the school.

3. Senior high school refers to an accredited public high school serving grades eight, nine, or ten through twelve.

4. The term library materials refers to printed material and includes books, magazines, journals, pamphlets, and like materials.

5. Externally motivated censorship refers to censorship activity engaged in by librarians in response to pressures that are perceived by them to be generated by persons or groups in the school or community.

6. Internally motivated censorship refers to censorship activity engaged in by librarians in response to their own personal convictions and without any awareness of outside pressure.

7. External motivators refers to factors that are influential in causing librarians to censor that are based on the convictions of individuals other than the

librarian with regard to what should or should not be made available to young people in school libraries.

8. Internal motivators refers to factors that are influential in causing librarians to censor that are based on the librarians' own personal convictions regarding what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries.

#### Review of Related Literature

Literature dealing with the general topic of censorship is relatively abundant and encompasses a wide range of topical concerns from the history of censorship to current controversies between would-be censors and a host of contemporary media forms. Censorship literature specific to the fields of education and library science in particular, however, is much more narrow in scope and somewhat less abundant. Literature of this type is often produced in flurries following major censorship investigations or controversies which tend to promote interest in and concern for censorship issues. During periods spanning such activity, when national interest in censorship has flagged, those who continue to publish literature relative to censorship matters tend to be individuals who are deeply dedicated to a cause and who

write frequently and fervently in support of their beliefs.

Literature that is specific to the librarian as censor tends to follow a similar pattern. It is relatively abundant in periods following major censorship incidents or investigations. In intervening periods it, too, is likely to be generated by defenders of a specific cause.

One major category of literature focusing on the librarian as censor consists of reports of research studies investigating censorship activity on the part of librarians. A second major category of this literature is concerned with the issue of censorship versus selection, and a third deals with the responsibilities of the librarian as censor. Literature representative of each of these categories is discussed in this review.

One of the earliest studies of the librarian as censor to be carried out on a national scale was that conducted by Mary Lida Eakin in 1948 entitled "Censorship in Public High School Libraries."<sup>11</sup> Eakin distributed a five-part questionnaire to selected senior high school libraries across the country and received returns from

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<sup>11</sup>Mary Lida Eakin, "Censorship in Public High School Libraries" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1948).

forty-seven states.<sup>12</sup> The purpose of the study was to determine what restrictions due to personal bias were being placed on the purchase or use of materials in school libraries and the extent to which censorship was engaged in by persons both within and without the schools.<sup>13</sup> Eakin's findings include the following: (1) some degree of censorship by librarians was evidenced involving the purchase and use of materials in all of the libraries included in the study,<sup>14</sup> (2) the most common basis for rejection of materials by the librarians was "an injurious effect on adolescent attitudes" with 90 percent of the librarians reporting that they avoided material for this reason,<sup>15</sup> and (3) although 96 per cent of Eakin's respondents reported at least one attempt to censor by someone outside of the library, it was concluded that librarians were responsible for more censorship than were outside persons or agencies.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Eakin, "Censorship in Public High School Libraries," pp. 9-12.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 15-16.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

In 1958, a landmark study of the librarian as censor entitled Book Selection and Censorship: A Study of School and Public Libraries in California was conducted by Marjorie Fiske.<sup>17</sup> This was one of the first investigations to document the fact that "public and school librarians were doing far more actual censoring on their own, quietly, than was even advocated, let alone successfully carried on, by outside pressure groups."<sup>18</sup> Fiske's was an interview study of 204 school librarians, school administrators, and municipal and county librarians. The purpose of the study as stated by Fiske was "to locate, define, and trace the interrelationship of the significant factors involved in the selection and distribution of controversial materials under varying circumstances" in California libraries.<sup>19</sup> The impetus for the study was the belief on the part of professional organizations, particularly the California Library Association, that a number of well-publicized censorship

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<sup>17</sup>Marjorie Fiske, Book Selection and Censorship: A Study of School and Public Libraries in California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

<sup>18</sup>Eli M. Oboler, Defending Intellectual Freedom: the Library and the Censor (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 171.

<sup>19</sup>Fiske, Book Selection and Censorship, pp. 2-3.

attempts in that state had created a climate of fear among the librarians.

Fiske's conclusions were quite dramatic. She found, for example, that a public episode in one part of the state caused librarians in distant areas to be extremely cautious in selecting books of the type involved in the controversy even though there existed no public pressure for such restraint.<sup>20</sup> Although fully half of the librarians interviewed expressed the conviction that librarians should not censor, nearly one-third reported that they regularly avoided buying books because of their controversial nature.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, 82 percent of the interviewees admitted placing some restrictions on the use of some kinds of books.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, it was found that the librarians who expressed strong convictions against censorship were actually the most active censors of the contents of their libraries.<sup>23</sup> Assessing the importance of the Fiske study, one author made the following comment:

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<sup>20</sup>Fiske, Book Selection and Censorship, p. 68.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.



This is an important volume, both in its explicit statements and in the implications its findings have for the library profession, library educators, and the future relationships of librarians with the public . . . . Book Selection and Censorship may turn out to be more of a mirror than a landscape of a scene far away. This is one book that, although controversial, should be bought by 100 per cent of all librarians and restricted by none.<sup>24</sup>

One of the few studies that deals exclusively with censorship in high school libraries was conducted by John Farley in 1964. The purpose of the study as stated by Farley was "to discover what book censorship was performed in the senior high school libraries of Nassau County, New York, to identify the source of this censorship, and to ascertain its rationale."<sup>25</sup> Farley was careful to distinguish between censorship by the librarian on his or her own initiative, termed voluntary censorship, and censorship by the librarian as a result of outside pressure, termed involuntary censorship. The method for securing data for this study was a structured interview. Farley found that although outside pressures to censor had been experienced by the majority of the librarians at some time in the past, pressures at the

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<sup>24</sup>Oboler, Defending Intellectual Freedom, p. 173.

<sup>25</sup>Farley, "Book Censorship In the Senior High School Libraries of Nassau County, New York," p. 1.

time of the study consisted mainly of vague expectations of complaints if controversial material were placed in the library. All of the librarians included in the study engaged in some censorship practices, and "the reasons most commonly cited for these practices were the youth and immaturity of high school students and the belief that some kinds of reading can have ill effects on character and conduct."<sup>26</sup> Among the librarians in this study, voluntary censorship practices were found to be more prevalent than involuntary censorship practices.<sup>27</sup>

In 1972, prompted by questions arising out of the Fiske investigation, Charles Busha conducted a study of attitudes of midwestern public librarians aimed at discovering (1) the extent to which public librarians in the north-central states of the United States accepted the intellectual freedom principals and concepts contained in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement and (2) to determine the attitudes of these librarians toward censorship practices.<sup>28</sup> Further,

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<sup>26</sup>Farley, "Book Censorship In the Senior High School Libraries of Nassau County, New York," p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Charles H. Busha, Freedom Versus Suppression With a Study of the Attitudes of Midwestern Public Librarians and a Bibliography of Censorship (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1972), p. 139.

Busha sought to ascertain the relationship between librarians' attitudes toward censorship and their attitudes about certain characteristic beliefs of authoritarianism.<sup>29</sup> Approximately 19 percent of the total population of public librarians in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin took part in the study. The questionnaire was composed of three parts. These included (1) statements designed to measure whether librarians' attitudes were in accordance with the principles of intellectual freedom adopted by the American Library Association, (2) an attitude scale designed to determine whether librarians were opposed to, approved of, or were neutral toward censorship activity, and (3) items designed to measure the potential of an individual to accept fascist ideology.<sup>30</sup>

According to Busha, the most significant result of this study was the finding that among the librarians surveyed there was a marked disparity between the attitudes of librarians toward intellectual freedom as a concept and their attitudes toward censorship as an activity.<sup>31</sup> While the librarians expressed strong

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<sup>29</sup>Busha, Freedom Versus Suppression, p. 139.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

agreement with freedom to read concepts, the greatest majority of them apparently "did not feel strongly enough about themselves as professionals to assert these principles in the face of real or anticipated pressures."<sup>32</sup>

In 1979, L. B. Woods and Lucy Salvatore conducted a study of library media specialists in selected schools in all fifty states.<sup>33</sup> Their intent was to discover (1) whether high school library media specialists were practicing self-censorship of controversial materials by failing to purchase such materials, (2) whether titles absent from the collection would be placed on order by librarians alerted to their absence, and (3) whether controversial titles would be subjected to restricted access.<sup>34</sup> It was concluded by Woods and Salvatore that the librarians in their study did appear to be deliberately avoiding titles considered to be most controversial, that the librarians were not uniformly willing to order controversial materials when their

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<sup>32</sup>Busha, Freedom Versus Suppression, p. 151.

<sup>33</sup>L. B. Woods and Lucy Salvatore, "Self-Censorship in Collection Development by High School Library Media Specialists" School Media Quarterly 9 (Winter 1981): 102-109.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

absence was pointed out, and that large numbers of materials considered to be controversial were being subjected to some sort of restricted access.<sup>35</sup> In light of their conclusions, Woods and Salvatore posed the following question: "Why do professional librarians practice censorship even though the library profession is strongly on record against the practice?"<sup>36</sup> A likely reason proposed by the authors was a strong concern for job security.

One study similar to that of Woods and Salvatore, but in which some atypical conclusions were reached was conducted in 1980 by Myrna Bump. Bump investigated the degree to which high school librarians in Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma practiced prior censorship in collection development.<sup>37</sup> The purpose of Bump's study was "to determine whether high school librarians are influenced in the book selection process by the number of censorship attempts a book may have

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<sup>35</sup>Woods and Salvatore, "Self-Censorship in Collection Development," pp. 104-106.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>37</sup>Myrna Marlene Bump, "Censorship Practiced by High School Librarians Prior to (Actual) Book Selection" (Ph.D. dissertation, Kansas State University, 1980).

received."<sup>38</sup> The librarians in the study were presented with a list of twenty-five books considered to have been the object of a high degree of censorship attempts. The librarians were requested to indicate the books that were in their collections. They were then called upon to assume that the books were not in their collections and that they did plan to purchase them. The librarians were then asked to rank order their choices for purchase. Following this, the respondents were asked to indicate any restrictions placed against the use of the books that were actually a part of their collections. Finally, the librarians were requested to indicate whether or not they had a selection policy and a formal method of handling complaints and whether anyone else was allowed to remove titles from orders once selections had been made.<sup>39</sup>

Bump's findings are, at once, encouraging and at odds with the findings of similar studies in that she found censorship by the librarians in her investigation to be the exception rather than the rule. Bump found that (1) librarians were not influenced in the book selection process by the number of objections lodged

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<sup>38</sup>Bump, "Censorship Practiced by High School Librarians Prior to (Actual) Book Selection," p. vi.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. vi-vii.

against a book by others, (2) books that were personally offensive to the librarian were not usually in the collections, (3) the librarians were in general agreement that any book at any time was subject to censorship by someone, and (4) librarians generally had freedom in the selection process with no one removing titles from the librarians' orders, although some had been instructed to avoid purchasing materials on certain controversial topics such as homosexuality or abortion.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, in 1982, John Beineke conducted a study of censorship practices of high school librarians in Indiana.<sup>41</sup> In his investigation, Beineke attempted to determine (1) how high school librarians viewed censorship issues, (2) which groups librarians saw as exerting pressure in the selection of books, (3) the topics that caused the most concern for librarians, and (4) the books most often challenged by would-be censors.<sup>42</sup> From a list of nine potentially controversial topics, the librarians selected sexual references and objectionable language as the two most troublesome topics

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<sup>40</sup>Bump, "Censorship Practiced by High School Librarians Prior to (Actual) Book Selection," p. 135.

<sup>41</sup>John Beineke, "Censorship in Indiana High School Libraries," Phi Delta Kappan 63 (May 1982): 638-639.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 638.

with evolution and prejudice/ethnic stereotyping tied as the third. In determining what forces influenced the decision not to place certain literary works on the library shelves, Beineke concluded that "the high school librarians themselves often choose not to purchase books that they believe might provoke criticism or controversy. Thus they acquiesce in a form of indirect censorship."<sup>43</sup> Other important influences governing librarians' purchasing decisions included students and colleagues. Parents were cited by thirty percent of the respondents as a significant influence, however, religious groups and local school boards did not seem to have as much influence as press accounts would indicate. One other interesting point brought to light by Beineke was that although "a majority of the librarians viewed censorship as a problem, all but three percent of them had practiced some form of censorship in selecting library materials."<sup>44</sup>

A search of literature spanning the period from 1982 through the first half of 1986 reveals no reports of

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<sup>43</sup>Beineke, "Censorship in Indiana High School Libraries," p. 639.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.



additional research studies focusing on the librarian as censor.

In further examining literature dealing with the librarian as censor, it is found that such writings frequently focus on the issue of censorship versus selection and feature varying points of view in this regard. A question often addressed in this literature is whether or not censorship is an unavoidable part of librarianship. One school of thought holds that it is in that the selection of one book automatically implies the rejection of another, and the placement of one book in an accessible location precludes the placement of another in that same place. When one book is favored, another is discriminated against, therefore, all selection and placement decisions made by librarians result in censorship of one form or another. Support for this point of view is found in the following statement:

I have never met a public librarian who approved of censorship or one who failed to practice it in some measure. In some cases the practice was resented and adopted only in response to assumed or actual pressure; in others, it was accepted as proper and was justified on the score that no library can provide all books and that, just as most books which have been published cannot be found in any single library, so a library is forced to practice censorship in effect, if not in name, by failing to acquire the thousands and millions of books which it passes up for reasons of money, space, community interest, or

whatever cause.<sup>45</sup>

Another author expressed his views on the issue of censorship as an unavoidable part of librarianship in the following way:

What else is there to say: I am a censor.

If someone willed his or her entire library to me for inclusion in the school library or as a classroom library and accompanied that gift with funds sufficient to catalogue and shelve the books, I would still go through the collection title by title, volume by volume, sorting, selecting, and - yes - censoring. If I really believed in the universal application of the First Amendment, I'd put the entire collection on the shelves without checking any of the titles.

I can conclude only that I believe in censorship and the only difference between me and the censor - the one I'd brand as "censor" - is that his or her stack of rejects would be higher than mine.<sup>46</sup>

Lester Asheim, a noted authority in the field of librarianship, made the following comments in regard to the inevitability of the librarian as censor:

. . .the ideal of absolute equality for all books is unattainable even supposing it were desirable. To demand that all books be equally accessible is

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<sup>45</sup>Leon Carnovsky, "The Obligations and Responsibilities of the Librarian Concerning Censorship," in The First Freedom, ed. Robert B. Downs (n.p.:American Library Association, 1960), p. 312.

<sup>46</sup>Robert F. Hogan, "Some Thoughts on Censorship in the Schools," in Dealing with Censorship, ed. James E. Davis (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1979), p. 89.

to demand that all books occupy the same place on the same shelf - a physical impossibility. And as soon as we defer to the laws of physics and place each book in a different place, we shall start having some books less accessible than others and shall be - in a sense - discriminating against the least accessible.<sup>47</sup>

Those who believe that it is necessary for librarians to censor in order to carry out their professional responsibilities frequently call on librarians to act on this obligation in a responsible manner. The following statement is illustrative of such an appeal:

Since you the librarian are inescapably a censor as well as a disseminator of knowledge, you must be doubly aware of the danger which your acts of censorship pose to the intellectual freedom of those whom you serve; every choice, every decision regarding an author, work, or patron should be made with the fullest possible awareness of the consequences to the First Amendment rights of the author and the patron.<sup>48</sup>

While some authors hold fast to the belief that censoring is an unavoidable part of librarianship, others have expressed at least some doubt about that stand. According to one individual, "selection in certain subject areas can most easily result in censorship, as

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<sup>47</sup>Lester Asheim, "Not Censorship but Selection," Wilson Library Bulletin 28 (September 1953): 64.

<sup>48</sup>John Swan, "Librarianship is Censorship," Library Journal 104 (October 1 1979): 2044.

the line between the two can be very thin."<sup>49</sup> Still another made the following remark: "To know with absolute certainty whether a librarian or English teacher was censoring or selecting one would need to enter that person's mind and psyche and soul, and, in some cases, the librarian or teacher might be honestly unsure whether she or he censored or selected."<sup>50</sup>

A third point of view is recorded in library literature with regard to the controversy surrounding censorship as opposed to selection. The discussion holds that selecting and censoring are discrete activities and that involvement in one does not necessarily imply involvement in the other. A leading proponent of this theory is Lester Asheim whose views are well respected and frequently cited in discussions of censorship versus selection. Asheim agrees that "there is only so much money which means that not everything can be bought; there is only so much space, which means that everything that is published or released in other formats cannot be

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<sup>49</sup>Helen E. Saunders, *The Modern School Library*, 2nd ed., completely revised by Nancy Pollette (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1975), p. 111.

<sup>50</sup>Kenneth L. Donelson, "Shoddy and Pernicious Books and Youthful Purity: Literary and Moral Censorship, Then and Now," *Library Quarterly*, 51 (January 1981): 9.

added."<sup>51</sup> Even so, he does not embrace the notion that to select one book is to censor another. In Asheim's judgment, selecting is a positive activity and censoring a negative one. Selectors look for reasons to keep books, censors look for reasons to reject them:

. . .the selector begins, ideally, with a presumption in favor of liberty of thought; the censor does not. The aim of the selector is to promote reading, not to inhibit it; to multiply the points of view that will find expression, not limit them; to be a channel for communication, not a bar against it.<sup>52</sup>

As has been demonstrated, some would argue that "the librarian is interfering with the freedom to read whenever he fails to make some book available."<sup>53</sup> Asheim counters that claim with the following comments: "viewed realistically, the librarian is promoting the freedom to read by making as accessible as possible as many things as he can . . . . The frequent forays of the censor against the librarian is heartening evidence that selection and censorship are different things."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Lester Asheim, "Selection and Censorship: A Reappraisal," Wilson Library Bulletin 58 (November 1983): 180.

<sup>52</sup>Asheim, "Not Censorship But Selection," p. 67.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

The question of whether or not librarians have a responsibility to censor is another major topic frequently encountered in the literature, and there are widely differing opinions on the matter. Phyllis Schlafly, conservative political activist and strong defender of traditional family values, is an avid supporter of one side of this controversy. According to Mrs. Schlafly, librarians are endowed with selection power. Along with this power they have a responsibility to be accountable to those who must pay for materials that are selected for purchase.<sup>55</sup> With respect to school librarians in particular, Mrs. Schlafly holds that since parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their own children, librarians should have respect for the parents' beliefs and attitudes. When selecting material for school libraries, they should be diligent in their efforts "to avoid offending the religious, ethical, cultural, or ethnic values of school children and their parents."<sup>56</sup> Mrs. Schlafly goes on to say:

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<sup>55</sup>David L. Bender, ed., Is School and Library Censorship Justified? (n.p.: Greenhaven Press, 1985), p. 138.

<sup>56</sup>Phyllis Schlafly, "Libraries Should Reflect Majority Values" in Is School and Library Censorship Justified? ed. David L. Bender (n.p.: Greenhaven Press, 1985), p. 139.

No library buys every book published. Every day in the week, librarians, teachers and school administrators are making decisions to select some books for library shelves and school classrooms while excluding (censoring) other books. These select-and-exclude decisions can be called "preemptive censorship."<sup>57</sup>

Librarians, she maintains, have a responsibility to use preemptive censorship to provide for "students and the public the wisdom of the ages through time tested 'great books' plus fairness on current controversies."<sup>58</sup>

A slightly different approach to librarians' responsibilities with regard to censorship is taken by Cal Thomas, who like Mrs. Schlafly is a staunch defender of Christian values. Mr. Thomas, a journalist and syndicated columnist, holds that all too often librarians are shirking their responsibilities by failing to provide adequate representation of certain philosophies in their libraries.<sup>59</sup>

Library literature pertinent to the responsibilities of the librarian as censor contains advice from those on the side of the liberal cause as well. In their efforts to rid libraries and schools of

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<sup>57</sup>Schlafly, "Libraries Should Reflect Majority Values," p. 140.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Cal Thomas, Book Burning (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1983), p. 149.

materials deemed sexist or racist, so called "left censors" are pointing to the responsibility of librarians to provide for their readerships only those books that avoid sex-role or racial stereotypes.<sup>60</sup>

Another common belief encountered in literature associated with the librarian as censor holds that it is the responsibility of the librarian to provide for young people only those materials that will encourage them to uphold traditional American values and to be morally right. An example of this philosophy is evidenced in an editorial found in a daily newspaper wherein the author declared that those selecting materials for schools and school libraries "have not only a right, but a duty, to select materials that contribute to the intellectual and moral growth of students."<sup>61</sup> In further support of this view, Dr. Onalee McGraw of the Heritage Foundation states that an important part of teachers' and librarians' responsibilities is to choose "works of enduring value that would appeal to most reasonable people in the

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<sup>60</sup>Fred Pincus, "The Left Must Guard American Values" in Is School and Library Censorship Justified? ed. David L. Bender (n.p.: Greenhaven Press, 1985), p. 139.

<sup>61</sup>"Preserving Free Thought," The Virginian-Pilot, 23 January 1982, Sec. A, p. 10.



supporting community . . . ."62 This argument was buttressed in another article wherein it was stated that it is the belief of many that corrupt literature will corrupt; therefore, it is the responsibility of librarians to provide literature "that supports traditional values and encourages students to virtuous and patriotic behavior."<sup>63</sup>

There are found in the literature many eloquent arguments to refute the notion that the librarian has a responsibility to censor. A substantial number of these are generated by organizations opposed to censorship and are revealed in official pronouncements such as the National Council of Teachers of English's Right to Read statement and the American Library Association's Freedom to Read statement.

Many individuals have championed the cause of the librarian as defender of intellectual freedom and opponent of censorship, and their beliefs are often found in the literature as well. One argument frequently encountered holds that librarians have a responsibility

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<sup>62</sup>Onalee McGraw, "Censorship and the Public Schools: Who Decides What Students Will Read?," 18 American Education (December 1982): 10.

<sup>63</sup>Robert Small and Patricia P. Kelly, "Censorship or Selection?," Virginia English Bulletin 36 (Spring 1986): 3.

to provide for their clientele the widest possible range of materials because "full freedom of expression and free access to information are essential ingredients for not only our system of public education but also our system of government."<sup>64</sup> Based on this philosophy, opponents of censorship by librarians argue that "it is the librarians' responsibility to make available materials representing all points of view concerning the questions and issues of our time, to all individuals who need or want them."<sup>65</sup>

In response to those who argue that it is the responsibility of librarians to yield to the desires of taxpayers, parents, or other partisans who call on librarians to limit their collections in some way, Lester Asheim offers the following advice: "It is the librarian's responsibility to identify interests and make judgments with the entire collection and entire community in mind, not just that part of it with the largest constituency or the loudest voice or the most

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<sup>64</sup>Robert P. Doyle, "Censorship and the Challenge to Intellectual Freedom," Principal 61 (January 1982): 11.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

intimidating threats."<sup>66</sup> Asheim goes on to say that "our [librarians'] responsibility is the defense of access to ideas, to information, esthetic pleasure, to recreation in its literal sense of re-creation, and to knowledge or at least to the process that leads to knowledge."<sup>67</sup> The following statement provides further support for Asheim's viewpoint:

The proudest ethic of American public librarianship is intellectual freedom. This ethic calls for librarians and libraries to resist when interests in the community demand the removal of library materials on whatever grounds. The intellectual freedom ethic also commits libraries to the formidable task of building collections and services to allow for the full expression of all points of view on controversial issues.<sup>68</sup>

Although the rights of students, parents, taxpayers, and other individuals have been explored at some length in the literature and in the courts, the rights of librarians with regard to censorship matters is an issue that has not been fully investigated. In fact, it is one that has barely been addressed. Nevertheless, this is a legitimate concern and one that will, no doubt,

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<sup>66</sup> Asheim, "Selection and Censorship: A Reappraisal," p. 183.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>68</sup> Mary Lee Bundy and Teresa Stakem, "Librarians and Intellectual Freedom: Are Opinions Changing?," 57 Wilson Library Bulletin (April 1982), p. 584.

take its rightful place in future discussions of the censorship controversy.

Robert O'Neil is one author who did undertake to examine this elusive issue. In his book, Classrooms in the Crossfire, O'Neil addressed the scarcity of cases defining the rights of librarians with regard to censorship. According to O'Neil, few such cases come before the courts because of legal uncertainties and practical difficulties. Librarians cannot afford test cases, nor are the libraries in which they work likely to support suits of this nature. Further, he maintains that when faced with the possibility of negative public reaction, it is the natural tendency of librarians to capitulate rather than litigate.<sup>69</sup> An editorial comment from the New York Times quoted by O'Neil in his book underscores O'Neil's thinking in this regard:

Professional librarians as a group are hardly known as flaming radicals. As civil servants they find themselves in the delicate position of being the guardians of much that is necessarily controversial, while their place on the totem pole of authority gives them very little power to defend their professional opinions and their personal security.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Robert M. O'Neil, Classrooms In the Crossfire (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 141-142.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

In O'Neil's opinion, however, there may be legitimate bases upon which librarians may claim a violation of rights in censorship cases. For example, as facilitators for the free expression of others, librarians should be allowed "to make untrammelled judgments about the acquisition and circulation of controversial materials."<sup>71</sup> Requiring librarians to avoid certain materials is tantamount to requiring them to violate the First Amendment rights of authors, publishers, and readers. It seems clear that librarians should not be required to violate the rights of others "by withholding material to which the First Amendment ensures them access."<sup>72</sup>

In summary, a major portion of the literature focusing on the librarian as censor consists of (1) reports of research studies of the attitudes and behavior of librarians in this regard, (2) books, articles, and miscellaneous literature exploring the controversy associated with censorship and selection, and (3) similar materials dealing with the responsibilities of the librarian as censor. With respect to the research studies, indications are that even though librarians

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<sup>71</sup>O'Neil, Classrooms In the Crossfire, p. 153.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

generally express agreement with intellectual freedom principles, it is common to discover that they violate those principles. Further, research indicates that a number of internal and external pressures impact on librarians to cause them to censor and that their censorship activity is aimed at a wide variety of subject matter.

Both those who oppose censorship and those who support it can find something to applaud and something to decry in literature focusing on the librarian as censor. Literature associated with this topic offers widely disparate views on the issue. Some authors argue that censorship is an unavoidable part of librarianship while others deride the notion. A number of authors lend avid support to the belief that librarians have a responsibility to censor while others vehemently resist the idea. Opposing arguments concerning the right of librarians to censor and to be shielded from an obligation to censor are treated in the literature as well.

In conclusion, it may be said of literature focusing on the librarian as censor, that it is, at best, unsettling. For, therein, many issues are raised, but few are resolved.

### Organization of the Study

Self-censorship by librarians is a particularly vexing concern. Professional ethics call for librarians to engage in no censorship activity, yet powerful pressures impact on librarians to cause them to do otherwise. When librarians censor, readers may be deprived of access to material that they want or need and that they are legally entitled to receive.

The extent to which head librarians in senior high schools in Virginia function as censors in their own libraries, the reasons why they engage in such behavior, and the extent to which their censorship practices result in deprivations for the users of their libraries are the primary topics of concern in this study.

A thorough investigation of censorship activity on the part of public school librarians requires an examination of all aspects of the problem. To this end, chapter two of the study is devoted to a discussion of the pros and cons of censorship in the public schools as viewed from three separate points of view: a professional perspective, a social/moral perspective, and a legal perspective. Chapter three contains an examination of the subject matter that librarians censor. Chapter four is composed of an investigation of the

methods by which librarians censor; and chapter five includes an examination of the factors that are influential in causing librarians to censor. Finally, chapter six is comprised of a review of the findings of the study and the conclusions and recommendations derived from those findings.

The question of whether censorship is appropriate in the school setting is one that has inspired continuous and enthusiastic debate. An examination from three separate perspectives of the controversy that surrounds the issue of censorship in the schools should provide some insight into this very complex and vital concern.



## CHAPTER II

### CENSORSHIP IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

A discussion of the pros and cons of censorship in the public school setting should logically begin with a definition of the term censorship along with a description of the basic controversy that surrounds it. Censorship is essentially "a policy of restricting the public exposure of ideas, opinions, conceptions, and impulses which have or are believed to have the capacity to undermine the governing authority or the social and moral order which that authority considers itself bound to protect."<sup>1</sup>

Broadly speaking, those who favor and those who oppose censorship normally bracket themselves with one or two approaches to society as represented by great names of the past. The former agree with Plato, St. Augustine, and Machiavelli that those who are qualified to identify evil should be empowered to prevent its dissemination. The latter, siding with Aristotle, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and John Dewey, maintain that a man is free only so long as he is empowered to make his

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<sup>1</sup>Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1930 ed., s.v. "Censorship," by Harold Lasswell quoted in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968 ed., s.v. "Censorship," by Henry J. Abraham.

own choices.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly, the question of whether censorship should be used has generated a considerable amount of controversy. The educational community, in particular, has been affected by the dispute.

Traditionally, the public schools and the libraries housed within them have provided an especially attractive target for the censor. Evidence of a propensity on the part of the American public to censor school materials is found in a report by the New York Public Library on its 1984 exhibition on censorship: "The general public today seems more willing to support a wider variety of censorship than at any time since the 1920's. At the local and state levels the most characteristic expression of this willingness is the epidemic of attempts to censor books and films in schools."<sup>3</sup>

Edward Jenkinson, author of Censors in the Classroom, the Mindbenders, has suggested a number of reasons why more people than ever before are intent upon

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<sup>2</sup>International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968 ed., s.v. "Censorship," by Henry J. Abraham.

<sup>3</sup>Joan Hoff-Wilson, "The Pluralistic Society," in Censorship 500 Years of Conflict, New York Public Library (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.111.

"cleaning up the schools." Among these are (1) the removal of prayer and Bible reading from schools, (2) the charge that schools are preaching the religion of secular humanism, (3) the institution of innovative educational programs such as values clarification and drug education, (4) the tendency of contemporary writers to deal frankly and realistically with subjects once thought to be taboo, (5) increased intervention in educational affairs of organized groups from the left as well as the right, (6) an inability on the part of some parents to recognize or understand the subject matter being presented to their children, and (7) a tendency among the public to feel that all that is wrong in society stems from the schools.<sup>4</sup>

According to the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, over one hundred book-banning incidents occurred in the schools during the early 1970's. The late 1970's saw a tripling of that figure; and by 1981, there were over nine hundred reported cases of attempts to ban books in primary and secondary schools across the country.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Edward B. Jenkinson, Censors in the Classroom: the Mindbenders (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), p. 68.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

A further sign of the temper of the times with regard to censorship and the public schools is evidenced in the findings of a highly acclaimed study of censorship in schools across the country mentioned earlier in this report that was conducted in the spring and summer of 1980 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the American Library Association (ALA), and the Association of American Publishers (AAP). One-fifth of the administrators and one-third of the librarians who responded reported that there had been some challenge to either classroom or library materials in their schools since September, 1978. Furthermore, the rate of challenges reported for 1976-1978 as compared with that of 1978-1980 indicated a definite increase in such activity.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the following conclusion was also reached in the study: "Most vulnerable to local challenges were the educational areas where one might expect the greatest freedom of choice. Library materials were affected nearly twice as often as supplementary classroom materials and nearly three times as often as textbooks."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Michelle Marder Kamhi, "Censorship vs. Selection -- Choosing the Books Our Children Shall Read," Educational Leadership 39 (December 1981): 211.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

Having established the fact that censorship is being practiced in the public schools, the question arises as to whether such activity is acceptable or whether it is not. A discussion of censorship in the public schools as viewed from a professional, a social/moral, and a legal perspective should help to bring about a better understanding of the issues associated with this vital concern.

#### The Professional Perspective

Of the three views of censorship in the public schools to be examined in this report, the professional prospective is the most well defined. Simply put, the library profession stands in unwavering opposition to censorship in any form, by any person, and in any place. Therefore, from a professional perspective, censorship in public schools is unequivocally wrong.

Even though the current position taken by members of the library profession is in adamant opposition to censorship, such has not always been the case. In fact, the founding fathers of librarianship clearly looked on censorship as intrinsic to their role.<sup>8</sup> Early evidence of this philosophy is apparent in Arthur Bostwick's oft-

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<sup>8</sup>Swan, "Librarianship is Censorship," p. 2042.

quoted American Library Association presidential address of 1908. In this address, entitled "The Librarian as Censor," Bostwick analyzed three categories of books that librarians were encouraged to provide for their patrons: "the Good, the True, and the Beautiful."<sup>9</sup> It was not uncommon during the pre-World War I era to find in library literature arguments supporting the belief that it was the librarian's responsibility to provide for his or her patrons "only the good in literature" and exhorting librarians to "protect the public from immoral and dangerous material."<sup>10</sup>

As the years progressed, however, an active concern among library professionals for the principles of intellectual freedom began to emerge; and in 1939, that concern was manifested in the adoption of a Library Bill of Rights by the American Library Association Council. The Library Bill of Rights outlined the ALA's basic policy on intellectual freedom and stood foursquare against censorship in any form by any individual. In 1940, the ALA's concern for intellectual freedom became even more apparent when the Council created a special

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<sup>9</sup>Donelson, "Shoddy and Pernicious Books and Youthful Purity," p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Encyclopedia of Education, 1971 ed., s.v. "Libraries, Intellectual Freedom In."

committee, the Committee on Intellectual Freedom, whose mission it was to further safeguard the rights of library users. In 1948, 1961, 1967, and 1980 revisions to the Library Bill of Rights were adopted providing further evidence of the ALA's abiding concern for and interest in the cause of intellectual freedom and the desire for this most important statement of ALA beliefs to remain relevant and functional in a changing society. In essence, the current Library Bill of Rights holds that it is the responsibility of librarians "to provide, through their institutions, all points of view on all questions and issues of our times, and to make these ideas and opinions available to anyone who needs or wants them, regardless of age, race, religion, national origin, or social or political views."<sup>11</sup> The Library Bill of Rights as amended in 1980 is found in appendix B.

While the ALA was actively engaged in the struggle to preserve First Amendment rights, so too was its affiliated organization, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). An especially trying period for this group emerged during the early 1950's when the anticommunist reaction of McCarthyism raced across the

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<sup>11</sup>Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, Intellectual Freedom Manual, 8th ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1983), p. viii.

nation and school librarians were coerced to ban books containing "un-American" thought.<sup>12</sup> In response to this threat to intellectual freedom, the AASA, during the course of its 1953 Annual Conference, authorized the formation of the Committee on Book Selection in Defense of Liberty in Schools of a Democracy. This committee was charged with the responsibility of drafting a statement of rights specifically applicable to the school library setting. Accordingly, the School Library Bill of Rights was developed and was presented to and adopted by the AASL Board of Directors in 1955. The document underwent one revision in 1969.<sup>13</sup> The revisions emphasized the need for a written selection policy, a written policy for dealing with challenges, and the need for maximum accessibility to all library materials for all library users. Appendix C contains a copy of the School Library Bill of Rights in its revised form.

Within a short time after the adoption of the School Library Bill of Rights, however, it became apparent that the existence of two documents with such similar titles and contents was both confusing and

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<sup>12</sup>Office for Intellectual Freedom, Intellectual Freedom Manual, p. 72.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



redundant. Furthermore, it was felt that the less forceful wording of the school version of the Bill of Rights weakened the impact of the original version. In 1976, after much discussion, the Board of Directors of the AASL withdrew the School Library Bill of Rights and endorsed the Library Bill of Rights thereby accepting the principles outlined in that document as its own official guide to ethical conduct for school librarians.<sup>14</sup>

In the years following the adoption of the Library Bill of Rights, the ALA sought to explain and emphasize its position on censorship by issuing periodic statements detailing examples of the application of the principles outlined in the Library Bill of Rights to specific library practices. A number of the explanatory statements are particularly appropriate to the school library setting. Among these are the statements on the following topics: (1) labeling (the practice of describing or designating certain library materials by affixing a prejudicial label to them or segregating them by a prejudicial system), (2) free access to libraries for minors, (3) restricted access to library materials, and (4) sexism, racism, and other --isms in library

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<sup>14</sup>Office for Intellectual Freedom, Intellectual Freedom Manual, p. 74.

materials. Copies of these interpretations may be found in appendix D.

Upon examining the evidence thus presented, it seems reasonable to conclude that from the professional point of view, censorship, even in the school setting, is not regarded as desirable, acceptable, nor as justifiable.

#### The Social/Moral Perspective

While there is agreement by the profession that censorship in schools is unacceptable, social/moral views on the issue reflect no such accord. In fact, from a social/moral perspective, the question of whether censorship in schools is appropriate provides a basis for much controversy.

Those who support censorship in schools on social/moral grounds often view such activity as both necessary and desirable. Ronald Sutton has proposed a number of reasons why proponents of censorship feel that such activity is appropriate to the school setting. First, "that would-be censors question materials and actions that do not conform to their particular view of the world is not unreasonable since education has always been seen as a process whereby the elders transmit both values and information to the young as a means of

preserving continuity in society."<sup>15</sup> A second reason for supporting censorship in schools, according to Sutton, is concerned with the fact that schools in America have traditionally been regarded as places wherein children were to be protected from certain aspects of life. Thirdly, in the past there was agreement as to what was right and appropriate for presentation to children, and these were the ideals upon which the curriculum was based. With the changing roles of family and church, however, came new and innovative educational programs. Finally, Sutton maintains that historically, the mission of the school has been to uplift and improve, the understanding being that what students read and studied in the schools should be better than what they encountered apart from them.<sup>16</sup>

Moralistic concepts about what was appropriate for presentation in schools dominated education in the past, and, to a great extent, are still influential in current day thinking. A major argument on the part of those who support censorship in the schools holds that the effects of reading on behavior are significant, thus, it is

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<sup>15</sup>Ronald Sutton, "Censorship Rides Again," Media and Methods 19 (September 1982): 7.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

possible for undesirable reading material to have a detrimental effect on the character or conduct of impressionable young people. Conversely, they argue that lessons and materials that clearly delineate between right and wrong may promote a decrease in undesirable behavior.<sup>17</sup>

As has been demonstrated, those who support censorship in the schools on social/moral grounds offer a number of reasons for promoting such activity. It should be noted, however, that as supporters of censorship in the schools, these individuals are operating in, not against, our historical tradition.<sup>18</sup>

On the opposite side of the censorship issue, those who oppose censorship in schools maintain that such activity is no more right on social/moral grounds than on any other. In fact, it is strongly held by this element that censorship is morally and socially wrong and that educators have an obligation to resist it. As Betsy Hearne, a librarian who works exclusively with children and young people noted:

The fact is, kids need some well-written books

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<sup>17</sup>Doyle, "Censorship and the Challenge to Intellectual Freedom," p. 9.

<sup>18</sup>Sutton, "Censorship Rides Again," p. 7.

about what's going on in their world; otherwise literature will seem at best irrelevant and at worst hypocritical. . . .

When factual books are banned from the open shelves, they are often the very kinds of facts children need most, on reproduction and birth control, for instance. And there are still parts of the country where children cannot find out about evolution or communism from a school or library book on that subject. In each case, the information is considered a threat and so kept hidden away. . . .

There is no question, for instance, that today's teenagers are going to have sex education. But is it going to be from the media, from peers, or from a responsible adult? There is no question that they will eventually experience sex, one way or another. Again, it is a question of when and how. Most adults want children eventually to find sex comfortable, not guilty or furtive or destructive. The right attitude can be formulated a lot better over a book than in the back seat of a car. Reading can, in fact, be the least harmful first encounter with the controversial problem.<sup>19</sup>

As has been pointed out, proponents of censorship often base their arguments on a conviction that exposure to certain books can have an undesirable effect on the character or conduct of young and impressionable readers. In fact, research findings have provided very few definitive answers with regard to the effect of the reading experience on behavior. An analysis of the bit of research that is available on this topic was conducted

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<sup>19</sup>Betsy Hearne, "Sex, Violence, Obscenity, Tragedy, Scariness, and Other Facts of Life In Children's Literature," Learning 10 (February 1982): 104-106.

by Richard Beach of the University of Minnesota. Beach examined two types of research: research on response to reading and research on the effects of reading. His findings were reported as follows:

1. Claims that books are undesirable are often made in the form of predictions that, given a certain book, a student or students will respond in a certain predicted manner. The research on response to reading indicates that readers' responses are highly unique and vary considerably from one book to another. Predictions as to the nature of readers' responses are therefore highly questionable.
2. Persons often assume that other readers will respond similarly to the same book--that if a book has undesirable meanings for them, it has undesirable meanings for all readers. The research indicates that differences in readers' age, personality, values, sex, literary training, and previous reading result in highly unique meanings for different readers.
3. Advocates of censorship often assume that reading certain books changes students' values or attitudes. While the findings of a large number of experimental studies on effects of readings are somewhat inconclusive, most of these studies indicate little short-term change in values or attitudes from reading certain books. Readers' values are determined by family, peers, schooling, and the media to a far greater extent than by reading.
4. Advocates of censorship also assume that reading certain books results in deviant behavior. There is little or no evidence of any relationship between reading and deviant behavior.

5. Claims are made that certain books, particularly those dealing with sex, are harmful to adolescent development. However, some research suggests that exposure to sexual material may be an integral part of normal sexual development, providing information about sex not available elsewhere. The research also suggests that adolescents deprived of such material do, in some cases, experience deviant sexual development.
6. Claims are made that censorship benefits students in that if books are not available, students will lose their interest in reading such books, choosing books considered more desirable. However, some research indicates that when a book is not available, desire for that book is not reduced but enhanced.<sup>20</sup>

Those who oppose censorship in the schools on social/moral grounds count among their supporters organized groups as well as individuals. For example, the National Council of Teachers of English, under the leadership of Jenkinson, has taken a stand against censorship in schools and school libraries which is based on social/moral concerns. This stand is evidenced in the group's official statement entitled "The Students' Right to Read" in which the following declaration is made: "Censorship leaves students with an inadequate and

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<sup>20</sup>Richard Beach, "Issues of Censorship and Research on Effects of and Response to Reading," in Dealing With Censorship, ed. James E. Davis (Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 1979), pp. 131-153.

distorted picture of the ideals, values, and problems of their culture."<sup>21</sup>

The American Library Association has also made clear its opposition to censorship in the schools on social/moral grounds by declaring that "censorship is harmful because it results in the opposite of true education and learning. In the process of acquiring knowledge and searching for truth, students can learn to discriminate--to make decisions logically in light of the evidence. By suppressing all materials containing ideas, themes, or languages with which they do not agree, censors produce a sterile conformity and stifle students' intellectual and emotional growth."<sup>22</sup>

From a social/moral perspective the controversy over whether censorship in schools is right or wrong is one that will not soon be resolved, for there are powerful and persuasive arguments on both sides of the issue. Furthermore, this is a question that is involved with a vital and precious concern, the social and moral well-being of the nation's youth.

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<sup>21</sup>The Students' Right to Read (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982), p. 9.

<sup>22</sup>"Censorship in the Schools: What is it? How do you Cope?," Announcement from the American Library Association, n.d.



### The Legal Perspective

The question of whether censorship in schools is right or wrong has been argued in the courts many times, yet this remains an issue that, from a legal standpoint, has not been fully resolved. School related censorship cases have been addressed by the state courts, the lower federal courts, and the United States Supreme Court.

There are two situations in which the federal courts may intervene in cases related to education. These occur when there are "(1) alleged violations of constitutionally protected right, privilege, or immunity of an individual; and (2) validity questions of state or federal statutes under the U. S. Constitution."<sup>23</sup> Basically, judicial involvement with censorship in the schools has focused on five major issues: "(1) academic freedom of teachers; (2) the right of students to read and receive information; (3) the right of school boards to make educational decisions; (4) the right of parents to oversee the education of their children; and (5)

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<sup>23</sup>Joseph E. Bryson and Elizabeth W. Detty, Censorship of Public School Library and Instructional Materials (Charlottesville, Virginia: The Michie Company, 1982), p. 72.

religious freedom of individuals."<sup>24</sup> Of these, the two most closely involved with the selection and use of library materials are the right of students to read and receive information and the right of school boards to make educational decisions. Over the past decade and a half, a number of important cases related to these two concerns have reached the federal court system. Decisions in these cases appear to follow two divergent paths. The less speech-protective path seems "to deny that removal of books from school libraries presented a constitutional issue and that these problems were therefore not amenable to resolution by federal courts."<sup>25</sup> The more speech-protective path holds that students have a First Amendment right to know and that "the right to know imposes constitutional constraints on the board's discretion with regard to censorship."<sup>26</sup>

One example of a decision reflecting the less speech-protective philosophy is found in the President's Council case heard by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals

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<sup>24</sup>Bryson and Detty, Censorship of Public School and Instructional Materials, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup>Gail Paulus Sorenson, "Removal of Books From School Libraries 1972-1982: Board of Education v. Pico and its Antecedents," Journal of Law and Education 12 (July 1983): 421.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 422.

in 1972. In this case the school board passed a resolution to withdraw from the junior high school libraries within the school district all copies of Piri Thomas' book Down These Mean Streets. Plaintiffs in the case included past and present presidents of various parent-teacher associations, students, parents, teachers, a librarian, and a principal.<sup>27</sup> Plaintiffs argued, among other points, that once a book had been placed on the library shelves, it should not be removed on the grounds that it was distasteful to school board members. The court chose to reject the plaintiffs' arguments in finding that there was "no infringement upon any basic constitutional values in the school board's action."<sup>28</sup>

A second ruling less supportive of free speech was made in the case of Bicknell v. Vergennes Union High School Board of Directors. The case was brought before the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in 1980. In Bicknell, the school board removed two books from a high school library, Richard Price's The Wanderer and Patrick Mann's Dog Day Afternoon. The books were removed on the grounds that they were vulgar, obscene, and violent.

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<sup>27</sup>Bryson and Detty, Censorship of Public School Library and Instructional Material, p. 104.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

Plaintiffs argued that removal of the books violated students' rights of free speech and due process. Once again the Second Circuit Court of Appeals decided that the removal of the books created no First Amendment violation.<sup>29</sup>

In 1976, a suit claiming violation of First and Fourteenth Amendment rights was brought before the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. The ruling in this action, Minarcini v. Strongsville City School District, was clearly supportive of free speech. The issues involved included debate over "what sort of books should be (1) selected as high school text books, (2) purchased for a high school library, (3) removed from a high school library, (4) forbidden to be taught or assigned in a high school classroom."<sup>30</sup> The Strongsville School Board had removed from the library shelves and banned the use in the classroom of Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle and God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater and Joseph Heller's Catch 22. The court decided to treat the textbook removal and the library book banning as separate issues. Following this action the court ruled that the school board did have

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<sup>29</sup>Bryson and Detty, Censorship of Public School Library and Instructional Material, p. 115.

<sup>30</sup>"The Strongsville Decision," School Library Journal 23 (November 1976): 23.

authority over textbooks. With regard to the library books, however, the court held that the establishment of libraries constituted a privilege that could not be withdrawn based on political and social tastes. Further, the court held that library books placed on the shelves could be removed only for constitutionally allowable reasons. In this case, it was ruled that when the school board removed the books, it did so in violation of the students' right to receive information.<sup>31</sup>

In 1978, another case was decided in favor of free speech and in opposition to censorship in the schools. The Right to Read Defense Committee v. School District case in Chelsea, Massachusetts came about in response to an objection by a parent to one poem in an anthology entitled Male and Female Under 18 that was being used in a high school creative writing course. After reading the poem, the school board pronounced it "filthy" and removed the book from the school library. In its ruling, the court "rejected the premise that school officials had the right to remove books that

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<sup>31</sup>Bryson and Detty, Censorship of Public School Library and Instructional Materials, p. 121.

contained language that was offensive to them and to some parents."<sup>32</sup>

Following the Minarcini and Right to Read cases, another court action took place that relied heavily on these two. In this 1979 First District case, Salvail v. Nashua Board of Education, a New Hampshire school board voted to remove Ms. magazine from the school library because it contained advertisements for contraceptives and information dealing with lesbian and gay rights. In support of First Amendment rights, the court ruled that the political and personal tastes of the school board could not be constitutionally controlling and ordered the board to reinstate the magazine subscription and restore back issues to the shelves.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, one of the most important cases dealing with removal of books from school libraries began in 1975 in New York when two school board members from the Island Trees Union Free School District attended a meeting of a conservative group concerned with the presence of so-called "objectionable books" in public schools. Upon checking the card catalog in the local high school

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<sup>32</sup>Sorenson, "Removal of Books from School Libraries," p. 427.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

library, the school board members discovered eleven of the "objectionable" books. Subsequently, the entire board met and voted to remove nine of these from both the classroom and the library settings. A class action suit followed with the plaintiffs claiming that students' First Amendment rights had been violated by the removal of the books. Relying on the President's Council case, the federal district court judge hearing the case rejected this claim and held that the school board acted within its scope of powers. On appeal, the Second District Court of Appeals "acknowledged that there was substantial evidence suggesting that the school board was politically and religiously motivated in removing the books."<sup>34</sup> The lower court's decision was reversed and the case was remanded back for trial. The school board then appealed to the United States Supreme Court. On June 25, 1982, in a five-four decision, the Supreme Court affirmed the Appeals Court decision and once again sent the case back for trial. In writing the Court's judgment, Justice William Brennan maintained that "the right to receive information logically flowed from the First Amendment free speech and press and encapsulated rights for both

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<sup>34</sup>Bryson and Detty, Censorship of Public School Library and Instructional Material, p. 131.

the 'sender' to distribute literature and the right to receive such literature."<sup>35</sup> In so doing, Justice Brennan acknowledged the important understanding that "school children not only have the right to First Amendment self-expression but also the First Amendment right to receive information and ideas."<sup>36</sup> On August 13, 1982, the Island Tree School Board voted to remove the ban on the nine books and to restore them, with some restrictions on their use, to the school library shelves.

When one examines censorship litigation of the recent past, it appears that "the courts have begun to address the purpose of the First Amendment to preserve an open marketplace of ideas and to assure a free flow of communication, and have begun to realize the importance of applying these principles to the nation's schools."<sup>37</sup> Consequently, from a legal standpoint, censorship in the public schools is more and more frequently being perceived as an unacceptable practice.

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<sup>35</sup>Bryson and Detty, Censorship of Public School Library and Instructional Material, p. 133.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p. 134.

<sup>37</sup>Frances R. Niccolai, "The Right to Read and School Library Censorship," Journal of Law and Education 10 (January 1981): 23.



Summary

Certainly, the issue of whether censorship in schools is right or wrong has provoked much controversy. An examination of this phenomenon from three perspectives provides evidence of widely differing opinions in this regard. From a professional standpoint, there is little debate over whether censorship in schools constitutes an acceptable practice: the library profession characterizes all censorship, be it in schools or any other setting, as undesirable, unnecessary and unacceptable. From a social/moral perspective, however, opinions as to whether censorship in schools is right or wrong are markedly diverse. Supporters of censorship in the schools argue that young and immature readers need to be guided and protected, therefore censorship is necessary and justifiable. Opponents of censorship, on the other hand, hold that it is necessary to expose young people to a full range of information and ideas if they are to be adequately prepared for the critical choices of the future. From this point of view, censorship is detrimental to the development of informed, intelligent decision-making, therefore it is inappropriate in the school setting.

Finally, from a legal perspective, past court rulings with regard to censorship in the schools appear to have followed two divergent paths, one less speech-protective and one more speech-protective. Nevertheless, as "recent court decisions have applied the freedom of speech aspect of the First Amendment to limit the school board's heretofore unlimited power to censor"<sup>38</sup>, censorship in schools is being regarded more and more frequently as a legally unacceptable practice.

Despite the fact that from every perspective examined, there is significant opposition to censorship in the educational setting, evidence suggests that censorship in the public schools is being practiced at an alarming rate and that school librarians are responsible for a considerable amount of this activity. In view of this fact, it is important to examine more closely the censorship practices engaged in and the censorship patterns developed by librarians. To this end, an investigation of all facets of the problem is in order, beginning with an examination of the kinds of material that librarians censor.

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<sup>38</sup>Niccolai, "The Right to Read and School Library Censorship," p. 23.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SUBJECT MATTER THAT LIBRARIANS CENSOR

In an examination of censorship by librarians, a major aspect of the problem to be taken into consideration is the subject matter that librarians censor. Kenneth Donelson, Professor of English at Arizona State University and outspoken critic of censorship in the schools, has described three categories of self-anointed library censors. These three censor types are distinguished by the kinds of materials that they seek to include in or exclude from library collections. He terms these (1) the literary censor, (2) the moral censor, and (3) the sociological censor.<sup>1</sup> According to Donelson, the literary censor is the individual who seeks to provide for the reader only those materials that are deemed to be of highest quality and to exclude from the reader all that are not. It is common for literary censors to make use of such terms as great

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Donelson, "English Teachers and Librarians May be Helping the Censors," Education Digest 49 (November 1983): 53.

books, discriminating taste, heightened sensitivity, and the like. These individuals describe as poor literature anything that has not met the so-called test of time and "that is not yet buried under the term classic or an inch of dust."<sup>2</sup> The second censor type described by Donelson is, in his view, both the least difficult to find and the most frightening. These are the individuals who look for only the clean and pure in literature and who use their own moral standards as a measure against which to make judgments about the value of literary works. Finally, the third type, the sociological censor, is described as the individual who is the most likely to appear noble and well-meaning but who functions as a censor nonetheless. Sociological censors seek to avoid materials that are, in their view, biased or distorted. According to Donelson, this, in reality, means "books that are biased in the right direction, since bias-free books exist only in theory."<sup>3</sup>

To the three censor types described by Donelson, it would, perhaps, be well to add one more, the ideological censor. These are the individuals who

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<sup>2</sup>Donelson, "English Teachers and Librarians May be Helping the Censors," p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

question ideas that are new or different or that fail to conform to their view of what is right. It is safe to say that ideological censors do not subscribe to the theory of the library as a marketplace of ideas.

In an attempt to shed some light on the nature and extent of the censorship problem in the nation, Judith Krug, executive director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, has revealed that prior to the 1980 election, reports of censorship attempts reached her office at the rate of three to five per week. Following the Reagan election, however, the number of such reports rose to three to five per day.<sup>4</sup>

Nor is the connection between these two occurrences merely illusory. There has developed in the United States over the past few years a powerful evangelical movement that is well funded, dedicated to conservative political issues, and "willing to exploit religious convictions for political gain."<sup>5</sup> This group played an important role in the election of Ronald Reagan

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<sup>4</sup>"News," School Library Journal 28 (January 1981): 11.

<sup>5</sup>Welch, Medeiros, and Tate, "Education, Religion, and the New Right," p. 204.

as President. Since the election, the conservative element has placed tremendous pressure on the American educational system in particular and has called for "a return to an image of what it used to be, complete with prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, creation according to Genesis, back-to-basics curriculum, and strong support of traditional family values."<sup>6</sup> As a means of furthering its agenda, the so-called New Right advocates not only the inclusion of those materials deemed appropriate to its cause, but the exclusion of those deemed inappropriate as well. In seeking to remove materials, their strategy is to bring the issue before the public by contacting the media and community leaders, with the intent of conveying to them the impression that the community is in support of censorship in the schools.<sup>7</sup>

Although it is a well-developed and powerful entity, the New Right does not represent the only source of concern for those who would oppose censorship. As William Tazewell observed, in regard to censorship matters, there seems to be a "changing mood in the

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<sup>6</sup>Welch, Medeiros, and Tate, "Education, Religion, and the New Right," p. 204.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

nation."<sup>8</sup> This changing mood is evidenced not only in an increase in the rate of censorship attempts, but in the appearance of a new and vigorous source of those attempts.

In observance of Banned Books Week in 1985, Dr. Robert M. O'Neil, president of the University of Virginia and chairman of the American Association of University Professors' national committee on pre-collegiate censorship, warned that whereas calls for censorship in the past emanated primarily from conservative organizations, they have now begun to flow as freely from liberal groups as well.<sup>9</sup> In this regard, Ronald Sutton, an outspoken intellectual freedom advocate who has worked closely with the Association for Educational Communication and Technology's Intellectual Freedom Committee, maintains that we now have two categories of censors -- the traditional and the non-traditional. According to Sutton, "traditional censors are most upset by what they see as violations of traditional American values: by profanity, slang, nudity, homosexuality, sex

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<sup>8</sup>William L. Tazewell, "Yield One Word to the Censor, and We've Lost it All," The Virginian-Pilot 11 March 1984, sec. C, p.4.

<sup>9</sup>U. Va. Chief Asks Colleges to Oppose School Censors, The Virginian-Pilot, 16 September 1985, sec. D, p. 3.

education, drug education, negative thinking or attacks on values (God, parents, country), violence, 'isms' (socialism, communism, internationalism), invasions of privacy, the occult and secular humanism."<sup>10</sup> The non-traditional censors, states Sutton, "share certain concerns with the traditionalists, such as abhorrence of violence, but their primary concerns are racism and sexism."<sup>11</sup>

As more liberals turn up on the censors' lists, it seems clear that today's censorship scene differs quite dramatically from those of even the fairly recent past.<sup>12</sup> It seems clear, as well, that all of these changes are likely to have a significant impact on the types of subject matter that librarians feel the need to control.

What are the kinds of materials that librarians censor? The findings in this regard are, at once, interesting and enlightening.

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<sup>10</sup>Sutton, "Censorship Rides Again," p. 7.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Mary Ann Raywid, "Censorship: New Wrinkles in an Old Problem," High School Journal 62 (May 1979): 332.



### Collection and Analysis of the Data

As has been explained previously, data for this study was obtained by means of a questionnaire that was designed to elicit information regarding the subject matter or types of subject matter librarians within the Commonwealth were prone to censor. Specifically, the questionnaire elicited information regarding the degree to which the librarians were restrictive in their treatment of twenty-five categories of controversial or potentially controversial subject matter. The librarians were presented with a list of the subject categories and requested to indicate the manner in which they most often dealt with each. Librarians were asked to respond in terms of one of six answers provided on the questionnaire. These were labeled A through F and represented a range of behavior that could be classified from highly restrictive to nonrestrictive. A numerical value was assigned to each answer and a restrictiveness index was computed based on these values. The six possible responses and their assigned values are as follows:

- 1 - A. I avoid purchasing such materials.
- 2 - B. I purchase such materials but place all in a restricted area and circulate only to designated individuals (example: teachers, students in certain

classes, students with parental permission, students in certain grade levels).

3 - C. I purchase such materials but place some in a restricted area and circulate only to designated individuals.

4 - D. I purchase such materials and place all in a restricted area but circulate to anyone on request.

5 - E. I purchase such materials and place some in a restricted area but circulate to anyone on request.

6 - F. I purchase such materials and place all on open shelves without formal restrictions on their use.

A restrictiveness index (R.I.) score for each subject category was computed by multiplying the frequency with which a response was selected by the value assigned to that response and dividing the outcome by the total number of responses to obtain a mean score. The greatest R.I. score for any category was 1.00, meaning that this was a subject that no respondent would knowingly acquire for his or her library. Conversely, the least R.I. score for any category was 6.00, achievable only by a subject category that every respondent would willingly purchase and place on the open shelves with no restrictions on its use. Extreme scores were not found in any category. Categories for which A and B responses were consistently selected were generally determined to be more restricted and those for which the

E and F responses were consistently selected were generally determined to be less restricted.

It is important to bear in mind that since distances between responses are not equal, the R.I. score should be viewed only as a relative position on a continuum between two extremes. Furthermore, it is indeed possible for two subject categories to achieve the same index score and to have, in fact, been handled quite differently by the librarians. With this in mind, the R.I. score should be looked upon not as an absolute but rather as an indication of a relative tendency on the scale being used.

In addition to comparing the R.I. scores of the individual subject categories, it was decided to compare the mean restrictiveness score for all fictional categories with that for all nonfictional categories. A t test was used as the statistical procedure in this instance.

Upon computing and examining the R.I. scores for all categories of subject matter listed on the questionnaire, it was found that the most restricted subject category was fiction containing explicit sexual references with a R.I. score of 2.083. The least restricted subject category was nonfiction dealing with

drugs and drug use with a R.I. score of 5.730. A complete list of the subject categories with their R.I. scores is found in table 1. These are ranked in order from most restricted to least restricted based on the mean score for each category.

Interestingly, material categorized as nonfiction sex education ranked as seventh most restricted out of twenty-five categories of subject matter. Considering the age and maturity level of students served in senior high schools, this finding was unexpected. In view of the alarming rate of teenage pregnancy being reported today, this finding may also be construed by many as unfortunate as well.

Materials containing sex-role stereotypes and racial stereotypes, ranked fifth and sixth respectively, also achieved a relatively high standing with regard to restrictiveness. This might lead one to infer that the voices from the left, the so-called non-traditional censors, may be effectively making themselves heard.

It is interesting to note that in every instance, with the exception of one, profanity, fictional categories were subjected to more restrictive measures than were their nonfictional counterparts. Fiction containing profanity ranked as the eleventh most

TABLE 1

SUBJECT CATEGORIES RANKED FROM MOST TO LEAST RESTRICTED  
 BASED ON RESTRICTIVENESS INDEX SCORES

Subject Categories	Restrictiveness Index Scores
Fiction with explicit sexual references	2.083
Materials displaying nudity	2.772
Materials thought to downgrade traditional American values	3.013
Fiction containing explicit violence	3.391
Materials with sex-role stereotypes	3.551
Materials with racial stereotypes	3.796
Nonfiction sex education	3.981
Fiction dealing with sexually transmitted diseases	3.981
Fiction dealing with homosexuality	3.912
Nonfiction dealing with homosexuality	4.089
Nonfiction containing profanity	4.124
Nonfiction containing explicit violence	4.204
Fiction containing profanity	4.218
Fiction dealing with birth control/abortion	4.692
Materials with unorthodox or controversial thought	4.730
Nonfiction dealing with sexually transmitted diseases	5.132
Nonfiction dealing with birth control/abortion	5.164
Fiction dealing with the occult	5.346
Nonfiction dealing with the occult	5.417
Fiction dealing frankly with contemporary life and problems	5.526
Fiction dealing with drugs and drug use	5.590
Nonfiction dealing with specific religious groups or doctrines	5.629
Nonfiction dealing frankly with contemporary life and problems	5.641
Evolution/Creationism	5.679
Nonfiction dealing with drugs and drug use	5.730

restricted category while nonfiction containing profanity ranked two places below as the thirteenth most restricted category.

The mean R.I. score for all fictional categories was 4.300. The mean R.I. score for all nonfictional categories was 4.908. A t test revealed this difference to be significant at the .001 level, therefore, it was concluded that the librarians included in this study were significantly more restrictive with fictional materials than they were with nonfictional materials.

Upon examining the data gathered in the questionnaire, it became apparent that, as a group, the librarians that were surveyed placed restrictions against the acquisition and use of materials listed in every subject category on the survey. A list of the subject categories and the percentage of librarians applying restrictions to their acquisition or use is found in table 2. The percentages range from a high of 86.2 percent to a low of 8.7 percent indicating that no category of subject matter was restricted by more than 86.2 percent of the librarians and no category was restricted by less than 8.7 percent.

Hypothesis one of this study is concerned with the kinds of materials that librarians censor. It is

TABLE 2

SUBJECT CATEGORIES AND PERCENTAGE OF LIBRARIANS APPLYING  
RESTRICTIONS TO THEIR ACQUISITION OR USE

Subject Categories	Percentage of Librarians Applying Restrictions
Fiction with explicit sexual references	86.2
Materials thought to downgrade traditional American values	74.4
Materials displaying nudity	73.7
Nonfiction sex education	63.1
Fiction containing explicit violence	56.2
Nonfiction dealing with homosexuality	54.4
Materials with sex-role stereotypes	53.1
Fiction dealing with homosexuality	52.5
Fiction dealing with sexually transmitted diseases	50.0
Material with racial stereotypes	47.5
Nonfiction containing profanity	45.6
Fiction containing profanity	43.1
Nonfiction containing explicit violence	41.2
Fiction dealing with birth control/abortion	34.4
Materials with unorthodox or controversial political thought	33.7
Nonfiction dealing with birth control/abortion	30.6
Nonfiction dealing with sexually transmitted diseases	28.7
Fiction dealing with the occult	19.4
Nonfiction dealing with the occult	18.7
Fiction dealing frankly with contemporary life and problems	18.1
Nonfiction dealing frankly with contemporary life and problems	13.7
Fiction dealing with drugs and drug use	13.1
Nonfiction dealing with drugs and drug use	11.9
Nonfiction dealing with specific religious groups and doctrines	10.6
Evolution/Creationism	8.7

stated therein that the head librarians in senior high schools in Virginia are more restrictive in their handling of fictional materials than in their handling of nonfictional materials. The evidence clearly supports the validity of the hypothesis.

#### Summary

It was found that, as a group, librarians involved in the study do restrict the acquisition and use of all twenty-five subject categories listed on the questionnaire. The most censored material, fiction containing explicit sexual references, was restricted by 86.2 percent of the librarians, and the least censored material, subject matter dealing with evolution/creationism, was restricted by 8.7 percent of these individuals. From the evidence, it was concluded that head librarians in senior high schools in Virginia do censor a wide range of subject matter in their libraries but that they are significantly more restrictive with fictional materials than with nonfictional materials.

Now that the kinds of materials censored have been found, it is appropriate to examine a second major aspect of the problem of censorship by librarians, the means by which restriction is exercised.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE MEANS BY WHICH LIBRARIANS EXERCISE CENSORSHIP

In an examination of censorship by librarians, the methods by which these individuals restrict the acquisition and use of materials in their libraries represents a second important element of the problem to be investigated. When librarians function as censors, their censorship activity is most apparent in one of two areas of endeavor: the acquisition of material or the circulation of material.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the acquisition function, it is a relatively simple matter for librarians to single out for purchase only those materials that reflect their own tastes or purposes and to exclude all others. Librarians who resort to such tactics, however, may be justifiably labeled as censors.

There is a definite distinction between one who censors and one who selects. Lester Asheim's classic description of the difference between these two is,

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<sup>1</sup>Fiske, Book Selection and Censorship, p. 67.

perhaps, the most widely-acknowledged explanation available today.

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 virtues, for strengths, which will overshadow minor objections. For the censor, on the other hand, 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 says, if there is anything good in this book let us try to keep it; the censor 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<sup>2</sup> can destroy much that is worth saving.

While highly restrictive selection procedures can eliminate the need for correspondingly restrictive circulation procedures, there are occasions when even the most circumspect of librarians will allow potentially troublesome materials to become a part of the library's collection. Frequently, however, the inclusion of such materials is contingent upon the imposition of restrictions on their use. "Once any item is acquired, it can be controlled by placing it on locked or restricted shelving and/or limiting its use to qualified

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<sup>2</sup>Asheim, "Selection and Censorship," p. 180.

patrons. Variations of these methods may be used by different librarians, but these are sufficient to allow any diligent librarian to keep any item from any patron if this is considered desirable."<sup>3</sup>

It matters not whether librarians contrive to keep materials from patrons or patrons from materials, the result is the same. Librarians who, in support of their own values, beliefs, attitudes, or concerns, or those of others, avoid providing for patrons an entire range of available material may be depriving those patrons of access to information that they want or need and to which they are legally entitled. In any event, librarians who resort to such tactics are operating in direct conflict with the basic principles of intellectual freedom and the ethical code of conduct delineated and adopted by the library profession.

#### Collection and Analysis of the Data

The issue of how librarians censor was specifically addressed in this research, and it was hypothesized that librarians in the Commonwealth, if they censor, most often do so by refusing to purchase materials.

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<sup>3</sup>Michael Pope, Sex and the Undecided Librarian, (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1974), p. 182.

Information obtained from the questionnaire was used to examine the methods by which the librarians controlled the acquisition and use of controversial or potentially controversial subject matter in their libraries. Specifically, the respondents were requested to indicate the method by which they most often dealt with twenty-five categories of subject matter. The librarians were asked to respond in terms of one of six answer choices provided on the questionnaire. The six responses were labeled A through F and represented a range of behavior that could be classified as highly restrictive to nonrestrictive. The A response, "I avoid purchasing such materials," was considered to be the most restrictive answer, because if this method were used, it would result in the total exclusion of the material in question from any library user. The B, C, D, and E responses were progressively less restrictive in that they provided for increasing levels of accessibility in terms of both the placement of the material and the number of persons allowed to use it. The F response provided for total freedom of acquisition and use.

An analysis was made of the extent to which each of the methods was used by the librarians to control the acquisition and use of materials in their libraries. The

findings generated by this procedure are reported in terms of frequencies and percentages.

The methods for restricting the acquisition or use of materials that were offered as choices in section two of the questionnaire and the frequency with which each was selected by the librarians included in the study are displayed in table 3.

TABLE 3

## RESTRICTIVE METHODS AND SELECTION RATES

Restrictive Methods	F	%
A. I avoid purchasing such materials.	961	66
B. I purchase such materials but place all in a restricted area and circulate only to designated individuals.	147	10
C. I purchase such materials but place some in a restricted area and circulate only to designated individuals.	84	6
D. I purchase such materials and place all in a restricted area but circulate to anyone on request.	72	5
E. I purchase such materials and place some in a restricted area but circulate to anyone on request.	191	13
Total Restrictive Responses	1455	100

When the librarians in the study engaged in behavior designed to restrict the acquisition or use of material in their libraries, it seems clear that the method of choice for these individuals was to avoid purchasing materials for their libraries that were perceived by them to be controversial. In fact, as is demonstrated in table 3, it was found that when this restrictive measure was undertaken, it was used 66 percent or two-thirds of the time. The least restrictive method, that of purchasing materials and placing some in a restricted area but circulating to anyone on request, was the second most frequently employed censoring tactic. The remaining three methods were spaced relatively evenly between those two extremes.

That librarians are permitted to rely so heavily on the practice of avoiding controversy by failing to purchase controversial materials is not so surprising in view of the fact that school librarians generally enjoy a remarkable degree of autonomy with regard to the selection and purchase of materials for their libraries. The librarians included in this study were asked to indicate if anyone other than the librarian was responsible for reviewing and selecting print materials

for their libraries. One hundred and twenty or 75 percent of the respondents indicated that no person other than the librarian was involved in reviewing and selecting material for their libraries. The librarians were asked to indicate, as well, if anyone other than the librarian was required to approve of titles selected for purchase. One hundred and thirty-two or 82.5 percent of the respondents indicated that no person other than the librarian was required to approve of materials selected for purchase. Of the 17.5 percent reporting that someone other than the librarian was required to approve of materials selected for purchase, a number added comments indicating that approval was merely perfunctory or that approval was required for the expenditure of funds but not for individual titles.

In further investigating how the librarians utilized restrictions and thus censorship, there was concern that certain personal, community, or institutional characteristics might have influenced their behavior. It was decided, therefore, to determine whether or not there was a relationship between characteristics associated with the librarians or the institutions or communities in which they worked and the extent to which the librarians were restrictive in their

handling of the twenty-five subject categories listed on the questionnaire. To this end, the librarians were grouped according to the characteristics under consideration. A restrictiveness level was established for each group by computing the mean of the R.I. scores for all of its members. A one way analysis of variance was then used to test for significant differences between group means.

The age of the librarians was the first characteristic studied. The findings in terms of frequencies and percentages are found in table 4.

TABLE 4

## AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Age	F	%
Under 25 Years	1	.6
26-35 Years	34	21.3
36-45 Years	51	31.9
Over 45 Years	74	46.3

Since there was only one librarian in the first age group, that category was excluded from consideration. Restrictiveness levels were computed for the remaining



three categories and a one way analysis of variance was used to compare these three categories for significant differences between groups. This procedure yielded an F ratio of .2356 and an F probability of .7904. Since there were no significant differences at the .05 level, it was concluded that there were no significant differences in the extent to which the librarians were restrictive based on their age.

The number of years that the librarians were employed as a librarian/media person was the second characteristic taken into consideration. The findings in terms of frequencies and percentages are presented in table 5.

TABLE 5

## LENGTH OF SERVICE AS LIBRARIAN/MEDIA PERSON

Years of Service	F	%
1-5 Years	12	7.5
6-10 Years	39	24.4
11-15 Years	40	25.0
16+ Years	69	43.1

Restrictiveness levels were computed for all four experience categories. A one way analysis of variance was used to compare for significant differences between groups. This procedure yielded an F ratio of .9128 and an F probability of .4363. Since there were no significant differences at the .05 level, it was concluded that there were no significant differences in the extent to which the librarians were restrictive based on their years of service as a librarian/media person.

The third variable to be taken into consideration was the type of local community in which the librarians worked. The findings in terms of frequencies and percentages are revealed in table 5.

TABLE 6

## TYPE OF LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVED BY THE SCHOOL

Community Type	F	%
Rural	76	47.5
Suburban	58	36.3
Urban	26	16.3

Restrictiveness levels were computed for all three categories. A one way analysis of variance was

used to test for significant differences between groups. This procedure yielded an F ratio of 2.8634 and an F probability of .0601. Since there were no significant differences at the .05 level, it was concluded that there were no significant differences in the extent to which the librarians were restrictive based on the type of community in which they worked.

The fourth variable to be considered involved the political characteristics of the communities served by the schools. The findings in terms of frequencies and percentages are revealed in table 7.

TABLE 7

## POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY

Political Description	F	%
Conservative	76	47.5
Moderate	77	48.1
Liberal	5	3.8

Since there were so few responses in the liberal group, this category was excluded from consideration. Restrictiveness levels were computed for the remaining two categories. A one way analysis of variance was used

to compare for significant differences between groups. This procedure yielded an F ratio of 1.9675 and an F probability of .1433. Since there were no differences at the .05 level, it was concluded that there were no significant differences in the extent to which the librarians were restrictive based on the political characteristics of the communities in which they worked.

The final characteristic examined was the grade levels served by the schools. The findings in terms of frequencies and percentages are presented in table 8.

TABLE 8

## GRADE LEVELS SERVED BY THE SCHOOL

Grade Levels	F	%
8-12	35	21.9
9-12	98	61.3
10-12	25	15.6
11-12	2	1.2

In considering the grade levels served by the schools, the original intent was to include in the study only those librarians working in schools serving grades nine through twelve or any combination thereof including grades eleven and twelve. Upon examining the responses, however, it became apparent that if the schools serving grade eight were excluded from consideration, over 20 percent of the respondents would be omitted from the study. Since this was not considered to be acceptable, the study was broadened to include those librarians working in schools serving grades eight through twelve.

In view of the fact that there were so few schools in the category serving only grades eleven and twelve, this group was dropped from consideration. Restrictiveness levels for the remaining three categories were computed. A one way analysis of variance was used to test for significant differences between groups. This procedure yielded an F ratio of 1.9675 and an F probability of .1433. Since there were no significant differences at the .05 level, it was concluded that there were no significant differences in the extent to which the librarians were restrictive based on the grade levels served by the schools in which they worked.

Hypothesis two of this study is concerned with the issue of how librarians censor. It is stated therein

that the most common method used by head librarians in senior high schools in Virginia to restrict the acquisition and use of certain materials in their libraries is to avoid purchasing those materials. The evidence presented in this chapter is, indeed, supportive of the acceptance of hypothesis two.

### Summary

The findings of this investigation indicate that, as a group, the librarians included in this study do make use of the entire range of restrictive methods made available as answer choices in the questionnaire. In restricting the acquisition and use of materials in their libraries, however, they do rely quite heavily on one restrictive measure in particular, that of avoiding the purchase of materials that they consider to be controversial.

In investigating the extent to which the librarians were restrictive in their handling of controversial or potentially controversial subject matter, tests were conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in the restrictiveness levels of the respondents based on certain personal, community, or institutional characteristics. These revealed no significant differences in the extent to which the

librarians were restrictive based on the age of the librarians, their years of experience as a librarian/media person, the type of community in which they worked, the political characteristics of the communities in which they worked, or the grade levels served by the schools in which they worked.

Having determined the subject matter that librarians censor and the methods employed by these individuals to exercise censorship, it is appropriate now to investigate one final concern, the factors that are influential in causing librarians to engage in such behavior.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REASONS WHY LIBRARIANS CENSOR

In an investigation of censorship by librarians, perhaps the most vital concern to be addressed is the cause for such behavior. Indeed, if librarians perceived no cause to censor, presumably, they would not do so. This being the case, an examination of the other two major facets of the problem, what librarians censor and how librarians censor would be unnecessary. The fact is, however, that such is not the case. Evidence indicates that librarians frequently function as censors in their own libraries and that there are a number of factors that are influential in causing them to behave in this manner.

In the late 1950s, a study of school and public libraries in California brought to light an important finding: "Librarians, at least in the area of intellectual freedom, all too often are their own worst enemies."<sup>1</sup> In this study, Marjorie Fiske found that surprisingly few actual pressures to censor were generated by patrons, parents, administrators and other interested parties. But

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<sup>1</sup>Oboler, Defending Intellectual Freedom, The Library and the Censor, p. 64.



librarians, fearing the possibility of such pressures had carefully screened their collections to the extent that very few materials likely to cause controversy were present. "In other words, a conclusion was reached in the Fiske study that librarians were generally following the principle that the best way to avoid censorship controversies or pressures in libraries was to avoid purchasing controversial books."<sup>2</sup>

In 1972, another damaging conclusion with regard to censorship and librarianship was reached in a study of the attitudes of Mid-western librarians by Charles Busha. Busha found that although the librarians in his study expressed agreement with intellectual freedom principles, they were rarely willing to assert those principles against real or anticipated censorship pressures.<sup>3</sup> In 1982, John Beineke surveyed high school librarians in Indiana and reported that "the librarians themselves often chose not to purchase books that they believed might provoke criticism or controversy."<sup>4</sup>

Although these studies describe conditions extant in diverse areas of the country and in different decades, the

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<sup>2</sup>Busha, Freedom Versus Suppression and Censorship, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup>Oboler, Defending Intellectual Freedom, The Library and the Censor, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>Beineke, "Censorship in Indiana High School Libraries," p. 638.

conclusions reached are remarkably similar. They indicate that much of the censorship activity engaged in by librarians takes place in response to pressures to censor that are perceived by the librarians to be generated by persons or groups in the school or community. Such censorship may be characterized as externally motivated in that it is rooted in a desire on the part of the librarian to avoid criticism or controversy based on the values, beliefs, or attitudes of others.

Even though studies, such as those cited above, indicate that a considerable amount of the censorship activity ascribed to librarians is externally motivated, external pressures are not the sole provocation for such behavior. On the contrary, some censorship practices engaged in by librarians result from their own personal convictions about what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries. Such censorship may be said to be internally motivated in that it takes place in response to the librarian's own system of attitudes, values, and beliefs.

For the most part, past attempts to investigate censorship on the part of librarians have focused on censorship motivated by external pressures. However, some efforts have been made to explore the extent to which

librarians engage in internally motivated censorship as well. In a 1964 study of book censorship in high school libraries in Nassau County, New York, John Farley concluded that among the librarians in his study, censorship performed because of the librarian's own convictions about the propriety of circulating certain materials and without any awareness of external pressure to censor was more prevalent than censorship resulting from outside pressures.<sup>5</sup> In like manner, a study of high school libraries across the nation conducted by Mary Lida Eakin in 1948, indicated that internally motivated censorship was common among the librarians surveyed with "an injurious effect on adolescent attitudes" being cited as the most common basis for such activity.<sup>6</sup>

Whether censorship is practiced in response to internal or external motivation, its effects on the library user are equally damaging. All censorship limits choices. "The right of any individual not just to read but to read whatever he wants to read is basic to a free society."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Farley, "Book Censorship in the Senior High School Libraries of Nassau County, New York," p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>7</sup>National Council of Teachers of English, "The Students' Right to Read," p. 7.

Censorship, no matter what its impetus, results in an abridgment of that right.

#### Collection and Analysis of the Data

The factors that are influential in causing librarians to censor constitute a major point of concern in this study. It is hypothesized herein that librarians' own convictions with regard to what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries are more influential in causing them to censor than are pressures to censor that are perceived by the librarian to be generated by persons or groups in the school or community.

Section three of the questionnaire was designed to elicit information regarding the reasons why librarians censor. Specifically, the respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which each of thirteen factors, labeled pressures/concerns on the questionnaire, were influential in causing the librarians to avoid purchasing materials or to place restrictions on their use. The librarians were asked to respond in terms of one of four answers provided on the questionnaire. A numerical value was assigned to each answer and an influence index (I.I.) was computed based on these values. The four possible responses and their assigned values are as follows:

- 1 - Not at all influential
- 2 - Mildly influential
- 3 - Moderately influential
- 4 - Highly influential

An I.I. score for each factor was computed by multiplying the frequency with which a response was selected by the value assigned to that response and dividing the outcome by the total number of responses to obtain a mean score. The greatest I.I. score for any factor was 4.00, meaning that this was a pressure/concern that was judged highly influential by all respondents in causing them to restrict the acquisition or use of materials in their libraries. Conversely, the least I.I. score for any factor was 1.00, achievable only by a pressure/concern that all respondents considered to be not at all influential in causing them to censor materials in their libraries. No extreme score was found. As was pointed out earlier in dealing with the restrictiveness index scores, it is important to bear in mind that distances between responses are not equal, therefore the I.I. score should be viewed only as a relative position on a continuum between two extremes. Accordingly, the I.I. measure should be properly regarded as a relative tendency on the scale being used rather than as an absolute.

Upon constructing and examining the I.I. scores for all pressures/concerns listed on the questionnaire, it was found that the most influential factor in causing librarians to censor was a conviction on the part of the librarian that material in school libraries should be of the highest literary quality. The I.I. score for this belief on the part of librarians was 2.987 with 43 percent of the librarians reporting that this concern was strongly influential in causing them to exclude certain materials from their libraries or to place restrictions on their use. Only 9 percent of the librarians considered this factor to be not at all influential. This finding indicates that of the three censor types identified by Donelson and discussed earlier in this report, the literary censor appears to be the most prevalent among the respondents in this study. It may be recalled that according to Donelson, the literary censor is the one who seeks to provide for his or her readership only those materials that are deemed to be of highest literary quality and to exclude from that readership all literature that is considered to be undeserving of such a distinction.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Donelson, "English Teachers and Librarians May be Helping the Censor," p. 53.

The factor that was regarded as least influential in causing the librarians in the study to censor was a reluctance on the part of the librarian to be placed in the position of defending materials that he/she had selected. The I.I. score for this concern was 1.936. Forty percent of the librarians judged this factor to be not at all influential in causing them to restrict the acquisition or use of material in their libraries while only 10 percent considered it to be highly influential.

A complete list of the pressures/concerns that were presented on the questionnaire along with their I.I. scores is found in table 9. These are ranked in order from most to least influential.

In further examining the reasons why librarians censor, it was decided to investigate the extent to which the librarians' own personal convictions were influential in causing them to censor as opposed to pressures to censor, either real or imagined, that were generated by persons or groups in the school or community. To this end, the thirteen pressures/concerns listed on the questionnaire were classified as either internal or external motivators. Internal motivators are defined as those factors that are based on the librarians' own personal convictions regarding what is or is not appropriate for placement in their

TABLE 9  
 FACTORS INFLUENTIAL IN CAUSING LIBRARIANS TO CENSOR  
 IN ORDER FROM MOST TO LEAST INFLUENTIAL

Factor	Influence Index Score
A conviction on the part of the librarian that material in school libraries should be of the highest literary quality	2.987
A conviction on the part of the librarian that certain materials can have an undesirable effect on the character or conduct of young people	2.474
The possibility of complaints from individuals within the school such as teachers, administrators, students	2.287
A conviction on the part of the librarian that a censorship controversy over one book or magazine is not worth the adverse public relations it would cause for the school	2.257
The possibility of complaints from parents	2.217
A concern on the part of the librarian about his/her ability to defend material should a controversy arise	2.214
The possibility of adverse publicity or criticism in local newspapers	2.077
Knowledge on the part of the librarian that material under consideration has caused controversy elsewhere	2.064
A conviction on the part of the librarian that parents have a right to expect that their children will be shielded from exposure to certain materials in school libraries	2.026
A concern on the part of the librarian that in the event of a controversy, he/she would not be supported by building level administrators	2.013
The possibility of complaints from organized groups	2.000
The possibility of complaints from other individuals in the community	1.987
A reluctance on the part of the librarian to be placed in the position of defending material that he/she has selected	1.936



libraries. External motivators are defined as those factors that are based on the convictions of others regarding what is or is not appropriate for placement in school libraries.

The following factors were classified as internal motivators:

1. A concern on the part of the librarian about his/her ability to defend material should a controversy arise
2. A reluctance on the part of the librarian to be placed in the position of defending material that he/she has selected
3. A concern on the part of the librarian that in the event of a controversy over library materials he/she would not be supported by building level administrators
4. A conviction on the part of the librarian that parents have a right to expect that their children will be shielded from exposure to certain materials in school libraries
5. A conviction on the part of the librarian that certain material can have an undesirable effect on the character or conduct of young people
6. A conviction on the part of the librarian that a censorship controversy over one book or magazine is not worth the adverse public relations it would cause for the school

The following factors were classified as external motivators:

1. The possibility of complaints from parents
2. The possibility of complaints from other individuals in the community
3. The possibility of complaints from organized groups

4. The possibility of complaints of individuals within the school (teachers, administrators, students)
5. The possibility of adverse publicity or criticism in local newspapers
6. Knowledge on the part of the librarian that the material under consideration has caused controversy elsewhere

The mean I.I. score for all internal motivators was computed as was the mean I.I. score for all external motivators. These were then compared. A t test was used as the statistical procedure in this instance.

The mean I.I. score for all internal motivators was 2.2668. The mean I.I. score for all external motivators was 2.1066. A t test revealed the difference between these two scores to be significant at the .01 level. Based on this finding, it was concluded that the librarians' own personal concerns about what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries were more influential in causing them to censor than were similar concerns on the part of others.

It is interesting to note that among the external motivators, the possibility of complaints from individuals within the school such as teachers, administrators, or students was more influential in causing the librarians to censor than was the possibility of complaints from any other

source. In rank order by influence level from most to least influential in causing the librarians to censor were the possibility of complaints from the following persons or groups of persons: (1) individuals within the school such as teachers, students, or administrators, (2) parents, (3) local newspapers, (4) organized groups, and (5) other individuals in the community.

Hypothesis three of this study is concerned with the issue of why librarians censor. It is stated therein that the librarians' own personal convictions regarding what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries are more influential in causing them to censor than are pressures to censor that are perceived by the librarian to be generated by persons or groups in the school or community. The evidence presented clearly supports the validity of this hypothesis.

#### Summary

It was found that every pressure/concern listed on the questionnaire was considered to be highly influential by at least 10 percent of the respondents in causing them to censor material in their libraries. The factor that was judged the most influential in causing the librarians to censor was a conviction on the part of the librarian that materials in school libraries should be of the highest

literary quality. The factor found to be least influential in causing the librarians to censor was a reluctance on the part of the librarian to be placed in the position of having to defend material that he/she had selected. Overall, it was determined that the librarians' own personal convictions regarding what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries were more influential in causing them to censor than were the convictions of others in this regard.

Three major concerns associated with the phenomenon of censorship by head librarians in senior high school libraries in Virginia have been addressed in this investigation. These are as follows: the subject matter censored by these individuals, the means by which they exercise censorship, and the factors that are influential in causing them to censor. Accordingly, it is appropriate, at this point, to review the results of this investigation, to summarize the findings and establish conclusions based on those findings, to examine the implications of the study, and to develop recommendations for implementation or for further investigation.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This investigation has focused on censorship by head librarians in public high school libraries in Virginia as reported during the 1985-86 school year. Particular emphasis has been placed on the following issues: (1) what subject matter is either denied or made available only in a limited fashion to students in senior high school libraries in Virginia as a result of censorship on the part of the librarians in charge of those collections, (2) as a matter of general practice, what restrictions are applied by librarians to the acquisition and use of materials in high school libraries in Virginia, and (3) what is the rationale for proscriptions applied by librarians to the acquisition and use of materials in high school libraries in Virginia?

The primary method of securing data for the study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher and distributed by mail in April, 1986 to the head librarian in every public senior high school in the Commonwealth of Virginia. As of the date of this investigation there were 281 such institutions. Responses were received from 192 or

68 percent of the librarians surveyed. Only responses from librarians serving in schools housing grades eight and above were included in the study. The total number of these was 160.

The survey instrument was designed to secure the following types of information: demographic information pertaining to the schools and school districts represented in the study, personal information pertaining to the librarians represented in the study, subject matter that provoked censorship activity on the part of the librarians, the methods by which the librarians controlled the acquisition and use of materials in their libraries, the factors that were most influential in causing the librarians to engage in censorship practices based on their own personal convictions, and the factors that were most influential in causing the librarians to engage in censorship practices based on the convictions of others.

The data generated by the questionnaire was processed with the use of the Virginia Beach City Schools' computer using the SPSS program.

#### CONCLUSIONS

It was the intent of this research to test the validity of three hypotheses. Conclusions were reached with

regard to each of these. In addition to the primary conclusions, additional related findings were brought to light as well. These are reported in terms of secondary conclusions. The hypotheses, the primary conclusions, and the secondary conclusions are discussed below:

Hypothesis One. It was postulated in hypothesis one that librarians are more restrictive in their handling of fictional materials than they are in their treatment of nonfictional materials. An analysis of the data generated by the survey instrument revealed that such was, indeed, the case with respect to the librarians included in this study. The construction of a restrictiveness index (R.I.) and a comparison of the mean R.I. score for all nonfictional material with that for all fictional material by means of a t test indicated that there was a significant difference in the degree to which restrictions were applied to each, with fictional materials being treated more restrictively. It was, thus, concluded that the librarians in the study were significantly more restrictive in their treatment of fictional material than they were in their handling of nonfictional material. On this basis, the validity of hypothesis one was established.

One secondary conclusion was reached with regard to the subject matter that librarians censor. Based on

evidence derived from the survey, it was concluded that the librarians in this study placed restrictions on a wide range of subject matter. Evidence of this is found in the fact that every subject category listed on the questionnaire was restricted in some manner by no fewer than 8.7 percent and as many as 86 percent of the respondents.

Hypothesis Two. It was theorized in hypothesis two that the method most commonly used by librarians to restrict access to controversial or potentially controversial material in their libraries is to purposely avoid purchasing such material. Upon examining the data generated by the survey, it was found that, in fact, this method of censoring material was used 66 percent of the time by the librarians in the study. Therefore, it was concluded that when the librarians engaged in behavior designed to restrict the acquisition or use of certain materials in their libraries, the method of choice was to avoid purchasing those materials.

In further examining the means by which librarians exercise censorship, some secondary conclusions were also reached. Mean R.I. scores for groups of librarians possessing certain characteristics were compared by means of a one way analysis of variance in order to determine whether the age of the librarians, their years of experience as a



librarian, type of community in which they worked, political characteristics of the community in which they worked, or grade levels served by the schools in which they worked had any bearing on the tendency of these librarians to be restrictive. Since statistical analysis revealed no significant differences, it was concluded that there was no relationship between these factors and the extent to which the librarians were restrictive.

Finally, even though one method of restricting access was used much more frequently than any other, every method listed on the questionnaire was utilized by at least 5 percent of the respondents, leading to the conclusion that, as a group, the librarians in the study did make use of a variety of methods to restrict the acquisition and use of materials in their libraries.

Hypothesis Three. It was postulated in hypothesis three that the librarians' own personal convictions regarding the selection and placement of material in their libraries are more influential in causing them to censor than are the convictions of others in this regard. Based on statistical analysis of the data generated by the questionnaire, it was concluded that among the factors that were influential in causing librarians to censor, those pressures/concerns that were based on the librarians' own

personal convictions (internal motivators) were more influential than were the pressures/concerns that were based on the convictions of others (external motivators). On this basis, the validity of hypothesis three was established.

Further analysis of the evidence indicated that every factor listed on the questionnaire was regarded as highly influential in causing the librarians to censor by no fewer than 7.8 percent of the respondents and by as many as 39.4 percent of these individuals. This led to a secondary conclusion that a wide variety of factors were influential in causing the librarians in the study to censor material in their libraries.

#### IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research apply only to libraries in public senior high schools in Virginia, and no attempt is made to claim universal applicability of these results to public high school libraries in any other state. Nevertheless, two important implications for American public education in general and the profession of school librarianship in particular are revealed in this study.

First, attempts to identify and deal with school library censorship in the past have focused, for the most part, on the efforts of individuals other than the librarian

to limit the access of young people to information in school libraries. The findings of this study, however, suggest that such efforts may have lacked the proper focus. It has been demonstrated here, for example, that 86 percent of the librarians indicated that they limit access to certain subject matter in their libraries, that the most restrictive method available for limiting access, that of refusing to purchase materials considered to be controversial, is utilized 66 percent of the time by these librarians, and that the librarians' own personal convictions are significantly more influential in causing them to censor than are pressures to censor that may be generated by any other person or group of persons. With this in mind, future investigators of school library censorship cannot afford to overlook the role of the librarian in this regard.

A second important implication derived from this study is involved with professional training programs for school librarians. "The school librarian today is widely recognized as carrying out indispensable functions in the educational process: reviewing, selecting, and disseminating

the words of others."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it is recognized that "freedom in the public schools is central to what and how students learn."<sup>2</sup> Consequently, it is imperative that school librarians possess a thorough understanding of and appreciation for the rights of students to read and to know, and an equally thorough understanding of the ramifications of the denial of those rights. Furthermore, it is essential that school librarians be knowledgeable about the proper procedures for selecting materials for their libraries and for defending those materials should the need arise.

Preparation programs for school librarians need to be examined for proper emphasis with regard to the principles of intellectual freedom and the selection and defense of library materials. Weaknesses in these two vital areas should not be tolerated.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations are offered:

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<sup>1</sup>"Liberty and Learning in the Schools: Higher Education's Concerns," A Report by the Commission on Academic Freedom and Pre-College Education (Washington, D. C.: American Association of University Professors, 1986), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>"Liberty and Learning in the Schools," p. 3.

### Recommendations for Educators

1. Professional preparation programs for school librarians should include strong emphasis upon the importance to American education of the principles of intellectual freedom.

2. Professional preparation programs for school librarians should include a strong emphasis upon the proper procedures for selecting and defending library materials.

3. Efforts should be made to make other faculty and staff members aware of the importance of intellectual freedom to American education. In the event of a controversy over library materials, the librarian should feel secure in the knowledge that he/she will not be asked to stand as the lone defender of students' rights to read and to know.

4. Committees consisting of librarians, teachers, administrators, students, and parents should be formed to develop a freedom to read policy for each school or school division.

### Recommendations for Further Research

1. An investigation of the patterns of censorship developed by school librarians in other states could help to draw a broad picture of such activity across the nation.

2. An investigation of the requirements of preparation programs for school librarians could provide some insight into the adequacy of such programs to prepare librarians to meet and deal with challenges to intellectual freedom.

3. A comparison of the attitudes of newly-certified public and college librarians with those of newly-certified school librarians toward intellectual freedom principles could help to reveal any differences that might have developed as a result of diverse training methods.

4. A comparison of preparation programs for school librarians with those for public and college librarians could help to determine if any of these is more effective in preparing librarians to meet and deal with challenges to intellectual freedom.

The result of this and future related research should help to provide some insight into the very large and complex problem of censorship in the schools, a problem that is of vital concern to education in a free society.

APPENDIX A

Cover Letter and Questionnaire

Dear Colleague,

As a student at the College of William and Mary, I am conducting a research study involving head librarians in senior high schools in Virginia. Specifically, I am attempting to determine how the librarians deal with certain controversial or potentially controversial material in their libraries and to examine the many pressures and concerns that librarians experience in this regard.

This is not a lengthy questionnaire. Pilot subjects required about fifteen minutes to complete it. In addition, you can be certain that the questionnaire has in no way been coded and that anonymity will be strictly preserved.

As a school librarian myself, I am certainly mindful of the fact that the end of the school year can be hectic for us. Nevertheless, I do hope that you will take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to respond to this survey. Your feelings and experiences are extremely important to the outcome of this research, and your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Enclosed is a stamped self-addressed envelope for returning your questionnaire. I thank you for taking part in this study, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Laura McMillan*

Laura McMillan



## SECTION I

1. What is your age?

- under 25  
 26-35  
 36-45  
 over 45

2. How long have you been employed as a librarian/media person?

- 1-5 years  
 6-10 years  
 11-15 years

3. How would you best describe the population served by your school?

- rural  
 suburban  
 urban

4. How would you characterize the population served by your school?

- conservative  
 moderate  
 liberal

5. What grade levels are served by your school?

- 9 through 12  
 10 through 12  
 other (please specify)

6. How many students are served by your school?

- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> up to 499 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 500-999   | <input type="checkbox"/> 2000-2499 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1000-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> over 2500 |

7. Does your school/school district have a written selection policy for library materials?

- yes     no

8. Is anyone other than the librarian responsible for reviewing and selecting print materials for your library?  yes     no

- If yes, please identify:  building level administrators  
 building level selection committee  
 central office personnel  
 other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Is anyone other than the librarian required to approve of titles selected for purchase?  yes     no

- If yes, please identify:  building level administrators  
 building level selection committee  
 central office personnel  
 other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate the extent to which the following pressures/concerns influence you to avoid purchasing certain materials or to place restrictions on their use:

	Not at all Influential	Mildly Influential	Moderately Influential	Strongly Influential
The possibility of complaints from parents				
The possibility of complaints from other individuals in the community				
The possibility of complaints from organized groups				
The possibility of complaints from individuals within the school (teachers, administrators, students)				
The possibility of adverse publicity or criticism in local newspapers				
A concern on the part of the librarian about his/her ability to defend material should a controversy arise				
A reluctance on the part of the librarian to be placed in the position of defending material that he/she has selected				
A concern on the part of the librarian that in the event of a controversy over library materials he/she would not be supported by building level administrators				
Knowledge on the part of the librarian that material under consideration has caused controversy elsewhere				
A conviction on the part of the librarian that parents have a right to expect that their children will be shielded from exposure to certain materials in school libraries				
A conviction on the part of the librarian that certain materials can have an undesirable effect on the character or conduct of young people				
A conviction on the part of the librarian that material in school libraries should be of the highest literary quality				
A conviction on the part of the librarian that a censorship controversy over one book or magazine is not worth the adverse public relations it would cause for the school				

Are there other pressures/concerns that influence you to avoid purchasing certain materials or to place restrictions on their use? If so, please list below and indicate the extent of their influence:

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Please check the one response that best describes your method of dealing with the subject categories listed below. Use the following code for your answers:

- A. I avoid purchasing such materials.  
 B. I purchase such materials but place all in a restricted area and circulate only to designated individuals (example: teachers, students in certain classes, students with parental permission, students in certain grade levels).  
 C. I purchase such materials but place some in a restricted area and circulate only to designated individuals  
 D. I purchase such materials and place all in a restricted area but circulate to anyone on request.  
 E. I purchase such materials and place some in a restricted area but circulate to anyone on request.  
 F. I purchase such materials and place all on open shelves without formal restrictions on their use.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Fiction with explicit sexual references						
Nonfiction sex education						
Fiction dealing with homosexuality						
Nonfiction dealing with homosexuality						
Fiction dealing with sexually transmitted diseases						
Nonfiction dealing with sexually transmitted diseases						
Fiction dealing with birth control/abortion						
Nonfiction dealing with birth control/abortion						
Nonfiction dealing with specific religious groups or doctrines						
Evolution/Creationism						
Fiction containing explicit violence						
Nonfiction containing explicit violence						
Fiction dealing with drugs and drug use						
Nonfiction dealing with drugs and drug use						
Materials displaying nudity						
Materials thought to downgrade traditional American values						
Materials with unorthodox or controversial political thought						
Fiction containing profanity						
Nonfiction containing profanity						
Fiction dealing frankly with contemporary life and problems						
Nonfiction dealing frankly with contemporary life and problems						
Fiction dealing with the occult						
Nonfiction dealing with the occult						
Materials with racial stereotypes						
Materials with sex-role stereotypes						

Is there other subject matter that you would consider controversial or sensitive enough to avoid purchasing or to which you would be likely to restrict access? If so, please list below and indicate the manner in which you would handle this material.

APPENDIX B  
Library Bill of Rights

## 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.

2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be prescribed 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.

Adopted June 18, 1948.

Amended February 2, 1961, June 27, 1967, and January 23, 1980,  
by the ALA Council.

APPENDIX C

School Library Bill of Rights

## SCHOOL LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS for School Library Media Center Programs

*Approved by American Association of School Librarians Board of Directors,  
Atlantic City, 1969.*

The American Association of School Librarians reaffirms its belief in the Library Bill of Rights of the American Library Association. Media personnel are concerned with generating understanding of American freedoms through the development of informed and responsible citizens. To this end the American Association of School Librarians asserts that the responsibility of the school library media center is:

- To provide a comprehensive collection of instructional materials selected in compliance with basic written selection principles, and to provide maximum accessibility to these materials.
- To provide materials that will support the curriculum, taking into consideration the individual's needs, and the varied interests, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds, and maturity levels of the students served.
- To provide materials for teachers and students that will encourage growth in knowledge, and that will develop literary, cultural and aesthetic appreciation, and ethical standards.
- To provide materials which reflect the ideas and beliefs of religious, social, political, historical, and ethnic groups and their contribution to the American and world heritage and culture, thereby enabling students to develop an intellectual integrity in forming judgments.
- To provide a written statement, approved by the local Boards of Education, of the procedures for meeting the challenge of censorship of materials in school library media centers.
- To provide qualified professional personnel to serve teachers and students.

APPENDIX D

Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights



## STATEMENT ON LABELING

## An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

Labeling is the practice of describing or designating certain library materials by affixing a prejudicial label to them or segregating them by a prejudicial system. The American Library Association opposes this as a means of predisposing people's attitudes towards library materials for the following reasons:

1. Labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes and as such, it is a censor's tool.
2. Some find it easy and even proper, according to their ethics, to establish criteria for judging publications as objectionable. However, injustice and ignorance rather than justice and enlightenment result from such practices, and the American Library Association opposes the establishment of such criteria.
3. Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections. The presence of books or other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library.

The American Library Association opposes efforts which aim at closing any path to knowledge. This statement does not, however, exclude the adoption of organizational schemes designed as directional aids or to facilitate access to materials.

Adopted July 13, 1951. Amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981, by the ALA Council.

## FREE ACCESS TO LIBRARIES FOR MINORS

## An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

Some library procedures and practices effectively deny minors access to certain services and materials available to adults. Such procedures and practices are not in accord with the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS and are opposed by the American Library Association.

Restrictions take a variety of forms, including, among others, restricted reading rooms for adult use only, library cards limiting circulation of some materials to adults only, closed collections for adult use only, collections limited to teacher use, or restricted according to a student's grade level, and interlibrary loan service for adult use only.

Article 5 of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS states that, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." All limitations on minors' access to library materials and services violate that Article. The "right to use a library" includes use of, and access to, all library materials and services. Thus, practices which allow adults to use some services and materials which are denied to minors abridge the use of libraries based on age.

Material selection decisions are often made and restrictions are often initiated under the assumption that certain materials may be "harmful" to minors, or in an effort to avoid controversy with parents. Libraries or library boards who would restrict the access of minors to materials and services because of actual or suspected parental objections should bear in mind that they do not serve *in loco parentis*. Varied levels of intellectual development among young people and differing family background and child-rearing philosophies are significant factors not accommodated by a uniform policy based on age.

In today's world, children are exposed to adult life much earlier than in the past. They read materials and view a

variety of media on the adult level at home and elsewhere. Current emphasis upon early childhood education has also increased opportunities for young people to learn and to have access to materials, and has decreased the validity of using chronological age as an index to the use of libraries. The period of time during which children are interested in reading materials specifically designed for them grows steadily shorter, and librarians must recognize and adjust to this change if they wish to serve young people effectively. Librarians have a responsibility to ensure that young people have access to a wide range of informational and recreational materials and services that reflects sufficient diversity to meet the young person's needs.

The American Library Association opposes libraries restricting access to library materials and services for minors and holds that it is the parents -- and only parents -- who may restrict their children -- and only their children -- from access to library materials and services. Parents who would rather their children did not have access to certain materials should so advise their children. The library and its staff are responsible for providing equal access to library materials and services for all library users.

The word "age" was incorporated into Article 5 of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS because young people are entitled to the same access to libraries and to the materials in libraries as are adults. Materials selection should not be diluted on that account.

Adopted June 30, 1972; amended July 1, 1981, by the ALA Council.

## RESTRICTED ACCESS TO LIBRARY MATERIALS

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Restricting access of certain titles and classes of library materials is a practice common to many libraries in the United States. Collections of these materials are referred to by a variety of names such as "closed shelf," "locked case," "adults only," or "restricted shelf."

Three reasons generally advanced to justify restricted access are:

- (1) It provides a refuge for materials that belong in the collection but which may be considered "objectionable" by some library patrons;
- (2) It provides a means for controlling distribution of materials to those who are allegedly not "prepared" for such materials, or who have been labeled less responsible, because of experience, education, or age;
- (3) It provides a means to protect certain materials from theft and mutilation.

Restricted access to library materials is frequently in opposition to the principles of intellectual freedom. While the limitation differs from direct censorship activities, such as removal of library materials or refusal to purchase certain publications, it nonetheless constitutes censorship, albeit in a subtle form. Restricted access often violates the spirit of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS in the following ways:

- (1) It violates that portion of Article 2 which states that ". . . no library materials should be proscribed . . . because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

"Materials . . . proscribed" as used in Article 2 includes "suppressed" materials. Restricted access achieves de facto suppression of certain materials.

Even when a title is listed in the catalog with a reference to its restricted status, a barrier is placed between the patron and the publication. Because a majority of materials placed in restricted collections deal with controversial, unusual, or "sensitive" subjects, asking a librarian or circulation clerk for them may be embarrassing for patrons desiring the materials. Because restricted collections are

often composed of materials which some library patrons consider "objectionable," the potential user is predisposed to thinking of the materials as "objectionable," and may be reluctant to ask for them. Although the barrier between the materials and the patron is psychological, it is nonetheless a limitation on access to information.

- (2) It violates Article 5, which states that, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of . . . age. . . ."

Limiting access of certain materials only to adults abridges the use of the library for minors. Access to library materials is an integral part of the right to use a library. Such restrictions are generally instituted under the assumption that certain materials are "harmful" to minors, or in an effort to avoid controversy with adults who might think so.

Libraries and library boards who would restrict the availability of materials to minors because of actual or anticipated parental objection should bear in mind that they do not serve in loco parentis. The American Library Association holds that it is parents -- and only parents -- who may restrict their children -- and only their children -- from access to library materials and services. Parents who would rather their children not have access to certain materials should so advise their children.

When restricted access is implemented solely to protect materials from theft or mutilation, the practice may be legitimate. However, segregation of materials to protect them must be administered with extreme attention to the reason for restricting access. Too often only "controversial" materials are the subject of such segregation, indicating that factors other than theft and mutilation -- including content -- were the true considerations. When loss rates of items popular with young people are high, this cannot justify the labeling of all minors as irresponsible and the adoption of prejudiced restrictions on the right of minors to use library services and materials.

Selection policies, carefully developed to include principles of intellectual freedom and the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, should not be vitiated by administrative practices such as restricted access.

\*See also FREE ACCESS TO LIBRARIES FOR MINORS, adopted June 30, 1972; amended July 1, 1981, by the ALA Council.

Adopted February 2, 1973; amended July 1, 1981, by the ALA Council.

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## SEXISM, RACISM AND OTHER -ISMS IN LIBRARY MATERIALS

## An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

Traditional aims of censorship efforts have been to suppress political, sexual or religious expressions. The same three subjects have also been the source of most complaints about materials in library collections. Another basis for complaints, however, has become more and more frequent. Due, perhaps, to increased awareness of the rights of minorities and increased efforts to secure those rights, libraries are being asked to remove, restrict or reconsider some materials which are allegedly derogatory to specific minorities or which supposedly perpetuate stereotypes and false images of minorities. Among the several recurring "isms" used to describe the contents of the materials objected to are "racism" and "sexism."

Complaints that library materials convey a derogatory or false image of a minority strike the personal social consciousness and sense of responsibility of some librarians who - accordingly - comply with the requests to remove such materials. While such efforts to counteract injustices are understandable, and perhaps even commendable as reflections of deep personal commitments to the ideal of equality for all people, they are - nonetheless - in conflict with the professional responsibility of librarians to guard against encroachments upon intellectual freedom.

This responsibility has been espoused and reaffirmed by the American Library Association in many of its basic documents on intellectual freedom over the past thirty years. The most concise statement of the Association's position appears in Article II of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS which states that "Libraries should provide books and materials presenting all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times; no library materials should be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

While the application of this philosophy may seem simple when dealing with political, religious or even sexual

expressions, its full implications become somewhat difficult when dealing with ideas, such as racism or sexism, which many find abhorrent, repugnant and inhumane. But, as stated in the FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT,

it is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society each individual is free to determine for himself what he wishes to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and inoffensive....We realize that application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

Some find this creed acceptable when dealing with materials for adults but cannot extend its application to materials for children. Such reluctance is generally based on the belief that children are more susceptible to being permanently influenced - even damaged - by objectionable materials than are adults. The LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, however, makes no distinction between materials and services for children and adults. Its principles of free access to all materials available apply to ever person, as stated in Article V, "The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his age, race, religion, national origins or social or political views."

Some librarians deal with the problem of objectionable materials by labeling them or listing them as "racist" or "sexist." This kind of action, too, has long been

opposed by the American Library Association in its STATEMENT ON LABELING, which says,

If materials are labeled to pacify one group, there is no excuse for refusing to label any item in the library's collection. Because authoritarians tend to suppress ideas and attempt to coerce individuals to conform to a specific ideology, the American Library Association opposes such efforts which aim at closing any path to knowledge.

Others deal with the problem of objectionable materials by instituting restrictive circulation or relegating materials to closed or restricted collections. This practice, too, is in violation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS as explained in RESTRICTED ACCESS TO LIBRARY MATERIALS which says,

Too often only "controversial" materials are the subject of such segregation, leading to the conclusion that factors other than theft and mutilation were the true considerations. The distinction is extremely difficult to make, both for the librarian and for the patron. Unrestrictive selection policies, developed with care for the principles of intellectual freedom and the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, should not be vitiated by administrative practices such as restricted circulation.

The American Library Association has made clear its position concerning the removal of library materials because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval, or because of pressures from interest groups, in yet another policy statement, the RESOLUTION ON CHALLENGED MATERIALS:

The American Library Association declares as a matter of firm principle that no challenged material should be removed from any library under any legal or extra-legal pressure, save after an independent determination by a judicial officer in a court of competent jurisdiction and only after an adversary hearing, in accordance with well-established principles of law.

Intellectual freedom, in its purest sense, promotes no causes, furthers no movements, and favors no viewpoints. It only provides for free access to all ideas through



which any and all sides of causes and movements may be expressed, discussed, and argued. The librarian cannot let his own preferences limit his degree of tolerance, for freedom is indivisible. Toleration is meaningless without toleration for the detestable.

Adopted February 2, 1973 by the ALA Council

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CENSORSHIP BY LIBRARIANS IN  
PUBLIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA

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ABSTRACT

This investigation focused on censorship by librarians in senior high schools in Virginia during the 1985-86 school year. Emphasis was placed on determining the subject matter that the librarians censored, the means by which censorship was exercised, and the factors that were influential in causing these individuals to engage in such activity.

The primary method of securing data for the study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher and mailed to the head librarian in every senior high school in the state of Virginia. Responses were received from 68 percent of those surveyed.

Based on an analysis of the data generated by the survey the following conclusions were reached: (1) the librarians in the study placed restrictions on the acquisition and use of a wide variety of subject matter, with every subject category listed on the questionnaire being restricted in some manner by at least 8.7 percent

and as many as 86 percent of the respondents, (2) the librarians were significantly more restrictive with fictional materials than with nonfictional materials; (3) the tactic most commonly employed to control the acquisition and use of controversial materials was to purposely avoid purchasing those materials; (4) there was no relationship between characteristics associated with the librarians or the communities or schools in which they worked and the extent to which these individuals were restrictive; and (5) the librarians' own personal convictions about what should or should not be made available to the users of their libraries were more influential in causing them to censor than were pressures to censor, either real or imagined, that were generated by persons or groups in the school or community.

Based on these findings, a number of recommendations were offered aimed at accomplishing two major tasks: first, insuring that professional preparation programs for school librarians include a strong emphasis upon the importance to American education of the principles of intellectual freedom and the proper procedures for selecting and defending library materials, and, second, establishing within the schools a network of support to insure that in the event of a controversy over library materials, the librarian will not be asked to



stand as the lone defender of students' rights to read  
and to know.