



NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL ISSUE: International Views on Banned Books

October 2023

Edited by: Marianne Martens (United States), Sarah Evans (United States), & Maria Alexiusson (Sweden)

Welcome from the Editors

IFLA's Section on Libraries for Children and Young Adults had its midyear meeting in Singapore in May. One night, over dinner, we started talking about intellectual freedom, censorship, and book banning. Our Australian and Norwegian members said that they organized exhibits in their libraries about "Books Banned in the United States." Those of us from the United States (Marianne and Sarah) were suddenly aware of how what is happening in the US is perceived around the world. Of course, challenges and book bans are not isolated to the United States. As librarians, we believe that the freedom to read is a core tenant of democracy.

We decided to create a special edition newsletter in conjunction with Banned Books Week (October 1-7th, 2023) that would look at censorship and book challenges worldwide. This newsletter contains articles from England, France, Kenya, Norway, Thailand, and three from the United States. We hope that this newsletter inspires conversations -- and advocacy for freedom to read around the world.

Many thanks to Carolyn Rankin for last minute editorial support!

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Forbidden Books in Thailand and Young People

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Banned books have been a topic of intrigue and controversy throughout history. In Thailand, a country with a complex relationship between tradition, modernity, and a communist revolutionary movement lasting throughout the 1930s to 1970s, lists of legally “forbidden books” have been announced over the last century. However, young people have often been drawn to banned books, even though engaging with forbidden literature in Thailand comes with risks as doing so openly can lead to legal trouble and social ostracism. This article explores the historical background and reasons for censorship, its implications for young people, and the ongoing debate surrounding forbidden books in Thailand.

Historical Background and Reasons for Censorship

Being the only country in Southeast Asia that was never subject to European colonial rule, the history of book publication in Thailand has been strongly influenced by uninterrupted cultural tradition, social norms, and political turmoil. The practice of censoring books dates back to the early 19th century during the reign of King Rama III. Around 1848, Mr. Mote Amatayakul hired someone to copy legal texts from the Royal Library in the Grand Palace in Bangkok and hired Dr. Dan Beach Bradley, the first printer in Siam to print them as Thai legal texts for public sale. The King ordered him to be punished because the King believed that propagation of the laws to make them more widely known to the public would cause trouble to the country. However, Nakarin Maktrirat, a Political Science professor, contended the ban of the (smuggling) printing of Thai law books were of utmost importance and this attempt to make laws public knowledge was “The destruction of the legal education tradition that had been restricted solely to the elite” (Maktrirat, n.d.).

Later in 1868, *Nirat Nong Khai*, a book written by a military official, Laung Pattanpongpakdi (Mr. Tim Sookayang), containing some content that allegedly defamed both his commander and a government

minister, resulted in a large lawsuit. As a result, the author was sentenced to flogging and imprisonment, and copies of the books were collected from the publisher and burned. However, over a century later in 1999, the Thailand Research Fund recommended that particular book as one of the 100 best Thai books of all time. In total, seven books in the top 100 list have been banned at some time or another by the Thai government.

In 1930, the Siamese Communist Party (SCP) was founded by Ho Chi Minh in Bangkok (Feng, 2022). The communist revolutionary movement then began to flourish and books on communist ideology became popular amongst college students. Concerns about national security motivated the Thai government to formalize the censorship of printed material by promulgating the Printing Act of 1941, beginning with a list of forbidden books. Publications that addressed topics such as democracy, human rights, communism, and political activism were particularly vulnerable to censorship. Between 1977 and 1980, the country faced political turbulence and social unrest. It was during this period that the most expansive book bans took place, with four announcements prohibiting 217 publications.

Implications on Young People

The prohibition of publications between 1977 and 1980 had a profound impact on Thai society. Freedom of expression was curtailed, leading to a stifling of intellectual discourse and limiting the diversity of ideas. The absence of critical analysis and open dialogue hindered the development of well-informed citizens crucial for a functioning democracy. Later, when the communist movement collapsed both nationally and internationally in the early 1980s, many banned books were released again, but they no longer enjoyed their earlier popularity.

For young people in Thailand, reading forbidden books can be an act of defiance or a way of asserting their intellectual independence in a society that might discourage dissent, but it can also be a manifestation of their desire to understand the complexities of their country’s history, politics, and culture beyond what is presented in mainstream narratives. The act of seeking out and reading these books can foster critical thinking,

empathy, and a broader perspective on the world around them.

However, it is important to note that engaging with forbidden books in Thailand is still illegal. The legal and social consequences of openly discussing or distributing such literature can be severe, potentially jeopardizing educational opportunities and future prospects. As a result, many young readers tread carefully, employing a mix of caution and creativity to navigate this delicate landscape.

Ongoing Debate and Challenges

The issue of forbidden books remains contentious in Thailand. Critics argue that censorship suppresses artistic creativity and inhibits the country's cultural evolution and democracy. Supporters of censorship emphasize the need to maintain traditional values and protect institutions from criticism. Continued censorship of books means that writings critical of the monarchy or those challenging the military's authority are swiftly suppressed. Examples are *The Revolutionary King* by William Stevenson, *The King Never Smiles* by Paul Handley, and *A Coup for the Rich* by Giles Ji Ungpakorn (Maktrirat, n.d.).

The first case of children's books being challenged occurred recently in 2021. The Ministry of Education put a set of eight books called Wadwang Books (Tales of Hope) under review for censorship, with the reasoning that the books contained provocative content, and tend to negatively influence the minds of Thai youth. This created a backlash that made the book series popular, and the books were completely sold out within a short period of time (BBC News Thai, 2021)



Set of Wadwang books

One example from the series is a book called *J. for Jit: Life of the Thai Genius who Loved to Learn*, a biography of Jit Phumisak (1930-1966) who has been described as the "Che Guevara of Thailand". His most influential book was *The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today*, which was banned before, but later made it to the list of the 100 best Thai books of all time.



Cover and a page from
J. for Jit: Life of the Thai Genius who Loved to Learn

In conclusion, forbidden books in Thailand represent a realm of knowledge that entices young people with the promise of unearthing hidden truths and questioning established norms. While these texts may be officially prohibited, they continue to captivate the curiosity of the youth, driving them to seek alternative ways of accessing and discussing the ideas contained therein.

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Censorship of *Bien trop petit* in France

A 1949 law governing children's publications today

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During the height of this summer, a scandal rocked the French literary world. On July 17, 2023, the Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin announced a ban on the sale of Manu Causse's novel *Bien trop petit* to minors on pornographic grounds. At a time when internet pornography is widely accessible to all, the censorship of a novel published within a collection that aims to speak to teenagers about sexuality in a different way has caused a stir among book trade professionals. Bookshops, librarians, publishers and professional associations have spoken out against the decision, which is part of a legislative context - the 1949 law on publications aimed at young people - whose limits, almost 75 years after its promulgation, are now up for debate.

The context of the 1949 law

Officially, censorship no longer exists in France under the Freedom of the Press Act of July 29, 1881. Since then, publications are no longer subject to prior authorization. While censorship has not disappeared, not least for children's publications, it is exercised *a posteriori*, as provided for in the law of July 16, 1949 on publications intended for young people¹.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, there was a worrying rise in juvenile delinquency, considered to be linked to the harmful influence of cinema and the press. People were also wary of the massive influx of American comics, which were attracting an enthusiastic audience of young readers. It was the golden age of comics, and some people in France took a dim view of these works, which were considered violent and likely to "demoralize youth." This led to the 1949 law, still in force today, which stipulates that publications for young people

must in no circumstances "present in a favorable light banditry, lies, theft, laziness, cowardice, hatred, debauchery or any acts qualified as crimes or misdemeanors or likely to demoralize childhood or youth."

In practical terms, children's publishers must send a copy of all their publications to the Ministry of Justice (in addition to the legal deposit sent to the National Library), where they are subject to examination by a special commission. The Ministry of Justice then issues binding decisions based on the commission's advice, as in this case, the ban on sale to minors of the book *Bien trop petit*, deemed pornographic. This criterion, not included in the original law, was added in 2011, along with a ban on content likely to incite discrimination or hatred. 10 pages (out of 400) in the book are targeted specifically for "self-indulgent description of numerous scenes of very explicit sex."



Chauchat Guillaume, *Je me suis caché*, Albin Michel Jeunesse, 2019

A succession of memorable, high-profile cases

Book professionals in France are of course particularly vigilant when it comes to censorship. In particular, librarians have been deeply affected by several cases of censorship from the late 1980s onwards, when far-right municipalities decided to intervene directly in library acquisitions, instructing them to stop buying African tales, books on Jewish culture, or books likely to shock the moral order².

¹ Law no. 49-956 of July 16, 1949 on youth publications: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000878175>

² Véronique Soulé, "Censures et autocensures", Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France, February 1999. <https://bbf.enssib.fr/consulter/bbf-1999-03-0044-005>

In the 2010s, other cases of censorship shook the world of libraries (*Tango à deux papas* in 2010, *Tous à poil* in 2011), one of them involving the publisher of *Bien trop petit*, Thierry Magnier. In 2012, the artist Katy Couprie published *Le dictionnaire fou du corps*, a scientific and liberal encyclopedia of the human body. In 2016, this book was withdrawn from Paris school libraries. The left-leaning municipality awkwardly justified the withdrawal by pointing out that the book was not censored and that it remained available in municipal libraries (implying that this was where parental control could be exercised).

The memory of these cases was revived when France's first Library Act³ was passed in 2021, article 5 of which stipulates that "library collections... must be free from all forms of ideological, political or religious censorship or commercial pressure."



Béatrice Boutignon, *Tango à deux papas, et pourquoi pas ?*
Le Baron perché, 2010

Marc Daniau, Claire Franek, *Tous à poil !* Rouergue, 2011

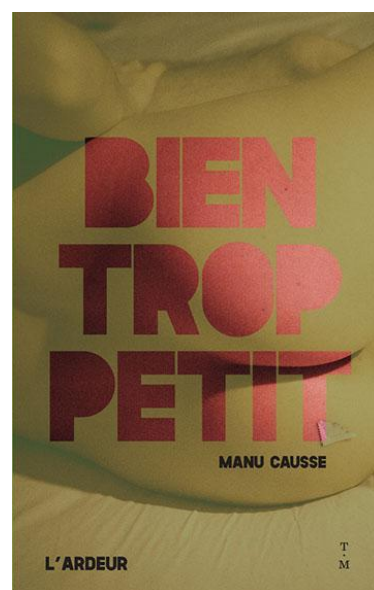
Couprie Katy, *Dictionnaire fou du corps*,
Editions Thierry Magnier, 2012

What's pornographic in 2023?

Founded in 1997, Thierry Magnier is emblematic of a generation of committed and bold publishers. Initially a specialist in books for young children, it subsequently developed several collections for teenagers, most recently L'Ardeur in 2019, aimed at ages 15 and up. Comprising a dozen novels to date, this series focuses on adolescence, its challenges, excesses and unspoken issues. And particularly sexuality, desire and fantasies.

At a time when pornography is available everywhere, to everyone, unfiltered, L'Ardeur aims to offer a different perspective, conveying a vision of sexuality that is, at best, normative.

This is also the ambition of author Manu Causse. In *Bien trop petit*, Grégoire is teased by a classmate at the pool about the size of his penis. It's too small, apparently, and Grégoire is convinced that his sex life is over before he has had his first experience. In an attempt to overcome his shame, he starts writing pornographic fiction, which he publishes on the Internet. Here, he is rebuked for his caricatured vision of sexuality, which leads to a correspondence that enables him to realize his desires and pleasure have little to do with size or performance.



Causse Manu, *Bien trop petit*, Editions Thierry Magnier, 2022

Outcry from the book trade

Book professionals have reacted with one unified voice. The Association des bibliothécaires de France issued a statement⁴ opposing censorship and pointing out that libraries are not obliged to remove the book from their shelves; rather, it must simply not be accessible to minors.

³ Association des Bibliothécaires de France. Mode d'emploi de la loi Robert sur les bibliothèques territoriales, octobre 2022. <https://www.abf.asso.fr/6/46/984/ABF/mode-d-emploi-de-la-loi-robert-sur-les-bibliotheques-territoriales>

⁴ "L'Association des bibliothécaires de France était, est et sera toujours farouchement opposée à la censure", 20 juillet 2023. <https://www.abf.asso.fr/1/22/1041/ABF/-communique-lassociation-des-bibliothe-caires-de-france-etait-est-et-sera-toujours-farouchement-opposee-a-la-censure-#:~:text=Un%20arr%C3%AAt%C3%A9%20%C3%A9manant%20du%20minist%C3%A8re,maison%20d'%C3%A9dition%20Thierry%20Magnier.>

Some libraries have chosen to take the fight even further. The librarians at Rezé (near Nantes) have set up a table of books censored in France and elsewhere (including *Harry Potter*), and announced that they will be buying more books from L'Ardeur.

Authors have also spoken out in support of Manu Causse. For example, Nicolas Mathieu, author of *Leurs enfants après eux* (Prix Goncourt, 2019) launched the hashtag #wheniwas15 on social networks on July 20, urging his followers to recount memories of their first sexual emotions, as a reminder that, "at 15, we love and desire like crazy." He received and relayed over 3,000 replies⁵.

In the immediate aftermath, the Syndicat national de l'édition, questioning "the coherence and effectiveness of rules defined nearly 75 years ago," called for a re-evaluation of the 1949 law⁶.

In September, the hustle and bustle has died down a little, with the start of the new literary season and its 450 or so new novels. However, the debate is far from over: Manu Causse's title, as is typical in the market whenever a book is subject to censorship, saw its sales rise by over 600% in the week following the government's decree, and librarians, armed with the new Library Act, remain more vigilant than ever before.

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Banned books exhibitions in Norway

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Lillestrømsbibliotekene, Strømmen, Norway

Perhaps you think when you hear the term "forbidden books" that it is something that belongs to the past, but unfortunately, that is not the case. Even in 2023, books are being challenged, taken away from libraries, schools, and school libraries and even banned or censored in many countries. Stavanger is a free city, so we welcome writers, journalists and others who are persecuted and threatened because of their expressions. Since 1996, 13 writers, musicians and artists from various countries around the world have found a safe haven in Stavanger.

The International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN) is an independent organisation of cities and regions offering shelter to writers and artists at risk, advancing freedom of expression, defending democratic values and promoting international solidarity. The administration of ICORN is located in Sølvsberget public library. It is therefore very natural for the library to

⁵ Debré, Ondine, "La fronde anticensure de Nicolas Mathieu sur Instagram", 02 août 2023. https://www.lemonde.fr/m-le-mag/article/2023/08/02/sur-instagram-la-fronde-anti-censure-de-nicolas-mathieu_6184262_4500055.html

⁶ Le Syndicat national de l'édition demande une évaluation de la loi du 16 juillet 1949. <https://www.sne.fr/actu/le-syndicat-national-de-ledition-demande-une-evaluation-de-la-loi-du-16-juillet-1949/>

work with freedom of expression, whether it concerns events with the artists, new publications, letting everyone have their say, having debates, or creating exhibitions with different themes. In our children's library we often have exhibitions of American banned books. These exhibitions are centrally located in the library so that everyone who enters can see them. They often have an explanation of why they have been banned on them.



Children's library in Sølvberget public library

We have also had exhibitions where we have asked the public which book they would banned. They then had to find the book in the library and give an explanation as to why.



Exhibition at Madla library, Stavanger, Norway

In addition to exhibitions, we also have articles on our website where we write about which books have been banned in Norway in the past. All the books have links so people can borrow them.

Very recently, we experienced a new example in Norway of people wanting to ban books. (<https://www.tv2.no/nyheter/innenriks/reagerer-pa-barnebok-det-er-helt-uhort/16001873/>) On the occasion of both the crown prince and crown princess of Norway turning 50, Oslo municipality gave a book to be distributed to primary school students in fourth to seventh grade in Oslo. The book is about a school class who wants to take action to ensure that the forest they play in is not going to be a parking lot. The theme of this book is the climate and children fighting to be heard.

The party leader of the People's Party and a member of the city council in Oslo municipality reacts to several things in the book, including a character kicking a fossil fuel-dependent car. She believes that the book shows how children can take action by making dents in cars. The People's Party now demands that the book be taken out of school. They believe it is right that children learn about climate and the environment at school, but with a different focus. Mayor of Oslo, Marianne Borgen, tells TV2 (news channel) that the book has been well received by primary schools around the city. She feels that climate is something that children are very interested in, and that they are not too young to read about it. "So we are not going to withdraw the book from the school, it will just be nonsense," says Borgen.

Sometimes I feel like the ghost at the feast

Why Banned Books Week matters in UK school libraries

Alice Leggatt

Librarian and Library Manager, London, England

In October 2021 I had been in my first post as a school librarian at an all-boys Catholic school in Surrey for seven months. Library lessons were newly introduced and I kicked them off with a look at Banned Books Week. The students were interested, laughing in disbelief at the puritanical zeal with which their

childhood favourite *Captain Underpants* had been banned for 'offensive language'. Class after class voted that *they* and their trusted adults should be the ones to choose what reading was suitable for them. Both the students and I treated the week as something of a novelty, a chance to view an alien practice from the security of our own cosy, liberal space, complete with fake chains draped across the bookshelves.

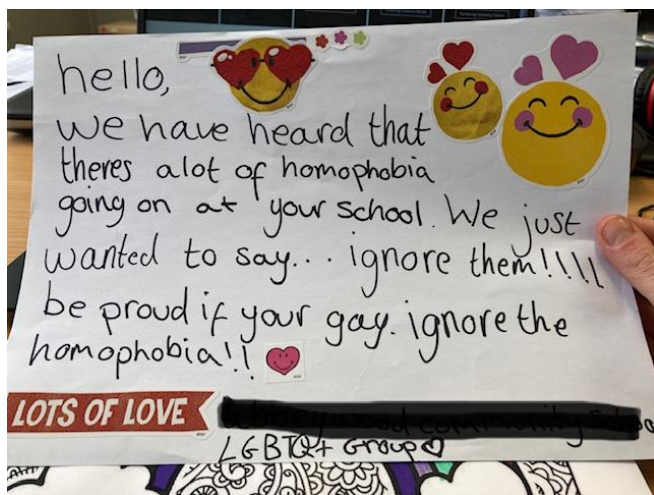
We were, sadly, naive. By the following March, the school and I were embroiled in a full-blown and very public book challenge.

The short story (you can google the long one) is that I booked the author Simon James Green to visit us for World Book Day; I booked him because his books are funny and my students liked them, not because they feature LGBTQ+ characters and themes, although this was not a problem for the school, who enthusiastically signed off on the visit. A week before Simon was due to arrive an article appeared on a far-right blog, decrying the visit as dangerous to the minds of 'developing boys' and suggesting that it could lead them in to a 'sordid lifestyle'. The diocese in control of the school seemed to panic and demand that we cancel, the school refused (arguing that the author had visited many other faith schools with no issue), the diocese responded by firing the entire school governing body, the press were tipped off, new governors demanded the removal of Simon's books from the library shelves, staff and students protested and, when mediation between teaching unions and the diocese failed, seventy members of staff went on strike for six days. Eventually, it was agreed that, in lieu of the visit, the school would host a 'diversity week'. Thankfully the school started to move on, but I couldn't. I stayed positive for as long as I could, but it became clear that I couldn't work within the murky boundaries I'd been left with - if *this* book (say *His Dark Materials*, which is anti-organised religion) was okay, but *this* one (which feature a kiss between two boys) wasn't, how could I ever feel confident? I moved to a new school.



Protest sign from strike

At the time, all was chaos and, frankly, trauma. However, with hindsight I am interested in the similarities between what happened to my school library in leafy Surrey and what I have come to think of as 'American-style' book banning attempts. As in the US, the initial 'concern' came from an organisation not remotely connected to my school in any way (the blog was in fact hosted in a different country, and it is still a mystery as to how they came to hear of the event in the first place). The language used was immediately hyperbolic and designed to instil fear – our decision to book a respected author was worse than the war in Ukraine, apparently. The word 'groomer' appeared frequently (please note, if I could groom students to do anything, it would be to stop eating so many of the Dungeons & Dragons club biscuits). Comments online were personal and hateful and, as in the US, the reasons for the banning mutated as time went on. First it was sexual language, then safety, then blasphemy. Quotes from the books were taken out of context so that they became a grotesque parody of themselves, with a scene depicting homophobic bullying cut down so brutally that it seemed to represent a sexual proposition instead. Social media succeeded in amplifying a small number of voices so that they were louder than the more numerous but quieter, moderate ones.



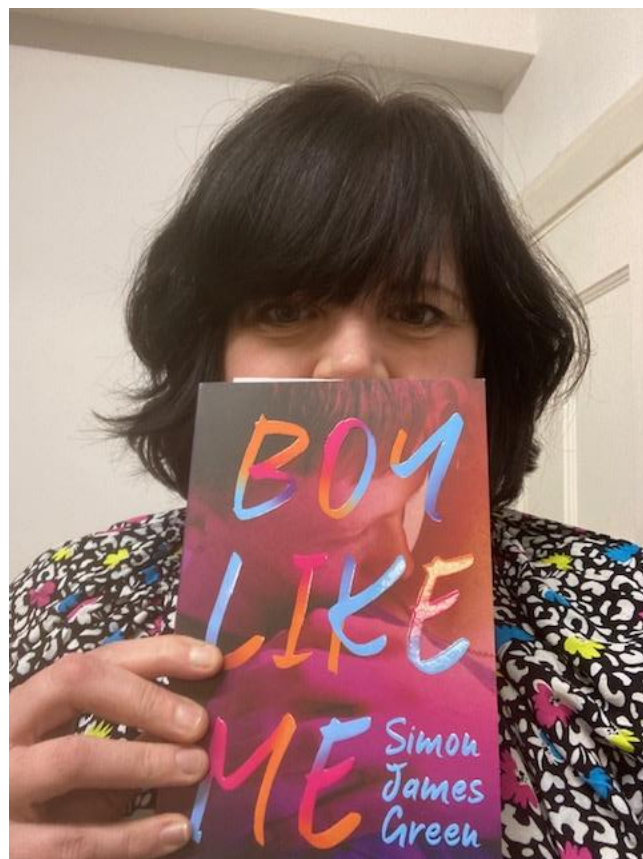
Supportive message

It took me a long time to accept that the horror stories I had read of book banning attempts in other countries had actually happened to me, to my lovely school, in the UK. Other UK school librarians I speak to are shocked too, but then they often go on to tell me that actually, a similar thing *nearly* happened at their school, or at a colleague's school, but leadership hushed it up and they just hid the offending book under their desk. Worryingly, many also tell me that they avoid this issue by restricting which students can read books with certain themes.

Once the dust had settled on my experience I decided that I should perhaps start speaking about it. I wanted to make sure that no other UK librarian found themselves in my position. I was concerned that, despite the excellent support I received from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals School Library Group (CILIP SLG) and the School Library Association (SLA), there was currently no specific training being offered on how to defend intellectual freedom in school libraries, and so together we worked to create a series of webinars and resources devoted to the issue, along with advice on how to create robust library policies. While I sometimes feel like the ghost at the feast, scaring librarians with my tales of strikes and fired governors, I think it is important to keep talking, because if we don't, we risk being unprepared.

This year I will once again be talking about Banned Books Week to the students in my new school, with Simon's books added to the 'banned' display that sadly grows year on year. Obviously I will not tell them the details of my experience, but I will let them know that

the UK is not (as I once naively assumed) immune from book challenges. I want them to know that their legal right to intellectual freedom is important, and worth fighting for.



P.s. Simon has since published *Boy Like Me*, a story set during Section 28 of two boys who fall in love through the pages of a forbidden library book. It's great.

Intellectual freedom and censorship

Creating awareness among Kenyan school students

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Banned books remains a center of controversial topics in Kenya and a taboo to speak about. The lack of school libraries is a major contributing factor to the lack of awareness on censorship among school-going children. While *Banned Books Week* is normally commemorated in several university libraries within Kenya, it is also

necessary to create awareness about intellectual freedom and censorship-related issues for younger students in primary and high schools. This short paper aims to describe strategies that are in place or can be implemented in Kenyan schools to create awareness among students about these topics.

Introduction

The need for libraries, especially in institutions of learning cannot be overemphasized. The provision of diverse resources remains central to libraries' programs and services and for the enhancement of knowledge among library users. Intellectual freedom, which means "the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction" (Jones, 2015, p. 3) is a core principle in librarianship which should be embedded in the school librarian's practice. The taboo nature of speaking on controversial topics especially in Kenyan schools emanates mostly from the belief that certain topics or issues do not abide by Christian principles. Christianity is the major religion in Kenya (Droz & Gez, 2021) and therefore resources or discussions on issues controversial to Christianity are not to be included in any aspect of schools. There is a fear especially among parents that the students are not mature enough to comprehend controversial topics and that if students gain knowledge and information on topics which are foreign to their own practices and beliefs, the students are likely to be easily swayed to subscribe to foreign principles.

Creating awareness on intellectual freedom among students.

One of the strategies that schools can use to create awareness on issues related to censorship and promote intellectual freedom is through cultural exchange programs facilitated by school administrators. For schools that have functioning libraries, librarians should be involved in facilitating these programs. Apart from incorporating diverse resources into the library's collection, school librarians with the support of their schools, should seek to invite guests from different cultures beyond the Kenyan borders to interact and have discussions with students on various issues related to the different cultures. Since libraries are considered as safe spaces for receiving and gathering information (Wexelbaum, 2016), controversial topics may be among

the issues for discussion during the interactions. The cultural exchange program should not aim at influencing students to adopt the practices and belief systems of other cultures, but rather the goal should be to exchange ideas, create awareness, and impart knowledge about other people and cultures, whether they are similar or different. Kenya alone has over 40 tribes who have different cultural practices and beliefs, but cultural awareness should not be limited to the Kenyan tribes. Even though information about other cultures may be acquired from books and other library resources, having a lived experience perspective is integral to knowledge acquisition—hence the need for having guests from around the world. Knowledge Empowering Youth Kenya (KEY-Kenya) is a charity based in Kenya, whose mission is to provide fully functioning school libraries. In addition, the charity continuously invites guests from all over the world who interact with students where knowledge and cultural experiences are exchanged. The charity also offers opportunities for volunteers who want to visit different school libraries within the country (Knowledge Empowering Youth, n.d). The exchange of information and knowledge that happens freely in the program, from diverse viewpoints between students and guests, promotes intellectual freedom.



Knowledge Empowering Youth (KEY) staff at the ALA conference talking about volunteer opportunities in Kenyan school libraries.

Apart from promoting literacy among students, storytelling (Agosto, 2016) and reading (Lafferty, 2014) have been used by schools in different parts of the world to promote intellectual freedom among students. Through stories, students can relate to and engage emotionally with the subjects of a story. The issues related to censorship may be complex to the youngest students, and therefore adult story tellers should

identify age-appropriate approaches to introduce these concepts to the students. The sessions can be held during the academic calendar or when the students are on school break. Having a large audience provides an opportunity for diverse voices and perspectives on controversial issues.



Children in a library story telling session.

Conclusion

Creating awareness on issues related to intellectual freedom and censorship should be a continuous and inclusive process to promote the fundamental right of access to information. Partnerships and collaborations with other like-minded organizations should also be a step to ensure that school librarians do not have to work alone in the fight against censorship. School libraries will continue to experience challenges as they strive to ensure access to diverse resources that promote intellectual freedom and therefore the strategies will continue to evolve.

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The following article is in **Spanish** – one of the seven official languages of IFLA. An **English** version follows.

Páginas de controversia

La acción de prohibir libros en los Estados Unidos y su impacto en creadores BIPOC

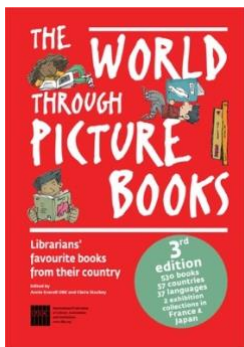
Ludy Rueda

Bibliotecaria de servicios para niños y adolescentes, Bibliotecas Poudre, United States

A lo largo de la historia de los Estados Unidos, la literatura ha sido una poderosa herramienta para la expresión de ideas y la difusión de perspectivas diversas. Sin embargo, la resistencia y prohibición a libros diversos en las bibliotecas y planes de estudios escolares registró cifras record en 2022.

La Asociación Americana de Bibliotecas (ALA por sus siglas en inglés) define un libro prohibido como un libro que ha sido retirado de las estanterías de una biblioteca, librería o salón de clases debido a su contenido "controvertido". Un desafío a un libro es "un intent de eliminar o restringir materiales, basándose en las objeciones de una persona o grupo". La prohibición y desafío a libros ocurren a nivel local y nacional revelando una problemática persistente en la sociedad estadounidense.

Esta resistencia se traduce en intentos de prohibir o desafiar libros, lo que tiene un impacto significativo en la educación, así como en los autores e ilustradores BIPOC (negros, indígenas y personas de color por sus siglas en inglés) quienes buscan compartir sus historias únicas y a menudo se encuentran en el centro de estas



controversias. Sus obras, que con frecuencia abordan temas de identidad, diversidad cultural y experiencias personales, son vistas por algunos como amenazantes o inapropiadas. Esta situación no solo limita la oportunidad de estos creadores de dar voz a sus comunidades,

sino que también perpetúa la marginalización de las voces no blancas en el mundo editorial. Cuando sus libros son prohibidos o desafiados, se les niega la oportunidad de compartir sus historias únicas y contribuir a la diversidad literaria que tanto necesitamos. Para los autores e ilustradores BIPOC, crear libros que reflejen sus propias experiencias y culturas no es solo un esfuerzo artístico, sino una forma de amplificar voces y narrativas subrepresentadas.

La literatura infantil desempeña un papel crucial en la formación de las mentes jóvenes y en la promoción de la empatía y la comprensión. Los libros que presentan personajes y perspectivas diversas brindan a los niños la oportunidad de ver el mundo desde diferentes puntos de vista, fomentando un sentido de inclusión y aceptación.

La prohibición de libros que abordan temas de equidad, diversidad e inclusión tiene consecuencias de largo alcance que van más allá de la simple censura. La literatura diversa es esencial para el desarrollo de mentes curiosas y abiertas. Los libros son una ventana al mundo, y al eliminar ciertas perspectivas, se envía un mensaje negativo de que algunas voces no son bienvenidas o deben ser silenciadas.

A pesar de los desafíos que enfrenta la literatura en Estados Unidos, también es importante reconocer los avances significativos que se han logrado en las últimas décadas. Muchos autores e ilustradores BIPOC han ganado reconocimiento a nivel nacional e internacional y premios por sus obras, tal como se destaca en el catálogo de El mundo a través de los libros ilustrados (<https://www.ifla.org/g/libraries-for-children-and-ya/the-world-through-picture-books/>), un proyecto de la Sección de bibliotecas para niños y jóvenes de la IFLA (Federación Internacional de Bibliotecas y Asociaciones, por sus siglas en inglés). Además, cabe hacer mención que muchas organizaciones, educadores,

bibliotecarios, estudiantes y ciudadanos comprometidos, han trabajado arduamente para promover la equidad, la inclusión y la diversidad en las bibliotecas y las aulas.

La lucha contra la prohibición de libros sigue en curso, pero también es una lucha por el derecho que Estados Unidos atesora orgullosamente: la libertad de expresión. Para avanzar hacia una sociedad más inclusiva y equitativa, es esencial defender la libertad de expresión y la diversidad literaria. Los libros diversos son una herramienta poderosa para promover la comprensión y la tolerancia, y debemos asegurarnos de que estén disponibles para todos los lectores. Al hacerlo, estamos construyendo un futuro en el que todas las voces son valoradas y todas las perspectivas son escuchadas.

English version of the previous article

Banning Books in the United States and Its Impact on BIPOC Creators

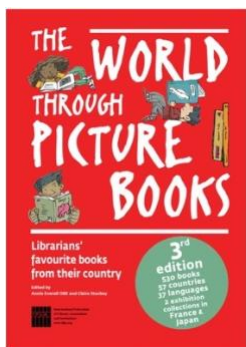
Ludy Rueda

Children and Teens' Services Outreach Librarian, Poudre Libraries, United States

Throughout the history of the United States, literature has been a powerful tool for the expression of ideas and the dissemination of diverse perspectives. However, resistance to diverse books in libraries and school curricula reached record numbers in 2022.

The American Library Association (ALA) defines a banned book as a book that has been removed from library shelves, bookstores, or classrooms due to its "controversial" content. A challenge "is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group". Books are currently being banned and challenged from the local to national level, revealing a persistent issue in the American society.

This resistance translates into attempts to ban or challenge books, which has a significant impact on education, as well as on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) authors and illustrators who seek to share their unique stories and often find themselves at the center of these controversies. Their work, which frequently address themes of identity, cultural diversity,



and personal experiences, are seen by some as threatening or inappropriate. This situation not only limits the opportunity for these creators to give voice to their communities but also perpetuates the marginalization of non-white voices in the publishing world. When their

books are banned or challenged, they are denied the opportunity to share their unique stories and contribute to the literary diversity we so desperately need. For BIPOC authors and illustrators, creating books that reflect their own experiences and cultures is not just an artistic endeavor but a way to amplify underrepresented voices and narratives.

Children's literature plays a crucial role in shaping young minds and promoting empathy and understanding. Books featuring diverse characters and perspectives give children the opportunity to see the world from different viewpoints, fostering a sense of inclusion and acceptance. Banning books that address equity, diversity, and inclusion has far-reaching consequences beyond just censorship. Diverse literature is essential for the development of curious and open minds. Books are windows to the world, and by removing certain perspectives, a negative message is sent that some voices are unwelcome or must be silenced.

Despite the challenges that literature faces in the United States, it is also important to acknowledge the significant progress made in recent decades. Many BIPOC authors and illustrators have gained national and international recognition and awards for their works, as highlighted in the catalogue *The World Through Picture Books* (<https://www.ifla.org/g/libraries-for-children-and-ya/the-world-through-picture-books/>), a project of the Libraries for Children and Young Adults Section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that many organizations, educators, librarians, students, and committed citizens have worked tirelessly to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity in libraries and classrooms.

The fight against banning books is ongoing, but it is also a fight for the right that the United States proudly cherishes: freedom of expression. To move toward a more inclusive and equitable society, it is essential to uphold freedom of expression and literary diversity. Diverse books are a powerful tool to promote understanding and tolerance, and we must ensure they are available to all readers. In doing so, we are building a future where all voices are valued, and all perspectives are heard.

Un-Banning Books, Perspectives, Identities, and Knowledge

Arjun Sabharwal

Digital Initiatives Librarian, University of Toledo, United States

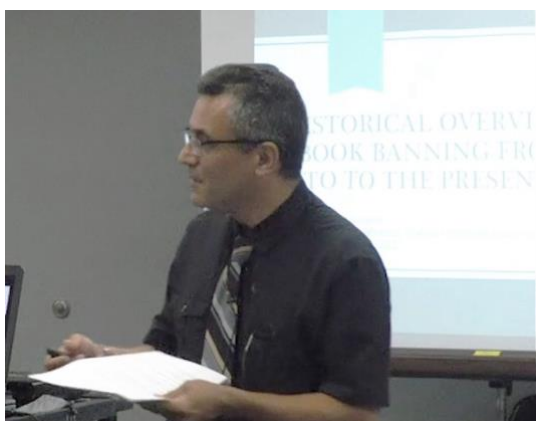
The University of Toledo Banned Books Coalition held its 25th Banned Books vigil in 2022—an important milestone in advocating for such rights under the First Amendment in the United States Constitution as the “freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” For students, scholars, educators, artists, librarians, journalists, and many others promoting a civil society, these rights should guarantee freedoms to: select books for purposes of teaching, critical thinking, and self-expression; publish news and knowledge in multimodal channels; and publish works of scholarship, art, and literature without fear of reprisals and persecution. Over the past decades, freedoms non-existent in totalitarian systems have become targets in self-described democracies, and the Banned Books movement launched in 1982 was in response to that in the US.



The 2013 Banned Books Vigil held in Carlson Library

The Banned Books vigils at The University of Toledo are scheduled around the American Library Association's

Banned Books Week, engaging educators, librarians, students, and community members. The events feature scholars, students, and artists invited to present on book banning and its deleterious consequences throughout history and in the present. The talks focus on cultural and political agendas behind banning, which affect targeted and underrepresented communities, women, prisoners, journalists, libraries, artists, and more; thus, these vigils are not just about banning books but also the knowledge, identity, and perspectives presented within. Q&As and discussions follow each presentation punctuated with door prize giveaways, raffles, a Jeopardy event, musical performances, free food, laughter, and extra credit for attendance. The audience represents a diverse and multigenerational cross-section of the university community. Dr. Paulette Kilmer, Professor of Communication, has been the principal energetic organizer and a true mover and shaker with an enthusiastic coalition to assist her in the process. Several academic units (e.g., Honors College, Health and Human Services, and University Libraries) have graciously offered their rooms to hold the event. The event would not have been possible without the generous support of Campus Friends including individuals, offices, and organizations within and outside the university. The event has regularly attracted local news channels attending and recording all or a part of the event, and interviewing members of the coalition and featured speakers. For the past three years, the Office of the Mayor of Toledo has issued proclamations recognizing the event as “Banned Books Day.”



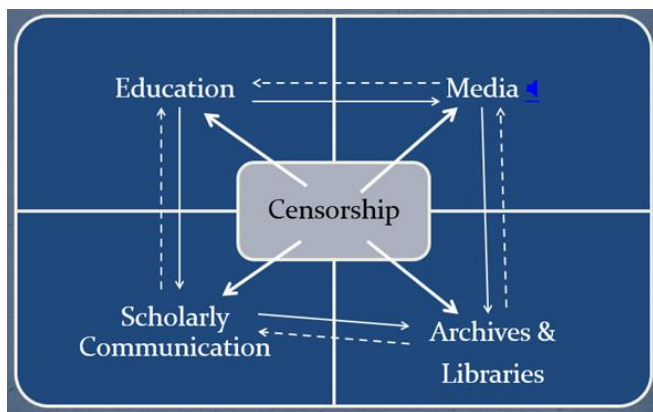
Arjun Sabharwal Presenting at the 2014 Banned Books Vigil.

While I value the opportunity to provide service to the university community also, I had personal and intellectual motivations for joining this coalition in 2010 and have presented four times on several topics related to censorship. I have participated in planning

these events and have overseen the setup and technology support were available at the event locations and contacted the presenters for their files. The COVID-19 restrictions have forced us to explore multicast streaming options using Zoom, Amazon Web Services, Facebook, and YouTube. I received a lot of assistance from Dr. Ali Imami (member of the Coalition) to configure and monitor this setup for two consecutive years, but we were fortunate to offer a hybrid (physical and virtual) solution for the 25th annual event in 2022. I used Webex to record the 2022 presentations and (with the written consent of speakers) uploaded edited videos to YouTube, which has become the video archive.

My personal and intellectual motivations for participating are interrelated. Having defected from Hungary in 1983 with my family, various experiences with censorship have shaped my views on Banned Books. In Hungary, I followed news of police raids of underground presses, authorities censoring rock songs with political messages critical of the socialist/communist system, blacklisting (or imprisoning) authors and artists, and blocking scholarly and creative works in contradiction with official positions from publication or performance. Although I was too young then to have created or authored works earning official disapproval (or worse) it would have been just a matter of time if I had embarked on the path of underground work.

The censorship model I used in my 2014 presentation (below) joins education, media, archives and libraries, and scholarly communication into a model detailing the pervasive influence of censorship and consequences. There are more elaborate models (integrating Law, Political Science, and Public Administration) in relation to censorship research; this one focuses on the effects of censorship in four closely related areas: education, media, archives and libraries, and scholarly communication. The effect on these areas can be more severe in autocratic political systems while democratic mitigation may be possible in more liberated societies currently feeling politically and ideologically motivated challenges positioned at the center of the model.



Censorship Model (Sabharwal, 2014)

In this model, effects of laws on Education would be in the areas of curriculum, forcing educators to include and exclude critical (or even factually sound) materials from the curriculum. The implications for higher education may, therefore, be reflected in the range of research topics explored (or dissuaded) in colleges and universities and the range of materials covered (and researched) by professors. Archives and libraries, in turn, will be limited in their ability to acquire other than officially approved materials and future readers will not have access to banned material due to official edicts and challenges. This will affect memory since archival collections will not contain certain records in the future due to lack of records created or contributed due to fear of retaliation or disciplining. While the solid arrows represent definite effects, the dashed arrows imply probable ones. With censorship shaping each of these areas to varying extents, it only takes time for these areas to show effects of censorship. While it is impossible to change the world outside our personal reach, it is in our power as educators, community leaders, journalists, and others to raise awareness of such trends and keep the effects of censorship as minimal as possible. For me, it was this activity that allowed me to do what I could to speak up against censorship.

The Need for Children's & Young Adult Historical Literature

Lori Thomas
Educator, United States

As of 2023, we have seen important historical literature disappearing from children's and young adult library

shelves due to biases and misconceptions related to the content of these texts. Book banning or censorship of literary texts narrows the scope of where children receive access to information and restricts intellectual freedom. In just a one-year period from mid-2021 to mid-2022, approximately 2,000 books were banned in the United States, with the majority of those books including LGBTQIA+ themes or people of color as the central protagonists (Hikida, Hoffman, & Scanlon, 2023), indicating that intellectual freedom, particularly for children and adolescents, has become a political and ideological battleground.

According to Liou and Cutler (2023), "books targeted for censorship are often not read and interpreted accurately by complainants and district personnel prior to removal decisions being made" (p. 47). Book banning or censorship of texts that are believed to be inappropriate for children and adolescents can be motivated by various political, religious, social, or other reasons (Johnson, 2022). Due to these different ideologies, many of the books that are frequently challenged deal with issues surrounding race, gender, sexual orientation, family composition, or gender identities. As a result of frequent challenges of the materials included on reading lists or as part of a literature curriculum, educators, librarians, and other information professionals must be prepared to face criticism of their selections and recognize that in the face of these challenges, "diverse voices may be silenced, and real-world issues avoided" (Sachdeva, Kimmel, & Chérres, 2023, p. 30).



One literary genre that has faced its share of criticism and calls for censorship is historical fiction. As a genre, historical fiction "contains fictional characters in documented historical situations, or real historical figures in imagined situations, or fictional characters occupying fictional situations in the context of a real

historical period” (Beckett, 2022, p. 35). Due to its inclusion of these historical figures and situations, historical fiction often confronts sensitive subjects that must be examined to provide students with knowledge of where we have been and where we are going in the development of our country and the world. Unfortunately, historical fiction, which “has the power to remind and remember, to empower the marginalised [*sic*] and to challenge established modes of thinking and, ultimately, generate new ideas about our present, and our future, as a nation” (Beckett, 2022, p. 38), has faced significant challenges as educators seek to keep these texts in the hands of their students.

While historical fiction should not be a substitute for textbooks or primary sources that allow students to engage with the facts associated with historical figures or events, rather, it should serve as a supplement to encourage young readers to place themselves within a historical context and more critically examine issues of class, gender, or identity that might be lacking within a didactic survey of a topic. Historical fiction should not be accepted or introduced as facts but rather as a way to provide additional context and perspective to discussions of history.

Because of the historical setting, children and adolescents are able to engage with issues in their specific contexts while remaining separated from them through the boundaries of fiction. Historical fiction allows students the opportunity to explore “the extremes of human behaviour which ‘has strong appeal to children who are beginning to understand the complexity of human motivation and behaviour and seek to understand their own capacity for both good and evil’” (Beckett, 2022, p. 38). Rather than shutting students off from these texts, educators, librarians, and other promoters of literacy must foster dialogue about these texts and allow students the space to develop a deeper understanding of the critical issues shaping their world. Historical literature provides an opportunity to engage with material that has the potential to encourage an enjoyment of the study of history and exploration of the complexities of the human experience.



As Liou and Cutler (2023) remind us, “Literacy is a practice of freedom. It shapes our ability to critically question, assess, and respond to texts and information” (p. 45). It is the responsibility of librarians, educators, and other information professionals to ensure that children and adolescents have the opportunity to engage with a variety of texts, including those that challenge their worldview, beliefs, and overall assumptions of complex issues and situations. Banning books related to historical literature has and will continue to stunt the intellectual growth of children and young adults who need to understand the complexity of a dynamic and rapidly changing world while considering the context of the past.

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Lori Thomas is an educator with over twenty years of teaching experience. She is a scholar of historical information and literature. Lori is an adjunct instructor at Indiana University Indianapolis and Ivy Tech Community College.



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