

Challenged Books @ Your Library

Managing & Addressing Censorship Attempts

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Public Instruction
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Introduction to the Issue

- The number of participants speaks volumes
- The reasons vary
- The number of challenges in the past year is unprecedented



Learning Objectives

- Keep challenged books on shelves
- How CCBC and ALA support libraries during a challenge
- Where to find collection policies
- ALA Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement



The Issue: Why Are Books Challenged?

- Juvenile Materials
- Sexually Explicit
- Offensive Language
- Violence
- Diverse Content



The Issue: Book Challenges Today

- **Social Conflict**
- **Pandemic Tensions**
- **Political polarization**
- **Cancel culture**



The Issue: Another Influence

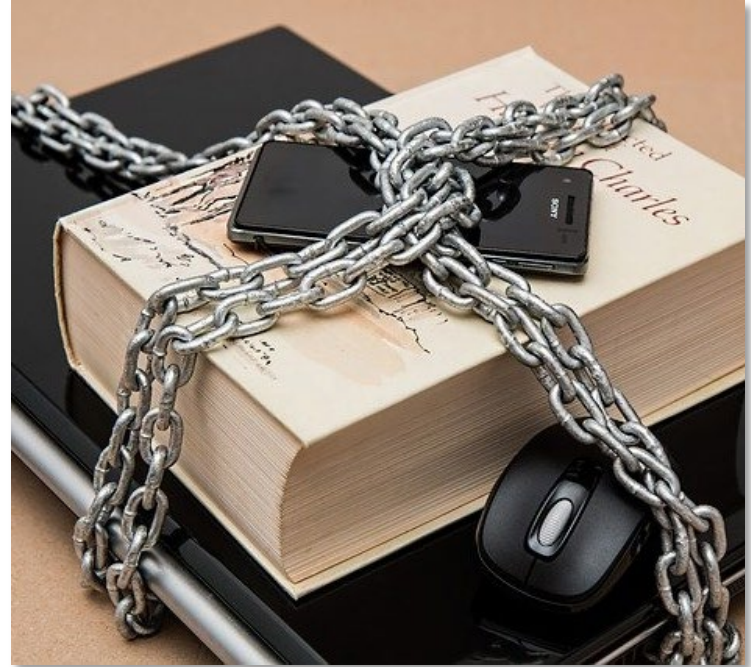
The demise of local news poses the kind of danger to our democracy that should have alarm sirens screeching across the land.

— Margaret Sullivan, media columnist for
The Washington Post



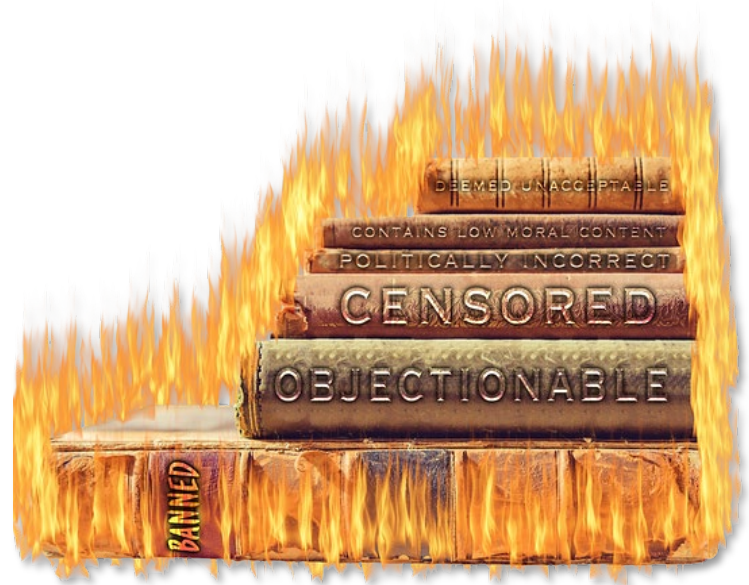
Reconsideration Process: Informal

- An individual identifies an offensive item
- Individual expresses *informal* complaint to someone they associate w/the library
- An exchange happens, and the individual is either satisfied or dissatisfied
- Complaint progresses until resolved or becomes a *formal* request for reconsideration



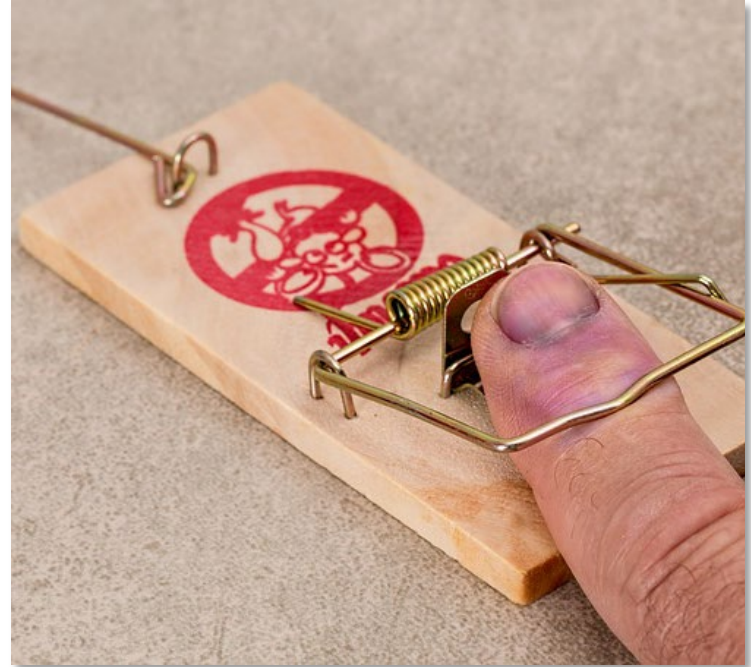
Reconsideration Process: Formal

- Reconsideration form submitted
- Review of the material takes place
- Ruling is made
- Appeal may take place
- Final ruling is made



Why Challenges Go Awry

- Policy +/- procedure is not followed
- Caught off guard
- Frightened
- Baited
- Rogue actions



Be Proactive: A Strong Policy

- Includes elements such as the library's mission, support for intellectual freedom, selection and weeding, and reconsideration (among others)
- Pass the [four-prong test of a legally defensible policy](#)
- Board and staff understand and know it well
- Review frequently, and revise as necessary



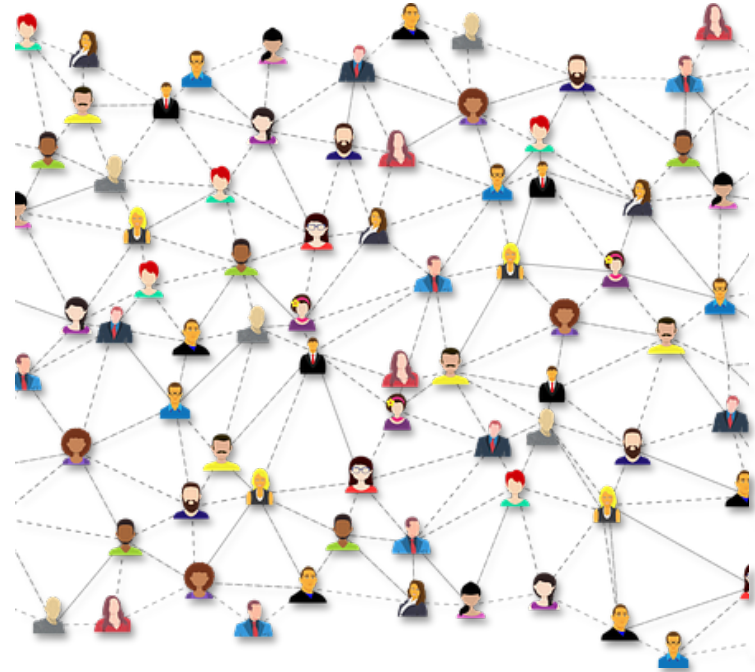
Be Proactive: A Well Rehearsed Procedure

- Develop a rehearsed speech
- Create talking points for staff and the board
- Role play, conduct drills
- Continued education and training that guarantees a calm, systematic response



Be Proactive: Build & Utilize Relationships

- Connect with allies
- Talk to service organizations
- Educate the public
- Inform your municipality



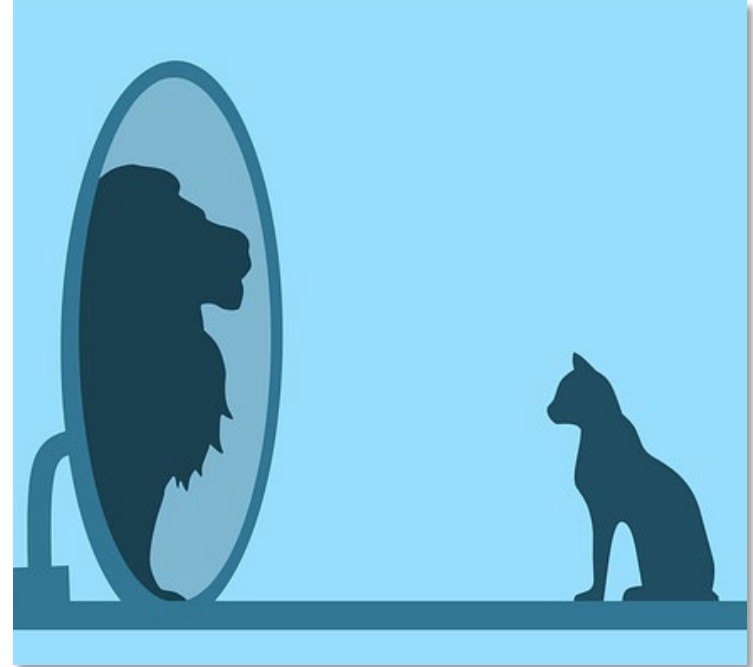
The Library's Response

- Stay calm
- Listen closely, respectfully
- Remain factual and unbiased
- Do not assume anything will remain private or off-record



The Library's Response

- Acknowledge their concern and right to express it
- Take the high road
- Stick to your policy & procedure
- Report challenges to [CCBC](#) +/- [ALA](#)



Tackling Different Types of Challenges

- LGBTQIA+ challenges?
- CRT/BLM/Diversity challenges?
- Trustee with a challenge?
- Coordinated/public efforts?



Sources

- [ALA Library Bill of Rights](#)
- [ALA Freedom to Read Statement](#)
- <https://bookriot.com/censorship-news-12-3-21/>
- <https://bookriot.com/book-censorship-news-12-10-21/>
- <https://bookriot.com/how-to-fight-book-bans-and-challenges/>
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/interactive/2021/local-news-deserts-expanding/?utm_source=pocket&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=pockethits
- All images found on [Pixabay.com](#)

Support & Resources

- [CCBC](#) - Assists Wisconsin librarians & teachers facing challenges
- ALA - [Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit](#); [How to Respond to Challenges and Concerns about Library Resources](#), [Intellectual Freedom Manual, 10th Ed.](#)
- [Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion](#) (Thompson, Jenkins)
- Monica.Treptow@dpi.wi.gov, DPI Consultant for School Libraries
- Shannon.Schultz@dpi.wi.gov, DPI Consultant for Public Libraries

Questions?

Thank You!



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