



Intellectual Freedom Committee

Oregon Library Association

May 2024

Welcome to Tuesday Topics, a monthly series covering topics with intellectual freedom implications for libraries of all types. Each message is prepared by a member of OLA's Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) or a guest writer. Questions can be directed to the author of the topic or to the IFC.

Intellectual Freedom Champion Award Winners 2024

With great excitement, the IFC would like to share this year's Intellectual Freedom Champion Award winners. We are thrilled to announce two deserving recipients of this award:

Miranda Doyle: In recognition of years of service and dedication with the IFC including a role as IF Representative for the Oregon Association of School Libraries, and extensive support given to library staff across Oregon as they navigated intellectual freedom situations.

Darin Stewart: In recognition of devotion to supporting intellectual freedom through the founding of the nonprofit, Parents Defending Schools and Libraries (PDSAL), giving voice to the parents and students across Oregon who stand for free and open access to information.

Miranda Doyle – Award Presented by Marie Felgentrager

On Wednesday, October 13, 2021, students had just returned to the Roseburg High School campus, post pandemic. We were all learning how to navigate this new world and were, quite frankly, a bit fragile. On that particular morning, the annual day of student testing, I stood in the library, overlooking a very crowded space, with students in nearly all of the available seats, awaiting their testing instructions. The first phone call

came early, before the test commenced. There are no private spaces in our open-concept library. Students, nervously shifting in their chairs, could easily overhear the screaming voice on the other end of the line: “I have called the sheriff and he is going to arrest you, you promoter of porn!” the caller screeched. And thus, our library joined the ranks of too, too many others. We faced a social media maelstrom and an intense, organized campaign calling for the immediate removal of a popular book that had resided peacefully on our shelf for over five years.

The phone calls and emails continued, often threatening. I was alerted that I had become a target on social media, my contact information made public. My union president advised me to seek restraining orders against the more vocal, belligerent individuals. During the days that followed, I felt terrified, anxious, suspicious, and alone. Every time the phone rang, my stomach sank. I had countless meetings with administrators as we navigated policies, processes, and procedures. Exhaustion and adrenaline were locked in constant battle. I knew I was supposed to report the challenge to the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse and did so immediately. And then, popping up in my email a short time later, a harbinger of hope: a message from Miranda Doyle, OASL Intellectual Freedom Representative.

Already well-respected in Oregon school librarian circles, the name “Miranda Doyle” was synonymous with action as well as kindness. Her simple email note stating, “Do you need help?” ushered in an era of support, consultation, and mentorship. Miranda provided resources and advice. She allowed her name to be published in an editorial speaking on the issue for *The Oregonian* at a time when it was unsafe for me to do so. I will always be thankful for Miranda.

For nine years, Miranda served the Oregon Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee as the OASL Intellectual Freedom Representative. During this time, Miranda assisted countless others in similar predicaments. Her energy, knowledge, and passion for intellectual freedom were a beacon of sanity in tumultuous times. Miranda’s decision to vacate the OASL Intellectual Freedom Representative role to take on new challenges was met with great sorrow. No one can truly replace this dynamic individual. Her role on the committee has been instrumental in aiding Oregonians, and her absence will be deeply felt. Miranda’s calm demeanor deescalated fraught censorship situations; her clarity and intelligence helped others comprehend the importance of First Amendment rights. Miranda remains a paramount professional, an expert in her field. Always willing to answer questions, offer ideas, lead presentations and conference sessions, Miranda demonstrates an innate ability to balance her talents. Her skills are unparalleled. She leads with efficacy and is inclusive in collaboration.

Miranda literally runs marathons! Her energy and stamina are admirable. In everything she does, Miranda gives her full attention. For those of you who have had the opportunity to work with her, benefit from her assistance, or attend one of her presentations, you know that Miranda does everything with quiet expertise. She epitomizes the highest of executive standards. We wish Miranda only the best as she continues adventuring, running, leading, collaborating, and guiding others in her future endeavors.

It is with great joy that we recognize Miranda Doyle with the Intellectual Freedom Champion Award for 2023!

Darin Stewart – Award Presented by Emily O’Neal

The first time the name Darin Stewart came up with the Intellectual Freedom Committee was in April of 2022. He reached out to, of all people, Miranda Doyle – our other IF Champion Award winner – via email, sharing that he was “dismayed by the recent onslaughts against intellectual freedom.”

He signed his email, “How can I help?”

I’m not sure he knew what he was getting into by offering those four simple words – “How can I help?”, but help doesn’t seem to fully describe what came next.

In May of 2023, Darin reached back out to Miranda and the IFC and shared that he was in the process of forming the 501c3 nonprofit, Parents Defending Schools and Libraries, also known as PDSAL. The intention is simple but strong: to create an alert system for parents to be able to fight back against book challenges at the beginning of the process, allowing for parents in the community to positively influence the outcome of challenges within their own school and library communities. PDSAL would also promote diverse and inclusive library collections by awarding small direct grants to school libraries for such book purchases.

Darin began regularly attending the IFC meetings and in June 2023 became an ex-officio member of the IFC, representing PDSAL and giving voice to the parents across Oregon. In August 2023, Parents Defending Schools and Libraries was officially formed and took off with urgency. Seemly overnight, a website was created, and in just four months, PDSAL had already launched a signature campaign with EveryLibrary and Fight for the First to address censorship at Canby School District, awarded their first grant for inclusive materials to West Linn High School, enhanced the PDSAL website, and put in place book resumes to help with challenge responses. As if that wasn’t enough, PDSAL has also been a part of investigating other challenges across the state,

including requesting public records requests and testifying at the Oregon Senate to support [SB1583](#).

There are many times when I know the IFC would not be anywhere as successful in supporting libraries during their challenges if Darin hadn't reached out in 2022, with that one simple sentence, "How can I help?" As the committee chair, I often feel guilty with the pressure I put on this committee, the number of emails and meetings I send out, and the amount of time this work demands. For Darin, I am aware he is doing this solely out of devotion to what is right, that before being the founder of PDSAL, he was simply a parent asking, "How can I help?" With the support and creation of Parents Defending Schools and Libraries, so much has happened and been accomplished, and I am eternally grateful to have someone so willing to devote so much attention and support to the needs of others. Thank you, Darin, for the seemingly endless willingness to step up and for the continued willingness to ask, "How can I help?"

It is with great respect and appreciation that the IFC is awarding Darin Stewart the Intellectual Freedom Champion Award. Thank you, Darin!