

Oregon Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee Tuesday Topic, December 2020

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 or a guest writer. Questions can be directed to the author of the topic or to the [IFC committee](#).



Bias and Librarian Censorship

You may have [read](#) a while back about [Anne Carroll Moore](#), who effectively censored *Goodnight Moon* during her tenure as a children's librarian at the New York Public Library. The reason seemed to be she simply didn't like it, saying, among other things, that it was "too sentimental". It's easy to chuckle at this old-school iron-bun librarian (to be fair she was pretty awesome in a lot of other ways), but it gives us a good opportunity to examine our own biases and how they play into our selections.

As librarians, we pride ourselves on determining what is right and what is not right for our collections. This can and should be based on strong collection policies, professional research and knowing our communities and their wants and needs. But inevitably, our biases also come into play. Acknowledging our biases and thinking about them are good first steps in avoiding this kind of censorship.

There are a lot of good resources out there to help us learn about, examine and overcome bias. Here are a few to start with:

[OPB: Who me biased?](#)

[ALA: Keeping up with...Implicit Bias](#)

[Yourbias.is](#)

[Harvard Project Implicit](#)

Anne Carroll Moore may have asserted that the omission of *Goodnight Moon* was about professional judgement. But the determination that something is badly produced and the determination that it's not "good for" our patrons or our library collection is where we really have to examine all of our biases and be sure that they are not undermining our missions and ethics. Next time you are making selections, creating a display, recommending reading or even in your own reading, recognize your biases and work to overcome them!

And if you're interested in diving deeper into the concept, here are a few articles:

Quinn, Brian. "Collection Development and the Psychology of Bias." *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, vol. 82, no. 3, 2012, pp. 277–304.

Wheeler Ronald. "We All Do It: Unconscious Behavior, Bias, and Diversity." *Law Library Journal*, vol. 107, no. 2, Spring 2015, pp. 325-331

Dalton, Shamika, and Michele Villagran. "Minimizing and Addressing Implicit Bias in the Workplace: Be Proactive, Part One." *College & Research Libraries News*, vol. 79, no. 9. Oct. 2018, pp. 478-485

Remember, Oregon libraries can report intellectual freedom issues and get support: [The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse](#) (OIFC) [collects](#) and [compiles](#) information about intellectual freedom issues at libraries in Oregon. The OIFC also provides information to libraries to help them [prepare](#) for and [address](#) intellectual freedom issues. Find additional resources to deal with challenges and develop robust policies at the [Intellectual Freedom Committee's toolkit page](#).