

September 2016 Tuesday Topic: Celebrate the Freedom to Read

Welcome back 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 Oregon Library Association's [Intellectual Freedom Committee](#). Questions can be directed to the committee member who sent the message or to one of the committee co-chairs.

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Banned books. Does anyone even talk about those anymore? The answer to that, as evidenced by regular challenges to items in school libraries and last month's dispute between the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Shakespeare Books & Antiques, is yes.



Celebrate the freedom to read in Oregon during next weeks' Banned Books Week (September 25 - October 1) along with libraries, bookstores, and schools across the United States. This annual celebration is an opportunity for libraries to start conversations about why it is important to have materials available representing all points of view and why free speech is necessary for a healthy democracy.

Here are some ways that you can take part.

Learn - Review and be inspired by the American Library Association's [Library Bill of Rights](#), and then visit the ALA's [Banned Books Week](#) website to learn more about frequently challenged titles and to get ideas and resources for your library. For an Oregon focus, visit the [Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse](#) to see reports on books that have been challenged at libraries in this state. The [BannedBooksWeek.org](#) website is focusing on diversity and the fact that "it is estimated that over half of all banned books are by authors of color, or contain events and issues concerning diverse communities."

Share - Visit the [Celebrate the Freedom to Read in Oregon](#) Facebook page and share your library's events (and photos!)

Explore - Spend some time wandering through a unique database of library materials challenges in Oregon, [Intellectual Freedom Issues in Oregon: A News Database](#). This historical database might give you some interesting community history to share with your library users, or it could be a good source for a student researcher looking at censorship issues over time.

Prepare - Prepare to have conversations with library patrons sparked by Banned Books Week or the Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Shakespeare Books & Antiques controversy. People are often surprised that there are still challenges to library materials and that it is still important (even with the Internet) for the library to make a full range of ideas and expression available to the public. Patrons may have questions about the intersection of a right to read with a responsibility to not be offensive. There aren't easy answers, but these conversations are the main reason for celebrating Banned Books Week, and they help build support for free speech in your library community.

You can also use this week as a reminder to prepare for the day when someone walks into your library with a concern about a particular title that is on the shelf.

- Does your library have a materials reconsideration policy and form?
- Do all library personnel know the procedure for responding to challenges?
- Are your public officials and institutional leaders aware that there is a procedure to be followed?
- If you are in a school library, are your school and district administrators aware of the process for responding to a request for reconsideration?

If you need help with policies, procedures and forms, visit the [Intellectual Freedom Toolkit](#) on the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee website. Help can also be found at the [Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse](#).

If you have more questions, contact Ross Betzer or Krista Reynolds, co-chairs of the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee and, with the help of the rest of our committee members, we will find answers for you. In the event of a challenge, we are always ready to help.

Read freely!

Ross Betzer
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