



Intellectual  
Freedom  
Committee

Oregon Library Association

## November 2022

*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**

It is probably not news to those of us in the library world that we are experiencing unprecedented challenges to the freedom to read. School libraries are being especially hard hit with external and, unfortunately, internal threats and actions against library materials, displays and programs. While we often stand together against those external forces it is important that we pay attention to how this is affecting our own choices and actions as librarians and library workers.

Librarians have the skills, education and experience to determine what is right for our collections and should endeavor to base our selections on strong collection policies, professional research and knowing our communities and their wants and needs. But bias can inevitably interfere with this process.

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](#)

Those resources can help us with our implicit or unconscious biases. But what about explicit bias? Some library or administration professionals may feel empowered in the current landscape to practice these biases. Additionally, (valid) fears about the consequences of our selections can be an unfortunate driving factor. Library workers across the country have lost their jobs or been subjected to threats of violence because of their adherence to providing a good well-rounded collection. This may even lead some library professionals to purposely avoid adding titles, subjects and themes to their collections to avoid negative reactions and outcomes. [This recent School Library Journal article](#) dives into the impacts all of this may have on future collections and students.

Solving these issues is not easy. A strong selection policy as well as policies for review are a great start. Remember to include processes for external and internal challenges. Clear internal documentation and communication about these policies (including training for stakeholders) is helpful for everyone involved. Using support tools available from the [ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom](#) can be helpful. **And remember that the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee is here to help and support you!** We can help with tools and resources, advice, connections to helpful allies and organizations and to generally support and back you up (this can be done anonymously). [Learn more about us here](#) and find additional resources to deal with challenges and develop robust policies at the [Intellectual Freedom Committee's toolkit page](#).