

Intellectual Freedom

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What is Intellectual Freedom (IF)?

According to the American Library Association's Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF), "Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored." (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship/faq>).

Why is IF important?

Intellectual freedom is a basic tenet of librarianship and it based upon the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. This allows us to read, speak, analyze, discuss, and promote issues that may be controversial.

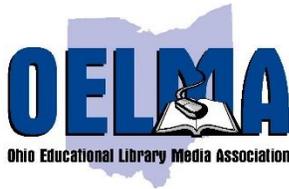
As a professional library association, we look to our leadership in the American Library Association, which has an office (OIF) that will assist in intellectual freedom issues. The first document that is important to consult is the [Library Bill of Rights](#). It is especially important to note that Article V focuses on the fact that a user's rights is not infringed upon due to age.

What is Censorship?

Censorship is the act of suppression of any material that someone finds objectionable. This can be a book, image, website, social media, and/or film. According to OIF, "Censors try to use the power of the state to impose their view of what is truthful and appropriate, or offensive and objectionable, on everyone else. Censors pressure public institutions, like libraries, to suppress and remove from public access information they judge inappropriate or dangerous, so that no one else has the chance to read or view the material and make up their own minds about it. The censor wants to prejudge materials for everyone" (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship/faq>).

What is a Challenge? What is a Banning?

According to the "Challenge Support" page, a challenge is the process of trying to remove materials, based on some type of objection and a banning is the actual removal of the challenged material (2018). The difference here is the challenge is the seeking to removal, while the banning is the actual banning of the material from access.

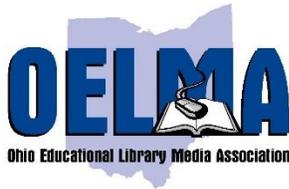


According to Adams (2013, p.51), this can consist of one or more of the following steps:

1. **Expression of concern:** Questioning the material in a critical and/or subjective manner
2. **Oral complaint:** Oral questioning of the validity and/or suitability of the material
3. **Written complaint:** Formal petition in writing that challenges the suitability of the material in the library or classroom
4. **Censorship:** Changing the status of the material by administration. Adams notes that this is not just removal, but any change in the availability of the item. “Such changes include exclusion, restriction, removal, or age/grade level changes” (Adams, 2013).

What Should I Do if I Have a Challenge?

1. Don't panic! At some point, everyone will have a concern that could potentially turn into a challenge. Try to keep in mind the quote by Jo Godwin “A truly great library contains something in it to offend everyone” (IFLA Libraries, 2007).
2. Talk to your administration about what policies are in place. You need to follow board-approved policies about what steps you as a librarian should take and what steps administration need to start. A challenge does not necessarily mean a banning or removal of a resource.
3. If you do not have a board-approved selection policy, talk to your administration about getting one approved. You will not always be successful, but it is important to try to. A good place to start is with the [Selection & Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries](#), which was published and approved by the ALA OIF.
4. Submit your challenge to OIF [here](#). It is really important that you report it to ALA as they keep track of any challenges.
5. Reach out to your library colleagues at OELMA and AASL.



References

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