

Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse
Fifth Annual Report
July 1, 1991 – June 30, 1992

The Oregon State Library established the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse to assist all types of libraries in upholding the principles of the Library Bill of Rights. The Clearinghouse collects and disseminates information about challenges against library materials, and consults about intellectual freedom principles, policies, and procedures. The *Fifth Annual Report* of the Clearinghouse summarizes 42 challenges against library materials received during FY 1991-92. A five year overview of Clearinghouse data follows the summaries of each challenge incident. For further information, contact Ellen Fader, Public Library Consultant, at 1-503-378-2112, ext. 224.

Challenges in Public Libraries

Cedar Mill Community Library, Portland
• *Final Exit* by Derek Humphry (Adult)

Summary of objections: Objections that the book tells how to commit suicide and that it will result in the death of people.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 1991. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Summary of objections: Concern that book not appropriate for library because of what it depicts about human behavior.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 7/10/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

• *Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady* by Selina Hastings (Juvenile)

Corvallis-Benton County Library, Corvallis
• *Rolling Stone Magazine* (6/23/92 issue)

Summary of objections: Objection to cover of issue which displayed 3 nude men; considered indecent; restricted access requested.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Magazine retained with no restrictions, 7/2/92.

Summary of objections: Language inappropriate for children.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 7/31/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

• *Throw A Kiss, Harry* by Mary Chalmers (Juvenile)

• *A Taxing Woman* (Video)

Summary of objections: Objections to brief nudity and sex; warning label requested.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Film retained, labeling rejected, 1/31/92. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book may make children feel bad; they'll associate not doing something when asked with spanking.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 10/28/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

• *Pandolfini's Endgame Course* by Bruce Pandolfini (Adult)

Douglas County Library System, Roseburg
• *The Last Mission* by Harry Mazer (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Obscene language.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/26/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Summary of objections: Errors in information.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/6/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

• *About Phobias* by Sara Bonnett Stein (Juvenile)

Hillsboro Public Library, Hillsboro
• *Nightmare on Elm Street* by E. L. Flood (Juvenile/Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern that this book, about "Nightmare on Elm Street," was in the children's dept.; could cause bad dreams.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 4/7/92. Letter sent explaining that the book was only in the children's section while it was new; all non-fiction is later routinely intershelved.

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about thesis of the book that childhood phobias occur in very young children because they are sexually attracted to their parent of the opposite sex.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/6/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

• *Blaze and the Gypsies* by C. W. Anderson (Juvenile)

Lake County Library, Lakeview
• *Guess What?* by Mem Fox (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Objections that subliminal messages would promote witchcraft and seduce children into witchcraft.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Book retained in decision by Board, 4/1/92. No appeals filed.

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about stereotyping of gypsies and promoting false impressions (prejudice) of gypsies.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 2/10/92. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

• *My Life as a Dog* (Video)

Multnomah County Library, Portland
• *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that there was no indication on the cover that it may not be suitable for children.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained without labeling, 3/23/92. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *L. Ron Hubbard: An Introduction to Scientology* (Video)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that non-factual material was being presented.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained, 2/25/92.

- *Ozzy on the Outside* by R. E. Allen (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the material was too explicit; may encourage sexual involvement.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 3/26/92. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Lotta's Easter Surprise* by Astrid Lindgren (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book disillusioned children about the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 4/8/92. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Sturgis, South Dakota: Motorcycle Mecca* by Martin Garfinkel (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book dehumanizes women; inappropriate values to promote in the library.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 4/30/92. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Daddy's Roommate* by Michael Willhoite (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern that the implication of this book, about a boy with a gay father, won't be understood by children, and is questionable material for them.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 5/7/92. The book was part of a preschool theme packet intended for daycare teachers to review first and then share with children. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *The Disuniting of America* by Arthur Schlesinger (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern that this book, published by Whittle Communications, is insidious because of the presence of ads; has ulterior motives beyond that of providing information.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 6/9/92. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Newberg Public Library, Newberg

- *The Next Whole Earth Catalog, 2nd ed.*, edited by Stewart Brand (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern that graphic sexual pictures and book order information in the "Sex" unit is not suitable for children; request that pages on sex either be cut out or access restricted.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained without restriction, 7/31/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Oregon City Public Library, Oregon City

- *My Friend Flicka* by Mary O'Hara (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Objection to library having this book in the children's department because of profane language.

Summary of events: Initial staff review process; recommendation made to retain. Book retained in children's department in decision by Library Board, 8/10/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Salem Public Library, Salem

- *God Knows* by Joseph Heller (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book mocked the biblical figure of King David; depicted him as using obscene language.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 7/31/91. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *The Shooter* by Gregory G. Vanhee (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book contained pornographic language.

Summary of events: Staff review process. By the time of its review the book was in poor physical condition with missing pages, and it was withdrawn. Letter sent indicating that if it had been in better condition, the book would have been retained, 2/21/92.

Woodburn Public Library, Woodburn

- *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America* by Lillian Faderman (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about theme of book.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 1992. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Challenges in School Library Media Centers

Beaver Elementary School, Beaver

- *How to Draw What You See* by Rudy De Reyna (Juvenile/Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Objections to drawings of nude artists' models; adolescents not mature enough for this type of material; may misuse it.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained but with the inclusion of a brief "awareness letter" informing parents that the book had been discussed. Book retained with addition of "awareness letter" in decision by School Board, 5/4/92.

Carlton Elementary School, Carlton

- *Curses, Hexes and Spells* by Daniel Cohen (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that a student was using this book to put "hexes" on another student; an American folk song about hate which includes swear words, is printed; the book is available to children of any age.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be placed on a reserve shelf to be used with supervision of the librarian or teacher. Book restricted in decision by Review Committee, 10/22/91.

Cascade Middle School, Eugene

- *Clan of the Cave Bear* by Jean M. Auel (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern that student readers may develop the perception that the sexual acts and values described are the norm, and may be tried.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained, 11/29/91. Decision appealed to the School Board. Book removed from middle school library in decision by School Board, 4/92.

Dickie Prairie Elementary School, Molalla
 • *The Look of Horror* by Jonathan Steinfield (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern about graphic photographs from a number of horror films.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained but restricted from general circulation. Students in grades 5 to 8 must request access. Book restricted in decision by School Board, 1/15/92.

Liberty Elementary School, Tillamook
 • *Alice in Rapture, Sort Of* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about sections that referred to french kissing, descriptions of bras and breasts.

Summary of events: Initial building level review process by staff. Book restricted to grades 5 and 6. Decision appealed and committee review process was initiated. Committee recommended to retain the book with no restrictions. Book retained without restriction in decision by the School Board, 3/2/92.

North Bend High School, North Bend
 • *Birdy* by William Wharton (Adult/Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about passages of graphic sexuality. Wanted district to adopt a rating system for library books similar to that used for movies.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Met with couple and discussed literary merits of the book. Committee recommended to superintendent that the book be retained and that the following statement be included in student handbook: "Copies of selection criteria and any challenges may be obtained from the NBHS Library/Media Center," 5/28/92.

Oakland High School, Oakland
 • *Rolling Stone Magazine* (Adult, Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about irreverent, negative, and sexual attitudes pervading the publication; subscribing with district funds does not promote district educational goals.

Summary of events: Initial building level review process by staff. Decision made not to renew the subscription, 11/25/91. Appealed by high school librarian to Superintendent. Original decision upheld, 1/9/92. Appeal made to School Board and public hearing held. Decision not to renew subscription upheld by School Board, with further restriction that students need parental permission to check out back issues, 2/25/92.

Rural Dell Middle School, Molalla
 • *Eli's Songs* by Monte Killingsworth (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern that loggers were portrayed poorly; objection to character's threat of suicide as way of making a point; promotes eco-mania.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book, written by a teacher in the Rural Dell School, be retained. Book retained in decision by Superintendent, 4/92. Second request for removal resulted in same decision by

Superintendent with approval of the School Board, 5/92.

Salem-Keizer School District, Salem
 • *Secret Spells and Curious Charms* by Monika Beisner (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that the book contained spells and selections taken from adult books of black magic; considered a how-to book on spells; stated that Black Magic is considered a form of religion; violates the separation of church and state.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be retained without restriction. Book retained in decision by School Board, 1/14/92.

• *Witches, Pumpkins, and Grinning Ghosts: The Story of the Halloween Symbols* by Edna Barth (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns that the book contained references to the occult and witchcraft, and suggested that children born on Halloween were able to see and talk with ghosts; may lead them to the practice of witchcraft.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be retained without restriction. Book retained in decision by School Board, 4/14/92.

• *Mystery Walk* by Robert McCammon (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that book was full of violence and profanity; book considered bizarre, with no literary value.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be removed from middle school. Book restricted to the high school level in decision by School Board, 4/14/92.

• *In the Night Kitchen* by Maurice Sendak (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed about frontal nudity of a male child in a few pictures; may be confusing to children as they are taught that bodies are private.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be retained without restrictions. Book retained in decision by School Board, 7/14/92.

• *The Magic Pot* by Patricia Coombs (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns that the book is about a demon that does magic, implying that witchcraft is good; may encourage children to dabble in witchcraft.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be retained without restriction. Book retained in decision by School Board, 7/14/92.

• *The House of Dies Drear* (Video)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book projects fear by frequent references to evil and Satan; presents a false perception of history; causes loss of child's security in school.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the video be restricted, with advice that teachers preview the video for appropriateness to curriculum and objectives. Video restricted to seventh grade and above in decision by School Board, 8/25/92.

Sweetbriar Elementary School, Troutdale

• *The Seventeen Gerbils of Class 4A* by William Hooks (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about use of profanity.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 11/13/91.

Talmadge Middle School, Independence
• *I Love You, Stupid!* by Harry Mazer (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that book was not age appropriate; promotes experimentation in teenage sex, sexist view of women; does not promote responsible decision-making; relationships portrayed between young men and women are not ones of mutual respect.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 12/2/91.

Toledo High School, Toledo
• *Famous All Over Town* by Danny Santiago (Young Adult)

Summary of Objections: Concern expressed about use of profanity.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee decided that the book be retained, 6/8/92; no further appeal filed.

Whitworth Elementary, Dallas
• *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that reading this book might cause lack of appetite and nightmares, and a curiosity about death in unhealthy ways.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee split on decision. Book retained in decision by School Board, 2/24/92.

Five Year Overview

Following is an overview about the challenges against library materials in Oregon, based on the data reported since the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse was established in 1987. Over the five years, the Clearinghouse received a total of 180 challenges.

Figure 1

Number of Challenges Reported:
By Type of Library



Of the 180 challenges, public libraries submitted 104 of them, and school libraries submitted 76 reports about challenges to school library materials.

Figure 2

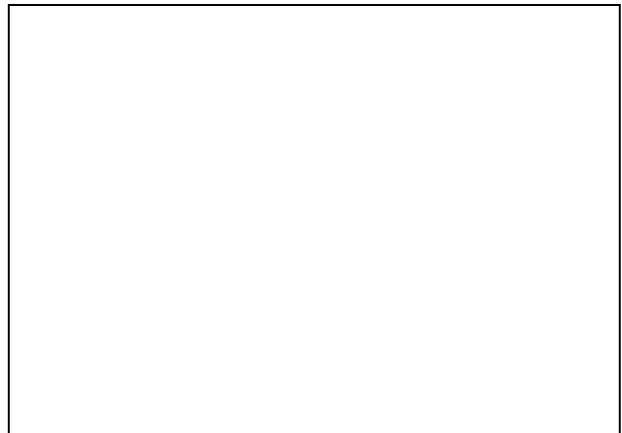
Number of Challenges Reported:
By Age Designation



Over the five years, the Clearinghouse received 50 challenges to library materials for adults, and 130 challenges to library materials for children.

Figure 3

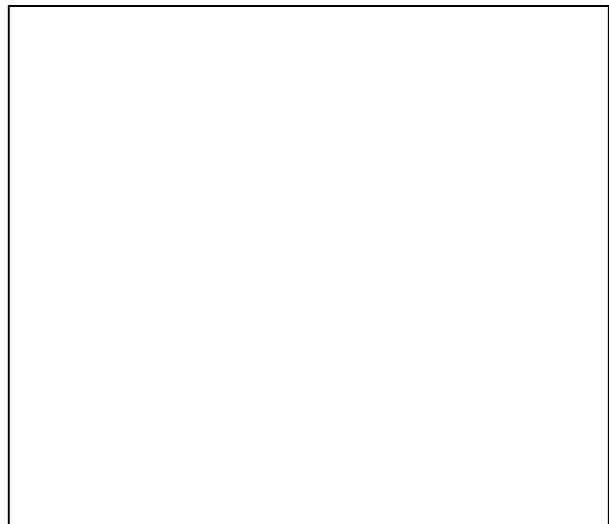
Number of Challenges Reported:
By Type of Objection



Of the 180 challenges filed since 1987, 80 objections to graphic sexual content or profane language were recorded. Twenty-three items were characterized as too scary or violent for children. Thirty-seven items were considered objectionable because of subject matter concerning witches, the occult, devils, etc. Forty challenges were categorized as objectionable for "other" reasons.

Figure 4

Number of Challenges Reported:
By Final Decision



The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse considers the final decisions about the 180 challenges encouraging. Retaining the materials was

the outcome in 150 of the challenge incidents. Only 17 items were removed in the five years. Materials were reclassified four times, and restricted nine times.