

Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse
Seventh Annual Report
July 1, 1993 – June 30, 1994
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The Center for the Book
Oregon State Library
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Goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

The goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries, by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon about challenges to intellectual freedom, and by increasing awareness as to how threats to intellectual freedom can be overcome.

Objectives of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

To establish a central clearinghouse to collect and disseminate reports about challenges to intellectual freedom in all types of Oregon libraries.

To provide information about challenged materials to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians when requests for reconsideration of materials are formally registered.

To provide information to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians about establishing appropriate policies and procedures before a challenge to intellectual freedom occurs.

To cooperate with other persons and groups concerned with intellectual freedom or related issues.

Scope and Methodology of the Clearinghouse

The data collected is limited to formal challenges against any type of library material in any type of Oregon library. A formal challenge is defined here as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library. The Clearinghouse will report informal (not written) challenges when such challenges are of interest because they have received significant public debate.

The Clearinghouse reports details about challenges as they are recorded on "Reconsideration Report" forms submitted by library or school staff, or

occasionally by citizens. Additional information is obtained from newspaper reports, if available. In a few instances, newspaper articles are the sole source of information about a challenge.

The Seventh Annual Report summarizes 34 challenges against library materials that took place between July 1, 1993 and June 30, 1994. The section, "Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1993–94," provides a brief synopsis of other incidents affecting intellectual freedom in Oregon libraries. A five-year overview of Clearinghouse data (see section, "The Charts") analyzes the data in a graphic format. The Annual Report section, "The Big Picture," provides a statistical snapshot of Clearinghouse data since its inception in May, 1987.

It is possible to research challenged materials in Oregon libraries using the Annual Reports produced by the Clearinghouse. The Sixth Annual Report contained a six-year index of challenged titles that provided a reference to which library experienced the challenge and which annual report contained the details about the challenge. Using that report, together with the Seventh Annual Report, readers will have a complete picture of all challenged materials reported to date. To obtain copies of previous years' annual reports, or to obtain a complete seven-year index maintained on microcomputer, call Ellen Fader, Public Library Consultant, Oregon State Library, at 503-378-2112, extension 224.

Summary of Challenges Reported in 1993–94

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received information about 34 challenges to library materials between July 1, 1993 and June 30, 1994. The formats challenged included 25 books, 5 videos, 2 periodicals, and 2 recordings. Public libraries experienced 26 of the challenges and school libraries experienced 8 challenges. Sixteen of the challenged materials were designated as children's and young adult materials, and 18 were materials for adults. In 27 of the 34 challenges, library staff, committees, library boards, or school boards decided that the challenged materials should be retained. In two instances the decision was made to reclassify the materials, and in three instances materials were restricted in use. In one case, the book was replaced with a new edition of the same title. Material was removed from one library.

The largest number of objections to library materials in 1993–94 focused on sexual themes (other than homosexuality), and graphic language. These materials were objected to 16 times. There were six challenges based on objections to materials containing references to homosexuality, down substantially from 35 reported in the Sixth Annual Report. Stories or illustrations that were considered too scary for children or overly violent were challenged five times. The seven challenges reported in the "other" category registered objections to the racist treatment of Native Americans, a disrespect for children's elders or authority, mature content in a picture book, the style of parenting demonstrated, teen females' reliance on male opinions for validation of self-worth, and the format of a translated text that distorts the philosophy and rhythm

of the original Chinese. There were no challenges to materials solely because of perceived occult, witchcraft, or satanic references, in contrast to previous years.

The challenges listed below are organized according to library type, public or school, and arranged alphabetically by the name of the library where the challenges occurred. Under the name of each library, the materials challenged are listed in alphabetical order by title. Under the summary of events, the phrase "Staff review process" refers to adopted procedures by which library staff read or view the materials, collect reviews and other information about the material, and make the initial decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in public libraries. Generally, the library director writes a letter informing the library patron of the decision and explaining the appeals process, in case the citizen is not satisfied with the decision. The phrase "Committee review process" refers to adopted procedures by which a committee, such as an Instructional Materials Review Committee, makes the initial decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in schools. Generally, the school board makes the final decision based on a recommendation from the Committee.

Challenges in Public Libraries

Astoria Public Library, Astoria

History of Oregon by Robert C. Clark (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that comments referring to Indians as "inferior to whites" will give children racist ideas; citizen requested that the book be replaced with "an accurate and current" survey of the history of Oregon for children.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained and relocated to basement storage due to book's age and poor condition, 9/20/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Douglas County Library System, Roseburg

Sport by Louise Fitzhugh (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed about the book's "foul" language, as well as its "depressing" story line that makes it unsuitable for young children; requested removal or reclassification to adult.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 5/12/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book contains content that is not "proper" to read to children; objection was also raised that the book "makes the big bad wolf look like a good guy in a bad way."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 4/11/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Driftwood Library, Lincoln City

The Big Needle by Ken Follett (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed about passages that described "sex orgies," and "sex with three people."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 5/5/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Hermiston Public Library, Hermiston

Daddy's Roommate by Michael Willhoite (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book teaches that homosexuality is "normal" and "natural."

Summary of events: Library Board recommended to City Council that the book be reclassified. Reclassified to parenting collection, 5/9/94. Letter sent.

Forever by Judy Blume (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book is too explicit in alerting young people to the consequences of sex.

Summary of events: Library Board recommended to City Council that the book be reclassified. Reclassified to adult collection, 5/9/94. Letter sent.

Multnomah County Library, Portland

Blazing Saddles (Video)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed over the "foul language" used that makes the video unsuitable for young people.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained, 8/10/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Bricks are Heavy by Butch Vig and L7 (Recording)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the material is not appropriate for young people because of explicit lyrics and pictures.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Recording retained, 3/21/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Dona Herlinda and Her Son (Video)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed about having this "open candid expression of homosexual behavior" available at a public library.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained, 12/14/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Heather Has Two Mommies by Leslea Newman (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book promotes a lesbian lifestyle.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 4/21/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Heiress Bride by Catherine Coulter (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book is vulgar and pornographic.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 5/3/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Immediate Family by Sally Mann (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the material is pornographic.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 9/27/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Lesbian Sex Book by Wendy Caster (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the library is spending money on this type of material, that erotic materials are not appropriate, and that it is easily accessible to children.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 2/3/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Official Book of Leisure Suit Larry, Sierra On-line (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book is "juvenile pornography."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 9/2/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Un Senor Muy Viego Con Unas Alas Enormes (Video)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that children and young adults that view this video will receive the impression that it is "okay to force women to have sex with them," and recommends video be restricted to adults only.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained, 12/1/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Tao...A Rendering into English of the Tao Teh Ching of Lao Tsze translated by Charles A. Mackintosh (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the format of the book distorts both the philosophy and the rhythm of the original Tao Teh Ching.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/2/93. Additional copies of other translations will be purchased for customers' comparison reading. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

This Book Sucks by Mike Judge (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that tax dollars are spent on materials in which children can learn disrespect for authority and the attitude that violence is acceptable; recommends removal.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 4/21/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

When the New Baby Comes, I'm Moving Out by Martha Alexander (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about child voicing disrespect for mother.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 12/14/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Wild at Heart (Video)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the film's violence, language and sexual acts; requested that the video be restricted to adult viewing.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained, 8/5/93. The Library does not have a policy of restricting access to videos based on age. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Salem Public Library, Salem

Kidnapping of Kevin Kowalski by Mary Jane Auch (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about a swimsuit scene; believes book is appropriate for older readers.

Summary of events. Staff review process. Book retained, 4/28/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Pelle the Conqueror (Video)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about scenes of sexual violence; requested that video be removed from library.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained, 1/10/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Vic and Blood by Harlan Ellison and Richard Corben (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that "the whole book is violent," and that it condones rape.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 3/15/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

A Walk Among the Tombstones by Lawrence Sanders (Recording)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed over graphic language and graphic accounts of violence, and the lack of a label warning customers about contents.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Recording retained without labeling, 9/23/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Seaside Public Library, Seaside

When Heroes Die by Penny Durant (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that book promotes homosexuality, and requested that it be removed from collection.

Summary of events: Staff and Library Board review process. Book retained in final decision, 10/5/93. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Siuslaw Public Library, Florence

Seven Diving Ducks by Margaret Friskey (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that parenting skills – parent's love is conditional and based on child's behavior – are poorly modeled.

Summary of events: Staff review. Decision to retain book upheld by Library Board, 1/18/94. No appeal filed.

Springfield Public Library, Springfield

Daddy's Roommate by Michael Willhoite (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book would lead children "astray," and demanded that the title be removed from the collection.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 1/24/94. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Challenges in School Library Media Centers

Bilquist Elementary, Milwaukie

The Witches by Roald Dahl (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed over references to violence to children by parents and children, and the occult.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained without restriction, 9/29/93. Superintendent recommended restricted library access requiring a teacher's recommendation and a parent's approval; also allowed the book to be used as an instructional supplement by classroom teachers, 11/3/93. Because of unclear policies and procedures concerning the district appeal process, these policies are being reviewed and revised. When completed, the superintendent will hold another hearing on the book to reconsider his decision. Final decision still pending.

Roseburg High School, Roseburg

The Dark Half by Stephen King (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed over book's demonic violent content and vulgar language.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 5/11/94.

Salem-Keizer School District, Salem

El Agua by Nicole Giron (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that this Spanish language book about water contains two paintings by Mexican artists that graphically depict a nude adult female and a nude male child; believe the book is not suitable for elementary children since "it exposes them to adult anatomy and contributes to a lack of personal modesty."

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee split in decision to retain book with and without restrictions. Book removed in decision by Superintendent; to be replaced with another Spanish language book on water, 11/29/93.

The Dead Man in Indian Creek by Mary Downing Hahn (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed about book's graphic violence, and several occurrences of inappropriate parenting; believes book is too frightening for elementary readers.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained. Book retained without restriction in decision by School Board, 2/22/94.

The What's Happening to My Body? Book for Boys: A Growing Up Guide for Parents and Sons (1984 edition) by Lynda Madaras (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that book contains slang names for sexual organs and functions, and that book contains information on homosexuality but not on HIV and AIDS.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended replacing book with the revised edition that contains information on HIV and AIDS. Book to be replaced with 1988 edition, and retained without restriction in decision by School Board, 1/11/94.

Scappoose High School, Scappoose

Rolling Stone (Periodical)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about ads and covers that feature nude or partially dressed models, sexually provocative advertisements, and an article on a gay fraternity.

Summary of events: With the support of the majority of the faculty, administrators have restricted access to Rolling Stone, and encouraged the removal of certain articles, covers and advertisements from the magazine. One third of the student body has signed a petition to protest the administration's restriction of Rolling Stone. (Information taken from The Oregonian, 6/4/94. The article also reported that potentially offensive material has been removed from other magazines such as Life, Sassy, and YM.)

Union High School, Union

Meridian by Alice Walker (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the graphic sexual language that describes a rape and other sexual encounters is degrading to teen readers; feels that this is pornography, and requested that all books by this author be removed.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 5/12/94. Junior high student access to the book will be monitored more closely, and the Board will review its policy for dealing with challenges to insure that it is appropriate.

Vale School District, Vale

Teen (Young Adult Periodical)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that two articles in Teen (October, 1993) are objectionable because they imply that girls must depend on male approval and acceptance for a feeling of self-worth.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended to the School Board that the magazine be retained without restriction. Magazine restricted by School Board, 10/13/93. Students in fifth and sixth grades need permission from their parents or guardians before access will be granted; seventh and eighth grade students continue to have unlimited access. Staff and students are not permitted to share personal copies of the magazine on school premises with students below seventh grade.

Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1993–94

Several major incidents relating to intellectual freedom that fall outside the purview of the formal, written challenges to public and school library materials reported here took place in Oregon during the last year. To assist readers of this report in understanding more about Oregon's libraries and issues of intellectual freedom, we offer the following information.

At the Newport Public Library, the parents of a 15-year-old boy submitted a request for reconsideration, which asked that two foreign videos their son borrowed be removed from the collection, or be restricted to an "adults only" collection. After receiving the director's explanation of why the library places an emphasis on building a collection of foreign films, and how the library attempts to provide information for all interests, the parents withdrew their request. The videos remain available without age restriction.

Videos were also a major issue in Springfield. After parents bypassed the library and communicated directly to the Springfield City Council that their child borrowed an R-rated video from the library, the council directed the Springfield Public Library to restrict access to R-rated films to borrowers ages 16 and older. After a legal review of the constitutionality of its decision, motivated by inquiries from the Oregon chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and the Motion Picture Association of America, the Council rescinded its directive, and replaced it with a rule allowing parents to deny permission for their children to borrow R-rated videos.

In Coquille, a reward has been offered for information leading to the identity of the individual(s) responsible for using typewriter correction fluid to block out words in a variety of library materials. Many cases of editing have been discovered, and a user of the Coquille Public Library has started a fund to finance the replacement of the most seriously vandalized books.

Since the defeat of Ballot Measure 9, the 1992 statewide initiative that proposed through Constitutional amendment that government "cannot facilitate" homosexuality, the Oregon Citizens Alliance has promoted efforts to have city and county electorates vote on similar initiatives. In addition to prohibiting expenditure of government funds "to promote homosexuality or express approval of homosexual behavior," the local initiatives contain language that specifically mentions libraries -- "this section shall not be construed to limit public libraries from providing materials for adults which address homosexuality." In the six counties and 17 cities that passed the local initiatives in 1993 and 1994, no library challenges have been reported that appear to have resulted from passage of the measures. The ability to enact the local measures is the subject of a number of legal challenges. At the time this report was written, initiative petition signatures to place another statewide measure on the November 1994 ballot were submitted to the Oregon Elections Division. Similar language to that cited

above pertaining to libraries would appear on the statewide measure, if certified for the ballot.

The Charts: A Five-Year Overview

The following is an overview of the last five years of challenges against library materials in Oregon, based on the data reported since July 1, 1989. To improve the readability of the charts, the Clearinghouse has begun this year to limit data illustrated on the charts to that collected in the last five years. A complete quantitative summary of data collected since the inception of the Clearinghouse follows in the section, "The Big Picture."

Figure 1 illustrates the number of challenges in public libraries and the number of challenges in school libraries. Over five years, the Clearinghouse collected information about 163 challenges to public library materials, and 79 challenges to school library materials.

(Insert Figure 1)

Figure 2 illustrates whether challenges each year were against materials for children and young adults, or against materials for adults. In the past, citizens have challenged materials designated for children and young adults more than materials for adults. This is the first year that more materials published for an adult audience were challenged. Since 1989, there were 147 challenges concerning materials for children and young adults, and 95 concerning materials for adults.

(Insert Figure 2)

Figure 3 classifies the objections to materials each year into broad categories. Often multiple objections are cited against materials but the chart illustrates only one major objection for each challenge. The chart indicates that while the number of challenges related to graphic sexual content or explicit language has remained at a fairly constant level since the early years of the Clearinghouse, the number of challenges related to homosexual content has varied considerably in recent years. This is the first year that no objections solely to occult and witchcraft themes in library materials have been reported.

(Insert Figure 3)

Figure 4 illustrates the final outcome in each challenge: whether the materials were retained without restriction in each library, reclassified to a different age group or subject section in the library, restricted to a certain age group or restricted to access only with parental permission, replaced with a similar item on the same subject or a new edition of the same title, or removed from the library. Transferring materials from one library in a district to another library is classified as a removal in this chart. In 86% of the challenges (207 times) in the last five years, the materials were retained on library shelves with no restrictions. Materials were removed from library shelves only 15 times, or in 6% of the incidents.

(Insert Figure 4)

The Big Picture: A Seven-Year Overview

The Clearinghouse cautions against using its data as an absolute picture of the level of attempts to limit intellectual freedom. Publicizing Clearinghouse services to libraries in Oregon still results in data being reported from libraries that have never done so previously. Changes in library staff mean that knowledge about the Clearinghouse may diminish. The shrinking number of trained school library media staff, resulting from funding problems in public education, may have contributed to an under-reporting of school library challenges. The following is a statistical snapshot of challenges reported since the inception of the Clearinghouse in May 1987. The total number of challenges was 293, of which 186 were in public libraries, and 107 in school libraries. 189 of these challenges were to materials designated for children or young adults, and 104 were for adult materials. Objections to the content of library materials fell into the following categories: scary or violent content, 40 challenges; graphic sexual content or explicit language, 106 challenges; occult themes, 41 challenges; homosexual content, 52 challenges; and other assorted concerns, 54 challenges. Library materials were retained in 246 of the challenges (84%); reclassified 8 times (3%); restricted 16 times (5%); replaced 3 times (1%); and removed 20 times (7%).

Assistance with data organization and reviews about materials provided by: Judyth Leifheit, Val Vogt, Craig Smith, Stana Smith, and Bob Thornhill (Oregon State Library). Assistance gathering book covers to be photographed provided by Stephen H. Armitage (West Linn Public Library).