

Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse
Eighth Annual Report
July 1, 1994 – June 30, 1995
Coordinator, Ellen Fader, Public Library Consultant
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 Eighth Annual Report summarizes 37 challenges against library materials that took place between July 1, 1994 and June 30, 1995. The section, "Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1994–95," 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 and Eighth 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 eight-year index, contact Val Vogt, Oregon State Library, at 503-378-2112, extension 222, or val.t.vogt@state.or.us.

Summary of Challenges Reported in 1994–95

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received information about 37 challenges to library materials between July 1, 1994 and June 30, 1995. The formats challenged included 29 books, 2 videos, 1 periodical, and 5 recordings. Public libraries experienced 26 of the challenges and school libraries experienced 11 challenges. Twenty-nine of the challenged materials were designated as children's and young adult materials, and eight were materials for adults. In 34 of the 37 challenges, library staff, committees, library boards, site councils, superintendents or school boards decided that the challenged materials should be retained. In one instance the decision was made to reclassify the material. There were no decisions to restrict challenged materials, or to replace the challenged material with revised editions of the same title. Materials were removed from two libraries.

The largest number of objections to library materials in 1994–95 focused on sexual themes (other than homosexuality), or use of graphic language. These materials were objected to 17 times. There were seven challenges to materials solely because of perceived occult, witchcraft, or satanic references, reversing last year's trend of having no such challenges, and resuming the traditional pattern of such challenges in Oregon libraries. There were five challenges based on objections to materials containing references to homosexuality, declining slightly from the six challenges reported in the Seventh Annual Report, and 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 six

times. The two challenges reported in the "other" category registered objections to perceived racist treatment of Native Americans and African Americans.

The challenges listed below are organized according to library type, public or school, and arranged alphabetically by the name of the library where the challenge 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 decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in schools. Sometimes, the school board or the superintendent makes the final decision based on a recommendation from the committee. Increasingly, due to changes attributed to school reform, which encourages locally-based decision-making, the committee or the school's site council makes the final decision about the challenged item.

Challenges in Public Libraries

Clatskanie Library District, Clatskanie

Alpha and the Dirty Baby by Brock Cole (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that because the book includes a "devil's imp" character and references to "casting spells," it exposes children to the occult.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 2/17/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Douglas County Library System, Roseburg

Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes by Chris Crutcher (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the book's language.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 1/20/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Driftwood Library, Lincoln City

Hearts and Minds (Video)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that scene filmed in a brothel is offensive, and would "start an appetite for pornography."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained, 4/17/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Hillsboro Public Library, Hillsboro

The Predator by Ice Cube (Recording)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed over the lyrics' "explicit...obscene, degrading-to-women descriptions of sex acts." Requested replacement with "non-offensive rap music."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Recording retained, 9/14/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Shaq Diesel by Shaq O'Neal (Recording)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed over the lyrics' "explicit...obscene, degrading-to-women descriptions of sex acts." Requested replacement with "non-offensive rap music."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Recording retained, 9/14/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Whoomp! (There It Is) by Tag Team (Recording)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed over the lyrics' "explicit...obscene, degrading-to-women descriptions of sex acts." Requested replacement with "non-offensive rap music."

Summary of events: Staff review process determined that recording did not meet the library's selection policy criteria. Recording removed, 9/14/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

McMinnville Public Library, McMinnville

The Strong-Willed Child by James Dobson (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book advocates use of physical force to the point of abuse.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 9/7/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Multnomah County Library, Portland

As Nasty As They Wanna Be by 2 Live Crew (Recording)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the recording's lyrics are obscene and vulgar.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Recording retained, 3/27/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Daddy's Roommate by Michael Willhoite (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns about the book's inclusion in a early childhood curriculum kit, since the book deals with a homosexual parent.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 2/3/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Doggy Style by Snoop Doggy Dog (Recording)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the recording's "language, content, tenor, and presentation;" objection to the library making "pornographic materials available to minors."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Recording retained, 7/25/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Down on the Farm by John Stchur (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that book is sexually explicit, and that it "preys on blood lust deviancy;" requested separate shelving for horror stories.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained in general collection, 8/29/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Indian Legends of the Great West by Johanna R. M. Lyback (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that portions of the book's introduction are insulting to native peoples.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 4/14/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Jumper by Steven Gould (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that the book is too violent and graphic for young readers.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 5/9/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Mommie Laid an Egg or Where Do Babies Come From? by Babette Cole (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that a book for children contains drawings of adults in various sexual positions; requested book's removal or reclassification.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book reclassified to the Parents' Collection, 5/22/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

More Scary Stories To Tell in the Dark by Alvin Schwartz (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed over the book's gruesome and satanic details, the "gross" covers, and the assertion that pioneers told these stories (objector asserts she cannot prove by her research); requested removal or reclassification.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/8/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

New Joy of Gay Sex by Dr. Charles Silverstein and Felice Picano (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that the illustrations do not inform, but instead serve to excite the reader.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/18/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Orfe by Cynthia Voigt (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed the book's content is not suitable for youth, and that the book contains both death and profanity.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/18/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Parsley by Ludwig Bemelmans (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that book deals with the destruction of plants and animals, and that children might conclude that it is okay to kill people; recommended that the book be burned.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 2/24/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Parting Glances by Bill Sherwood (Video)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that material about homosexuality is available to young people, and that this video is shelved with "family films;" recommended removal of video and "any similar material," or separate shelving.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained, 5/5/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology edited by Paul Hoover (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed because book contains graphic poems with "sexual references and vulgar words;" objects to "my money" purchasing "pornography."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 7/14/94. No further appeal filed.

Root of All Evil by Dell Shannon (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern that the book is racist.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 2/24/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Scary Stories To Tell in the Dark by Alvin Schwartz (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed over the book's gruesome and satanic details, the "gross" covers, and the assertion that pioneers told these stories (which objector asserts she cannot prove by her research); requested removal or reclassification.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 11/8/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Take It Off -- Take It Off by David Ritz (Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book is "just plain filth."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 9/12/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Virtual Girl by Amy Thompson (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed over the book's classification for young adults since it has scenes that include nudity and sexual situations, which the objector feels are unsuitable for youth.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 10/5/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

What Do You Say, Dear? by Sesyle Joslin (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern that the book promotes violence, and does not teach positive values.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 3/20/95. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

The Witches by Roald Dahl (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed over the graphic description of witches' faces and feet, and that witches are described as child-killers.

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained, 8/31/94. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Challenges in School Library Media Centers

Beaver Grade School, Beaver

In the Night Kitchen by Maurice Sendak (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed by a parent about child's nudity in book and requested that a parental warning sticker be placed on the book.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be retained, 5/3/95.

Bolton Middle School, West Linn

Jumper by Steven Gould (Young Adult)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about book's graphic homosexual rape scene.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that book be retained. Book retained without restriction by School Board, 4/23/95.

Danebo Elementary, Eugene

The Giver by Lois Lowry (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that the book is about a cult that "controls its members, murders infants and commits suicides," that the book is violent and graphic, and that it deals with subjects inappropriate for children.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained without restriction, 1/30/95.

Fairfield Elementary School, Eugene

Abel's Island by William Steig (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed about violence in the book and the book's mention of "conjugal love" between mice.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained without restriction, 11/3/94.

Firwood School, Sandy

The Headless Horseman Rides Again by Jack Prelutsky (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book "is evil," and that students would not be able to differentiate between "real and made-up."

Summary of events: Committee review process. Site council recommended that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 2/16/95.

Glenn D. Hale Elementary , Eagle Point

Sorcerer's Scrapbook by Michael Berenstain (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that the book teaches "occultic practices" of witchcraft and sorcery, and advocates using a horoscope for guidance.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be removed from the school's library, and moved to unrestricted access at another school library within the district that has students of "appropriate age level." Book removed and placed in intermediate school in decision by Superintendent, 12/8/94.

Powell Valley Elementary, Gresham

The Headless Horseman Rides Again by Jack Prelutsky (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that this poetry book contains "evil stories," and is satanic.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained without restriction, but not be displayed at Halloween, 1/9/95.

Riley Creek Elementary, Gold Beach

Seventeen, March 1994 issue (Periodical)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed that a letter about being gay, which is included in the "Sex + Body" column, contains misinformation.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the periodical be retained. Periodical retained in decision by School Board, 10/94.

Westside Elementary, Hood River

Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed by parents that the book's topic, writing style, and pictures are too scary.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 12/14/94.

William Knight Elementary, Canby

In the Night Kitchen by Maurice Sendak (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that the book has nude pictures, and that the book would contribute to sexual abuse.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by Superintendent, 6/2/95.

Outside Over There by Maurice Sendak (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Concerns expressed that the book contains nudity, and would encourage nudity and contribute to sexual abuse.

Summary of events: Committee review process. Committee recommended that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by Superintendent, 6/2/95.

Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1994–95

Oregon experienced 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. To assist readers of this report in understanding more about Oregon's libraries and issues of intellectual freedom, we offer the following information, which was also reported in various Oregon newspapers.

Four parents attempted to have Alice Walker's Pulitzer-prize winning novel, *The Color Purple*, removed from the reading list of the senior English class at Junction City High School, located in a rural community north of Eugene. The parents objected to *The Color Purple*'s use of "crude words," and claimed that the book "promotes perverse, destructive values," and "even has God condoning lesbian sex." The book was reviewed by a committee that recommended on April 28, 1995 that the book be retained without restriction on the reading list, provided that an alternate selection is made available. Standard practice at the school involves offering students who object to an assignment an alternative book to read. Unhappy with the committee's decision, the parents then appealed to the School Board, which upheld the decision. The *Oregonian* reported on May 11, 1995, that the complainants may attempt recall elections for School Board members who voted to retain the book. The *Eugene Weekly* reported on June 22, 1995, that the Junction City chapter of Parents for Academic Excellence (PAE) sent Junction City School District families a version of *The Color Purple* that consisted of a page-and-a-quarter of sexual descriptions and included every instance that sexual intercourse is referred to with a slang four-letter word.

At Redmond High School, a complaint by a parent forced the removal of the Tony Award-winning play *Equus* from the Redmond High School required reading list for sophomore honors classes. The parent's complaint cited objectionable language and "Christian insults" as the reasons for the challenge. In August 1994, a school review committee announced its decision, which is based on the play's "inappropriateness for sophomores." The play remains available as supplemental reading material, and continues to be available in the school library media center.

The Forest Grove City Library makes display space in the children's area, which consists of three bulletin boards, available on a rotating basis nine months of the year to area schools who showcase children's art. In November 1994, a library user at the Forest Grove City Library threatened verbally and by letter to file suit against the library unless it removed its current exhibit. A private Christian school in Cornelius had arranged an exhibit of primary students' art, which consisted of one bulletin board that displayed drawings of turkeys, one of pilgrims, and one of the seven days of creation. The library user believed that the library violated the separation of church and state by displaying the creation scenes, and that it used public funds to mount a religious display. With legal advice from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the library director elected to retain the display, in compliance with the library's display policy. On March 8, 1995, the Library Commission supported this decision. The library also slightly revised its

display policy to eliminate subjective references to community values, and to affirm its display space as a local community forum. The library user has not continued to pursue the issue.

At least three libraries, including Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, Salem Public Library, and Sheridan Public Library, offered community members the opportunity to view the exhibit *Family, Friends, and Neighbors*, developed by Clergy and Laity Concerned, and sponsored in Sheridan by West Valley Human Rights Coalition. This traveling exhibit attempts to inform citizens about gay and lesbian Oregonians' everyday lives. Using photographs and quotes from people who could be our "family, friends, and neighbors," the exhibit endeavors to put a human face on sexual diversity in Oregon. Although the exhibit was not formally challenged in any of the locations, citizen reaction to having access to the exhibit, as reflected by numerous letters to newspapers and library directors, and in a comments book located near the Sheridan exhibit, varied from wildly appreciative to condemnatory, and generated considerable community comment. At the Sheridan Public Library during June 1995, West Valley Human Responsibility Coalition responded by sponsoring an exhibit that focused on "traditional family values," as reported in *The Sun*, Yamhill County's newspaper.

At the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, staff repeatedly discovered sex education books that were vandalized by having pages torn out. The books included guides to assist parents in talking with their children about sex, as well as informational titles, such as *The Magic of Sex*, *Woman's Body*, *Good Sex Guide*, and *How Sex Works*. As soon as library staff made replacement copies available for use, they were vandalized, even though the library had not received any complaints about the books' contents. The library also discovered that a picture of swimmer Greg Louganis was removed from a copy of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. During the last year, in addition to the newspaper, a total of 17 titles and 27 books were affected, for a total of \$576 damage. Police and the city attorney were notified about the activity, since it is a misdemeanor to destroy public property. Staff requested that library users inform them of any further library vandalism incidents, and planned to continue to replace the damaged books with new copies. By the end of June 1995, no further incidents of vandalism were discovered. The library attributes its success in stemming the vandalism to an active public relations campaign, and efforts by the staff to be more visible in the vicinity of the sex education books.

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, 1990. To improve the readability of the charts, the Clearinghouse has begun 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 165 challenges to public library materials, and 81 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. Traditionally, citizens have challenged materials designated for children and young adults more than materials for adults. Since 1990, there were 148 challenges concerning materials for children and young adults, and 98 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 content about witches and the occult, as well as challenges related to homosexual content, has varied considerably in recent years.

(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 (212 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: An Eight-Year Overview

Although the Clearinghouse has been collecting data for eight years, we are aware that we cannot provide 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. Specifically, the Clearinghouse hypothesizes that reporting of school library media center challenges continues to be low due to the shrinking number of trained staff, which has resulted from public education's funding problems.

The following is a statistical snapshot of challenges reported since the inception of the Clearinghouse in May 1987. The total number of challenges was 330, of which 212 were in public libraries, and 118 in school libraries. 218 of these challenges were to materials designated for children or young adults, and 112 were for adult materials. Objections to the content of library materials fell into the following categories: scary or violent content, 46 challenges; graphic sexual content or explicit language, 123 challenges; occult themes, 48 challenges; homosexual content, 57 challenges; and other assorted concerns, 56 challenges. Library materials were retained in 280 of the challenges (85%); reclassified 9 times (2.5%); restricted 16 times (5%); replaced 3 times (1%); and removed 22 times (6.5%).

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

Extra material to use for a Banned Books Week section:

The American Library Association (ALA) will join the American Booksellers Association (ABA), the Association of American Publishers (AAP), the National Association of College Stores (NACS), the American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA), and the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (ABFEE) to sponsor Banned Books Week, September 23-30, 1995.

The first Banned Books Week, held in September 1982, featured displays of challenged books in libraries across the nation and generated public and press attention for First Amendment concerns.

Each year, the American Library Association develops a kit of useful materials for local observances of Banned Books Week. The 1995 Banned Books Week kit (\$28.00) includes four 16 inch x 22 inch posters, 100 bookmarks, and a resource book with clip art; display and publicity ideas; quotes on the First Amendment; and an annotated "List of Books Challenged or Banned in the US in the Last Year." These items are also available for separate purchase.

To order the American Library Association's Banned Books Week materials, contact the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom at 800-545-2433, extension 4223. Contact the other Banned Books Week sponsoring organizations to determine what materials they may make available.