



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



State Library
of Oregon

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Salem, Ore – Libraries and schools in Oregon reported challenges to more books and other materials in 2022-23 than at any point since the State Library of Oregon began collecting data. This statistic and more are available in the latest report of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse (OIFC).

The [Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse](#) was established in 1987 to collect and compile information from libraries and schools concerning intellectual freedom, the right of anyone to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and [Article I, Section 8 of the Oregon Constitution](#). OIFC particularly tracks challenges, i.e., any attempt to remove or restrict access to a library material, service, or program based on the objection of a person or group.

The [OIFC 2023 Report](#) shows that **46 challenge** incidents were reported from July 2022 to June 2023. **93 titles were challenged** in those incidents, as well as various services and programs, setting a record for the most titles challenged in Oregon in one year. The previous record was set in 1992-93 with 70 titles.

This Oregon milestone comes amidst a similarly record-breaking national climate of challenges. Earlier this year, the American Library Association (ALA) [reported](#) that 2022 saw the most attempts to restrict library resources since they began collecting statistics. Per ALA, “The prevalent use of lists of books compiled by organized censorship groups contributed significantly to the skyrocketing number of challenges and the frequency with which each title was challenged.” OIFC data is reported to the ALA and compiled in their national statistics.

Objections to library materials and services in Oregon varied widely. Stated reasons for the challenges often centered around lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and related topics; claims of materials being sexually explicit or pornographic; or materials and services by, for, or about Black, Indigenous, and people of color. In addition to materials challenges, in seven incidents people objected to libraries’ Pride Month displays. In another incident, an individual challenged the library’s materials and services in Spanish.

This year's report included new causes for concern. In 15 incidents, libraries reported that objectors bypassed established challenge processes by taking objections directly to a library board, school administrator, or governing board, or even hiding, stealing, or trashing materials. In some cases, library staff were intimidated and harassed, called groomers and pedophiles, and/or received death threats.

“In the face of unusual vitriol, libraries and library staff in Oregon once again have proven to be fierce defenders of intellectual freedom” says Wendy Cornelisen, State Librarian. “Strong libraries ensure that everyone in the community sees themselves and the experiences of others unlike themselves in library collections and services. The State Library of Oregon is committed to strengthening libraries and supporting their staff during this exceptional and challenging time.”

Libraries experiencing intellectual freedom challenges in Oregon are supported by the Oregon Library Association (OLA) and the ALA. Volunteers on OLA's [Intellectual Freedom Committee](#) respond and advise libraries during challenges, often serving as points of first contact for libraries seeking assistance. ALA's [Office of Intellectual Freedom](#) provides resources and consulting to help libraries prepare for and manage attempts at censorship. The State Library of Oregon relies on the expertise of both groups in its OIFC work.

To learn more about the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse and challenges in Oregon libraries, please visit the OIFC website at <https://libguides.osl.state.or.us/oifc> or contact Buzzy Nielsen, Program Manager for Library Support, at buzzy.nielsen@slo.oregon.gov or 971-375-3486.