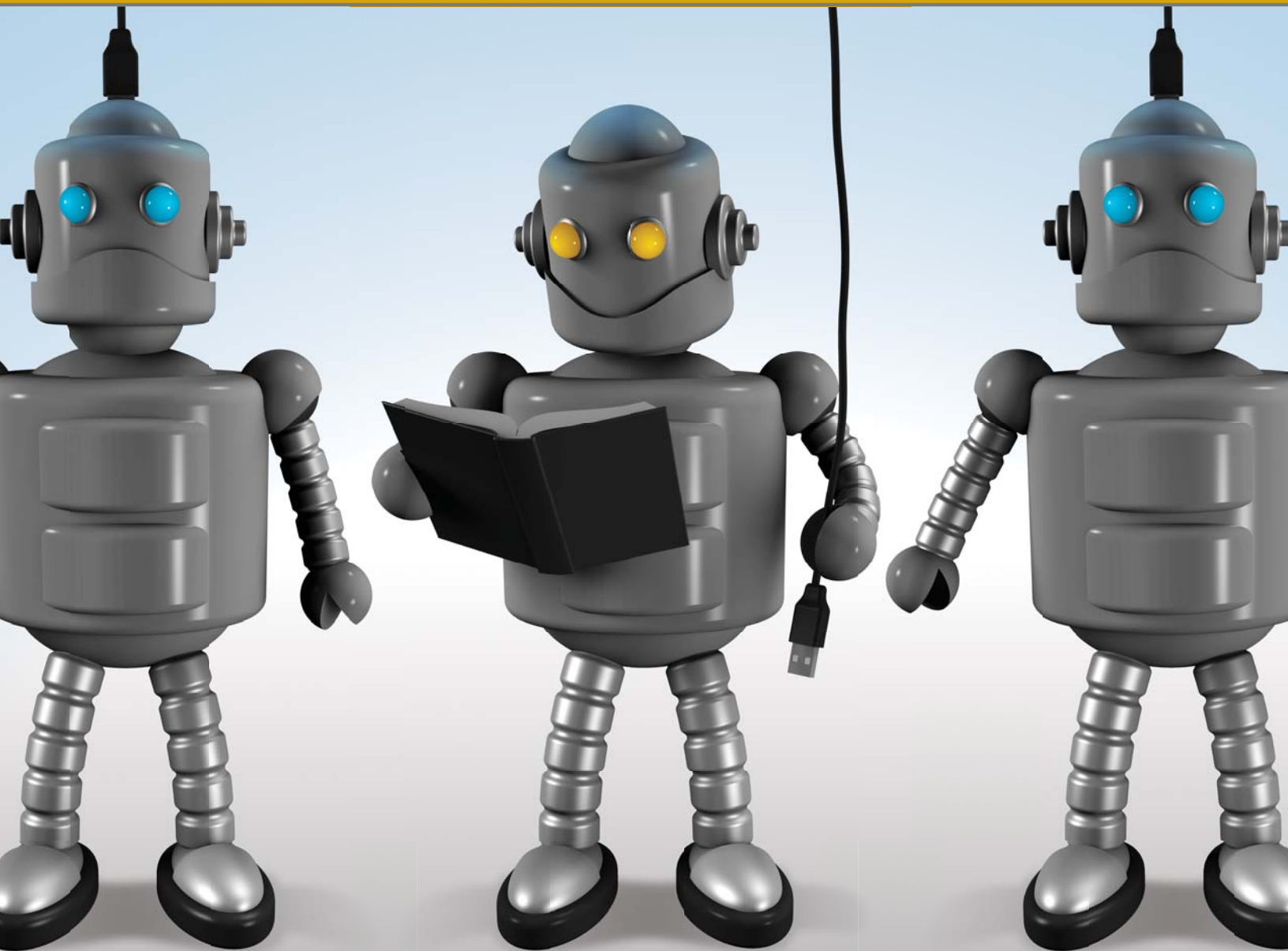


Think for Yourself and Let Others Do the Same

Books Challenged or Banned in 2009–2010 | Robert P. Doyle



BANNED BOOKS WEEK Celebrate Your Freedom to Read www.ala.org/bbooks

Sponsored by: American Booksellers Association, American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, American Library Association, American Society of Journalists and Authors, Association of American Publishers, and National Association of College Stores. Endorsed by: Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

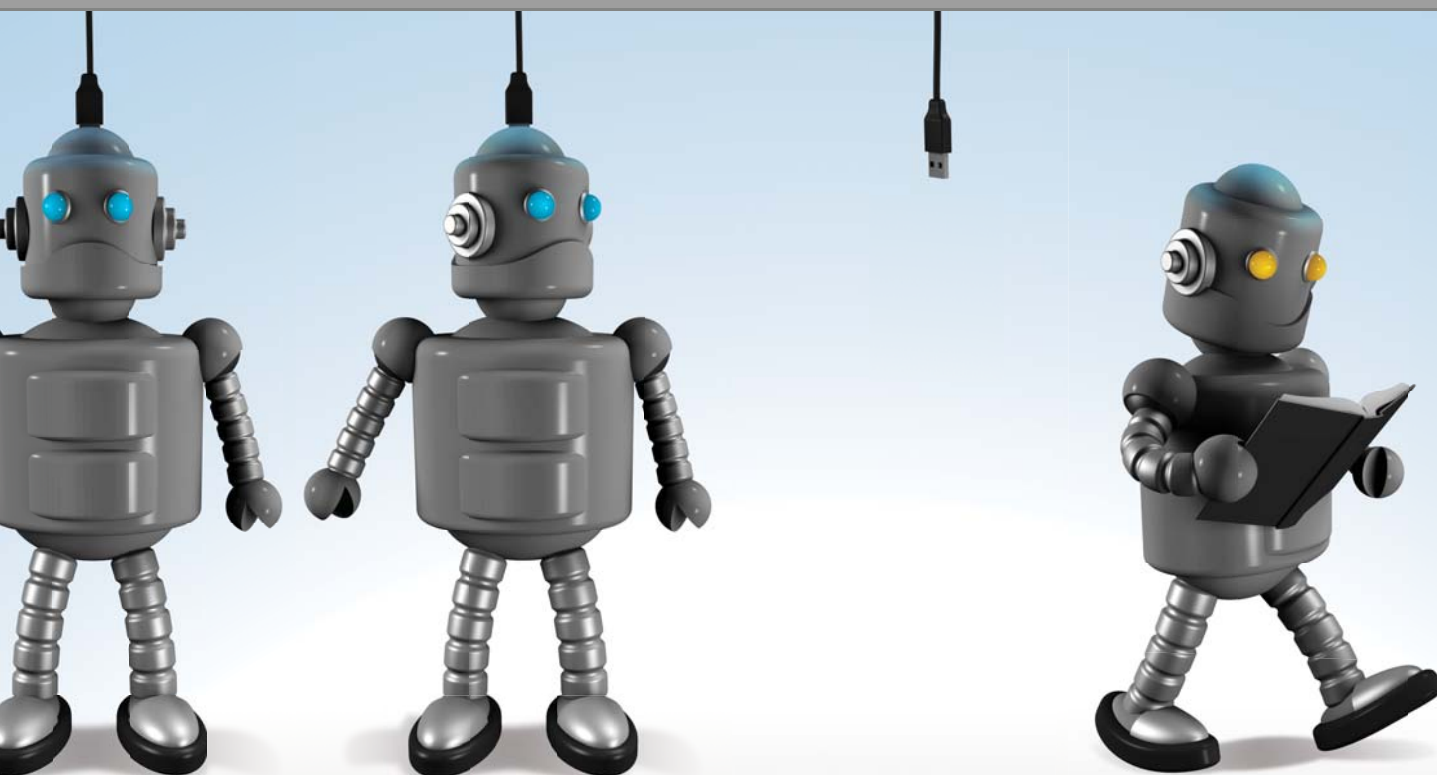
Books Challenged or Banned in 2009–2010

Banned Books Week 2010 is the twenty-ninth annual celebration of the freedom to read. This freedom, not only to choose what we read, but also to select from a full array of possibilities, is firmly rooted in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Although we enjoy an increasing quantity and availability of information and reading material, we must remain vigilant to ensure that access to this material is preserved; would-be censors who continue to threaten the freedom to read come from all quarters and all political persuasions. Even if well intentioned, censors try to limit the freedom of others to choose what they read, see, or hear.

Sex, profanity, and racism remain the primary categories of objections, and most occur in schools and school libraries. Frequently, challenges are motivated by the desire to protect children. While the intent is commendable, this method of protection contains hazards far greater than exposure to the “evil” against which it is leveled. U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, in *Texas v. Johnson*, said, “If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.” Individuals may restrict what they themselves or their children read, but they must not call on governmental or public agencies to prevent others from reading or seeing that material.

The challenges documented in this list are not brought by people merely expressing a point of view; rather, they represent requests to remove materials from schools or libraries, thus restricting access to them by others. Even when the eventual outcome allows the book to stay on the library shelves and even when the person is a lone protester, the censorship attempt is real. Someone has tried to restrict another person’s ability to choose. Challenges are as important to document as actual bannings, in which a book is removed from the shelves of a library or bookstore or from the curriculum at a school. Attempts to censor can lead to voluntary restriction of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy; in these cases, material may not be published at all or may not be purchased by a bookstore, library, or school district.

It should be noted that this bibliography is incomplete because many prohibitions against free speech and expression remain undocumented. Surveys indicate approximately 85 percent of the challenges to library materials receive no media attention and remain unreported. Moreover, this list is limited to books and does not include challenges to magazines, newspapers, films, broadcasts, plays, performances, electronic publications, or exhibits.



This bibliography represents books challenged, restricted, removed, or banned in 2009 and 2010 as reported in the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* from May 2009–May 2010. (A date prior to May 2009 indicates the controversy began earlier, but continues into 2010.)

Alexie, Sherman
The Absolutely True Diary
of a Part Time Indian

Thorndike Press; Little

Retained on the summer reading list at Antioch, Ill. High School (2009) despite objections from several parents who found its language vulgar and racist. In response to concerns, however, the district will form a committee each March to review future summer reading assignments. The committee, which will include parents, would decide whether parents should be warned if a book contains possibly objectionable material. Source: Sept. 2009, p. 171.

Anderson, Laurie Halse
Twisted

Viking

Withdrawn from classroom use and the approved curriculum at the Montgomery County, Ky. High School (2009), but available at the high school library and student book club. Some parents have complained about five novels that contain foul language and cover topics — including sex, child abuse, suicide, and drug abuse — deemed unsuited for discussion in coed high school classes. They also contend that the books don't provide the intellectual challenge and rigor that students need in college preparatory classes. The titles appeared on suggested book lists compiled by the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds who are "reluctant readers." The superintendent removed the book because it wasn't on the pre-approved curriculum list and couldn't be added by teachers in the middle of a school year without permission. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 16–17; Mar. 2010, p. 56.

Angelou, Maya
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Bantam

Restricted to students with parental permission at the Ocean View School District middle school libraries in Huntington Beach, Calif. (2009) because the "book's contents were inappropriate for children." Challenged in the Newman-Crows Landing, Calif. School District (2009) on a required reading list presented by the Orestimba High English Department. A trustee questioned the qualifications of Orestimba staff to teach a novel depicting African American culture. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 14–15; May 2010, p. 103.

Block, Francesca Lia
Baby Be-Bop

HarperCollins

Four Wisconsin men belonging to the Christian Civil Liberties Union (CCLU) sought \$30,000 apiece for emotional distress they suffered from the West Bend, Wis. Community Memorial Library (2009) for displaying a copy of the book. The claim states that, "specific words used in the book are derogatory and slanderous to all males" and "the words can permeate violence and put one's life in possible jeopardy, adults and children alike." The CCLU called for the public burning of this title. Four months later, the library board unanimously voted 9–0 to maintain, "without removing, relocating, labeling, or otherwise restricting access," this and other books challenged in the young adult section at the West Bend Community Memorial Library. Source: July 2009, pp. 128, 132, 134; Sept. 2009, pp. 169–70.

Boyle, T. Coraghessan
The Tortilla Curtain

Viking

Challenged on the Santa Rosa, Calif. High School reading list (2010). A review committee approved the continued use of the book with the following guidelines: "The teacher must appropriately prepare students for parts of the book that may be considered provocative; limit the book to juniors and seniors; should a parent object to the book, board policy is currently in place that allows a student to be excused from the book assignment, and provides for an alternative assignment without penalty to the student." Source: Mar. 2010, pp. 55–56.

Brown, Marc Tolon
Buster's Sugartime

Little

Challenged, but retained at the Union, Okla. district elementary school libraries (2009) despite a parent's complaint that the book features two same-sex couples and their children. Source: Mar. 2010, pp. 53–54.

Burroughs, Augusten
Running with Scissors
St. Martin

Challenged as a suggested reading in a class where juniors and seniors earn college credit in Hillsborough County, Fla. (2010). Four high schools — Plant, Middleton, Hillsborough, and Bloomingdale — voted to keep the book and place a "Mature Reader" label on the front cover. Three high schools — Sickles, Robinson, and Lennard — will require parental consent. Gaither High School and Riverview High School voted to ban the book. The book was banned at Riverview because, "This book has extremely inappropriate content for a high school media center collection. The book contained explicit homosexual and heterosexual situations, profanity, underage drinking and smoking, extreme moral shortcomings, child molesters, graphic pedophile situations and total lack of negative consequences throughout the book." Source: May 2010, pp. 103–4.

Cast, P. C. and Kristin Cast

House of Night series

St. Martin's Griffin

Banned at Henderson Junior High School in the Stephenville, Tex. Independent School District (2009). The entire teen vampire series was banned for sexual content and nudity. Since the series has not been completed, "Stephenville ISD actually banned books that have not yet been published and perhaps even books that have yet to be written. There is no way the district could know the content of these books, and yet they have been banned." Source: Nov. 2009, pp. 197–98, 225.

Chbosky, Stephen

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

Pocket Books

Removed from Portage, Ind. High School classrooms (2008) for topics such as homosexuality, drug use, and sexual behavior. The novel chronicles the freshman year of high school of a young man struggling with awkwardness and the changing world around him. Challenged at the West Bend, Wis. Community Memorial Library (2009) as being "obscene or child pornography" in a section designated "Young Adults." The library board unanimously voted 9–0 to maintain, "without removing, relocating, labeling, or otherwise restricting access," the book in the young adult section at the West Bend Community Memorial Library. The vote was a rejection of a four-month campaign conducted by the citizen's group West Bend Citizens for Safe Libraries to move fiction and nonfiction books with sexually explicit passages from the young adult section to the adult section and label them as containing sexual material. Challenged on Wyoming, Ohio high school district's suggested reading list (2009). The book contains frank and sometimes explicit descriptions of sex, drugs, suicide, and masturbation. Restricted at the William Byrd and Hidden Valley high schools in Roanoke, Va. (2009) to juniors and seniors. Freshmen and sophomores, however, will need parental permission to check out the book. Source: Jan. 2009, pp. 8–9; May 2009, pp. 80–81; Sept. 2009, pp. 169–70; Nov. 2009, pp. 202–3; Jan. 2010, pp. 13–14.

Comfort, Alex

Joy of Sex

Crown; Simon & Schuster

Restricted minors' access in the Topeka and Shawnee County, Kans. Public Library (2009) because the organization Kansans for Common Sense contended that the material is "harmful to minors under state law." Later the board voted 6–3 in favor of adopting a staff recommendation to keep the books where they are currently located on the shelves in the library's Health Information Neighborhood section. Source: May 2009, pp. 77–78; July 2009, p. 139.

Crutcher, Chris

Deadline

Greenwillow Books

Withdrawn from classroom use and the approved curriculum at the Montgomery County, Ky. High School (2009), but available at the high school library and student book club. Some parents have complained about five novels containing foul language and covering topics — including sex, child abuse, suicide, and drug abuse — unsuited for discussion in coed high school classes. They also contend that the books don't provide the intellectual challenge and rigor that students need in college preparatory classes. The titles appeared on suggested book lists compiled by the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds who are "reluctant readers." The superintendent removed the book because it wasn't on the pre-approved curriculum list and couldn't be added by teachers in the middle of a school year without permission. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 16–17; Mar. 2010, p. 56.

Drill, Esther

Deal with It! A Whole New Approach to Your Body, Brain, and Life as a gURL

Pocket Books

Challenged at the West Bend, Wis. Community Memorial Library (2009) as being "pornographic and worse than an R-rated movie." The library board unanimously voted 9–0 to maintain, "without removing, relocating, labeling, or otherwise restricting access," the books in the young adult category at the West Bend Community Memorial Library. The vote was a rejection of a four-month campaign conducted by the citizen's group West Bend Citizens for Safe Libraries to move fiction and nonfiction books with sexually explicit passages from the young adult section to the adult section and label them as containing sexual material. Source: May 2009, pp. 80–81; Sept. 2009, pp. 169–70.

Dubberley, Emily

Sex for Busy People: The Art of the Quickie for Lovers on the Go

Simon & Schuster

Restricted minors' access in the Topeka and Shawnee County, Kans. Public Library (2009) because the organization Kansans for Common Sense contended that the material is "harmful to minors under state law." Later the board voted 6–3 in favor of adopting a staff recommendation to keep the books where they are currently located on the shelves in the library's Health Information Neighborhood section. Source: May 2009, pp. 77–78; July 2009, p. 139.

Ehrenreich, Barbara

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America

Holt

Challenged at the Easton, Penn. School District (2010), but retained despite a parent's claim the book promotes "economic fallacies" and socialist ideas, as well as advocating the use of illegal drugs and belittling Christians. Source: May 2010, p. 107.

Frank, Anne
***Anne Frank: The Diary
of a Young Girl***

Doubleday

Challenged at the Culpeper County, Va. public school (2010) by a parent requesting that her daughter not be required to read the book aloud. Initially, it was reported that officials have decided to stop assigning a version of Anne Frank's diary, one of the most enduring symbols of the atrocities of the Nazi regime, due to the complaint that the book includes sexual material and homosexual themes. The director of instruction announced the edition, published on the fiftieth anniversary of Frank's death in a concentration camp, will not be used in the future despite the fact the school system did not follow its own policy for handling complaints. The remarks set off a hailstorm of criticism online and brought international attention to the 7,600-student school system in rural Virginia. The superintendent said, however, that the book will remain a part of the English classes, although it may be taught at a different grade level. Source: Mar. 2010, pp. 57–58; May 2010, p. 107.

Fuentes, Carlos

Aura

Farrar

Banned from the curriculum in Puerto Rican public high schools (2009) along with four other books because of coarse language. Written by one of Latin America's most prominent contemporary writers, the novel contains a brief romantic encounter beneath a crucifix. It is a scene that prompted Mexico's former interior secretary to try to have the book dropped from a reading list at his daughter's private school, without success. Fuentes said that the attempt boosted sales of the book. The other titles banned were: *Antologia personal*, by Jose Luis Gonzalez; *Mejor te lo cuento: antologia personal, 1978–2005*, by Juan Antonio Ramos; *Reunion de espejos*, by Jose Luis Vega; and *El entierro de Cortijo: 6 de octubre de 1982*, by Edgardo Rodriguez Julia. Source: Nov. 2009, p. 204.

Garrison, Eric Marlowe

***Mastering Multiple Position Sex
Quiver***

Challenged, but retained at the Pataskala, Ohio Public Library (2009). The library determined to implement a new juvenile library card. A parent or guardian will be able to sign off on the card, thereby restricting his or her child's borrowing rights to juvenile materials. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 12–13; Mar. 2010, p. 53.

Hahn, Mary Downing
The Dead Man in Indian Creek

Clarion Books; Sandpiper

Challenged at the Salem-Keizer School District, Oreg. elementary schools (2010) because of the drugs and drug smuggling activities in the book. The book was previously challenged in 1994 in the same school district because of graphic violence, examples of inappropriate parenting and because it was too frightening for elementary students. The book has won awards from the International Reading Association, the Children's Book Council, and the American Library Association. Source: May 2010, pp. 105–6.

Harding, Kat

Lesbian Kama Sutra

Thomas Dunne Books

Restricted minors' access in the Topeka and Shawnee County, Kans. Public Library (2009) because the organization Kansans for Common Sense contended that the material is "harmful to minors under state law." Later the board voted 6–3 in favor of adopting a staff recommendation to keep the books where they are currently located on the shelves in the library's Health Information Neighborhood section. Source: May 2009, pp. 77–78; July 2009, p. 139.

Hartinger, Brent

Geography Club

HarperTempest

Challenged at the West Bend, Wis. Community Memorial Library (2009) as being "obscene or child pornography" in a section designated "Young Adults." The library board unanimously voted 9–0 to maintain, "without removing, relocating, labeling, or otherwise restricting access," the books in the young adult category at the West Bend Community Memorial Library. The vote was a rejection of a four-month campaign conducted by the citizen's group West Bend Citizens for Safe Libraries to move fiction and nonfiction books with sexually explicit passages from the young adult section to the adult section and label them as containing sexual material. Source: May 2009, pp. 80–81; Sept. 2009, pp. 169–70.

Hemingway, Ernest

***Hills Like White Elephants:
A Short Story: The Complete Short
Stories of Ernest Hemingway***

Scribner

Pulled from a Litchfield, N.H. Campbell High School elective course classroom (2009) after parents voiced their concerns about a short-stories unit called "Love/Gender/Family Unit" that dealt with subject matters including abortion, cannibalism, homosexuality, and drug use. The parents said the stories promoted bad behavior and a "political agenda" and they shouldn't be incorporated into classroom teachings. The Campbell High School English curriculum adviser eventually resigned. Source: Sept. 2009, p. 154.

Hitler, Adolf

Mein Kampf

Houghton

Plans by German scholars to reprint as an academic treatise were rejected by the state copyright holders (2009), who said a new edition of the book could fuel support for far-right groups. The Bavarian authorities reaffirmed a sixty-four-year-old ban on the book after the Munich-based Institute of Contemporary History, or IFZ, applied for permission to reprint the work. Source: Sept. 2009, pp. 155–56.

Irving, John

A Prayer for Owen Meany

Ballantine; Morrow

Removed from the Pelham, Mass. school district recommended summer reading list (2009) after a parent complained about the novel's objectionable language and sexuality. Source: Sept. 2009, pp. 153–54.

Johnson, Maureen

The Bermudez Triangle

Razorbill

Challenged at the Leesburg, Fla. Public Library (2009) because of sexual innuendo, drug references, and other adult topics. Source: July 2009, p. 131.

King, Stephen
***Survivor Type: A Short Story
from Skeleton Crew***

Signet

Pulled from a Litchfield, N.H. Campbell High School elective course classroom (2009) after parents voiced their concerns about a short-stories unit called "Love/Gender/Family Unit" that dealt with subject matters including abortion, cannibalism, homosexuality, and drug use. The parents said the stories promoted bad behavior and a "political agenda" and they shouldn't be incorporated into classroom teachings. The Campbell High School English curriculum adviser eventually resigned. Source: Sept. 2009, p. 154.

Kingsolver, Barbara
The Bean Trees

Harper

Challenged at the William S. Hart Union High School District in Saugus, Calif. (2009) as required summer reading for the honors English program because the novel includes sexual scenes and vulgar language. Students have the option of alternative assignments that still meet objectives and teaching goals. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 15–16.

Klausen, Jytte
The Cartoons That Shook the World
Yale University Press

Yale University Press in New Haven, Conn. (2009) removed twelve cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad from an upcoming book about how they caused outrage across the Muslim world, citing fears of violence. A Danish newspaper originally published the cartoons — including one depicting Muhammad wearing a bomb-shaped turban — in 2005. Other Western publications reprinted them. The following year, the cartoons triggered massive protests from Morocco to Indonesia. Rioters torched Danish and other Western diplomatic missions. Some Muslim countries boycotted Danish products. Islamic law generally opposes any depiction of the prophet, even favorable, for fear it could lead to idolatry. Source: Nov. 2009, pp. 204–7.

Knowles, Jo (Johanna Beth)
Lessons from a Dead Girl
Candlewick Press

Withdrawn from classroom use and the approved curriculum at the Montgomery County, Ky. High School (2009), but available at the high school library and student book club. Some parents have complained about five novels containing foul language and cover topics — including sex, child abuse, suicide, and drug abuse — unsuited for discussion in coed high school classes. They also contend that the books don't provide the intellectual challenge and rigor that students need in college preparatory classes. The titles appeared on suggested book lists compiled by the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds who are "reluctant readers." The superintendent removed the book because it wasn't on the pre-approved curriculum list and couldn't be added by teachers in the middle of a school year without permission. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 16–17; Mar. 2010, p. 56.

Lee, Harper
To Kill a Mockingbird

Lippincott/Harper; Popular Library
Removed from the St. Edmund Campion Secondary School classrooms in Brampton, Ontario, Canada (2009) because a parent objected to language used in the novel, including the word "nigger." Source: Nov. 2009, pp. 203–4.

Lippman, Laura
***The Crack Cocaine Diet: A Short
Story from Hardly Knew Her***
Avon

Pulled from a Litchfield, N.H. Campbell High School elective course classroom (2009) after parents voiced their concerns about a short-stories unit called "Love/Gender/Family Unit" that dealt with subject matters including abortion, cannibalism, homosexuality, and drug use. The parents said the stories promoted bad behavior and a "political agenda" and they shouldn't be incorporated into classroom teachings. The Campbell High School English curriculum said the short story was not intended to glorify bad behavior, rather, it was chosen for its tone and point of view and to show the often devastating consequences of drug use. The English curriculum adviser eventually resigned. Source: Sept. 2009, p. 154.

Martin, Michael
Kurt Cobain
Capstone Press

Removed from all elementary and middle Farmington, Minn. school libraries (2009) because the book was "very dark and violent and made references to the use of Ritalin as being a precursor to the use of illicit drugs. It also covered topics such as mental illness and suicide." Source: Jan. 2010, p. 11.

McDonald, Brian
***In the Middle of the Night:
The Shocking True Story of
a Family Killed in Cold Blood***
St. Martin

Challenged at the Cheshire, Conn. Public Library (2009). McDonald's book revisits 2007, when Joshua Komisarjevsky and Steven Hayes allegedly invaded the Cheshire home of Dr. William Petit, beating him with a baseball bat and raping, torturing, and murdering his wife and two daughters. Complainants want the book kept off the library shelves until the men accused of the crime have been tried. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 7–8; Mar. 2010, p. 51.

Mead, Richelle
Vampire Academy series
Razorbill

Banned at Henderson Junior High School in the Stephenville, Tex. Independent School District (2009). The entire teen vampire series was banned for sexual content or nudity. Since the series has not been completed, "Stephenville ISD actually banned books that have not yet been published and perhaps even books that have yet to be written. There is no way the district could know the content of these books, and yet they have been banned." Source: Nov. 2009, pp. 197–98, 225.

Merriam-Webster Editorial Staff
***Merriam-Webster Collegiate
Dictionary***
Merriam-Webster

Pulled from the Menifee, Calif. Union School District (2010) because a parent complained when a child came across the term "oral sex." Officials said the district is forming a committee to consider a permanent classroom ban of the dictionary. Source: Mar. 2010, p. 55.

Meyer, Stephenie H.

Twilight series

Little

Banned in Australia (2009) for primary school students because the series is too racy. Librarians have stripped the books from shelves in some junior schools because they believe the content is too sexual and goes against religious beliefs. They even have asked parents not to let kids bring their own copies of Stephenie Meyer's smash hit novels — which explore the stormy love affair between a teenage girl and a vampire — to school. Source: Nov. 2009, pp. 207–8.

Moore, Alan

The League of Extraordinary

Gentlemen: Black Dossier

America's Best Comics

Challenged at the Jessamine County Public Library in Nicholasville, Ky. (2009). A petition with 950 signatures was presented to the board to overturn its collection policy. The petition specifically asked for the removal of four works on the grounds that they "offended me in that they depict sexual acts and/or describe such acts in a way that in my opinion are contrary to the Jessamine County public opinion" of what should be in a public, taxpayer-supported collection. The petition concluded the works constituted a public safety issue in that they encourage sexual predators. In addition to Moore's graphic novel, the other works challenged were *Snuff*, by Chuck Palahniuk, *Choke*, a DVD based on a novel by Palahniuk; and the DVD *Ron White: You Can't Fix Stupid*. The graphic novel eventually got two employees fired for breaching library policies, the library director was threatened with physical harm, and the book was recataloged, along with other graphic novels with mature trends, to a separate but unrestricted graphic novels section of the library. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 8–9; Mar. 2010, p. 52.

Morrison, Toni

Song of Solomon

Knopf; NAL

Reinstated in the Shelby, Mich. school Advanced Placement English curriculum (2009), but parents are to be informed in writing and at a meeting about the book's content. Students not wanting to read the book can choose an alternative without academic penalty. The superintendent had suspended the book from the curriculum. Source: July 2009, pp. 140–41.

Myracle, Lauren

ttyl

Amulet Books

Challenged, but retained at the John Muir Middle School library in Wausau, Wis. (2009) despite a parent's request that the book be removed because of sexually explicit content. The author said, "The book's dialogue about sex and alcohol is frank but the characters criticize those who engage in those behaviors." Retained in the Ponus Ridge Middle School library in Norwalk, Conn. (2010). While many critics decry its style as "grammatically incorrect," most who take exception point to its foul language, sexual content, and questionable sexual behavior. It is the first book written entirely in the format of instant messaging — the title itself is a shorthand reference to "talk to you later." Source: July 2009, p. 140; May 2010, p. 127.

Richardson, Justin, and Peter Parnell

And Tango Makes Three

Simon & Schuster

Challenged, but retained in the North Kansas City, Mo. schools (2009) despite a parent's concern that the book wasn't age-appropriate, didn't follow the district's policy on human sexuality education, and tries to indoctrinate children about homosexuality. The illustrated book is based on a true story of two male penguins that adopted an abandoned egg at New York City's Central Park in the late 1990s. In subsequent discussions, the schools appear to be headed towards segregating elementary school libraries according to "age appropriateness." Students might be restricted to view or check out materials in their own age-class or younger. Source: Mar. 2010, pp. 52–53, 73.

Schrag, Ariel, ed.

Stuck in the Middle: Seventeen

Comics from an Unpleasant Age

Viking

Pulled from the school library collections at two Sioux Falls, S.Dak. public middle schools (2009). The book is the work of sixteen cartoonists who recreated true tales from their middle-school years. The book's major themes are bullying and boy-girl awkwardness. Masturbation and marijuana show up in passing, and several of the vignettes include words most parents wouldn't want to hear from their children. Source: Jan. 2010, p. 13.

Scott, Elizabeth

Living Dead Girl

Simon Pulse

Challenged, but retained at the Effingham, Ill. Helen Matthes Library (2009) despite concerns about its graphic content and the unsatisfactory ending. The book is about a fifteen-year-old's perspective of living with her captor after being forcibly kidnapped and imprisoned at the age of ten. The book has received several accolades from book critics. Source: Nov. 2009, pp. 219–20.

Sedaris, David

I Like Guys: A Short Story

from Naked

Back Bay Books

Pulled from a Litchfield, N.H. Campbell High School elective course classroom (2009) after parents voiced their concerns about a short-stories unit called "Love/Gender/Family Unit" that dealt with subject matters including abortion, cannibalism, homosexuality, and drug use. The parents said the stories promoted bad behavior and a "political agenda" and they shouldn't be incorporated into classroom teachings. The Campbell High School English curriculum adviser said the short story was selected not only for its tone and style, but also its message of respect and acceptance, not for advocating homosexuality. The English curriculum adviser eventually resigned. Source: Sept. 2009, p. 154.

Seierstad, Åsne

The Bookseller of Kabul

Little; Virago

Challenged, but retained on Wyoming, Ohio high school district's reading list (2009) despite concerns about its sexual content. After a second challenge to a different title, the district reviewed all books on reading lists. Staff members rated each book on its relationship to the course, its uniqueness, its appropriateness, and the extent to which it "could create controversy among students, parents, and community groups." Source: Nov. 2009, pp. 202–3.

Selzer, Adam

How to Get Suspended

and Influence People

Delacorte

Challenged at the Nampa, Idaho Public Library (2009) by a parent appalled that the cover included an abstract drawing of a nude woman and the back cover contains some profanity. The book explores the theme of censorship through the eyes of a gifted eighth-grader who is suspended after making an avant-garde sex-education video for a class project. Source: Jan. 2010, p. 8.

Shusterman, Neal

Unwind

Simon & Schuster

Withdrawn from classroom use and the approved curriculum at the Montgomery County, Ky. High School (2009), but available at the high school library and student book club. Some parents have complained about five novels containing foul language and cover topics — including sex, child abuse, suicide, and drug abuse — unsuited for discussion in coed high school classes. They also contend that the books don't provide the intellectual challenge and rigor that students need in college preparatory classes. The titles appeared on suggested book lists compiled by the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds who are "reluctant readers." The superintendent removed the book because it wasn't on the pre-approved curriculum list and couldn't be added by teachers in the middle of a school year without permission. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 16–17; Mar. 2010, p. 56.

Silverstein, Charles, and Felice Picano

The Joy of Gay Sex

Harper

Challenged in the Lewis and Clark Library in Helena, Mont. (2008) due to objections over its content. The book has been in the library's collection since 1993. The library director accepted the recommendation of the library's collection review committee that the book be retained in the collection. Restricted minors' access in the Topeka and Shawnee County, Kans. Public Library (2009) because the organization Kansans for Common Sense contended that the material is "harmful to minors under state law." Later the board voted 6–3 in favor of adopting a staff recommendation to keep the books where they are currently located on the shelves in the library's Health Information Neighborhood section. Source: Nov. 2008, pp. 231–32, 254–55; May 2009, pp. 77–78; July 2009, p. 139.

Snyder, Zilpha Keatley

The Egypt Game

Dell; Macmillan

Challenged as part of a reading list in a fourth-grade class at Southern Hills Elementary School in Wichita Falls, Tex. (2009) because the book includes scenes depicting Egyptian worship rituals. The Newbery Award-winning book has been an optional part of the school district's curriculum for years. "I'm not going to stop until it's banned from the school district. I will not quiet down. I will not back down. I don't believe any student should be subjected to anything that has to do with evil gods or black magic," said the student's father. Source: Jan. 2010, p. 17.

Sones, Sonya

One of Those Hideous Books

Where the Mother Dies

Simon & Schuster

Challenged, retained at the Theisen Middle School in Fond du Lac, Wis. (2010) despite a parent's belief that the book's "sexual content was too mature for eleven- to fourteen-year-olds." The book has won several awards, including being named a 2005 Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association. The same parent plans to request removal of six other books from the library, including the *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* series, another set of books by Sones, and *Get Well Soon*, by Julie Halpern. Source: Mar. 2010, p. 54; May 2010, pp. 127–28.

Toriyama, Akira

Dragon Ball: The Monkey King

Viz Comics

Removed from the Wicomico County, Md. school media centers (2009) because the Japanese graphic novels depict some violence and show nudity. Source: Jan. 2010, p. 9.

Von Ziegesar, Cecily

Only in Your Dreams:

A Gossip Girl Novel

Little

Challenged at the Leesburg, Fla. Public Library (2009) because of sexual innuendo, drug references, and other adult topics. Responding to a call by parents, church, and community leaders to remove this novel along with twelve other provocative books available to teens at the Leesburg Public Library, city commissioners voted 4–1 to separate all books based on age groups. High-school books will be placed in a separate area in the library stairwell. Source: July 2009, p. 131; Nov. 2009, p. 201.

Walker, Margaret

Jubilee

Houghton

Challenged at the Jacksonville, Ill. High School (2010) by a pastor who said he found the fictionalized story of the author's grandmother, who was born as a slave in Georgia, "offensive" and "trashy" and a novel about the way of life in the Old South. "We believe it is to promote superiority for white people and to step on black people and make them feel inferior." The Ku Klux Klan challenged the novel in South Carolina in 1977 because it produces "racial strife and hatred." Source: May 2010, pp. 104–5.

Walls, Jeannette

The Glass Castle: A Memoir

Scribner

Challenged at the William S. Hart Union High School District in Saugus, Calif. (2009) as required summer reading for the honors English program. The 2005 memoir chronicles the author's harsh childhood and family life and includes profanity, criticisms of Christianity, and accounts of sexual abuse and prostitution. Students have the option of alternative assignments that still meet objectives and teaching goals. Source: Jan. 2010, pp. 15–16.

WritersCorps

Paint Me Like I Am: Teen Poems

HarperTempest

The principal at the Landis Intermediate School in Vineyard, N.J. (2009) removed two pages that included the poem "Diary of an Abusive Stepfather" after a thirteen-year-old Landis student's mother questioned its appropriateness. The thirty-one-line poem is peppered with profanity and details a violent relationship between an adult and child. San Francisco-based WritersCorps, an art organization linking writers with teens in urban areas to provide outlets for their experiences, produced the anthology. Retained in the combined middle and high school library in the North Fond du Lac, Wis. School District (2010) provided it has a label designating it as appropriate for high school students. Younger students could also access the book with prior parental permission. A parent asked the school district to reconsider the book due to mature language. Source: July 2009, pp. 131–32; May 2010, pp. 128–29.

Take Action!

Protect Your Right to Read

Each day, all across the country, one of our most basic freedoms — the right to read — is in danger. In communities large and small, censorship attempts every year threaten to undermine our freedom to read. Without our constant support, the First Amendment freedoms that we so often take for granted — the right to read, explore ideas, and express ourselves freely — are at risk.

The First Amendment guarantees that each of us has the right to express our views, including opinions about particular books. At the same time, the First Amendment also ensures that none of us has the right to control or limit another person's ability to read or access information. Yet, when individuals or groups file formal written requests demanding that libraries and schools remove specific books from the shelves, they are doing just that — attempting to restrict the rights of other individuals to access those books.

The rights and protections of the First Amendment include children as well as adults. While parents have the right — and the responsibility — to guide their own children's reading, that right does not extend to other people's children. Similarly, each adult has the right to choose their own reading materials, along with the responsibility to acknowledge and respect the right of others to do the same.

When we speak up to protect the right to read, we not only defend our individual right to free expression, we demonstrate tolerance and respect for opposing points of view. And when we take action to preserve our precious freedoms, we become participants in the ongoing evolution of our democratic society.



Act now to protect your right to read. Here's how you can get involved:

Stay Informed

Be aware of what's happening

The best way to fight censorship is to be aware that it's happening. When you encounter it, be prepared to speak up or let others know.

Ask the people on the front lines — librarians, teachers, school principals — if there are any current attempts to challenge or ban books or other materials. If they have support groups or information lists, ask to join them.

Legislators and public officials often introduce legislation to restrict access to books and other materials in libraries, schools, and bookstores. Let officials know that there are citizens actively opposed to demands to restrict or remove books in schools and libraries.



Attend school board, library board, and PTA meetings

You can speak up about the importance of free speech to education in a democratic society.

As a regular participant in gatherings, you have the opportunity to learn about policies governing access to books and materials. You can witness firsthand when someone demands that a school or library remove a book or restrict access to books.

Subscribe to print and online news publications

You can stay current on First Amendment rights and censorship issues.

The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom

(www.ala.org/oif) publishes the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* (members.ala.org/nif) and provides regular news updates via the OIF blog (www.oif.ala.org/oif), Twitter (twitter.com/oif) and the IFACTION mailing list (lists.ala.org/sympa/info/ifaction).

The First Amendment Center

(www.firstamendmentcenter.org) maintains an online First Amendment library (www.firstamendmentcenter.org/faclibrary/index.aspx) and provides breaking news about First Amendment issues via its RSS newsfeed (www.firstamendmentcenter.org/rss/news.rss).

The McCormick Foundation's Post-Exchange

(freedomproject.us/post-exchange) has original reporting and commentary on First Amendment and freedom related news. It also sends out an electronic newsletter that aggregates news from around the country and world on these issues.

Join groups committed to preserving the right to read

You can participate by joining these nonprofit organizations.

The Freedom to Read Foundation

(www.ftrf.org) is the only organization in the United States whose primary goal is to protect and promote the First Amendment in libraries by participating in litigation dealing with free expression in libraries and other venues. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, *The FTRF News*.

The American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression

(www.abffe.org) promotes and protects the free exchange of ideas, particularly those contained in books, by opposing restrictions on the freedom of speech.

The National Coalition Against Censorship

(www.ncac.org) is an alliance of fifty national non-profit organizations, including literary, artistic, religious, educational, professional, labor, and civil liberties groups that works to educate both members and the public at large about the dangers of censorship and how to oppose them.

The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund

(www.cbldf.org) works to protect free speech in comics by supporting First Amendment rights for members of the comics community, fans, and professionals alike.

The American Civil Liberties Union

(www.aclu.org) works daily to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution including the freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Local chapters and affiliates (www.aclu.org/affiliates) provide assistance to local communities.

Challenge Censorship

Report censorship to ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom

You can help raise awareness of censorship in your local community.

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom tracks attempts to remove or restrict books across the country. By reporting censorship incidents, you can help them to identify trends in censorship cases and document responses and solutions to censorship. All identifying information is kept strictly confidential. You can file reports online by going to www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/challengeslibrarymaterials/index.cfm.

Attend and participate in public hearings

You can inform public officials that censorship won't be tolerated in their community.

By attending hearings, you can speak out in support of free expression and the right to read freely. You can let officials know that there are citizens actively opposed to demands to restrict or remove books in schools and libraries. Such attempts seldom succeed when concerned citizens speak out against censorship.

Write letters to public officials

You can write to public officials encouraging them to preserve the freedom to read.

Let them know that your rights and your views are entitled to the same respect as those who seek to censor books. You can write to any official you believe can prevent the suppression of books in your community: your mayor, city council, other city officials, library board members, school board members, superintendent of schools, etc.

Send a letter or an op-ed article to local news organizations

You can update community news outlets with information and opinion.

Make sure you let reporters and editors know that there are members of the community who oppose censorship and the official suppression of ideas. Like letters to public officials, letters sent to local news outlets and comments posted on websites and blogs are effective ways to raise awareness.

Work with community groups

You can network with local organizations for support. Inform professional associations, civic organizations, and religious groups about attempts to remove books from the community's library or school. You can ask to speak to their membership about the importance of preserving First Amendment freedoms. Or ask if you can contribute an article to the group's newsletter or Web site. You can speak with the group's leaders and ask them to lend public support to efforts to protect the right to read in the community.

Form a coalition to oppose censorship in your community

You can partner with others who support the right to read freely.

Even a small number of persons can form a group to oppose censorship. Such groups allow members to share responsibility for attending meetings and conducting outreach efforts. By joining together you can become a resource for the community as a whole. (To read the story of one exemplary community coalition, visit their Web site at www.westbendparentsforreespeech.webs.com.)

Seek assistance from national groups

You can get guidance and support from experienced organizations.

Get started by researching existing groups so that you can benefit from their expertise. Check out the national organizations listed on page 10 for assistance, resources, and referrals whenever you or your organization address demands to remove books from libraries or schools.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES

Join Friends of the Libraries and PTAs

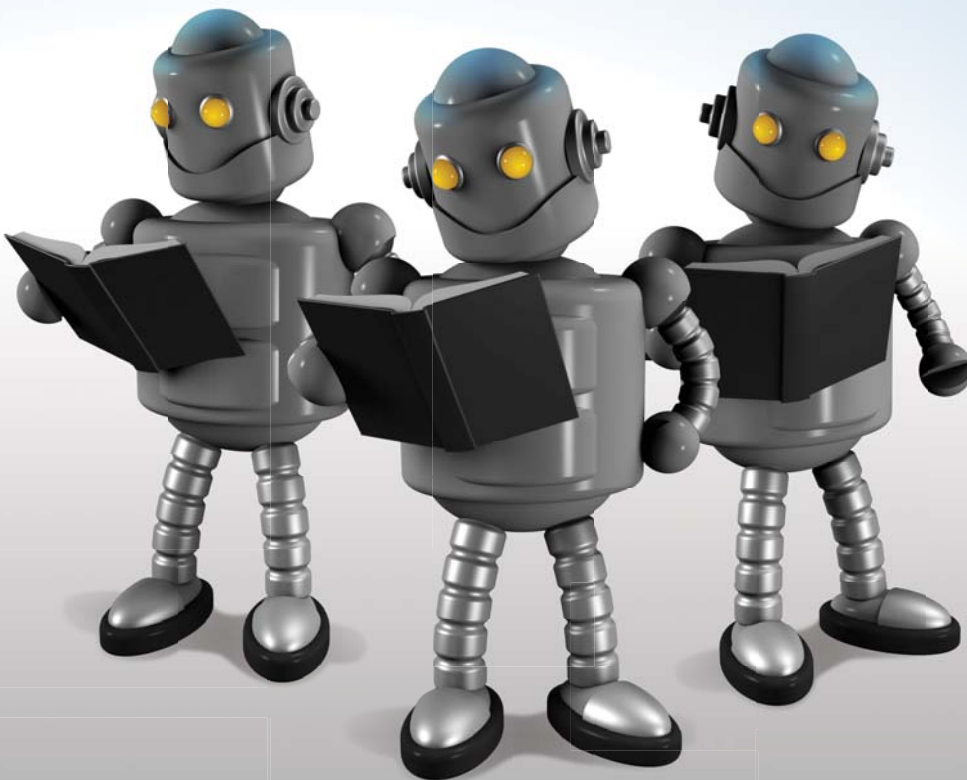
You can become an advocate for community education groups.

Libraries and schools rely on volunteers and advocates to accomplish their mission of educating young people. These groups also provide information and life-long learning opportunities to adults in the community. You can contribute by participating in Friends groups, PTAs, or volunteering directly where your help will strengthen these vital institutions.

Participate in Banned Books Week

You can promote the right to read by joining in the celebration.

Each year, libraries, schools, and bookstores across the nation celebrate the freedom to read by observing Banned Books Week. This public event in September features author visits and banned book readings. You can show your support for the freedom to read by attending these events. Please visit www.ala.org/bbooks for more resources and information.



Support Banned Books Week

Banned Books Week merchandise to help celebrate the freedom to read — such as posters, t-shirts, buttons, and bookmarks — is available for purchase at the ALA Store Online at www.alastore.ala.org, or by calling toll-free at 1-866-SHOP ALA (1-866-746-7252). This year's merchandise features robots (see below) and the slogan "Think for Yourself and Let Others Do the Same." For more information on Banned Books Week, please visit www.ala.org/bbooks.

