Intellectual Freedom
Foundations and Current Issues
Who are we and Why are we here?

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- Intellectual Freedom Committee Chair for the Ohio Library Council
- Branch Manager of the Main Location of Huron County Community Library
- Presented on diversity, Customer Service Barriers, and Intellectual Freedom at the OLC Convention multiple times

Rick Rubin (he/him)

- Former Reference Librarian/Director of Personnel- Akron-Summit County Public Library
- Director/Professor (Retired), School of Library and Information Science, Kent State University
- Member, OLC Executive Board
- Trustee, Cuyahoga Falls Library
Intellectual Freedom is something...

- to take pride in, believe in, and care about
- to promote and encourage
- to defend when necessary
- to implement every day in every possible way.
We are a democratic society:

   Faith in the individual to make decisions

   Faith in education, knowledge, and information to help make those decisions.

   Faith that society is healthiest when ideas can flow smoothly (intellectual freedom)
"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression: this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations)

“The freedom to think or believe what one will, freedom to express one’s thoughts and beliefs in unrestricted manners and means, and freedom to access information and ideas regardless of the content or views of the author(s), or the age, background, or beliefs of the receiver.”
   –Eliza Dresang, 2009
Freedom from...

- Government oversight or undue regulation
- Public scrutiny
- Invasion of one’s privacy regarding what one reads, views or hears.
Freedom to...

Access information unimpeded

To learn through discovery of new ideas

To have access to controversial issues

To engage others about diverse issues in a constructive and hospitable environments

To create one’s own content including social media
Foundation 3: The Library Promotes and Protects Intellectual Freedom

**Intellectual Freedom**

Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored.
Support from Our Profession

Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations
Freedom to Read Statement
ALA Code of Ethics
ALA Core Values of Librarianship
Foundation 4: The Library is a Public Good

To educate, inform, entertain: To provide collections and services that benefit the community as a whole and the individuals within that community.

To engage: Civic Educator, Conversation Starter, Community Bridge, Visionary, Civic Forum.

To reach out: To respect majority and minority members of the community and reflect their interests through the library’s collections, services, and facilities.
Foundation 5: All Aspects of the Library Affect Intellectual Freedom

- Books and materials selection and collection development
- Programming policies and practices
- Meeting room policies and practices
- Computer use policies and practices
- Library card policies
- Privacy and confidentiality including circulation records
- Other public spaces (displays, bulletin boards, bathrooms, seating areas)
- Staff attitudes and behaviors
Foundation 6: Intellectual Freedom Applies to Everyone

Common groups for violations:

- Older adults
- Young adults
- LGBTQ+ individuals
- People of color
- Black and Indigenous people
- People with disabilities
- Homeless individuals
- New adult and non-readers
- Incarcerated or formerly incarcerated people
- Those living in poverty
6 Foundations Review:

1. The Library Is Essential to a Democratic Society
2. Intellectual Freedom is a Fundamental Human Right
3. The Library Promotes and Protects Intellectual Freedom
4. The Library is a Public Good
5. All Aspects of the Library Affect Intellectual Freedom
6. Intellectual Freedom Applies to Everyone
Taking a Closer Look: Current Events and Issues

Challenges to Freedom To Read

Staff Attitudes and Behavior
   Self-censorship
   Reluctance to serve some groups

Collection Development and Selection

Meeting Rooms

Privacy

LGBTQ+
What does all this mean to you?

Staff can face the same barriers as patrons

  Microaggressions – both internal and external

  Training opportunities – looking beyond Banned Book Week

Self – Censorship

  Effects services, collection maintenance, and programming

Policy

  Have DEI policy posted

  Make sure policy includes hate speech definition

    ACLU statement has some good examples
Censorship and Bias

Challenges from the public

We have been here before.

Have a plan

Prepare staff

Have policy to protect your collection and community

Self-censorship
Selection and Collection Development

Why do libraries need selection policies?

- To help develop a collection that is based on both the goals of the library and the needs of its users.
- To defend the principles of intellectual freedom.

What should be included in a selection policy?

- Objectives for acquiring materials
- Responsibility and process for selection
- Criteria
- Reconsideration of materials process
Increased challenges to books
Objections to library programming
Gendered language
Staff Inclusion
Meeting Rooms

Meeting room policies should:

- Provide an explanation of scope and purpose for the meeting room
- Use inclusive rather than exclusive terms
- Be viewpoint and content neutral

You can:

- Define the time, place, or manner of use
- Include limitations on frequency of use
- Specify whether or not meetings must be open to the public
- Specify under what conditions people will be charged to use meeting room spaces, and what those charges will be
Privacy

Who can see records?

- Staff
- Guardians for youth under 18
- The patron

Who Can’t?

- Ohio Revised Code
- Court Orders/warrants

Beyond legal requirements

“All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people’s privacy.”

THE LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, ARTICLE VII
Summary to Reflect On:

Intellectual Freedom is a fundamental value of our libraries and should be encouraged and promoted.

A democratic society depends on intellectual freedom to prosper.

Libraries are fundamental protectors of intellectual freedom.

The past repeats itself. Challenges will always be there.

Libraries must represent the viewpoints of minorities and marginalized populations as well as the majority.

Protecting intellectual freedom is the responsibility of all who work in or govern libraries.
Libraries, Society, and The Road Forward

Libraries in America are cornerstones of the communities they serve. Free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in America's libraries is imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government.

From “Libraries: An American Value.”

Adopted February 3, 1999 by the Council of the American Library Association.
Questions and Comments?
Intellectual Freedom – A Foundation Webinar
INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM WEBINAR

STANDING UP TO CENSORSHIP

Part 1 - Meeting the Moment Panel Discussion
Part 2 - Banned Book Author Ashley Hope Perez

Tuesday, March 29
7 p.m.

in person at the Bexley Public Library and on Zoom
71% of voters oppose efforts to remove books from public libraries.

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<thead>
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<th>Party</th>
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<td>Democrats</td>
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<td>Independents</td>
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