

What To Do Before a Book is Challenged

Across the country there has been a dramatic increase in the number of book challenges in school districts and public libraries. A well curated collection that meets the needs of an entire community will certainly include items that some will find objectionable.

Be Prepared

The keys to successfully navigating these situations are (1) a solid collection development policy and (2) a well-trained staff. In addition to outlining the process and criteria for selecting resources, the policy should describe the procedure the library will follow when a user requests that a resource be reconsidered. Having a policy and procedure in place will help your staff deal confidently with users who express concerns.

Sample Policies

The OLC has put together several sample policies from different-sized libraries which are available on the OLC website. The policies cover collection development, library programs, meeting rooms and more. You will also find information on how to handle First Amendment Audits. This information is for Institutional Member Libraries only and is password protected.

Board Support

Make sure your board approves your policy. Library board members have an obligation to ensure that the library provides its users with a variety of materials representing a broad range of viewpoints.

Staff Training

As you know, it is important to continuously train your staff on library policies, procedures, and guidelines. Your frontline staff will be the library's first point of contact, and how they handle the situation will set the tone for the entire process. The better prepared you and your staff are, the more likely you will be to present the library's position dispassionately and coherently - and ensure that the library's mission is accomplished consistently. Additional guidance on handling informal complaints and formal challenges is available on the [ALA website](#). We understand that this is a stressful and challenging time. If you have questions, please contact the OLC office.