People often express surprise that books are still being challenged. How quaint!

Do Americans still use libraries? (They do; two-thirds of us have and use library cards.) Do people still try to ban books, even in the age of streaming video and the internet? (Yes – and in schools and libraries, they frequently succeed.)

Since 1990, the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom has been tracking reports of attempted and successful challenges to materials and services in libraries and schools in the United States. (Occasionally, we also note certain international challenges.) “Challenges” are formal attempts not just to complain about, but to remove or restrict access to library resources. Usually, books are targeted, although the trend is to move beyond books [see below]. Sometimes, those challenges are affirmed by government representatives or school, public library, or university officials. When the resource is in fact restricted or removed, we say it has been “banned.” That is, a governing authority has removed access to a resource in that institution.

Censorship is a slippery thing, thriving in the shadows. Although the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom exists to track censorship attempts, and support libraries dealing with those attempts, libraries are under no legal responsibility to report intellectual freedom challenges. With the precipitous decline of school librarians across the nation, few school library workers even know that there are such things as collection development policies, or requests for reconsideration, or our office and the support we provide.

From studies conducted in 2011 in Missouri, Oregon, and Texas, we have learned that only between 3-18% of challenges ever make it to us. Of the ones that do, we offer the assurance of confidentiality. Far too often, the person who pulled the book is a principal, dean, or director. Those who report it to us may worry about losing their jobs.

This 2017 Field Report documents the public reports of the challenges that found their way to our office. All of the reports here have been verified by some external third party. These challenges made it to the press, or TV, or can be traced through public board minutes. This is the public record of attempts to deny access to the intellectual content of our culture.

Most of the challenges we receive are isolated occurrences. For titles like 1984, Eleanor and Park, Jacob’s New Dress, and The Handmaid’s Tale, there was just one publicly reported challenge, or two. In a rare case, a book has three or four. A dozen challenges for a single title is a lot, reflecting a spike of cultural conflict. Ten years ago, it was Harry Potter, and wild allegations of Satanism. Now it’s fear of teen suicide.

But the point isn’t the frequency or volume of challenges to specific titles. The point is readiness, an alertness to the times. This report does not claim to be comprehensive or representative. It’s simply the best we have, a peek under the veil censors would prefer to draw over their activities. Sometimes, there are themes, and those themes are worth talking about. The best defense against censorship is transparency. Censorship succeeds when nobody talks about it at all.

But there are new challenges, too, far beyond books. Authors are invited to speak, then disinvited when someone complains about them. Sometimes, even on college campuses, there is destruction of property, physical threats, or real violence. Book or art displays, whether from the community or the staff, spark calls to remove a viewpoint from the public gaze.

In 2017, for the first time we’ve seen attacks against library periodical databases. Most of these are coordinated attacks by a single group that believes information and references to human sexuality found in research databases are pornographic, and should be forbidden.

Since December of 2016, we have also been tracking hate crimes in libraries, which began to rise sharply after the 2016 presidential election. While these illegal acts aren’t always defined as censorship, occasionally there is an overlap with library material censorship – as when a book is mutilated or destroyed.

Today, our environment is larger than print. Where thought goes, the censors follow.

We invite you to distribute and talk about the 2017 list of censorship activities. What does it say about America today? How does it match up with your own community?

Most importantly, how can libraries and literary advocates continue to encourage both individuals and whole communities to learn and grow, to understand the world around us?

Censorship is not the answer.

James LaRue, Director
Office for Intellectual Freedom
American Library Association
Alexander, Michelle

Banned in North Carolina prisons in February 2017 because it was considered “likely to provoke confrontation between racial groups.” The book was later removed from the list of prohibited books after the American Civil Liberties Union sent Department of Public Safety officials a public letter in 2018. *The New Jim Crow* is just one of thousands of items that are denied distribution within federal and state prisons. It is often unclear whether an item that appears on a master list of disapproved items is restricted from a specific inmate or if the item is banned from the prison library for all inmates. North Carolina Department of Corrections policy states publications describing violence, escape, the commission of a crime, or the manufacture of poisons or drugs, or publications containing sexually explicit material may be banned.

Source: “Amid ACLU protest, NC prisons will remove The New Jim Crow from banned books list,” Indy Week, January 23, 2018.

**Alexie, Sherman**

Curriculum approval was delayed at the Conejo Valley Unified School District Board (California) in the spring of 2017 for the fall semester because the board president had personal objections to the books *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and *The Kite Runner*, because of profanity and sexuality. After a summer of protests and editorials, the board met in August and approved the curriculum with all four books included.


Challenged by several parents in the New London-Spicer School District (Minnesota), who asked that it be removed from eighth-grade English students’ required reading list, on the basis of “gratuitous and unnecessary” profanity and reference to sexual acts. The school board voted 3-2 to retain Alexie’s book for the eighth-grade curriculum.


Challenged but retained at Democracy Prep (Nevada), where seventh-graders are required to read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Parents complained about the language and sexual references in the book and asked administrators to remove the book from the curriculum. The Democracy Prep executive director held firm in support of the book and did not ban it.


Retained at Sauk Prairie (Wisconsin) Schools after a group of parents raised concerns about teaching Alexie’s award-winning book in ninth-grade classes. Their complaints about the profanity, violence, and sexual references in the book were considered by a review committee. The review committee and superintendent formally recommended to retain the book. After the parents appealed the administration’s decision, the school board voted unanimously to retain the book in the school’s curriculum.


Restored to the tenth-grade curriculum at Alton High School (Illinois), following a review committee meeting about *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. The book was temporarily pulled from instruction early in October after a single parent objected to its contents. The teacher worked with the parent and the administration to reinstate the book and provide an alternative for concerned parents.


**Arnold, Mike and Emila Gardner**

Banned at Oregon state prisons. This self-published book about a former Marine sniper who is serving time for a fatal shooting, written by the man’s two attorneys, was judged to fall to under the category of “true crime,” a genre which is prohibited in Oregon prisons.


**Asante, M.K.**
*Buck* (2013)

Removed from the curriculum at Digital Harbor High School (Maryland) after parents complained that the content and language were too graphic for teenagers. The coming-of-age memoir follows author M.K. Asante as he navigates the streets of Philadelphia as a kid, educating himself through gangs, school, rap and books. A teacher from Digital Harbor High School wrote an opinion piece for the *Baltimore Sun* stating, “When we take away literature that reflects the realities of many students’ lives, we say to them that their voices do not matter.” Asante, now an associate...
professor at Morgan State University, has been teaching *Buck* in Baltimore City since 2013, and told *Cassius*, “When I was a young buck, it was these kind of books and these kind of authors [that] really changed the whole trajectory and direction of my life ... ”


**Asher, Jay**

*Thirteen Reasons Why* (2007)

Temporarily removed from school library shelves at the Mesa County School District (Colorado), because of recent teenage suicides in the community. The novel was made into a Netflix original series this past year, and some critics claim the series romanticizes suicide. The curriculum director ordered its removal, but after the school librarians protested the censorship, the book was promptly returned to library shelves.


Banned at Red Deer Catholic School Division (Canada) after school counselors and psychologists hosted an evening discussion with families on mental health and safety, including the 2016 Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*. In response to parents’ and school faculty members’ concerns that the series glamorizes teen suicide, the school banned the 2007 young adult novel by Jay Asher that the series is based on.


Banned at Stone Lakes Elementary School (Florida). The principal said, “Besides depicting the suicide itself in a somewhat graphic nature, there is frequent use of profanity, alcohol and sexually explicit material (both in the book and the TV show).” Despite book reviews and publisher indications that the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* is most likely to be found in libraries serving middle schools and high schools, Orange County Schools officials made a blanket ban that any book labeled “Mature Teen” is not welcome on an elementary school campus.


Retained as required reading for sophomores at a Fort Wayne Community Schools (Indiana) high school, after a mother complained at the district’s board meeting, and also called the high school principal to express her concerns about *Thirteen Reasons Why* and the assignments associated with reading it. Her concerns center on the tone of the main character’s expressions, lack of mental health care, and author’s lack of a moral lesson for those suffering from depression. The book has not been removed from the curriculum.


**Atwood, Margaret**

*The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985)

Retained on Wyomissing High School’s (Pennsylvania) summer reading list of books recommended for juniors and seniors, after a group of parents attempted to get the novel removed because of vulgar language and graphic depictions of sex. At a curriculum and technology committee meeting with the acting superintendent, administrators decided to retain the book and develop additional options for families who choose not to read it.


**Bradbury, Ray**

*Fahrenheit 451* (1953)

Retained as a required part of the eighth-grade curriculum at Santa Rosa District Schools (Florida). A parent filed a formal request to ban the classic 1953 novel because of profanity and using God’s name in vain. She also had concerns about Bradbury including sex, drugs, suicide, murder, and abortion in the book. After a review committee evaluation, per district selection policy, the superintendent clearly and directly supported intellectual freedom by retaining the book. Despite the school district’s assurance that students can opt for another assignment, some students plan to start a petition to ban *Fahrenheit 451* from Santa Rosa District Schools for good.


**Burroughs, Augusten**

*Running with Scissors* (2002)

Challenged but retained in a public library in Oregon. The memoir was reviewed because of a patron’s belief that the material is child pornography and promotes child sexual abuse.

Source: 2017 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**Carlson, Melody**

*TrueColors series* (2003-2007)

Challenged and “restricted to certain age group” at the Franklin Middle School of Franklin Independent School District (Texas). The *TrueColors series* was called out because of “inappropriate situations for age of student reading.” This was one of three challenges at the school in 2017. The author’s website states that each of the 12
YA Christian fiction books in her series “explores edgy, poignant topics.”

Deuker, Carl
_Gutless_ (2016)
The Florida-wide Celebrate Literacy Week didn’t go as planned at Jay High School when a book was pulled from the school’s reading list created for the event. The YA book _Gutless_ is about a high school football player finding courage and standing up to bullies. One of the passages labeled “inappropriate” by some parents describes a girl flaunting her breasts and the narrator’s reaction to it. The author told *Santa Rosa Press Gazette*, “The main character learns through the course of the novel that developing the moral courage to stand up to evil is essential, far more important than physical courage on an athletic field. The teachers would have used the book to take on the topics of bullying and abuse of power.”

Elkeles, Simone
_Perfect Chemistry; Chain Reaction; Rules of Attraction_ (2008-2011)
Banned from the Challenger Middle School Library (Colorado) when administration overruled a review committee that had unanimously recommended to retain _Perfect Chemistry_.
The original complaint filed by a parent cited graphic sexual encounters, drug and alcohol use, violence, and profanity. The book review committee, librarians, educators, and parents filed a 92-page appeal to the school board in hopes of overturning the superintendent’s censorship of the book. The school board voted to ban the book. The other two books in the series by Simone Elkeles have also been removed.

Erickson-Schroth, Laura and Laura A. Jacobs
_“You’re in the Wrong Bathroom!”: And 20 Other Myths and Misconceptions About Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming People_ (2017)
Challenged and relocated to the adult nonfiction collection at the Geneva Public Library (Illinois). A community member found the book face-out on display in a young adult nonfiction collection designed for grades 9-12. She verbally expressed to a staff member that she felt the book was inappropriate, then formally submitted a request to “remove this book, or any others like it.” The patron’s concern was that the book is written to indoctrinate readers and it encourages risky behaviors. The library director agreed with the recommendation of the review committee to retain and relocate the book.

Esquivel, Laura
_Like Water for Chocolate_ (1989)
Now available only as excerpts used in the eleventh and twelfth-grade Spanish courses at Uplift Charter Schools’ North Hills Preparatory School (Texas), this magic realism title by a Mexican author was deemed “too complex for the grade level assigned.” The book was made into a movie three years after it was published.

Gagne, Tammy
_Boxers_ (2010)
The children’s book was challenged, but retained, at Camacho Elementary School (Texas). The complaint was that the book on the boxer breed of dogs offered information about bull-baiting, bull-docking, and bull-cropping that was “not appropriate for elementary school students.”

Gaines, Ernest
_A Lesson Before Dying_ (1993)
A parent’s complaint about _A Lesson Before Dying_ being included in the curriculum turned into a district-wide ban of all instructional materials that contain “profanity, cursing, or inappropriate subject matter” at Dixie County (Florida) schools. The student of the parent was
given a substitute title, while a committee reviewed *A Lesson Before Dying* and decided to retain it. A day after the decision, the superintendent issued the ban.  

**Gina, Alex**

*George* (2015)  
Removed from a set of award-winning books that the Wichita School District (Kansas) purchased for all 57 Wichita elementary schools, but school librarians may purchase it with their own funds. The supervisor of library media for the Wichita district stated that the book about a transgender fourth-grader contains language and references that are not appropriate for young children. The book was on the 2017-2018 master list for the William Allen White Children’s Book Awards, which since 1952 has honored the memory of a distinguished citizen of Kansas by providing a set of 10 books every year for third- through fifth-grade readers. *George* will not be included in the set provided to Wichita schools. Four of Wichita’s 57 elementary schools have the middle-grade novel in their libraries.  

**Going, K.L.**  
*The Liberation of Gabriel King* (2005)  
Challenged in Pinellas County (Florida) by a mother calling it inappropriate for fifth-graders because it includes the N-word. Pinellas County Schools District leaders have approved the book, but are reviewing whether policies related to sensitive materials were followed. The author calls it a fictional story about courage in 1976, where one of the characters in it is an African American girl facing her fear of the KKK.  

**Guterson, David**  
*Snow Falling on Cedars* (1994)  
Curriculum approval was delayed at the Conejo Valley Unified School District Board (California) in the spring of 2017 for the fall semester because the board president had personal objections to the books *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian,* *Snow Falling on Cedars,* *The Catcher in the Rye,* and *The Kite Runner,* because of profanity and sexuality. After a summer of protests and editorials, the board met in August and approved the curriculum with all four books included.  

**Hall, Michael**  
This illustrated children’s book was challenged, but retained, in a Rocklin Academy school (California). A transgender kindergarten student gave some books about her situation to her teacher, and the teacher read them to the class. Some parents complained to the school board about being “blindsided.” The district responded that the books were age-appropriate, fell within the book selection policy, and that unlike sex education, the topic of gender identity did not require prior parental notice. However, the superintendent stated that “staff will be engaging parents and teachers in discussions about how materials outside our curriculum will be addressed in the future.”  

**Herbst, Judith**  
*Beyond the Grave* (2004)  
Challenged and relocated from the River Place Elementary School (Texas) to the middle school in the Leander Independent School District. *Beyond the Grave* examines cases of spontaneous human combustion, reports of reincarnation, and other mysterious tales. The concern was that “photographs will scare children and give them nightmares.”  

**Hosseini, Khaled**  
Curriculum approval was delayed at the Conejo Valley Unified School District Board (California) in the spring of 2017 for the fall semester because the board president had personal objections to the books *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian,*
Snow Falling on Cedars, The Catcher in the Rye, and The Kite Runner, because of profanity and sexuality. After a summer of protests and editorials, the board met in August and approved the curriculum with all four books included.


Challenged but retained after a school district board member requested Khaled Hosseini’s novel be removed from the Advanced Placement English curriculum at Fishers High School (Indiana), after discovering her daughter reading it. The parent objected to its inclusion of a same-sex gang rape scene and depiction of distrust in adults. The book was retained in the curriculum, and teachers sent an end-of-the-school-year letter to parents, offering an alternative assignment if requested.


Higley Unified School District (Arizona) removed Khaled Hosseini’s contemporary classic from the English curriculum, after five years of it being included on the list. Students at Williamsfield High School were in the middle of reading the book when it was pulled with no explanation. Students spoke up about the censorship and as a result, the administration shut down the high school newspaper.


Jennings, Jazz and Jessica Herthel
I Am Jazz (2014)
This title, one of the Top Ten Challenged Books of 2017, was challenged, but retained, in a Rocklin Academy school (California). A transgender kindergarten student gave some books about her situation to her teacher, and the teacher read them to the class. Some parents complained to the school board about being “blindsided.” The district responded that the books were age-appropriate, fell within the book selection policy, and that unlike sex education, the topic of gender identity did not require prior parental notice. However, the superintendent stated that “staff will be engaging parents and teachers in discussions about how materials outside our curriculum will be addressed in the future.”


Kariel, Frank
My World History (2012)
A school board in Brevard County (Florida) decided to keep the textbook in ninth-grade classrooms, amid complaints that its chapter on Islam “painted Mohammed and the treatment of women in an overly favorable light.”


Kawahara, Reki
Sword Art Online: Aincrad (2009)
A Jerome Middle School (Idaho) student approached a teacher about “inappropriate” language and drawings in the Japanese manga novel from the library. The English teacher issued a complaint. A review committee unanimously recommended that the book be kept in the school’s library.


Lee, Harper
To Kill a Mockingbird (1960)
After a mother complained to the superintendent that her son was uncomfortable with the N-word, the historical novel, which deals with race relations in the Jim Crow South, was removed from the eighth-grade curriculum at Biloxi Public Schools (Mississippi) in the middle of teaching it, without following policy. After national outcry, the book is available to be taught as an optional assignment with the written permission of a parent.


Legrand, Claire
Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls (2012)
Challenged and retained in a public library in Oregon, this book is described as “spine-tingling fun.” A local patron requested the material be moved from juvenile to teen due to disturbing content and dark/scary themes.

Source: 2017 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon
Morrison, Toni
*The Bluest Eye* (1970)
Frequently challenged over the years for sexual situations (such as rape, incest and teen pregnancy), the book written by Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison was challenged and retained by the Uplift Charter School’s North Hills Preparatory School (Texas).

Banned at North Buncombe High School (North Carolina) after English teachers sent home a syllabus at the start of the school year informing parents and students of the controversial content, and said students could opt out of the reading and replace it with another book for their English 3 honors class. Once the unit began, a parent filed the challenge because *The Bluest Eye* didn’t align with their values and felt that it was not appropriate to be read in school. The school-level committee that met about the book agreed with the parent that it was not appropriate for an eleventh-grade class, but offered a recommendation that it could be appropriate for a twelfth-grade AP literature class. Regardless, the district withdrew the book from the curriculum for “all grades and levels of instruction.”

Myers, Walter Dean
*Bad Boy* (2001)
Retained, but with a warning to parents. A parent of a sixth-grader in Duval County (Florida) objected to assigned reading of *Bad Boy*, citing the inclusion of the word “penis,” a homophobic slur, drug use, gang violence, and the questioning of religion. The school district stated it would warn parents before assigning the memoir.

Myracle, Lauren
*L8r, G8r; TTYL; TTFN* (2004-2007)
Banned at Mohave Middle School (Arizona) — where the mother of a sixth-grader objected to the sexual topics of the series, and took the complaint to the local Fox 10 TV station — but also from all the other middle schools in the Scottsdale Unified School District. Lauren Myracle’s series of text message conversations between three teenage friends sold over 1.5 million copies, but also landed her on the No. 1 spot in the Top Ten Most Challenged Books list in 2011 and 2009.

Olsson, Soren and Anders Jacobsson
*In Ned’s Head* (2001)
Challenged, after a fifth-grader checked out the book from the Buena Vista Spanish Immersion School library (Oregon). His mother posted complaints on Facebook. Her opinion that the book is not appropriate for any grade, let alone elementary levels, was shared with the school district. District administrators removed the book from the elementary school.

Orwell, George
*1984* (1949)
Challenged and removed from required reading at the Lake Travis Middle School (Texas) because parents felt this classic book was not “age appropriate.” An alternative book was permitted. Originally published in 1949, Orwell’s classic dystopian novel surged to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list in the months following the 2016 presidential election.

Banned but eventually retained. A parent of a student at the Rigby High School in Jefferson County School District (Idaho) complained about a passage in 1984, calling it violent and sexually explicit. The book was assigned reading in two senior level government classes. Early reports claimed that
administrators had directed the book to be banned, and district reconsideration policies had not been followed. After strong student protests against the banning, including an online petition with over 500 signatures, officials announced that the book would be retained. An alternative book was offered to meet the concerns of those parents with objections.


Orwell, George

*Animal Farm* (1946)

Administrators at Stonington Public Schools (Connecticut) removed George Orwell's classic novel from the eighth-grade language arts curriculum. No official reason was given about why the book was removed from the group of “anchor books,” which caused much upset in the community. Despite multiple comments at board meetings and heated protests from a Mystic Middle School teacher, the book is limited to supplemental status.


Patterson, James


The *Maximum Ride Manga Series* was one of the three titles challenged at the Franklin Middle School (Texas) in 2017. Two were restricted for use for certain age group (*TrueColors* series and *Maximum Ride Manga Series*); the third (*Drama*) was banned. The concern for all the challenges was “inappropriate situations for age of student reading.” The *Maximum Ride Manga Series* was restricted to older students. There are nine titles in the series, which has been described as a cross between *The Boxcar Children* and *X-Men*.


* Pitman, Gayle

*This Day in June* (2014)

Retained, amid controversy. With the full support of the conservative Illinois Family Institute, a husband and wife submitted a formal request for reconsideration of the children's picture book about a gay pride parade, after their 3-year-old daughter picked it from the children's shelf at the West Chicago Public Library (Illinois). They requested to have the book removed or relocated to the adult section so children won't be exposed to LGBT imagery. Over 150 people attended the library board meeting, and after much debate, the board voted 6-1 to keep the book in the library's youth collection.


Quran

Two copies of the *Quran* were discovered in a toilet at the University of Texas at Dallas student union. Police were unsure who discarded the holy books or if it was a staged activity.

Source: “Qurans found in toilet at University of Texas at Dallas, police say,” Dallas News, April 12, 2017.

Rowell, Rainbow

*Eleanor and Park* (2013)

This YA novel was initially pulled from the Yamhill-Carlton School District (Oregon) curriculum by the school board after parents complained about its use in a middle school classroom. Agreeing with the parents who disapproved of the profanity in the award-winning book, the board voted to pull it immediately without following district policy. Later the board apologized for its hasty decision and the process was turned over to a reconsideration committee. The committee retained the book.


Sachar, Louis

*Is He a Girl?* (1993)

After another North Carolina school district removed *Jacob’s New Dress*, some parents asked the Union County Public School District (North Carolina) to remove another book that addresses identity from a classroom collection in the Rea View Elementary School. The North Carolina Values Coalition claimed *Is He a Girl?* and other books like it were an “attempt by the LGBT community” to “indoctrinate children” and “normalize (LGBT) type of behavior.” UCPS did not remove the book. A parent could choose not to allow their child to read any materials, said UCPS. However, policy states no parent has the right to determine the reading, viewing, or listening resources for children other than his/her own.

Source: “Controversial book doesn’t receive same outcome as CMS,” Union County Weekly, April 7, 2017.

Salinger, J.D.

*The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Curriculum approval was delayed at the Conejo Valley Unified School District Board (California) in the spring of 2017 for the fall semester because the board president had personal objections to the books *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, Snow Falling on Cedars, The Catcher in the Rye*, and *The Kite Runner*, because of profanity and sexuality. After a summer of protests and editorials, the board met in August and approved the curriculum with all four books included.


Schrag, Ariel

*Stuck in the Middle* (2007)

Because of parent complaints, Del Crest Middle School (Oklahoma), part of the Mid-Del School District, temporarily removed the book *Stuck in the Middle*, a series of illustrated tales by Ariel Schrag, from the library shelves. One parent called it “trash” and complained of vulgarities, sexual references,
and drug use in some of the stories. Following district policy, a review committee recommended the book be retained.


Schwartz, Alvin

The second book in the trilogy of Schwartz’s macabre folktales, illustrated by Stephen Gammell,

was challenged and removed from the school library, final decision pending, at the Lake Travis Elementary School (Texas). The book was challenged because it contained “violence or horror.”


Silverberg, Cory

*Sex is a Funny Word* (2015)
Retained but relocated, after an outraged social media post with a picture of *Sex is a Funny Word* on the new books display at the Athens-Limestone Public Library (Alabama). The book was taken from the display and relocated in juvenile non-fiction. Cory Silverberg’s 2015 sex education resource for younger audiences is just one of many books that are frequently challenged as being “pornographic.”


Stone, Tanya Lee

*A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl* (2006)
Banned from the Cody High School library (Wyoming) when the school board overruled the review committee. A parent complained that *A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl* was about sex in high school, of dubious literary quality, and “arguably pornographic.” The review committee recommendation, on a 7-2 vote, was to retain the book. But the school board voted 5-1 to ban the book.


Telgemeier, Raina

*Drama* (2012)
This graphic novel was one of the three titles challenged at the Franklin Middle School (Texas) in 2017 and the only one to be banned. The concern for all the challenges was “inappropriate situations for age of student reading.” *Drama*, which explores the on- and off-stage drama of the middle school theatrical experience, was No. 2 on the Top 10 Most Challenged Books of 2016 list.


Thomas, Angie

*The Hate U Give* (2017)
After a parent’s public complaint at a school board meeting, the superintendent of Katy Independent School District (Texas) removed the multiple award-winning book *The Hate U Give* from all the school libraries in the district. Teachers and librarians argued against the censorship, which produced overwhelming media uproar. A Katy ISD student circulated a petition gathering over 3,700 signatures to urge reinstatement of the book. The superintendent held firm in his claim that the book was pervasively vulgar and he was legally right to censor the book. Three months later, the critically acclaimed novel about a black teen dealing with the aftermath of witnessing a police shooting that killed her unarmed friend was returned to the district’s high school libraries, available to students only with parental consent.


Twain, Mark

*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)
Lawrence High School (Kansas) student newspaper first reported the challenge to using *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as an eleventh-grade English class required reading assignment. Despite claims from the school district that the book is not banned, several staff members’ concerns about
offensive language have knocked the book down from required reading in the curriculum to use only as a district-approved common novel for high school American Literature classes.

Walls, Jeanette
*The Glass Castle* (2005)
Marshfield High School sophomores have been required to read *The Glass Castle* since 2010. After a parent complained about vulgar language and explicit situational content to the Marshfield (Wisconsin) School Board, a formal request was filed with the district to remove the book from the curriculum. The nine-person committee reviewed the text in seven days and unanimously recommended to retain the book as one of the school district’s “curriculum-aligned resources.”

Winter, Jeanette
Two books by Jeanette Winter — *Nasreen’s Secret School* and the *Librarian of Basra* — were challenged as part of the third-grade curriculum at Colter Elementary School (Wyoming). A parent wrote to the school board and complained that the books were un-American and upsetting for their family. The issue is unresolved.
Source: Teton County School District Board documents, Nov. 8, 2017

Zinn, Howard
*A People’s History of the United States* (1980)
A defeated bill in Arkansas would have banned books and materials written by Howard Zinn after 1959 in all publicly funded schools’ curriculum and course material. Zinn’s most popular work, *A People’s History of the United States*, is the only volume to tell America’s history from the point of view of women, workers, minorities, immigrants, and the working class, according to publisher HarperCollins. In response to the bill, the Zinn Education Project sent 700 free copies of *A People’s History* to librarians and teachers across the state.

Reading list
A summer reading list for an AP government and economics class was removed at the Spanish Fort High School (Alabama) for including too many right-leaning and conservative authors. Titles included *Trickle Up Poverty: Stopping Obama’s Attacks on Our Borders, Economy and Security; Guilty: Liberal ‘Victims’ and Their Assault on America; Liberalism is a Mental Disorder; and The Land of Fair Play: American Civics from a Christian Perspective.*

Various textbooks
Six textbooks were under review at a June school board meeting in Collier County (Florida): *By the People: A History of the United States; Understanding Economics; Networks Social Studies Florida; United States Government: Our Democracy; United States History Florida;* and *Street Law: A Course in Practical Law*. Parents claimed that the textbooks had factual errors, political bias and pornography in them. Five of the books were approved for the next school year; *Street Law* was put on hold because community members felt it highlighted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights more than the U.S. Constitution.
Source: “Collier school board hears complaints about textbooks,” NBC-2, June 1, 2017.

Various Holocaust books
Multiple Holocaust-oriented books have been defaced at the Wentworth Library (Minnesota). Anti-Semitic words and symbols, which the library has noted on many occasions over a period of years, is always in black ink. Sometimes it’s just the word “Lies!” Other times, articles have been pasted into the books. While the library tries to salvage the resource and mark out the offensive graffiti, many times the vandalism is so severe that the books have to be thrown away.
The following are public challenges in 2017 to library or school services and materials that aren’t books.

**FILMS**

*2 Days in Paris* (2007)
In a public library in Oregon, a patron wrote and submitted a statement of concern about the 2007 movie *2 Days in Paris*, directed by and starring Julie Delpy, because of anti-gay content. The film was retained in the library collection.

Source: 2017 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

*Anomalisa* (2015)
*Anomalisa,* a 2015 American stop-motion animated comedy-drama, was challenged and retained in a public library in Oregon. Patron objected to the age difference between two characters who engaged in sexual activity, and that one of those characters was a “family man.”

Source: 2017 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

*Beautiful Thing* (1996)

*Keep the Lights On* (2012)

*Tipping the Velvet* (2002)

*Longtime Companion* (1989)

*Blue Is the Warmest Color* (2013)

*Holding the Man* (2015)

*Free Fall* (2013)
Over the course of seven months, library staff of Baker County Library District (Oregon) began finding several LGBTQ DVDs “misplaced” in odd places around the library, including in boxes and reference display racks. When confronted, a patron admitted to hiding the DVDs because they included LGBTQ content. The patron was banned from the library for six months.


*Killer Joe* (2011)
This film was challenged, but retained, in a public library in Oregon. A patron was concerned that the material was sexually explicit and violent.

Source: 2017 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

*La Leyenda de la Llorona* (2011)
*La Leyenda de la Llorona* is an animated horror adventure comedy film based on a famous Mexican legend. A public library patron in Oregon objected to a preview of the film that was on a different video because of sexual content unsuited to age group, violence, and disturbing themes. Copies of movies in the library collection that included the preview of the *La Leyenda de la Llorona* movie were removed.

Source: 2017 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

*Mr. Brooks* (2007)
A 2007 psychological thriller about a man who is sometimes controlled by his murder-and-mayhem-loving alter ego was challenged, but retained, at a public library in Oregon after a patron objected to an explicit sex scene and the topic of serial killers.

Source: 2017 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**MAGAZINES**

*Maxim*
At a public library in Oregon, *Maxim* magazine was challenged and retained after a patron objected to misogynistic world views, objectification of women, and a lack of intellectual content.

Source: 2017 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

*Sex, Etc.*
Parents requested that a sex education magazine be removed from circulation at the Pinelands Regional Junior High School media center (New Jersey). Written by teenagers, *Sex, Etc.* magazine content covers topics such as coming out, friends with benefits, making sexual decisions, oral sex, and having open discussions with parents. Content is reviewed by doctors and sexual health educators before publication, according to a spokesperson for the organization Answer, which runs the magazine.


*Teen Vogue*
*Teen Vogue* magazine received backlash after publishing the article “Anal Sex: What You Need to Know.” Objectors used the hashtag #PULLTEENVOGUE to protest the sex education article. A vlogger known as “The Activist Mommy” posted a video of herself burning the magazine, and urged parents to go to their local library and store and ask that the “pornography” be pulled from the shelves.


**PROGRAMS**

The day before author Kate Messner was scheduled to speak to students at a Vermont elementary school about her latest novel, *The Seventh Wish,* the invitation was rescinded because someone at the school questioned whether students could handle a subplot about drug addiction. In response, Messner said, “When we decide a book is inappropriate for a school library because it deals with a tough subject, we’re telling kids in that situation that their problems can’t even be talked about.”


Akkron-Summit County Public Library (Ohio) administration cancelled a speaking event with author Matt Taibbi. He was scheduled to discuss his new book, *I Can’t Breathe,* about the life of Eric Garner, who died at the hands of police in New York City. Two days before the program, the library announced the cancellation on its Facebook page: “Over
the past week, Mr. Taibbi’s writings about his time in Russia have come under scrutiny, particularly a book he co-authored in 2000 that contains graphic misogynistic imagery involving the sexual exploitation of women.” The library said in its statement, “Unfortunately, the library cannot ignore the misogynistic content of Mr. Taibbi’s previous work, and has decided to cancel the program.”


A program at the Arlington Heights Memorial Library (Illinois) intended to inform undocumented residents about their rights was canceled after officials received protests and phone threats. The immigration rights program, titled “Know Your Rights,” was scheduled to include a presentation from the Community Activism Law Alliance. A caller threatened to sue the library and called for the executive director and programming department to be fired. Library management stated that the only reason the workshop was canceled was because of the issue of safety for participants, customers, and staff.


A high school in New Trier High School District 203 (Illinois) planned a variety of workshops on voter suppression, affordable housing, and police brutality. Colson Whitehead, author of the critically acclaimed historical fiction The Underground Railroad, and Andrew Aydin, creator and co-author of the graphic memoir series March, which chronicles the life of congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis, were invited to speak. Several hundred parents said there was not enough diversity, and the programming was too politically progressive and left-wing. Dueling petitions circulated, heated emails were sent, and hundreds of people packed a school board meeting beyond capacity calling for more conservative viewpoints. The program and speakers were not altered and student participation was higher than in past years.


Residents and parents objected to author Dana Alison Levy visiting the nine elementary schools in Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools (Virginia). Levy was chosen as the guest author because her book The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher — which features a family with same-sex parents — was included in the regional library’s reading list for Battle of the Books. At least 17 families opted out of the visit. Alison Levy received a warm welcome from attendees, according to the library’s youth services director.


Ashland Public Library (Oregon) hosted a program with Christopher Bollyn, author of Solving 9-11: The Deception That Changed the World. People picketed the library and booed the speaker, accusing him of being an anti-Semite and a Holocaust denier sponsored by hate groups. Library security escorted out individuals who disrupted the program.


Xochi Mochi was a guest reader for Drag Queen Story Hour at Michelle Obama Neighborhood Library in North Long Beach (California). Commentators and local politicians attacked the library and the program’s guest in conservative news outlets and on social media, calling her a “demon” and the program “demonic teachings.” Library social media posts about the program were deleted after several hateful and harmful comments to the LGBTQ community were posted. The storytime was well attended, with 60-70 people in attendance. Long Beach Library Services Director Glenda Williams said, “We will continue to have events that have inclusiveness for the entire community.”


Cherry Hill High School East (New Jersey) performed its spring musical Ragtime despite heated controversy about the use of the N-word. The Tony Award-winning musical, centered around themes of racism, intolerance, and injustice, is based on the 1975 novel by E.L. Doctorow. Following an appeal by civil rights groups, including the NAACP, and initiated by the mother of a student involved in the production, the district superintendent said the N-word would be eliminated or replaced in the script. A petition organized by a Cherry Hill East student gained more than 1,200 signatures asking the school district for permission to use the unaltered script “for the sake of Cherry Hill High School East’s continued artistic freedom and ability to present history as it happened rather than how we’d prefer to remember it.” Over a 100 people attended the Cherry Hill School Board meeting to plead their case on whether the use of the N-word should be used in the spring musical. The play was performed uncensored as the author and playwright intended.


**DISPLAYS AND ARTWORK**

As part of its Banned Books Week display, the Lexington
Park library (Maryland) set out wrapped banned books in the teen section, with the phrase “Do Not Read This. Lift to see the banned book, you rebel, you” posted on the wrapping. Parents objected to the books under the wrappings, especially the book *The Little Black Book for Girls: A Book on Healthy Sexuality*. The books were returned to the library’s collection after Banned Books Week.

Source: “‘Banned’ books at St. Mary’s library draw ire of parents,” The Enterprise, October 19, 2017.

During GLBT Book Month, the Temple Public Library (Texas) had two displays featuring pride imagery and LGBT materials. Concerned Christian Citizens, a local group, criticized the library for its June displays, saying that the library was “affirming an immoral lifestyle.” Community members on both sides of the issue spoke out at board meetings and signed petitions to influence the library board. Administrators recommended a written policy that provides clear guidance.


Two North Dakota legislators, Ben Koppelman and Chris Olson, spoke out against the West Fargo Public Library (North Dakota) for putting LGBT books on public display, calling it “radical, hardline sexual ideology.” The library director stated that the materials are not intended to judge or promote, but to inform the public on these social issues. The display was not removed.


The Lincoln Elementary School library (Utah) collection included a set of postcard reproductions of artwork titled “The Art Box” with images of famous artworks. Two postcards in the set were prints of the paintings “Iris Tree” by Italian painter Amedeo Modigliani and the Rococo-style partial nude “Odalisque” by 18th-century artist Francois Boucher. The school’s art teacher used the library resource in a lesson for sixth-graders. The art teacher was fired. The educational postcards were shredded by the principal at the request of the school district. A few days later police investigated a complaint against the art teacher that he was showing pornography to students. The teacher was not charged with any legal wrongdoing, has settled with the school district, and has chosen not to continue his career in education at Lincoln Elementary School.


A publicly funded poster exhibit about press freedom was removed from the Boyden Public Library (Massachusetts), after the library received complaints about “graphic” and “inappropriate” content. The exhibit, which hung in the library’s conference room, consisted of more than 20 posters protesting threats to freedom or depicting the dangers journalists face when reporting on terrorism or war. The library removed the posters under direction of the library board president.

Source: “In Foxboro, library exhibit on censorship is censored,” The Sun Chronicle, September 21, 2017.

As part of a Banned Books Week promotion, the Enoch Pratt Free Library (Maryland) crafted a display where patrons could have their photo taken reading a banned book against a police lineup backdrop with a hand-held sign that read “Caught Reading Banned Books.” Many of these photos were shared on the library social media pages. After viewing the posts, outraged comments went viral from people who thought the photos fed into stereotypes of young minority students appearing in police mugshots. The library immediately deleted the social media posts and dismantled the display.


Online Services and Resources
Public libraries and school districts in Colorado and Alabama have received complaints about access to pornography through online information databases, specifically EBSCO. EBSCO provides a multitude of database products for research, e-journals, magazines, e-books, and discovery service to libraries of all kinds. Some complaints have been initiated by members of the library or school community and other complaints have been mass posted on library or district social media pages. In most cases, libraries and districts have retained the library resource, but a few have cancelled their subscription or limited what resources are available.


Using social media to promote the library’s databases, information on health care reform and refugees, popular readers advisory articles, and STEM programming, Jefferson County Public Library (Colorado) received complaints from a county commissioner that the tweets were too politically biased. He stated in an email to the library director, the postings “give the impression of bias and opposition to our county and the nation’s leadership.” The tweets were deleted.


2. Start your own banned book club that highlights a radical read every month.

3. Ask your librarians, teachers, superintendents, and local public officials about attempts to ban or challenge books. They need to know you support the freedom to read in schools and libraries.

4. Attend school board, library board, and parent-teacher association [PTA] meetings.

5. Discuss tough and uncomfortable topics in literature with your parents, kids, librarians, teachers, students, and colleagues.

6. If there's a local challenge reported in the news, write a powerful letter to the editor in your newspaper. The letter could touch on the benefits of unrestricted reading.

7. Make some noise when censorship happens. Share stories and calls to action on social media.

8. Stay updated on censorship attempts by following the Office for Intellectual Freedom (@OIF) and Banned Books Week (@BannedBooksWeek) on Twitter.

9. Raise awareness by tweeting a quote from your favorite banned book or sharing your censorship story, with the popular hashtags #bannedbooks, #intellectualfreedom, and #BannedBooksWeek.

10. Celebrate Banned Books Week (September 23-29, 2018) by attending local programs or starting your own. Learn more at ala.org/bbooks.

11. Promote the freedom to read in style by purchasing banned book swag at the ALA Store (alastore.ala.org/keywords/banned-books-week). Sales support the defense of intellectual freedom in libraries and schools.


13. If there's a challenge to materials or services in your local library or school, contact the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom (ala.org/challengereporting). We’ll support you in whatever way you think is best — from writing letters and initiating campaigns, to visiting board meetings and contacting public officials. All challenges can be reported confidentially.
TOP TEN CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2017

#1 THIRTEEN REASONS WHY
by Jay Asher
REASON: suicide

#2 THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN
by Sherman Alexie
REASONS: profanity, sexually explicit

#3 DRAMA
by Raina Telgemeier
REASON: LGBT content

#4 THE KITE RUNNER
by Khaled Hosseini
REASON: sexual violence, religious themes, “may lead to terrorism”

#5 GEORGE
by Alex Gino
REASON: LGBT content

#6 SEX IS A FUNNY WORD
by Cory Silverberg
REASON: sex education

#7 TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
by Harper Lee
REASONS: violence, racial slurs

#8 THE HATE U GIVE
by Angie Thomas
REASONS: drug use, profanity, “pervasively vulgar”

#9 AND TANGO MAKES THREE
by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson
REASON: LGBT content

#10 I AM JAZZ
by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
REASON: gender identity