Have you joined the Intellectual Freedom Action Network?

In response to IFRT members requests for a more active voice in intellectual freedom issues, the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) established, in the fall of 1994, the Intellectual Freedom Action Network. The purpose of the network is twofold: first, participants are asked to submit to OIF information on groups that are attempting to censor materials in libraries. Although many of these groups are nationally based, they may also have local chapters. Local groups without a national affiliation are also very powerful in communities. Second, members of the network will be asked to lend support when a controversy erupts in their community. Such support could take the form of a letter to the editor, attending a school or library board meeting—or even a phone call to our colleague who is being challenged so she (or he!) knows there’s somebody out there who cares.

If you have further questions about the Action Network or are interested in signing up, please contact Donna Reidy, OIF Associate Director, at 800-545-2433, extension 4221.

Georgia First Amendment Foundation Holds Successful Fundraiser; Terry Anderson, Former Beirut Hostage, Is Keynote Speaker

By Tom Budlong

Editor’s note: Tom Budlong is a director of the Georgia First Amendment Foundation. He is a former chair of the IFRT.

The Georgia First Amendment Foundation, which was founded in 1994, held its first major fundraising event on April 14, 1995. Over 200 supporters of the First Amendment attended a luncheon at the Georgia Railroad Depot in Atlanta. Terry Anderson, former Associated Press bureau chief in Beirut, Lebanon, and a captive of the Shiite radicals for seven years, gave the keynote address. He spoke about his captivity, and more importantly, about his fight with government agencies to see documents concerning U.S. efforts to gain his release while he was a hostage. His attempts to get this information under the Freedom of Information Act have been greatly thwarted.

The Georgia First Amendment Foundation was formed as a statewide coalition to serve as an umbrella organization of open government efforts, and particularly to monitor compliance with Georgia’s sunshine laws. It works for better government access through education, empowerment, and enforcement. It provides much-needed help for people who want to exercise their First Amendment Rights to free speech and a free press. Foundation volunteers have explained the state sunshine laws to city and county attorneys attending the University of Georgia’s Institute of Government and to newly-elected sheriffs. They have also conducted workshops for the news media, including members of the Georgia Association of Broadcasters, the Society of Professional Journalists, and the Atlanta Press Club.

The Foundation has brought together public officials, government workers, and the news media in Albany and other cities to discuss differences and concerns about open government. Foundation directors persuaded the Oconee County school board to open meetings of a committee named to decide whether some library books were too provocative to keep in the schools.

Foundation attorneys also filed the lead amicus brief in litigation in which a Cobb County judge ruled that open government laws apply to coalitions formed by public hospitals with private facilities, just as they do public hospitals.

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The Georgia First Amendment Foundation has accomplished a lot in its short history, operating on donations from media companies, journalism groups, law firms, and some individuals. In order to broaden its support, the Foundation announced the organization of its "Defenders of the First" membership program, which offers membership to individuals for as little as $25.

The Foundation's board of directors plans more training sessions for elected officials, government workers, news reporters, and concerned citizens. Its newsletter, Georgia F.O.I. Access, is being widely distributed.

**IFRT STAFF LIAISON WELCOMES NEW ARRIVAL**

Anne Penway, Assistant Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom and IFRT Staff Liaison, gave birth to a daughter, Dorothy Rose, on February 27, 1995. Dottie made her debut at 10:33 p.m., weighing 6 lbs. 11 oz.

"We were hoping for a girl and were thrilled with Dottie's arrival — and when we saw she had red hair, we were doubly delighted," Anne said. "I've always thought that red-haired babies are the cutest things in the world, and of course, Dottie is the cutest red-haired baby I've ever seen (not to mention the smartest, the most precocious, the most gifted, the sweetest, the most beautiful, the lovliest, the best behaved, the most delightful,..."

According to one of the Board members, the reason for striking the statements was because of a "perceived political agenda." At the March meeting, the Library Board members did something of an about-face, and voted to replace the revised Library Bill of Rights with a Loudoun-specific statement entitled "Freedom for Ideas — Freedom from Censorship." This document seems to be a modification of the Library Bill of Rights; it states, in effect, that "censorship of ideas should be rejected and opposed." However, it removes the active imperative to do so from the library domain and does not state exactly who will oppose or reject such censorship. It also ignores other important aspects of First Amendment rights specifically protected by the ALA document.

Approximately ten people spoke at the Board's April meeting to oppose the new policy statement and to urge the Library Board to re-instate the Library Bill of Rights. None of the board members responded to any of the comments. At the end of the meeting, one Board member proposed adding additional statements to the "Freedom for Ideas..." document which would further limit access to the collection by those under 18. (Under a policy adopted earlier by this board, parents and/or legal guardians have complete access to library records of their children age 17 and under, and patrons under 17 cannot check out R-rated videos.)

The situation in Loudoun continues to develop, and the need to monitor Board actions is ongoing. Representatives from Mainstream Loudoun, a grassroots organization dedicated to supporting First Amendment Rights, and members of the Virginia Library Association attend Library Board meetings and speak out against attempts to dilute or alter ALA documents designed to protect these freedoms.

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**The First Amendment**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.
[Editor's note: Following is the text of the document, "Freedom for Ideas — Freedom From Censorship" which the Loudoun County Library Board adopted.]

The constitution guarantees that "[C]ongress shall pass no law...abridging the freedom of speech or of the press..." This guarantees a free people that all ideas can be promulgated and be available to all the people. A knowledgeable electorate is essential to the maintenance of our democracy.

Thus, it is the number one policy objective of the Library Board of Trustees that the people have access to all avenues of ideas. It is the freedom of ideas that keep [sic] open the path to new and creative solutions, and allows change to occur through informed free choice actions of the people. Armed with the facts, the American people have demonstrated discernment of truth from falsehood and shown that a free people can make reasoned decisions.

Therefore, the Library Board of Trustees, as agents of the whole people of Loudoun County, affirm the following propositions:

1. It is in the public interest to maintain a library collection, in various media, that has the widest diversity of views and expressions possible.

2. Collection of materials should not be excluded because of the information or views presented therein, or the politics of their message.

3. Library access and use should not be denied to anyone because of age, race, religion, origin, background or views.

4. Censorship of ideas should be rejected and opposed.

We state these principles with the firm belief that an informed citizenry will act responsibly and defend the principles of individual freedom that form the foundation of this nation.

The IFRT Report is an irregular publication of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table of the American Library Association and is sent to members of the Round Table. Membership information and/or correspondence about your subscription should be addressed to IFRT, Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611. The current editor of the IFRT Report is Sue Kamm, Inglewood Public Library, 101 W. Manchester Blvd., Inglewood, CA 90301, e-mail:inglewod@class.org. Letters to the editor are welcomed.
Intellectual Freedom Award Winners Named

John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award

The Fort Vancouver Regional Library Board of Trustees has been named the 1995 recipient of the American Library Association (ALA) Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT) John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award for Intellectual Freedom.

The award, consisting of $500.00 and a citation, honors individuals or groups who have demonstrated extraordinary courage in defense and support of intellectual freedom, and is named for the co-founder of the Round Table, who was an author, teacher, scholar, and advocate of intellectual freedom.

The Board is being recognized for staunchly defending fundamental principles of intellectual freedom, for persuasively presenting that defense to a wide community, and in the process, educating not only the regional community but also persons well beyond their service area.

“The Fort Vancouver Regional Library Board responded with sensitivity and professionalism to a heated and ongoing controversy over the right to have access to information that some members of the community found offensive,” said Wayne Rawley, Chair of the John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award Committee. “Their response was so well put together that many libraries are using it as a model in handling similar controversies. The end result is a better educated and more tolerant community which respects and supports the basic First Amendment freedom to speak and to have access to the speech of others,” he added.

State and Regional Achievement Award

The Northern Virginia Citizens Against Censorship is the 1995 recipient of the American Library Association (ALA) Intellectual Freedom Round Table State and Regional Achievement Award.

The award, $1,000 donated by the Social Issues Resource Series, Inc. (SIRS), and a citation, recognizes outstanding contributions to intellectual freedom at the state or regional level.

According to committee chair Dr. Frederick Stielow, “The award committee selected the Northern Virginia Citizens Against Censorship as this year’s winner for its extraordinarily successful effort in creating a grassroots coalition of people of varying backgrounds to fight for their freedom to read against organized pressure groups. In just one year of existence, the coalition gathered 800 members and put together a successful public communications campaign which demonstrated broad based support for fundamental First Amendment freedoms was instrumental in securing the right to select from a wide diversity of materials on library shelves in Northern Virginia.”

The awards will be presented on Saturday, June 24, at the beginning of the IFRT’s intellectual freedom program during the American Library Association’s Annual Conference in Chicago.

If you think books are judged by their covers... you’re right.

To order Banned Books materials, contact the OIF at (312) 280-4223.
DO WE NEED ANOTHER POLICY?...YOU BET!

by Gene Lanier

Editor’s note: Gene D. Lanier is professor and director of graduate studies in the Department of Library Studies & Educational Technology at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. LSLANIER@ECUVM.CIS.ECU.EDU

As the National Information Infrastructure (NII) rapidly moves into place, transforming the ways libraries will deliver information to their users, we as librarians must consider and make judgments on how this will be done. We must recommit ourselves to follow the tenets of the Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations as we facilitate access in this relatively new medium.

We have been successful in the past in accomplishing this as new media have been selected to be added to our library collections. Our book collections still are very important but most libraries now include media of all varieties in their attempt to meet user needs. We all have a best way of learning and therefore, libraries have attempted to meet the visual, aural, and motor approaches to information. As an example, when videos made their entrance into our collections, we used the same criteria for selection as we did for print materials. Access to these by all of our present and potential library constituency was a major consideration.

We must take the same stand as we make Internet access available. To clarify how we might do this, ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) is currently circulating a draft version of a new Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights. It is tentatively entitled, “Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks.” This draft is based on data collected by the IFC and on testimony which was given at hearings on the subject in Philadelphia at Midwinter. Any suggestions on this document should be forward to the Office for Intellectual Freedom for the Committee’s consideration. The draft helps in the examination of personal philosophies on ensuring access to electronic information while still conforming to the Library Bill of Rights. It speaks to the rights of users, equity of access, and information resources and other access issues.

Many librarians have indicated to me they have had difficulties in how to respond to intimidated parents who have seen in the media the emphasis on what some people might consider inappropriate materials. They are sincere in their attempts to protect their children from materials and information which they consider obscene or pornographic. It is too bad that the news media have emphasized this very small but emotion-packed part of what is available in cyberspace. Newspapers and magazines as well as television have played up this segment of information available through electronic means because it is newsworthy. They never seem to get around to expounding on the wealth and scope of information which is available by electronic means.

We have always made it very clear in the past that simply because we have selected and made available library materials, this did not indicate endorsement of their contents. Neither does making electronic information accessible imply endorsement. This is not a “cop-out” but is at the base of our intellectual freedom principles. As professional selectors of materials, we know we must throw out our personal prejudices as we go about the business of building our collections.

Therefore, it is our responsibility to develop guidelines for use of these electronic resources. Yes, just as it is important to have policies for selection, for meeting rooms, for bulletin boards, for circulation, etc., it is vital that we develop a policy for Internet use. I am of the opinion that a policy of this sort should be in place and approved by the governing boards prior to being connected to any network.

Many library systems already have such policies in place and generally refer to them as Acceptable Use Policies (AUP). As we make more use of e-mail and observe “netiquette” ourselves, we also need to keep our users in mind as we formulate such guidelines. They should be developed with access and other tenets of intellectual freedom as priorities. Just as we have for other formats, we have to be careful not to place restrictions on the use of electronic resources.

Sample AUPs are now becoming readily available on the net. A number of gopher and WWW sites have been identified where the factors other libraries feel are important as they establish rules and regulations may be examined. It appears that some or all of the following should be considered for incorporation into policy:

- Mission statement
- Identification of providers
- Whom you serve
- Privacy
- Freedom of expression
- Safety
- Plagiarism
- Indemnification
- Expected behaviors
- Morals and ethics
- Legal Constraints
- Harassment
- Security
- Targeted areas of interest
- Liability
- Permission signatures

Some of these components overlap and there are undoubtedly others that should be considered. The overriding consideration should be extreme care in ensuring that all users have equity of access as policies are developed.
New Opportunity to Support Immroth Endowment: Contributor Ribbons

Paul Vermouth, Chair
Intellectual Freedom Round Table

Last fall, IFRT announced a new opportunity to support the Immroth Award Endowment Fund and to provide well-deserved recognition for donors. Colorful Immroth Endowment Fund contributor ribbons will be available to contributors of $25.00 or more at the Annual Conference meeting by contacting OIF staff at Table 42 in the ALA office area. (Those who had already contributed $25.00 or more, or who did so before January 15, 1995, received their ribbons in time to wear them at the 1995 Midwinter Meeting.) The Immroth ribbons provide contributors with the recognition they deserve for their support. They also inspire those who see donors wearing them to contribute and receive ribbons of their own.

The Immroth Memorial Award was the first award established by the IFRT. It honors courageous intellectual freedom fighters in memory of IFRT's founder. Through the Immroth Award, IFRT has established an important tradition and legacy of honoring individual contributions to the cause which unites IFRT members. The Immroth Award is currently funded out of IFRT general funds. A few years ago, IFRT initiated an account to receive donations toward the establishment of an Endowment Fund which would support the Immroth Award and free up the monies currently used in support of it for other IFRT activities.

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