Chair's Report

By Pam Klipsch, 1995/1996 IFRT Chair

I hope that everyone has seen the John Berry editorials in the November 1 and 15 issues of Library Journal, and Lillian Gerhardt’s splendid rebuttal in the December issue of School Library Journal. If you’ve been keeping up with the fallout from the organized Conservative Christian Right’s attack on ALA, including the so-called “Family Friendly Libraries” conference in Ohio last October, you already know that the IF community has its work cut out for it. After all, if the editor-in-chief of Library Journal “still doesn’t get it” when it comes to providing equal access for all library users, and upholding the right of all parents to make their own decisions about their own children’s use of library materials and services, it’s clear we still have a long way to go within the ranks of ALA. But perhaps this will help dispel the myth of ALA as some Goliath setting out to impose its “liberal agenda” on American libraries.

It’s ironic that some of the same folks who proclaim that what’s wrong with this country is too much government interference in the lives of ordinary citizens are now complaining that libraries are not interfering enough! I, too, believe that we need to be sensitive and responsive to the concerns of parents. I, too, believe that librarians can and should do a better job of serving the diverse needs and interests of our communities, and I include conservative/Christian/traditional values in that diversity. But I don’t believe that we will do a better job of serving the needs of any part of our community by trampling on the needs and interests of all the rest.

The program we have planned for 1996 Annual Conference in New York hopefully will address some of these issues. It is titled: “Information or Indoctrination: Libraries Caught in the Cultural Crossfire.” The intent of this program is to discuss the effects of censorship and the suppression of information and ideas on the intellectual and social development of young people. We hope to explore some positive alternatives for librarians and parents who want to provide assistance and guidance to young people without resorting to blanket restrictions and suppression of information and ideas. We are in the process of contacting speakers with recognized experience in the areas of child development, psychology, education, children’s literature and online resources.

The program is scheduled for 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday at Annual Conference. Please consult your conference program for the location.
Anne Penway Leaving OIF

With great regret, we must inform you that Anne Levinson Penway has resigned from the OIF staff, effective October 9, 1995. Anne has accepted the position of Director of Admissions and Student Relations at the Valparaiso University School of Law.

“I have enjoyed working with you all, and have been tremendously impressed with the skill, determination, fortitude and resourcefulness of librarians in defending First Amendment rights,” Penway said.

You can contact Anne at:
Valparaiso University
School of Law
Wesemann Hall
Valparaiso, IN 46383-6493
Phone: (219) 465-7891
E-mail: apenway@wesemann.law.valpo.edu

Deborah Liebow Joins OIF Staff

We are pleased to welcome Deborah Liebow to the position of Assistant Director in the Office for Intellectual Freedom and IFRT Staff Liaison. Deborah came to the American Library Association from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago where she was the Program Manager of the Refugee Resettlement Program.

During her five year tenure there, Deborah assisted in the resettlement of over 16,000 refugees from the former Soviet Union in the Chicago area. She also managed a $10 million loan program for this refugee population.

Prior to that, Deborah was the Assistant Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League in Chicago for three years. Her focus there was the monitoring of local and national right-wing extremist groups and responding to community complaints of anti-Semitic incidents. Among many other duties, Deborah also participated in the preparation of school curriculum on Holocaust education and conducted teacher training throughout Illinois to comply with the state law mandating Holocaust education in the public schools.

Deborah also spent five years at the Illinois Office of the State Appellate Defender where she represented indigent defendants in the appellate courts of Illinois in criminal cases. Deborah has argued cases before the Supreme Court of Illinois, the Illinois Appellate Courts and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

“Deborah has a strong and diverse background in the law that will complement perfectly what OIF hopes to accomplish in the future,” stated Judith Krug, Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom.

Deborah holds a Bachelor Degree in Sociology from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and a law degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology’s Chicago Kent-College of Law.

As you can see from her background, Deborah has a life-long interest in civil rights issues and constitutional concerns. That is what attracted her to the position at OIF and OIF to her. We hope her tenure at OIF is long and rewarding.

You can contact Deborah at 800-545-2433, extension 4224.

Family Friendly Libraries conference
by Donna Reidy Pistolis, OIF Associate Director for Case Support and Research

I attended the Family Friendly Libraries (FFL) Conference on October 21 in Cincinnati. Following are my thoughts, feelings and impressions after attending.

I counted approximately 55 attendees, the majority from Ohio and Indiana, with a few from Michigan, Illinois, and other states. During the course of the day, a number of the attendees commented on how they were looking to FFL for advice on how to be more effective on the local level. Each person who commented seemed to be in the midst of a local battle.

The conference began with a welcome from Phil Burress, Clermont County (OH) public library trustee and founder of Citizens for Community Values (CCV). During his welcome, Mr. Burress made the statement that at that moment, FFL was not a national organization—they were holding this conference to see what kind of interest there was in this issue and were going to decide at the end of the day whether or not to start a national group.

The actual “meat” of the conference began with an overview by Karen Jo Gounaud (the driving force behind the FFL Movement) of why “family friendly” libraries are needed. To prove her point, Mrs. Gounaud outlined five points reflecting what she believes libraries and librarians are not doing, or are doing poorly; these points provided the rationale for starting this movement. The five points are:

• Treating parents as adversaries rather than partners;
• Treating patron suggestions and concerns as intrusions and “censorship;”
• Abdicating responsibilities to be part of a community effort protecting children from hurtful or dangerous influences;

Continued inside
Family Friendly Libraries conference continued

- Openly promoting the most "politically correct" and radical philosophies, while claiming to support "opposing points of view on all controversial topics;" and
- Failing to maintain a collection of distinguished historical books and other basics. (This argument aligns FFL with the Family Research Council's report, entitled "Discarded Images: Selected Classics and American Libraries.")

These five points also formed the basis of Mrs. Gounaud's response to ALA President Betty Turock's letter to the editor regarding Focus on the Family's attack on Banned Books Week.

Following Mrs. Gounaud was Buddy Smith, Vice-President of the American Family Association (AFA), who told the audience about the dangers of pornography in society, which is the key issue for AFA. Several audience members "confessed" to being pornography addicts or had spouses who were pornography addicts.

The next speaker was Dr. Hal Schell, former librarian (Professor Emeritus of Library Administration, University of Cincinnati Central Library), former homosexual, and an ALA life member. Dr. Schell spoke about homosexuality and the possibility of recovering from homosexuality. More importantly, he told how ALA, through its policies, has done a great deal to promote the homosexual agenda in libraries.

Homosexuality and the availability of homosexual materials in libraries, especially for children, seems to be a major concern for a great number of people in attendance.

The final speaker before the first break was Helen Biehle, who wrote, "The Seduction of the American Public Library," which was part of the registration materials for the conference. Mrs. Biehle began her presentation by passing around the audio cassette of Two Live Crew's Nasty As They Wanna Be to exemplify the type of materials that are available to children in libraries. Mrs. Biehle then elaborated on her piece attacking ALA, OIF and Judith Krug, Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom. She tried to make the argument that because Judy had once served on the ACLU's Board of Directors, ALA, and more specifically, OIF, was nothing more than a tool of the ACLU.

The first three speakers, in my opinion, were carefully selected to outline the three enemies that FFL wants to take on:
- Homosexuality and the availability of pro-homosexual materials in libraries, especially those available to children;
- Pornography, or more specifically, what they perceive as pornography, being available to children;
- ALA and OIF.

After we returned from a break, the speakers concentrated on the specifics of the above topics.

The first speaker was Cedricia Wilson, (former school and public librarian from Jackson, Alabama) who began by telling a story of how she was a promiscuous teenager and became pregnant at a very early age. She believes these events were caused by reading a book.

The purpose of Wilson's presentation was to exemplify that even some librarians, who try to persuade their board to remove materials, also are not taken seriously. Mrs. Wilson eventually resigned from her position after taking her request for removal to her board several times.

After Mrs. Wilson, Mr. Marthaar (a fill-in speaker), a librarian and self-described evangelical Christian, talked about censorship and selection. His presentation was geared toward informing the audience that librarians are self-censors (to the left) and use of the term "selection" is really a guise to include materials they want in libraries.

Mrs. Gounaud followed with another presentation, the purpose which was to tell audience members how to get taken seriously by their library boards. She said her involvement began when she was told she would only be allowed three minutes—one year—to state her concerns at board meetings.

Mr. Burress concluded the morning session with how he felt ALA's stranglehold on trustees is something that is promoted by library directors. At least that's how he felt in his case. From my perspective, this portion of the conference was a call to "rally the troops."

The final four speakers, I feel, were used to build upon the foundation laid by the first three speakers and give specific "first-hand" experience with these issues.

After lunch, Phil Burress announced that, due to the discussion at his lunch table (John Berry, editor of Library Journal, and Stuart Whitwell, associate publisher of American Libraries, were asked to eat with Phil and Karen Jo. Two librarians who happened to be at that table joined in the discussion), FFL would like to start a "dialogue" with librarians as to why the group's concerns don't seem to be a priority for libraries.

To serve this purpose, a panel was established. The members of the panel were Helen Biehle, Karen Jo Gounaud, Dr. Hal Schell, Dan Graves (a prison librarian), Patsy Hansel (Director—Williamsburg (VA) Regional Library), and John Berry. The first three were to represent the FFL perspective and the last three, the librarians perspective. (It is my feeling that the discussion not only at Phil Burress' lunch table, but other lunch tables, led the leaders of this group to decide there were a number of people attending the conference who did not agree with their position and, therefore, they decided to abandon the agenda for the afternoon so they would not reveal their strategies.)
The discussion began by a member of the audience asking why libraries cannot, or will not, restrict children's access to materials they perceive as dangerous or harmful. Ms. Hansel chose to answer this and I think she did a good job. At a later point in this panel discussion, however, Ms. Hansel announced that she has advocated for libraries adopting their own version of the Library Bill of Rights, a statement well received by the audience.

Mrs. Wilson (who had spoken at the morning session) wanted to know why the library couldn't use technology already in place to allow a parent to select certain sections of the library (or particular call numbers) from which a child would not be allowed to check out materials. Mrs. Wilson had developed a form that she felt libraries could use as a prototype. "The computer lets me know when my books are overdue, why can't it do this?" asked one participant.

Ms. Hansel and John Berry both tried to point out the logistical problems with this solution. At this point, Mr. Berry also pointed out that children's access to materials is a pressing issue for libraries and one, he feels, ALA is most vulnerable in trying to defend.

The panel discussion continued along these lines for the rest of the afternoon. At the end of the discussion, Phil Burress announced that he felt there was enough stimulating discussion to warrant the formalization of FFL as a national organization, and asked for members to serve on a steering committee.

If you have any questions about Family Friendly Libraries, or the conference, please contact Donna at 800-545-2433, extension 4221.

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**Freedom to Read Foundation Board Member J. Dennis Day Dies**

It is with great sadness that we report the death of intellectual freedom stalwart J. Dennis Day. Dennis passed away recently following a courageous battle with brain cancer.

Throughout his distinguished career in librarianship, Dennis devoted himself to the cause of intellectual freedom. He generously contributed time and effort both to the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee and to the Freedom to Read Foundation, serving terms as chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee (1981–1984) and President of the Freedom to Read Foundation (1986–1987), as well as member or chair of many other ALA and Foundation committees. Dennis' commitment to the principles of intellectual freedom gave him a special vision that provided crucial guidance in determining the best course of action when faced with difficult choices and challenges.

"Dennis was such an integral part of the intellectual freedom community. But more importantly, he was vital to its development. The very fact that we can talk about a 'intellectual freedom community' is Dennis' doing. He browbeat us—the IFC, ALA division IFCs, the ALA IFRT—into talking to each other, and then developing joint programs, joint activities, and even policies that we could all agree on and support. He was a force to be reckoned with, and we were lucky to have him as a colleague and as a friend," said Judith Krug, Director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom and Executive Director of the Freedom to Read Foundation.

"Dennis influenced the lives of thousands through his leadership and commitment. He made both a permanent contribution to his profession and a devoted circle of friends across the country," said June Finnell-Stephens, President of the Freedom to Read Foundation.

Dennis graduated first in his class from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, in 1967, with a master of science degree in library science. He served as Community Librarian for the Dayton and Montgomery County (Ohio) Public Library from August, 1967 to March, 1970; as Director of the Troy-Miami County (Ohio) Public Library from March, 1970 to September, 1976; and from September 1976 until the time of his death was Director of the Salt Lake City (Utah) Public Library. During his time in Utah, Dennis founded the Snowbird Leadership Institute, which has established itself as an intensive and greatly valued leadership development experience for his professional colleagues. The 1995 Snowbird Conference had just convened at the time of Dennis' death.

Dennis was particularly esteemed because of the concern he showed both for his professional colleagues and the communities he served, through his concentration on staff and leadership development, and on the constant improvement of community services in libraries. During his 19 years as Director, the Salt Lake City Public Library won the American Library Association's John Cotton Dana Award for outstanding community relations programs three times. The Troy-Miami County Public Library in Troy, Ohio, also won that award while Dennis was its Director.

At the regional and state level, Dennis served as president of the Mountain Plains Library Association, president of the Utah Library Association, chair of the Utah Governor's Conference on Library and Information Services Programs, president of the Ohio Library Association, and chair of the Miami Valley (Ohio) Library Organization.

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**J. Dennis Day Memorial Fund Established**

The Freedom to Read Foundation has established the J. Dennis Day Memorial Fund to be used in the defense of intellectual freedom in public libraries. Contributions may be sent to: J. Dennis Day Memorial Fund, Freedom to Read Foundation, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611
Do Religious Americans Really Support the Views of the Religious Right?

By Tom Budlong

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

Much press has been made recently that the Republican “Contract with the American Family” and the views of the religious right are strongly supported by a large majority of the American public. The Christian Coalition repeatedly claims that every item in the contract is supported by 60 to 90 percent of the American people.

In order to verify this claim, the avowedly liberal People For the American Way decided to contract for an independent unbiased survey. The survey was conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates and polled 1,252 registered voters between July 19–22, 1995. Voters were asked about problems facing American families and about differing approaches to solving those problems. Voters were asked whether they supported the Christian Coalition’s position on each item in the “Contract with the American Family.”

“The Christian Coalition is out of the mainstream of American public opinion, both in its priorities and its policy proposals,” said Geoffrey Garin of Peter D. Hart Associates. “This survey repudiates the Christian Coalition’s oft-repeated claim that 60 to 90 percent of the American people support each item in the Contract With the American Family.” In fact, a majority of Americans of every political and religious stripe reject key elements of the Contract.

According to the survey, the American public rejects most of the Christian Coalition’s approach on most of the planks of the Contract. Voters opposed these proposals by large and decisive margins:

- 57 percent rejected abolition of the Department of Education and cuts in education funding.
- 55 percent rejected abolishing federal support for arts, humanities and public broadcasting.
- 54 percent rejected restrictions on abortion and elimination of federal funding for family planning.

There were only two items in the Contract which received support from a majority of voters, those provisions dealing with crime and pornography. Two other provisions dealing with so-called “parental rights” legislation and tax policy changes are opposed by small pluralities.

One of the most interesting aspects of the study is the widespread rejection by those who self-identified themselves as being “religious,”of the Christian Coalition’s claim to speak for American families or for people of faith in matters of public policy. While 56 percent of Americans consider themselves to be “strongly religious,” only 18 percent said the Christian Coalition “speaks for me” when it takes positions on issues. This is contrasted with the 65 percent who say that they worry that groups like the Christian Coalition “go too far in mixing religion with politics” and the 55 percent who say it is inappropriate for the Christian Coalition to claim the label of “Christian values” for their political positions.

When they were given a choice between the Christian Coalition’s “Contract with the American Family” and alternatives that emphasized improving public education, increasing the availability of quality child care, providing responsible sex education, making college education more affordable, enforcing child support laws, and expanding job opportunities, voters chose the alternatives by a 3-to-1 margin. The alternative pro-family contract was preferred by majorities of strongly religious Americans, voters who put a lot of emphasis on traditional values, and born-again Christians.

Even deeply religious Americans strongly support the constitutional doctrine of separation of church and state. Only 13 percent thought that the Constitution and current laws prevented them from freely practicing their religion and 68 percent felt that the Constitution already affords such protection.

In the words of People For the American Way’s Tom Andrews: “The Christian Coalition has a clear vision of where it wants to take America, but America doesn’t want to go there. It’s up to those of us with a different vision to show Americans another path. The Christian Coalition may have a head start on organizing, but they don’t have the support of the American people. Once the rest of us are organized, their claims to speak for the American people will ring faint and hollow.”

And therein lies the challenge for those who believe in a set of family values rooted in respect and tolerance for others and respect for the beliefs, both religious and otherwise, of their fellow citizens. We must look to the Christian Coalition as a model for the organizational skills needed to fight intolerance and narrow vision of America that such organizations present. There is ample evidence that most Americans don’t support the narrow views of the religious right. It is incumbent on us as supporters of intellectual freedom to find a way to get this message across to the vast majority of Americans who reject the views of the religious right. We must also recognize that all religious people aren’t the enemy. There are a large number of religious people, even those of a fundamentalist stripe, who stand for an open and free society and who are our natural allies.
Intellectual Freedom Round Table
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois