

# A Private [School] Matter: The State of Materials Challenges in Private College Preparatory School Libraries in the Southeast United States

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*Materials challenges and censorship occur often in public and private educational settings. Private schools and their library media centers are not subject to the First Amendment but research reported in this article examines the state of challenges to materials held in private schools media centers in the southeast United States as a way to gauge the frequency and outcomes of materials challenges in these institutions. The study builds on previous research of challenges in public schools as a framework to examine the types of challenges to materials in private college preparatory school libraries in the southeast, the outcomes of the challenges, and the factors that influenced the outcome of the challenges. The author reports the results of a quantitative study wherein data were collected via a four part electronic survey with items that pertained to media center materials challenges that occurred during the 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05 school years. The article discusses the state of challenges to private college preparatory schools in light of previously identified challenge outcome factors and includes suggestions for future inquiry in the topic area.*

## Introduction

Threats to intellectual freedom have been documented in myriad areas of American society. The educational arena is one setting in which this freedom has been contested many times in the form of challenges to and censorship of classroom and media center materials. Materials challenges and censorship run counter to the tenets of our Constitution's First Amendment, which states, "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press" (Bill of Rights, Amendment I). History highlights many instances (e.g., *Williams v. Board of Education of County of Kanawha*, decided in 1974; *Board of Education, Island Trees Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*, decided in 1982) wherein the courts have reaffirmed the value of implementing free speech as it pertains to materials selection and student access to materials in a school setting. The First Amendment is staunchly upheld by the American Library Association (ALA), which has a mission to "provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all" (ALA 2007, Our Association section, 1).

Private schools and their library media centers are not subject to the First Amendment if they are not government funded entities, but it is important to examine the state of challenges to this

freedom in private schools as a way to gauge the frequency and outcomes of materials challenges in institutions other than those that are public. Private schools have long been seen as places that provide students with superior education (Schneider, Teske, and Marschall 2000). These institutions often offer a streamlined college preparatory curriculum in comparison to public schools, which generally offer a broader range of vocational and academic coursework (Willms 1987). Further, private school climates often provide opportunities for advanced topic exploration and high expectations for students to excel academically (Cookson 1989) and students enrolled in these institutions have consistently scored higher on achievement tests than their publicly educated counterparts (Howell and Peterson 2002; Willms 1987). While the First Amendment might not directly apply to private schools, “the school library media program plays a unique role in promoting intellectual freedom [because] it serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in a pluralistic society” (ALA 2007).

This article presents research that explores the broad topic of materials challenges in private schools and focuses specifically on college preparatory schools—those institutions that purport an explicit mission of preparing students for successful entry into post-secondary education.

## Review of Literature Related to Challenge Factors

Censorious behaviors have been studied for decades, leading to the identification of the many and varied forms of censorship as well as factors that influence challenge outcomes. The most comprehensive inquiries about challenges to school library media materials were conducted by Dianne McAfee Hopkins in 1989, 1990, and 1991. Hopkins collected data from school library media specialists (SLMSs) at public schools across the nation, which allowed her to create progressive iterations of a conceptual model (see figure 1) to visually represent the factors involved in a challenge from issuance to resolution. These factors were (1) complaint background, (2) challenge initiator, (3) district selection policy and degree of compliance, (4) school environment, (5) librarian’s characteristics (with specific attention given to a SLMS’s levels of dogmatism and internal/external locus of control), and (6) community environment (Hopkins 1991).

**Figure 1. Revised Conceptual Model for Outcomes to a Challenge (Hopkins, 1991)**

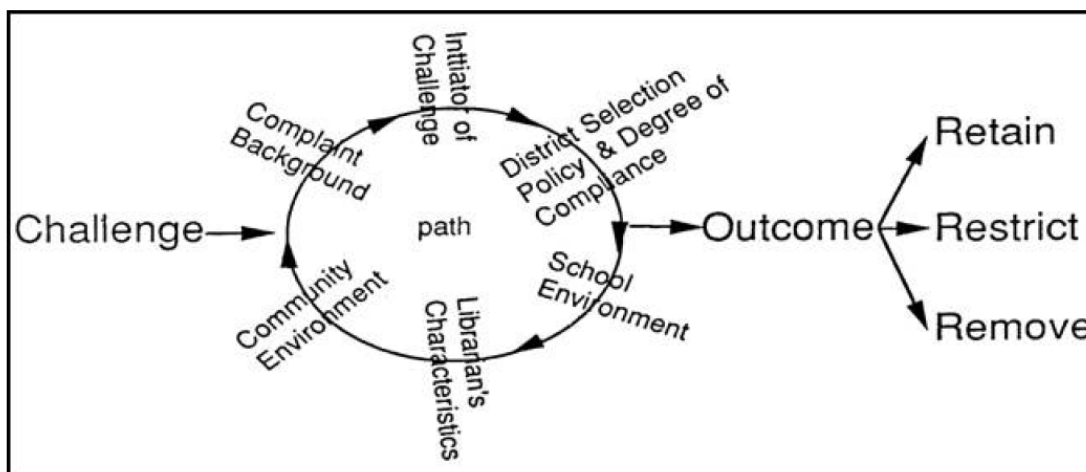


Figure 1. Revised Conceptual Model for Outcomes to a Challenge (Hopkins, 1991)

Hopkins' groundbreaking work is both derived from and complemented by other researchers' studies related to challenges and censorship. The literature shows strong support for materials selection policies as vital tools for use in retaining challenged materials. Marjorie Fiske (1959) studied book selection practices and censorship in California school and public libraries in the 1950s and found that challenged material was most often retained in libraries with an existing selection policy. Bracy (1982) determined that there was a positive correlation between the existence of a selection policy and fully accessible books. Simmons and Dresang (2001) suggested that the fundamental problem in many censorship controversies is lack of a district materials selection policy. Reichman (2001) listed one of the most essential reasons for a school to establish a materials selection policy as lessening the possibility for ambiguity and confusion in the face of a challenge.

Busha's (1972) and Pope's (1974) studies both noted a relationship between a librarian's level of formal training and his or her reaction to censorship attempts. Busha found that librarians without formal education were more likely to practice precensorship and to restrict or remove challenged materials, whereas librarians with professional training tended to be more vigilant about upholding intellectual freedom and access. Likewise, Pope concluded that the more professional training a librarian received, the less restrictive he or she tended to be.

The literature also includes perspectives of the relationship between school environment and challenge outcome. Fiske's (1959) study revealed that school librarians reported feeling isolated, like second-class citizens, and of low status because school administrators often intimidated the librarians into compliance regardless of the librarian's beliefs or the dictates of the materials selection policy. Farley (1964) also found administrators to have influence on librarian attitudes and activities. His study of high school libraries in Nassau County, New York, found that school librarians were more apt to practice precensorship when school administrators' attitudes were perceived to be unfavorable and negative. Contrary to Fiske's and Farley's explanations, however, Tyler-Porter (1997) found that while many school librarians reported feeling under some pressure by administrators, the majority of them did not engage in removal or restriction of any kind. With respect to school size and censorship, Pope's (1973) research in school, public, and academic libraries found (in school and academic libraries) an "inverse relationship between the size of the school and the selection index of its librarian" (114). That is, the larger the population being served, the less likely a librarian is to engage in censorious behaviors.

Finally, Serebnick's (1979) research examined censorship research and suggested a framework of influential variables similar to the conceptual model Hopkins would create twelve years later. Serebnick's framework included six classes of influential variables: librarian variables, library variables, community leader variables, community and community action variables, mass media variables, and judicial and legal variables. It is important to note that though several of Serebnick's variable classes were similar to the factors Hopkins would later identify and may have contributed to Hopkins' articulation of influential challenge outcomes factors, Serebnick's work did not include research to test specific hypotheses.

The fact that much of the research on this topic is dated suggests the need for renewed attention from scholars. Intellectual freedom is central to librarianship and constitutes an important social, legal, and educational issue. A major goal of this study was to begin to reinvigorate scholarship about these issues and serve as a starting point for continued examination of these issues.

## Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the topic of challenges to school media center materials has only been examined in the public school setting. Until the study discussed in this writing, no evidence was found of research conducted with a purpose to document challenges brought against media center materials in private college preparatory schools and the outcome of the challenges.

The research reported herein was conducted to examine challenge instances in private college preparatory schools in the southeast United States to assess how many challenges had been issued during a particular time period, what the outcomes of those challenges were, and what specific factors influenced the outcomes.<sup>1</sup> This research study is significant because it focuses on private college preparatory school libraries' mission to provide enrolled students a variety of reading materials that will assist with preparing them for college success. It is important to determine what occurs when challenges are presented to the materials intended to support the school's mission and curriculum.

The study referenced Hopkins' (1991) research as a basis for analyzing and discussing findings and was guided by three questions:

1. What is the status of challenges to materials in private college preparatory school libraries in the Southeast?
2. What were the outcomes of the challenges?
3. What factors influenced the outcome of the challenges?

## Key Definitions

Several terms were used frequently and are defined below because they may be used in ways unique to this study:

*Challenge*—a verbal or written complaint about the materials contained within the collection of a private college preparatory school's media center.

*School Library Media Specialist (SLMS)*—an individual employed by a private college preparatory school as an administrator in the media center. This individual may or may not have obtained formal training in library/information studies.

*Outcome*—the resolution of a challenge issued to an item in the collection at a private college preparatory school that results in the retention, restriction, or removal of that item.

*Locus of Control*—the measure of an SLMS's belief about whether she had control over situations (internal locus of control) or that those situations were controlled by forces beyond her power (external locus of control).

*Level of Dogmatism*—the measure of an SLMS's tendency to blindly accept demands of authority.

*Private College Preparatory School*—a nonpublic, coeducational, nonmilitary, nonreligious school that has

1. obtained accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS);
2. grades six and above;
3. a central library media center; and
4. a mission or vision statement that specifically indicates an objective to prepare enrolled students for success in college.

## Study Delimitations and Limitations

The research was a regional study that included SLMS working in private college preparatory schools within the southeast United States. The results of the study reflect the experiences of the participating SLMS and pertain only to the study respondents and not to all SLMSs at private college preparatory schools in the southeast United States nor to SLMS in private schools in other U.S. regions.

Three states in the region (Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi) were directly affected by a category 4 hurricane (Katrina) during the data collection period. Because the impact of the storm was so severe, 25 SLMS (comprising 23% of the total number of potential respondents) who worked in these states and who were sent participation requests may have been unable to participate in the study (three library media specialists in Mississippi submitted completed questionnaires prior to the hurricane).

## Data Collection Method

The data reported here represent results of a survey distributed electronically in 2005 and responses pertained to school media center materials challenges that had occurred during the three previous school years (i.e., 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05). The structure of the study and the survey instrument were derived from Hopkins' research (1989, 1990, 1991) conducted to determine the factors that influence the outcome of materials challenges (see appendix).

The sampling frame from which the population was derived was the SACS 2004–05 list of 106 potential nonpublic school study participants. SLMSs at each of the private college preparatory schools were e-mailed invitations to participate in the first phase of the study, which consisted of a four-part questionnaire that contained seventy-seven items and was made available though the Internet. Section 1 used fixed and open-ended response items to collect demographic data (e.g., total student enrollment and the SLMS's highest completed level of education). Section 2 contained items associated with materials selection policies and the SLMS's perceived level of pressure related to materials selection; data were collected through fixed, open-ended, and scaled response items. Section 3 contained fixed, open-ended, and scaled response items to collect data about the most recently resolved complaint (e.g., the form of the challenge and the subjects about which objections were made). Section 4 utilized only scaled response items to obtain SLMS' perspectives about their profession, experiences, self perception, and the state of schools and communities regarding challenges to intellectual access and intellectual freedom.

# Data Analysis

## Questionnaire Section 1: Demographic Data

Forty SLMSs participated in the survey, which constituted a 37.7% response rate. All survey respondents were female and thirty nine were white; one respondent was Hispanic. Respondents ranged in age from 30 to 74 with a mean age of 51. Responses were received from SLMSs in all SACS accredited states with the exception of Kentucky (see table 1). SLMS' educational levels were varied (see table 2). Thirty five (87.5%) SLMS listed either master's or specialist

degrees as their highest educational level, and four (10%) had earned bachelor's degrees or had completed postbaccalaureate study without obtaining a master's degree.<sup>2</sup> Table 3 summarizes the accrediting agencies represented in the educational preparation of the respondents.

**Table 1. Survey Responses by State**

State	Number of Respondents
Alabama	4
Florida	8
Georgia	8
Kentucky	0
Louisiana	1
Mississippi	2
North Carolina	7
South Carolina	3
Tennessee	3
Texas	1
Virginia	3
Total	40

**Table 2. Respondents' Highest Education Level**

Degree Type	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	2	5.0
Post-bachelor's study	2	5.0
Master's degree	23	57.5
Post-masters study	7	17.5
Two master's degrees	2	5.0
Specialist degree/certificate	3	7.5
Other degree/certificate	1	2.5
Total	40	100

**Table 3. Respondents' Highest Degree Received and Accrediting Agency**

Accrediting Agency	Frequency	Percentage
ALA	27	67.5
NCATE	3	7.5
Other	6	15
Unsure/not applicable	4	10
Total	40	100

## Questionnaire Section 2: Materials Selection Policies/Pressures

In Section 2, SLMS were asked to respond to items related to the materials selection policies at their respective schools (see table 4) and the level of pressure they felt when choosing library materials (see table 5). Thirty-seven SLMSs (92.5%) reported that their media centers had some type of materials selection policy. Policies were described as being (1) written documents that were approved by the school (65%), (2) written documents that were *not* school approved (5%), or (3) informal, unwritten policies (22.5%). Three SLMSs reported that their schools had no materials selection policy at all.

**Table 4. Materials Selection Policy Types**

Policy Type	Frequency	Percentage
Informal understood policy	9	22.5
Written policy not school approved	2	5.0
School approved written policy	26	65.0
No policy	3	7.5
Total	40	100

**Table 5. Pressure Related to Selecting Materials**

Amount of Pressure	Frequency	Percentage
No pressure	27	67.5
A little pressure	12	30.0
Extreme pressure	1	2.5
Total	40	100

Twenty-seven SLMS surveyed (67.5%) did not feel pressure from any individuals affiliated with their respective schools regarding making media center selections. However, 13 respondents (32.5%) reported feeling some level of pressure about the types of library media materials they chose from parents (35%), headmasters (15%), and teachers (7.5%).

### Questionnaire Section 3: Resolved Complaints

The third questionnaire section provided respondents the opportunity to report on the most recently resolved complaint that occurred at the school between September 2002 and the date of questionnaire completion. Ten (25%) SLMSs indicated that they had received complaints about the materials in their school libraries.

### Questionnaire Section 4: SLMS Perspectives

Questionnaire section 4 contained items that gathered SLMS's perspectives as they related to (1) their respective school environments (i.e., the materials selection policy, overall school climate, the headmaster), (2) the community and national climate (e.g., perception of impact of information media on outcome), and (3) their personal characteristics.

*Materials Selection Policy:* All but one of the SLMSs surveyed expressed agreement that having and using a materials selection policy is important and a way to improve the chance that a challenged material is retained. One respondent strongly disagreed with the idea that the



existence and use of a materials selection policy was necessary in the face of a materials challenge.

*School Environment:* Thirty-six (90%) respondents strongly or moderately agreed that SLMSs are respected members of the school faculty. A majority of respondents (n = 31 or 77.5%) also expressed moderate or strong agreement with the idea that the existence of a positive relationship between the head of the school and faculty has a positive effect on challenged library materials' rate of retention. Further, 100% expressed a high level of agreement with the idea that teachers will support school library media specialists who work well with them on a day-to-day basis.

Thirty-four (85%) respondents believed that SLMSs who receive materials challenges are less likely to feel intimidated if they have support and assistance from school faculty. Thirty-one respondents (77.5%) believed that challenged materials will ultimately be removed from the library if others at the school do not respect the SLMS.

*Community/National Climate.* Overall, respondents believed it was possible for information media and community organizations to influence the outcome of challenged materials. The majority of the respondents (a total of 34 or 85%) expressed mild (22.5%), moderate (17.5%), or strong (45%) agreement that when organizations outside of the school offer support in the face of a challenge the media specialist is less likely to become intimidated.

Regarding SLMSs' opinions about community information media (e.g., newspapers, radio, and television), 36 respondents (90%) believed these media have the ability to "greatly influence what happens to library materials that are challenged."

*Headmaster.* Respondents believed that the headmaster's level of involvement is related to whether a challenged material is retained or removed. Eighty-two and one-half percent of responding SLMS (n = 33) agreed that challenged materials will be removed if the headmaster does not offer to support the librarian during the challenge process. Additionally, all but one respondent agreed or strongly agreed that a headmaster's support during a materials challenge is critical in the retention of the material. Thirty-nine respondents also expressed agreement that it is important for librarians to have regular contact with the head of school and that doing so will cause the headmaster to be supportive during materials challenges.

*Higher Education.* SLMSs' responses were varied regarding perspectives about whether educational training plays an integral role in the outcome of a materials challenge. Close to half (47.5% or 19) of the respondents expressed some level of disagreement with the idea that SLMSs receive adequate preparation for dealing with challenges; twenty-one (52.5%) SLMS slightly, moderately, or strongly agreed that school media education is helpful in preparing school media professionals to deal with challenges.

Perspectives were also mixed about whether level of education was related to material retention. Eleven respondents (27.5%) indicated disagreement with the idea that the likelihood of retention for challenged materials was greater the higher the educational level of the librarian. Twenty-four private college preparatory SLMSs either slightly agreed (22.5%) or moderately agreed (37.5%) that level of education was positively correlated to material retention; five respondents (12.5%) strongly agreed.

## Answers to Research Questions and Discussion

The study's first research question was posed as, "What is the status of challenges to materials in private college preparatory school libraries in the Southeast?" Of 40 survey respondents, ten SLMS had experienced complaints to their school library materials during the 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05 school years. Thus, 25% of the study participants experienced materials challenges at some point during the three listed school years.

Research question two asked, "What were the outcomes of the challenges?" Survey data revealed that of the ten reported complaints, five books were retained, two were restricted, and three books were removed from school library collections. Table 6 summarizes the outcomes of the reported challenges.

**Table 6. Challenge Situations and Possible Influential Factors**

Challenge Instance	Materials Selection Policy & Use During Challenge	Challenge Initiator	Complaint Background	School Environ. (Headmaster Support)	School Environ. (Teacher Support)	Level of Internal Locus of Control	Level of Dogmatism	Outcome
A	None/NA	Parent	Oral/Written	High	High	High	Low	Retained
B	Written/None	Parent	Oral	None	None	High	Low	Retained
C	Written/Fully	Parent	Oral	None	High	High	Low	Retained
D	Written/A Little	Parent	Oral	None	None	Low	Low	Retained
E	Informal/A Little	Parent	Oral/Written	High	None	Low	Low	Retained
F	None/NA	Teacher	Oral	High	High	High	High	Restricted
G	Informal/None	Admin.	Oral	None	None	Low	Low	Restricted
H	Written/None	Parent	Oral	High	High	High	High	Removed
I	Written/A Little	Parent	Oral	None	None	High	Low	Removed
J	Written/Full	Other	Oral/Written	Low	No Knowledge	High	High	Removed

The third research question asked, "What factors influenced the outcome of the challenges?" Hopkins' (1991) research study and resulting conceptual model identified six factors that were potentially influential in public school media center challenge outcomes.

One of the goals of the research presented in this article was to determine if these factors were also influential in challenges issued to materials at private schools. When considering responses from the ten SLMSs who reported materials challenges in relation to the six factors, it is possible to make certain statements about the challenge situations when they are viewed with respect to Hopkins' description of influential factors and conceptual model (see figure 1).

*Materials Selection Policy:* Hopkins' study determined that materials were retained more often in situations where school- or board-approved written policies existed and when those policies were adhered to during challenges. In the study, five challenged materials were retained. In those instances, three media centers had written policies, one had an informal, unwritten policy, and one had no policy at all. Of the three media centers that had materials selection policies, only one SLMS reported that the document was adhered to during the challenge (see table 6).

Three SLMSs experienced materials challenges that resulted in removal of the item. In all three instances, a written materials selection policy existed; two SLMSs reported use of the policy during the challenge and one reported not using the policy. In the two instances where SLMSs reported that challenged materials had been restricted, one had and did not use the materials selection policy, and the other did not have a policy.

*Challenge Initiator:* Hopkins found that challenges issued by principals were likely to result in restrictions and removals, and parent-initiated challenges most often resulted in retention. In the current study, only one SLMS reported receiving a challenge from a school administrator (an assistant principal). In that instance the material was restricted within the library. The majority of reported challenges (seven) were initiated by parents. Parent-initiated challenges resulted in five retentions and two removals. The remaining challenges were initiated by a teacher and an individual outside of the school and resulted in restriction and removal respectively.

*School Environment:* SLMSs who participated in Hopkins' study responded that principals and teachers were viewed as sources of strength within a school, and their support considered influential in determining challenge outcome. In this study, no consistent pattern emerges regarding support from administrators and teachers (see table 6).

*Community/National Environment:* Hopkins found that community support during a challenge was influential to challenge outcome. No SLMS who reported challenges in the current study responded that the community had knowledge of the challenge.

*Librarian Characteristics:* Hopkins determined that level of internal locus of control and degree of dogmatism were significant in affecting challenge outcome because complaints received by SLMS with high internal locus of control and low level of dogmatism tended to result in retention of the challenged material. The current study found no consistent pattern in outcomes related to locus of control among the ten challenges. In the case of the five outcomes where materials were retained, all SLMSs reported a low tendency toward dogmatism (see table 6). However, the small sample size does not afford the opportunity to demonstrate statistical significance.

*Complaint Background:* Hopkins' study results indicated that when complaints were received orally, the materials selection policy was less likely to be used and the material was more likely to be removed. When written complaints were received, the policy was more likely to be used and the material was more likely to be retained. Additionally, principals and teachers gave greater attention and support to written challenges.

In the current study, three challenges that resulted in retention were received orally; two received both oral and written complaints. Both challenge instances that resulted in restriction of the materials received oral complaints. Two instances that resulted in material removal received oral complaints; one removed material received a complaint both orally and in writing.

When considering each challenge situation, survey responses alone could not be used to yield a definitive identification of which factors influenced challenge outcome. It is possible that one or more challenge factors were influential in determining various challenge outcomes. However, because of the low response rate and the small number of respondents who indicated experiencing materials challenges, inferential statistical analysis was not possible; it was only

possible and practical for the researcher to make broad and descriptive statements about the collected data with respect to the six potential influential factors. Consequently, it was not possible to either identify specific influential factors or draw conclusions about challenge outcome in the ten identified challenge instances on the sole basis of survey data.

## Implications for Future Research

This study generated findings that, when considered in the context of previous research about intellectual freedom in school settings—especially Hopkins’ groundbreaking work—can be viewed as an important first step toward fostering understanding of the state of challenges in private college preparatory schools. Though the findings cannot be generalized to describe the status of challenge outcomes at private college preparatory schools in the Southeast or other U.S. regions, the study can and should be used as a catalyst to prompt related research studies. Here are some possibilities for further study:

1. The study should be replicated among a statistically significant number of respondents within the same population. Such a larger study might have the potential to yield analysis of the relationships between such variables as education of the SLMS and outcomes of the challenges, level of dogmatism and outcome, school environment and outcome, and tendency toward dogmatism and outcome. In addition, a larger study would provide the opportunity to search for interaction effects among variables.
2. A larger study should be undertaken in other U.S. regions for regional comparisons.
3. The study excluded religious schools from the population. Future research might include examining challenges made to materials at religious school media centers to determine the status of materials challenges in those environments. Results could then be compared to those generated from studies of nonreligious private college preparatory schools.
4. Hopkins’ national study has not been replicated since it was conducted in 1990. Another national study of the status of outcomes to the materials in public school libraries should be conducted in order to collect updated data. The political discourse can change over decades, and a new study may yield new insights.
5. A national survey that examines materials challenges in private college preparatory school media centers should be conducted. The results of the private school and public school national studies could then be compared and contrasted to determine similarities and differences between the two entities.
6. Forty-seven and one-half percent of survey respondents believed that not enough training was given during their educational programs to prepare them for effectively dealing with materials challenges. This is an indication that it would be helpful for LIS school media programs to examine their curricula to determine where more emphasis might be placed on intellectual freedom issues to include increased practical application about ways SLMSs should proceed if confronted with a challenge.

Beyond these implications, there are many new research questions that this study raises that merit further investigation: What are the reasons (violence, sexual content, political issues, etc.) for such challenges? Are there differences between religious schools and secular schools in terms of number or type of challenges? Are there differences in number or type of challenges between grade levels served? Are there differences in responses to challenges on the basis of qualifications of media personnel? How can materials selection policies be best crafted to help

schools respond to various types of challenges? These particular questions are important avenues of research for further studies.

## Conclusion

The research detailed in this article contributes to the body of literature that addresses intellectual freedom issues in school library media centers. Results from the exploratory study should be looked upon as an initial examination of the status of materials challenges at private college preparatory schools in one region of the United States. One of the initial intents of the study was to compare findings to those uncovered in Hopkins' studies. However, factors influential during challenge outcomes may differ if the challenge is issued at a school library located within a private school facility. For example, tendencies toward dogmatism or levels of internal locus of control may differ in private schools. It is necessary to combine findings from the current study with further research efforts in similar settings to allow for more in-depth exploration of the topic. Doing so will uncover more definitive answers about the factors that contribute to challenge resolution in private school library media centers.

## Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges Dr. Kathleen Burnett (Florida State University) and Dr. Paul T. Jaeger (University of Maryland) for their support and feedback during both the research and writing process. Great appreciation is also extended to Dr. Jean Donham, *SLMR* editor, for her guidance during the manuscript submission process.

## Notes

1. For the study, southeast states were those identified by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and incorporated: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.
2. One respondent's highest educational level was an Associate's degree.

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## Cite This Article

Franklin, Renee E. 2008. "A Private [School] Matter: The State of Materials Challenges in Private College Preparatory School Libraries in the Southeast United States."

<<http://www.ala.org/aasl/slmr/volume11/franklin>>

# Appendix. Survey Questionnaire

## S. Section 1 Background Information

1. What grades are represented at this school? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the total student enrollment in this school?

# enrolled \_\_\_\_\_

3. Including yourself, how many certified/licensed librarians/library media specialists work in this school who are full-time and part-time? ENTER 0 IF NONE.

Full-time # \_\_\_\_\_

Part-time # \_\_\_\_\_

4. Including this year, how many years have you been employed as a school library media specialist?

Number of years at this school \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years anywhere, including this school \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many years have you been employed as a classroom teacher? ENTER 0 if NONE.

# of years \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is the highest level of formal education you completed?

- Bachelor's degree
- Post-bachelor's study
- Master's degree
- Post-master's study
- Two master's degrees
- Specialist degree/certification
- Ph.D./Ed.D.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



7. For highest degree in library or media education, check appropriate category.

- American Library Association (ALA) accredited master's program
- National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Unknown

8. Gender

- Female
- Male

9. What is the year of your birth?

19 \_\_\_\_

10. What is your racial heritage? SELECT ONLY ONE.

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black/African American (not Hispanic)
- Hispanic
- White (not Hispanic)
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## S. Section 2 Library Media Center Materials Selection and Complaints

Library media center materials include print materials included in the collection as well as internet delivered materials such as websites, chatrooms, databases, etc.

An **oral complaint** is an oral challenge relating to the presence and/or appropriateness of material in the library media center.

A **written complaint** is a formal, written challenge filed with the school or library media center relating to the presence and/or appropriateness of material in the library media center.

A complaint about library media materials may be initiated by any person whether inside or outside the school.

Note: *Regardless of the grade levels served at this school, focus only on library media center materials for grades 6 and above.*

11. Indicate the extent to which there is a policy for the selection of library media materials. SELECT ONLY ONE.

- Informal understood policy
- Written policy **not** approved by school

- Written policy **approved** by school
- No policy of any kind
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

12. Some school library media specialists operate with considerable freedom. Others feel under pressure. Not considering budget or curriculum restraints, to what extent do you feel under pressure from others in the selection of library media center materials? Select the appropriate number which most nearly reflects your feeling about pressure.

- 1 (no pressure)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (extreme pressure)

13. If any pressure is felt, what do you consider to be the source(s) of the pressure? **SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.**

- Principal/head of school
- Teacher(s)
- Parent(s)
- Community members other than parents
- Conservative group/organization/church
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

14. Are you aware of any oral or written complaints regarding library media center materials prior to September 2002?

- Yes
- No

15. Have there been any oral or written complaints regarding library media center materials in this school since September, 2002? If employed in this school less than three (3) years, answer only for the period in which you have been at this school. **IF ANSWER IS "NO" OR "DON'T KNOW" SELECT APPROPRIATE OPTION THEN CLICK "NEXT" TO GO TO SECTION 4.**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

16. How many oral or written complaints regarding library media center materials in this school were there in 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05? **ENTER 0 IF NONE.**

Oral 2002–03 \_\_\_\_\_

Written 2002–03 \_\_\_\_\_

Oral 2003–04 \_\_\_\_\_

Written 2003–04 \_\_\_\_\_

Oral 2004–05 \_\_\_\_\_

Written 2004–05 \_\_\_\_\_

### S. Section 3 Most Recently Resolved Complaint

This section provides an opportunity to report on the most recent resolved complaint occurring between September 2002 and today. A **resolved complaint** is one in which a decision has been reached about the presence and/or appropriateness of challenged library media center materials.

17. What was challenged? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

- Nonfiction book
- Fiction book
- Film/video
- Other AV material
- Magazine
- Newspaper
- Internet delivered material (e.g. website, chatroom, database, etc.)
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

19. Name the challenged library media center material. If book(s) provide author(s) as well as title(s), if known.

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20. Form of challenge? SELECT ONLY ONE.

- Oral only
- Written only
- Both oral and written

21. What were the topics focused on in the complaint? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

- Abortion
- Anti-American
- Anti-government
- Defiance of authority
- Drugs

- Evolution
- Family values
- Homosexuality
- Human reproduction
- Immaturity of users
- Inaccuracy
- Morality
- New age
- Nudity
- Obscenity
- Occult
- Parental disrespect
- Politics/political theory
- Pornography
- Profanity
- Racism
- Religion excluding evolution
- Secular humanism
- Sexism
- Sexuality
- Values clarification
- Violence
- War
- Witchcraft
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

22. Who was primarily responsible for initiating the most recent complaint? SELECT ONLY ONE.

- Principal/head of school
- Teacher(s)
- Parent(s)
- Student(s)
- Conservative group/organization/church
- Liberal group/organization/church
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

23. What was the complaint based on? SELECT ONLY ONE.

- Based on material's presence in the library media center
- Based on material's presence in classroom
- Both of the above
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

24. What was the outcome of the complaint? SELECT ONLY ONE.

- The material was retained for open access
- The material was restricted
- The material was removed from the library media center
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

25. In your opinion, to what extent was the library media materials selection policy used during the challenge process? Select the number which corresponds most closely to your opinion. IF NO POLICY, LEAVE BLANK AND GO TO QUESTION 26.

- 1 (not used at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (used fully)

26. What best describes the level of support provided to you by the school principal/head of school during the process? IF PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF SCHOOL WAS UNAWARE OF CHALLENGE, LEAVE BLANK AND GO TO QUESTION 27.

- 1 (no support)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (partnership role)

27. What best describes the level of support given to you by teachers in the school who knew of the challenge? IF TEACHERS WERE UNAWARE OF CHALLENGE, LEAVE BLANK AND GO TO QUESTION 28.

- 1 (no support)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (partnership role)

28. To what extent did you seek assistance from within the school during the time of the challenge process?

- 1 (no assistance sought)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (much assistance sought)

29. Regardless of whether you sought assistance or not, from whom did you receive assistance **within** the school or community during the challenge process? **SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.**

- Library media specialists in the community
- Principal/head of school
- Local teachers' organization
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- No assistance received within school or community

30. To what extent did you seek assistance from outside the school during the complaint process? **SELECT ONLY ONE.**

- 1 (no assistance sought)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (much assistance sought)

31. Regardless of whether you sought assistance or not, from whom did you receive assistance **outside** the school during the complaint process? **SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.**

- Library media specialists outside the school
- Local public library or public library system
- State professional library or media association
- State teachers' organization
- State Department of Education
- National organizations (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- No assistance received outside school

32. Was there active support for **retention** of the challenged material? Supporters might include administrators, teachers, students, parents, community individuals, and groups. **IF POSSIBLE SUPPORTERS HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF CHALLENGE, LEAVE BLANK AND GO TO QUESTION 33.**

- 1 (no support)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (high support level)

33. Was there active support for **removal** of the challenged material? Supporters might include administrators, teachers, students, parents, community individuals, and groups **IF POSSIBLE SUPPORTERS HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF CHALLENGE, LEAVE BLANK AND GO TO QUESTION 34.**

- 1 (no support)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (high support level)

34. To what extent did community public information media such as newspapers, radio, or television know of the complaint? IF PUBLIC INFORMATION MEDIA HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF COMPLAINT, SELECT 1 THEN CLICK “NEXT” TO GO TO SECTION 4.

- 1 (no knowledge)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (extensive knowledge)

35. To what extent did newspapers report on the complaint? IF NO COVERAGE BY NEWSPAPERS, SELECT 1 THEN GO TO QUESTION 37.

- 1 (no coverage)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (extensive coverage)

36. How did the newspapers react to the complaint?

- 1 (supported removal)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (supported retention)

37. To what extent did television stations report on the complaint? IF NO COVERAGE BY TELEVISION STATIONS, SELECT 1 THEN GO TO QUESTION 39.

- 1 (no coverage)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

- 6 (extensive coverage)

38. How did the television stations react to the complaint?

- 1 (supported removal)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (supported retention)

39. To what extent did radio stations report on the complaint? IF NO COVERAGE BY RADIO STATIONS, SELECT 1 THEN CLICK "NEXT" TO GO TO SECTION 4.

- 1 (no coverage)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (extensive coverage)

40. How did the radio stations react to the complaint?

- 1 (supported removal)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 (supported retention)

## **S. Section 4 Perspectives of the Library Media Specialist**

As a key player in challenges to library materials, your perspectives are important. In responding to this section, reflect upon your experience as a library media specialist as well as your overall perspectives of school, community, and national environments.

Record the number from the scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree) which most accurately reflects your level of agreement with the statements that follow. Do not spend too much time on any one statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Your initial reaction is what is requested.

41. Library media specialists are respected members of the school faculty.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4



- 5
- 6

42. When a principal/head of school and faculty work well together, you can expect library media center materials to be retained when a challenge occurs.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

43. Library media specialists who work well with faculty members on a day-to-day basis will find teachers supportive when material(s) is/are challenged.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

44. Library media specialists who receive assistance or support during a complaint from persons or organizations **outside** the school will be less likely to be intimidated during the challenge process.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

45. It is appropriate for the library media specialist to adhere to requests of the principal/head of school without question.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

46. Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability. Luck has little or nothing to do with it.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

47. Most people would view my principal/head of school as a strong educational leader.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

48. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

49. Of all the different philosophies which exist in this world, there is probably one which is correct.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

50. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

51. A materials selection policy is effective in dealing with library media center complaints.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

52. Most faculty members would describe my principal/head of school as having an authoritative manner.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

53. When the principal/head of school does not support the library media specialist in dealing with a complaint, challenged material will usually be removed.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

54. Even though support groups such as other librarians and library organizations exist, library media specialists are really powerless in affecting the outcome of complaints to library media center materials.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

55. Information media in the community such as newspapers or television can greatly influence what happens to library materials that are challenged.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

- 6

56. The higher the level of educational training held by the library media specialist who gets complaints about library materials, the greater the likelihood that library materials will be retained.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

57. In this complicated world of ours, the only way we can know what's going on is to rely on leaders or experts who can be trusted.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

58. There are two kinds of people in this world: Those who are for the truth and those who are against the truth.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

59. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

60. Library media specialists who work well with the principal/head of school on a day-to-day basis will find the principal/head of school supportive when library materials are challenged.

- 1
- 2

- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

61. Library media specialists who receive assistance or support during a complaint from others within the school will be less likely to be intimidated during the challenge process.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

62. If the library media specialist is not viewed as a respected colleague in the school, when library media center complaints occur, the material will usually be removed.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

63. Organized conservative groups that are involved in attempts to remove library media center material can greatly influence the removal of materials.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

64. The worth of library media specialists often goes unrecognized.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

65. Library media specialists receive excellent training in higher education programs to prepare them to deal with challenges to library media center materials.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

66. Most people just don't know what's good for them.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

67. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

68. This world is run by the few people in power and there is not much the ordinary person can do about it.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

69. When the library media materials selection policy is followed during the challenge process, challenged material has a greater chance of being retained.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

70. A self-confident library media specialist will be less likely to be intimidated during the challenge process when faced with a challenge to library media center materials.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

71. When a principal/head of school and faculty work well together, they are less likely to be divided when faced with a challenge to library media center materials.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

72. The support of the principal/head of school is critical in the retention of challenged library media center materials.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

73. Most complaints about library media center materials can be traced to organized conservative groups.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

74. Based upon my first-hand experience, it is accurate to say that library media specialists often feel like second class citizens among the faculty of a school.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

- 5
- 6

75. It upsets me whenever people stubbornly refuse to admit they are wrong.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

76. It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

77. Most people would say that my school has the characteristics of an effective school, such as clear goals, dedicated staff, high expectations, positive parent-community environment, and positive learning climate.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

78. Please provide any additional comments about your experiences with challenges to library media center materials in the space below.

**School Library Media Research** (ISSN: 1523-4320) is the successor to *School Library Media Quarterly Online* and the predecessor to *School Library Research*, an official journal of the American Association of School Librarians. The purpose of *School Library Media Research* is to promote and publish high quality original research concerning the management, implementation, and evaluation of school library programs. The journal also emphasizes research on instructional theory, teaching methods, and critical issues relevant to the school library profession. Visit the [website](#) for more information.





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