



FUTURE LIBRARIANS FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

ISSUE #1

WINTER 2025:
CENSORSHIP

Reintroducing FLIF!

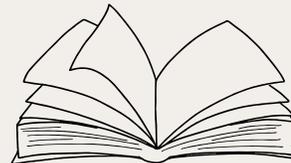
Future Librarians for Intellectual Freedom, or FLIF, is a student organization at the University of Alberta. As graduate students pursuing Master's degrees in Library and Information Studies, the group's mission is to encourage freedom of expression and social responsibility, while rejecting censorship, within the library and information studies field and beyond.

The organization was originally founded in 2004, but after a few years of decline, it is being revitalized with the help of the 2023/2024 cohorts. Beginning in the Fall 2024 semester, the group is working towards reviving the organization, its website, its communication channels, and starting our newsletter!

Our newsletter will be published on a semester basis, and will feature a variety of sources surrounding different themes relating to intellectual freedom.

This first issue features local, national, and international news, and one academic resource on the general theme of censorship.

With this newsletter, we hope to offer readers a chance to engage with sources that peak their curiosity and promote awareness of issues relevant to the field of LIS and beyond.



P.S. Stay tuned to see our revamped website! All of our newsletters will be archived on this site, which will also have some great information about what our group is working on! Another email will be sent out when the site is up and running.

Created by Hannah Lees, Emily Simon, and Marissa Stelmack

LOCAL NEWS

Consider this: Freedom of expression and Margaret Atwood

By Toni Samek (November 28, 2024)

As part of EPL's Forward Thinking Speaker Series, Toni Samek moderates a discussion with author Margaret Atwood about freedom of expression in Canada and the USA. The interview includes topics on book banning in light of Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 US election, The Guardian's decision to stop posting on X, as well as the regulation of digital platforms and the Canadian Government's Online Harms Bill C-63. When prompted about the backlash and harassment that public library workers face, Atwood briefly touches on Librarians and the Library Board taking a stand together. She further explains that kids will find access to information regardless, and that censorship begs an interesting question: who gets to decide what is censored? Samek concludes her article by applying her conversation with Atwood to effectively fostering a democratic education at the University of Alberta.

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Controversy at Noon: Book Banning in Alberta and Canada

By Asa Kachan, Kristopher Wells, Jessie Bach, Kit Dobson, and Anjula Gogia (February 21, 2024)

Hosted by the Writers Guild of Alberta, Asa Kachan, Kristopher Wells, Jessie Bach, Kit Dobson, and Anjula Gogia discuss themes of censorship and book banning in academia, teaching, public libraries, and bookstores. They stress the importance of diversity, listing the benefits associated with centering different and marginalized perspectives and experiences as professionals in charge of passing knowledge to the following generation.

[Watch on YouTube](#)

Censorship in Alberta Libraries

By Jessie Bach (August 12, 2022)

Materials in public libraries are being challenged all over Alberta and Canada. The Edmonton Public Library, for instance, keeps a running [list](#) of resources that have been challenged, why they have been challenged, and the response to the challenge. Since 1998, when EPL received their first formal challenge, only five resources have been removed from the collection. Most libraries have their own policies regarding intellectual freedom, and if an individual wishes to challenge a resource, there is a set procedure they can follow. Once the official review is enacted, the resource is often pulled from the shelf until a decision is made. However, some individuals have taken less official means of censorship by damaging, stealing, or hiding the material. Bach concludes her article by reminding readers of the importance of adhering to these procedures as it defends intellectual freedom and resists censorship.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Books Behind Bars: Incarcerated people in Canada are often without access to information. Prison librarians are working to change that

By Leslie Sinclair (July-August, 2022)

This article offers two former inmates' perspectives on the library, a story of local prison librarianship, and a discussion on the poor state of some prison libraries. It also provides insight into the disproportionate number of Black and Indigenous people in prisons across Canada and what that means for prison librarianship and prison library collections. Finally, the article touches on the financial barriers that volunteers and organizations face, the history of policy surrounding prison libraries, and how security measures are balanced against intellectual freedom.

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About that word, and about those books

By Lawrence Hill (December 7, 2024)

Lawrence Hill writes about the attempts to ban his own novel, *The Book of Negroes*, by the London District Catholic School Board due to its use of controversial, although historically accurate, language. While those who argue in favour of banning the novel say that this language can be harmful for students, Hill explains that the students who read this novel, often grades 11 and 12, should not be infantilized, and that banning books like his does not protect students but instead allows teachers to avoid the more challenging parts of their jobs. Additionally, Hill discusses the history and context of the language he uses, advocating for its place in literature, classrooms, and libraries.

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Fighting back against transphobia

By Waterloo Region Record (August 2, 2024)

These examples from BC and Manitoba demonstrate how school boards and public libraries have been made the targets for transphobic rhetoric and violence. It then highlights the work of queer lawyer Barbara Findlay (who only uses lowercase letters), Manitoba's South Central Regional Library director Cathy Ching, and LGBTQ+ advocate James Chamberlain as they work to fight back against transphobia and censorship.

For more information on Cathy Ching's work, see the following [article](#): **Manitoba librarian hopes human rights award will inspire others to fight censorship: South Central Regional Library director says battle against censorship in libraries isn't over** (June 28, 2024).

[Read Here](#)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Meet the next fact-checker, debunker and moderator: You.

By Stuart A. Thompson and Kate Conger (January 9, 2025)

Meta, following in the footsteps of other popular social media giants like X, has recently announced their decision to eliminate in-house and third-party moderation on their platforms. Instead, Meta will rely on users to supply their own Community Notes to posts that they deem offensive, misleading, or just plain incorrect. The authors of this article break down some of the perceived issues with this model, such as increases in misinformation, fake news, and hate speech, and decreases in information literacy and public trust. The political motives behind this decision are also analyzed, as are the nuances of censorship vs. freedom of expression.

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The State Library of Victoria controversy shows what can happen when institutions cling to ‘neutrality’

By Sarah Polkinghorne and Lisa M. Given (July 18, 2024)

The authors of this article examine the underlying motives for the cancellation of writing workshops by authors critical of Israel’s war in Gaza at the State Library of Victoria in Australia, which they identify as political in nature. It is interesting to see that the theme of neutrality promoted by library management, and the pushback against neutrality as a form of censorship by library staff, is not specific to North America and actually plays out across the globe. As a result, the State Library’s public and workplace relations are in shambles, leading the authors to ask, what happens when the need to uphold ‘neutrality’ infringes upon freedom of expression?

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Reporters Without Borders’ Uncensored Library uses Minecraft to provide access to censored work

By Lisa Peet (April 7, 2022)

Peet details the work of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in creating The Uncensored Library, which is a Minecraft server that provides access to independent media for those living in countries with censored media or internet access. Although it may seem an unorthodox choice, Minecraft is available to almost anyone with access to the internet, and documents can be easily hidden from prying government eyes within the server. Peet’s article describes RSF’s impact, work, continued relevance, and ongoing legacy. She also describes the Minecraft library’s design, functionality, and evolution since the project went live on March 12, 2020.

[Read Here](#)

SCHOLARLY SPOTLIGHT

Kim Becnel, & Robin A. Moeller. (2024). Evolving Perceptions of Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Read in Library Science Students: An MLS Program Self-Study. Journal of Education for Library and Information Science, 65(4), 426–439.

The researchers of this study interviewed students just starting their MLIS programs and those just graduating from the program at Appalachian State University, as well as those who had been working in the field for at least 5 years, in order to compare their views on intellectual freedom with regard to collection development and management for younger users. The study finds that graduating students show higher levels of concern relating to resources containing potentially problematic themes than students just starting the program. Additionally, the study found that the reasons for not including certain materials also shifts between beginning students and graduating students. Then, in the sample of current professionals, the researchers encountered strong advocates for diverse collections, even as they dealt with the current pressures from their user bases. The study then discusses these results in relation to the current state of LIS education at this university, as well as the effect of current societal and political pressures.

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FLIF

We appreciate feedback.
Please don't hesitate to
reach out to us.

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