

Utah Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee

Annual Report 2015-2016

(also includes noteworthy events relating to Intellectual Freedom in the State of Utah)

July: Censorship & Support Pleasant Grove Library was faced with a challenge that would have required them to remove all (7) of the R rated videos from their collection. The Library was challenged by one woman, who had a 6-year-old check one out, on purpose. The library board backed the library decision up to retain them. They did change the policy to allow parents to restrict cards. She organized a group to attend a city council meeting to appeal. The attendance was about 50/50 for each side but in the end the council voted to retain the videos. (King's Speech, 12 Years a Slave, Gone Girl...)

We offered advice on points that could be made, objective counter arguments and also tips on presenting the case initially at the meeting. The librarian contacted us for advice on what to do. We also consulted with OIF. We decided at that point our physical presence would be a distraction, but left the option open if necessary.

September: Training Olivia and I presented training at the Grand County Library in Moab. We presented information on challenges, reporting challenges and privacy.

Hi Wanda, I wanted to say thank-you to you for coming to Moab and speaking to everyone here about intellectual freedom. We all really enjoyed the presentation from you and Olivia, and have been discussing IF ever since.

Censorship Reading Horizons, a local publisher had a banned book case in Minneapolis that ALA actually upheld. The quality of the books was seen as culturally insensitive and unacceptable. It was reported nationally and the company indicated they would work to improve materials.

Banned Book Week More libraries in the state are participating in celebrating BBW. We posted pictures of them on our FB page. OIF hosted a webinar that discussed that instead of celebrating banning books, perhaps we should be celebrating the fact that we have the freedom to read. (See also Banned Book Week is a Crock, by Ruth Graham). For 2016 the ALA theme is "Stand For the Right to Read".

October: Privacy Joint sponsorship with The Salt Lake City Public Library a speaker for The Nation 150th Anniversary Speaker Series. Zoe Carpenter spoke on privacy, relating to her article in The Nation "Librarians vs. the NSA"

November: Privacy Event Alison Macrina from The Library Freedom Project. Alison discussed ways that we can increase online security for ourselves and our libraries.

December: Steve Irving resigned to accept a position in California.

January: Kristin Pekoll, Assistant Director for ALA OIF was featured on the Evil Librarian podcast.

March: UELMA Invited Chris Crutcher and Ellen Hopkins to speak at UELMA. The addressed Intellectual Freedom, the value of books that kids can relate to, even if they are ones that contain material prone to be challenged. This also became a joint venture, with the State Library and Two Rivers Alternative School in Ogden covering Ellen's expenses.

Ellen also did a presentation and author signing at the Salt Lake City Public Library on March 17, the night before the conference. She reported standing room only and there were people out in the hall. This was her first visit to Utah.

“Having you and Chris at the conference added so much for me. I loved his speech. I think he illustrated the need for books about complex issues. Although he didn't address censorship directly in a big way I honestly feel that is what that audience needed to hear. After Shannon Hale's speech last year about gender bias I saw a lot of attitudes change regarding sexism in recommending books. I think Chris has shown a need for sometimes hard stories about challenging topics. Thank Dustin for his support and of course your willingness to give your time.”

April: Censorship Sen. Todd Weiler and Rep. Curtis Oda sponsored a resolution (SCR9) which “recognizes pornography as a public health hazard leading to a broad spectrum of individual and public health impacts and societal harms”. It was passed by the Utah State Legislature and signed by Governor Herbert in April.

Censorship Jim Cooper, Director of Salt Lake County Library Services responded to a claim that Sen. Weiler had made that porn was available in libraries. Jim reiterated library policy regarding internet access.

May: Annual Conference Our committee sponsored no sessions at conference but we were very pleased to have Martin Garnar here for a preconference and a keynote. His topics were: “Everyday Ethics: Tools for First Responders on the Library’s Front Lines and Martin Garnar Keynote- Keep Up the Good Fight: Promoting our Principles in the 21st Century Library.

We have lost some members and gained some members, retaining around 17 on our committee. Losing members, especially as we encourage students and new librarians to join and learn about the topic, mentor others even as they move on in the profession and have other priorities.

We want to provide more training for rural areas and small towns in Utah. As usual we try to keep abreast of anyone needing assistance. It is our feeling, based on several reports that it would be beneficial to provide information besides just support. Perhaps a webinar that could be produced and accessed when convenient.

Our goals are 1) provide support, whether ourselves or helping navigate to OIF, for any IF issues anywhere in the state 2) offer training to help prevent challenges from becoming issues 3) mentor others 4) encourage challenge reporting 5) protect access and privacy.

Our current officers are: Wanda Mae Huffaker, Chair; Mindy Hale, Vice-Chair; Olivia Wilkinson, Secretary; Marinda Keller, Website Coordinator; Shawn Bliss, Executive Advisor, (Manager of Frivolity and Generalized Paranoia)

Wanda Mae Huffaker June 1, 2016