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UW-M School of Information Studies Statement of Support for the West Bend Library

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UW-M School of Information Studies Statement of Support for the West Bend Library

Posted on: April 14, 2009

In recent weeks, two citizens of West Bend, Wisconsin have petitioned the [West Bend Community Memorial Library](#) to remove gay-themed books from a section designated “Young Adults,” arguing the books should be reclassified and placed in a restricted area requiring parental approval prior to being released to a minor. They further demand that the books be labeled with a warning about their content, arguing that they are obscene and pornographic.

Some of the books in question include:

- “[The Perks of Being a Wallflower](#)” by Stephen Chbosky (MTV Books, a division of Simon & Schuster)
- “[The Geography Club](#)” by Brent Hartinger (HarperTeen, a division of HarperCollins)
- “[Deal With It! a whole new approach to your body, brain and life as a gURL](#)” by Esther Drill (Pocket, a division of Simon & Schuster)

The books are from major publishers, sold in general bookstores, and are available in public and high school libraries throughout the State of Wisconsin.

There has been [considerable media attention](#) to this challenge, and you can learn about the challengers’ position at their blog, “[WISSUP: Wisconsin Speaks Up](#)“, and some of the community opposition to the challenge at a blog of their own, “[West Bend Parents for Free Speech](#)“.

As a school dedicated to training librarians and information professionals principles of open access, inclusiveness, and diversity, the faculty and teaching academic staff at the UW-Milwaukee School of Information Studies have issued the following statement of support for the West Bend Library:

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Throughout the history of the American public library, special interest groups have attempted to exert a disproportionate degree of influence on the development of a community wide resource. Whatever the intentions of any of these groups, the public library is required to maintain a standard of intellectual integrity within a sometimes-volatile situation.

The public library was developed to be the anchor of free inquiry in our democracy. We believe that mission is still relevant today. Over 15,000 public library branches throughout the United States maintain access to quality materials collected and arranged according to national standards developed by thoughtful and committed information professionals. The administration and staff of the West Bend Community Library are among those professionals and public scholars dedicated to principles of open access, inclusive collections, and community service. The education of these professionals is rigorous and expansive, demanding sophisticated skills in assessment, development and leadership; it ensures their preparedness to take the lead in developing and delivering information resources to their communities.

We, the faculty and teaching academic staff at the School of Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, along with the SOIS Graduate Student Organization, commend the West Bend Community Memorial Library Board of Trustees, administration, and staff for their support of the principle of intellectual freedom in the face of pressure to abandon their professional and communal commitments.