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Wednesday, April 29, 2009

Response to ALA President and OIF Director Regarding West Bend, WI, and Control of the Local Library

The following is my response to American Library Association [ALA] **President Jim Rettig** and the **ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom Acting Director Deborah Caldwell-Stone** regarding the matter in West Bend, WI. It is so good I had to reprint it here. It is so easy to prove these people false, and no one should ever be intimidated by them or the ALA. The ALA only further marginalizes itself:

Yes, I'm **Dan Kleinman** of SafeLibraries.

Queery, [your blog post](#) has become much more interesting because Deborah Caldwell-Stone, Acting Director of the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, has commented [t]here. I'm jealous and wish she would comment on my own blog.

Now I will respond to Ms. Caldwell-Stone, but let me first preface my response by saying she has been doing what she has been doing for a very long time and has made numerous statements on a variety of issues. Now nobody is a computer and is expected to remember everything they ever said. So when I point out a statement Ms. Caldwell-Stone made in the past and compare it to the current situation, please understand it is only to get at the issues, not to play gotcha. Pobody's perfect. I make the following comments with all due respect to Ms. Caldwell-Stone.

I said only the following about Deborah Caldwell-Stone: "Further, the books will just be moved in the library. Even Deborah Caldwell-Stone has said that is appropriate in the appropriate circumstance."

To this Ms. Caldwell Stone responded, "For the record, Mr. Kleinman does not ... accurately portray my views or the views of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom."

However, in the past, Ms. Caldwell-Stone said, "There are times when a book might be moved, for example a young adult novel makes it into a fourth or fifth classroom and that's more appropriate for the high school library, and a committee can just say this was an inappropriate book to buy for this age group but it was an appropriate book to buy for this age category and it works for this high school library." Listen to the Deborah Caldwell-Stone say this in her own voice by clicking on the link located at "[Deborah Caldwell-Stone Discusses Banned Books](#)", by admin, *American Library Association*, 11 July 2008.

Now my reading of that tells me that there are times when a book might be moved for reasons of age appropriateness. Yes, the context was a public school library, but the same principle applies, and the speaker was Deborah Caldwell-Stone herself.

So when I said, "Further, the books will just be moved in the library. Even Deborah Caldwell-Stone has said that is appropriate in the appropriate circumstance," I have "[Deborah Caldwell-Stone Discusses Banned Books](#)" as my reliable source for that statement.

I try to provide accurate and truthful information, and I usually back it up with source material. Only this time I provided the source *after* I made the statement; how ironic the source I provided is the very person claiming I do not "accurately portray [her] views or the views of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom." Apparently, I do, at least in this instance.

On the other hand, it is Deborah Caldwell-Stone who herself is being misleading. She says, for instance, "The ALA opposes book banning and censorship in any form, including censorship that arises from disagreement with and disapproval of positive GLBT materials." While outwardly true, the whole truth is that no book has been banned for many decades in the USA. I'm talking about banned, not moved for reasons of age appropriateness. [Bd of Educ. v. Pico](#) says the parties stipulate that pervasively vulgar material may be removed from public schools immediately. [US v. ALA](#), a big loss for the ALA and the ACLU, saw the Court say, "**The interest in protecting young library users from material inappropriate for minors is legitimate, and even compelling, as all Members of the Court appear to agree.**" Did Ms. Caldwell-Stone tell you about that? Does the US Supreme Court make book banning and censorship the law of the land? No and no. See also "[LISNews Disses Judith Krug Unwittingly](#)" for how the ALA, indeed the very Office for Intellectual Freedom Caldwell-Stone leads, misleads the public on the issue of censorship just as she is doing here on this Queery blog post.

She misleads the public another way, but it may be innocently. Other than what she said about me that I proved was incorrect, the remainder of her comments addressed themselves not to the issues, but to a nonissue. The issue of "GLBT materials" is a nonissue because the proponent of the changes in the library has long ago (relatively speaking) dropped her claims regarding GLBT materials and has since requested only legal means for protecting children from inappropriate material in her own public library. That's the issue now. Legal means for protecting children. Deborah Caldwell-Stone did not address that issue. Why? My guess is that she knows they are legal and there actually are no arguments for not applying legal means to protect children. Hence the reliance on the out-of-date GLBT claims.

And I can see Ginny is really making her case well and convincing people to legally protect children in the public library and that the ALA knows this and knows this could set a dangerous precedent for libraries nationwide. How can I see this? Anyone can, actually. First, look at the misleading information provided by ALA acolytes at the UW-M: "[UW-M Library School Misleads West Bend Citizens.](#)"

More to the point, however, is how uncharacteristically the top ALA leadership is getting directly involved in a local issue. The ALA is running scared. In the Queery blog we have the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom leader, Deborah Caldwell-Stone, making false statements, no matter how innocently.

And the ALA President himself has gotten directly involved. See the letter I have included below. He too, like Caldwell-Stone and like the UW-M, raises the out-of-date GLBT claim. But he also adds the false pornography issue. Pornography is not the issue. We can all agree no pornography is involved, but it is just not the issue. Material can be inappropriate for children and still not be pornography. The issue is inappropriate material for children, not pornography.

Efforts to cast the issue as pornography are merely efforts to cleverly avoid the real issue.

Notice he also talks about, "we must preserve the intellectual freedom rights of the entire community," but his direct involvement in this matter is precisely the opposite, namely, to prevent the rights of the entire community and enforce the ALA's policies.

It's a public library, not an ALA library. **It's West Bend's library, not Chicago's library. Do not be fooled by desperate people using false pornography and censorship claims or out-of-date GLBT claims.** Notice how none of these people and organizations are discussing the actual issues, namely, the legal means for protecting children that is being sought in West Bend and successfully applied in other communities. Why is that?

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On Wed, Apr 29, 2009 at 4:20 PM, Nanette Perez nperez@ala.org wrote:

[ifaction] Statement from ALA President Regarding Library Controversy in West Bend, Wis.

The following is a statement issued by American Library Association President Jim Rettig regarding efforts to remove Library Board members and to restrict materials in the West Bend (Wisconsin) Community Memorial Library:

“Last week, the West Bend, Wisconsin Common Council voted to deny reappointment to four Library Board members, based on objections to these members’ ‘ideology’ and their adherence to library policy concerning challenges to materials in the library collection. This move appears to be motivated largely in response to an ongoing campaign that seeks to restrict access to books in the West Bend Community Memorial Library’s young adult collection of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender fiction and nonfiction.

“We are dismayed by and deeply concerned about these developments. Libraries connect people and ideas, by providing access to a diverse array of information to meet the needs of everyone in the community. Whatever their personal beliefs, library board members have an obligation to support this unique role of the public library. When individuals or groups attempt to block access to library materials in the name of their own particular beliefs, we must all oppose such efforts and we must preserve the intellectual freedom rights of the entire community.

“Fanning the flames of this controversy, opponents of open access in libraries have launched a campaign spreading fear and misinformation. Newspaper and radio ads call on the community to ‘protect our children,’ and have compared the removal of books from the library to buckling a child’s seat belt. A city Alderman has even gone so far as to compare the West Bend Community Memorial Library to a porn shop.

“The materials in question are not pornography. They include award-winning novels and acclaimed works of nonfiction. To advocate for the removal or restriction of these materials on the basis of partisan or doctrinal disapproval is censorship, pure and simple. Parents who believe

a book is not appropriate for their own children are free to make that decision—for their children; they do not have the right nor the authority to make it for anyone else’s children.

"Because it supports intellectual freedom, the American Library Association (ALA) opposes book banning and censorship in any form, and supports librarians and library board members whenever they resist censorship in their libraries. Since our society is very diverse, libraries have a responsibility to provide materials that reflect the interests of all of their patrons.

“We stand in support of the librarians and Library Board members of the West Bend Community Memorial Library and the community members who defend intellectual freedom and open access to ideas. By resisting calls to censor potentially controversial materials, they promote and protect true education and learning, and uphold the cherished freedoms that we, as Americans, hold most dear.”