

8-12-2009

ALA Censors with Gay Abandon

Dan Kleinman

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.uwm.edu/west_bend_library_challenge



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kleinman, Dan, "ALA Censors with Gay Abandon" (2009). *West Bend Community Memorial Library (Wisconsin), 2009*. 336.
https://dc.uwm.edu/west_bend_library_challenge/336

This Blog Post is brought to you for free and open access by UWM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in West Bend Community Memorial Library (Wisconsin), 2009 by an authorized administrator of UWM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact open-access@uwm.edu.

Wednesday, August 12, 2009

ALA Censors with Gay Abandon

["The Corrupt American Library Association Censors with Carefree Abandon"](#)

by **Laurie Higgins**

Illinois Family Institute

12 August 2009

In the fall of 2008, I wrote two articles describing how absurdly imbalanced public high school book collections are on the topic of homosexuality. I mentioned in those two articles that Deerfield High School had approximately 65 books that espouse liberal views on homosexuality and not one that espouses conservative views. At New Trier High school in Winnetka, it's even worse: it's approximately 120 liberal books to 0 conservative.

Now the organization "Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays & Gays" (PFOX) has issued a press release taking a West Bend, Wisconsin library to task for its refusal to include in its book collection any books written by or about men and women who have decided no longer to engage in homosexual acts or identify as homosexuals, while at the same time carrying numerous books that espouse positive views of homosexuality:

"Despite public opposition, the West Bend Community Memorial Library continues to stock gay books for children and teens while neglecting books by ex-gay authors.

"Many of the gay books promote homosexual behavior to youth and are the subject of protests by concerned parents, whose request to have the books moved to the adult section were denied.

"Our requests that the Library balance some of its homosexual material for children with material written by ex-gays or with a heterosexual slant have been ignored,' said **Regina Griggs**, executive director of Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays & Gays (PFOX).

"Apparently, the West Bend Community Memorial Library is not interested in diversity,' said Griggs. . . . According to its own policy, the Library has a 'professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in developing collections.'

"For a library to provide children's books which promote homosexuality while denying ex-gay books smacks of censorship and indoctrination of youth with a one-sided ideology,' said Griggs." Furthermore, PFOX is asking the American Library Association (ALA) to condemn the violation of ALA principles that such censorship represents. There are two chances of that happening: slim and fat.

In July 2009, the [American Library Association](#) held its annual convention right here in Chicago. It might surprise IFI readers to learn that one of the pressing issues addressed at this convention for librarians was same-sex marriage. This issue is of such pressing concern to the ALA that a resolution was put forward that has the ALA formally endorsing same-sex marriage. I hope this

disabuses the naïve among us of the delusion that the ALA is an unbiased, politically neutral organization committed to providing "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."

[Here](#) is a "must-read" article about the event from the delightfully sardonic "Annoyed Librarian" who wrote about the resolution in his or her blog post "[ALA 2009: ALA Council and Same Sex Marriage](#)." (Please send this link to the librarians in your schools and community libraries.)

ALA ideologues are prepared to defend their de facto censorship practices. Their defense centers around their "Collection Development Policies" (CDP's). The term sounds so stupefyingly boring that no one thinks to look closely at them and how they actually affect library book collections-- but we should.

Fortunately, two university librarians have provided cynical, saucy, and trenchant analyses of CDP's which you can read [here](#) and [here](#).

It's not just the ALA whose bias is showing. A cursory look at the ideological biases of those who publish, review, and recommend books to school libraries and who sit on award committees will illuminate why such imbalances exist at virtually all public school and community libraries.

Secular publishing companies are largely staffed by liberals. Schools of education and departments of library science are notoriously liberal. Organizations that review and recommend books are notoriously liberal. And committees that award literary prizes are largely composed of individuals who hold liberal views on social issues, including homosexuality.

These various groups, along with English departments in colleges, universities, and high schools, are embarrassingly hypocritical when it comes to their public statements about intellectual freedom and diversity. When it comes to the topic of homosexuality, they are intellectually incestuous, politically motivated, narrow-minded, intolerant censors.

Below is an excerpt from a 2008 [article](#) written by four women on the staff of the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison followed by their [biographies](#), which reveals just how influential ideologues are in determining what books libraries purchase. This will also clarify why West Bend, Wisconsin community members are having so much trouble getting *ideas* into their local libraries:

Over the past few years there has been a **welcome increase in young adult novels dealing with gay and lesbian themes and topics, and 2007 proved to be the best year yet, not only in terms of quantity but in terms of quality as well** (emphasis added). We were pleased to see several newcomers pen their first novels for young adults with LGBTQ themes. Among these are published adult authors writing for the first time for teenagers, including **Peter Cameron** (*Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You*) and **James St. James** (*Freak Show*). First-time novelists **M. Sindy Felin** (*Touching Snow*) and **Perry Moore** (*Hero*) both got off to a great start with their original, finely crafted stories.

Established authors **Julie Peters**, (*grl2grl*) and **Ellen Wittlinger** (*Parrotfish*) expanded the genre

by offering a variety of LGBTQ characters, including transgender teens. And **Nancy Garden**, a pioneer in the field, published a collection of short stories (*Hear Me Out*) that shows the changes that have occurred in the lives of gay and lesbian teens over the past six decades. This year also marked the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition of *Annie on My Mind* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), which was so groundbreaking when it came out—the first gay/lesbian love story with a happy ending. We have come a very long way, indeed, since **John Donovan** published *I'll Get There: It Better Be Worth the Trip* (Harper & Row), the first gay novel for teens, in 1969.

In addition to *Annie on My Mind*, 2007 was an anniversary year for another landmark young adult novel. **S.E. Hinton's** *The Outsiders*, now a classic, came out in a fortieth-anniversary edition. Both of these books were important precursors of things to come.

...

In fact, one of the things that struck us profoundly this year was the fact that publishing reflecting the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning youth has, in just a few years, grown exponentially, and in that growth we are seeing more new voices and greater diversity of experience than we see within any single component of multicultural literature.

Kathleen T. Horning

Kathleen is the director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Kathleen T. Horning is a librarian who has served on many ALA award committees and is the former chair of the Newbery Award Committee. Kathleen is a past-president of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) of the American Library Association (ALA), and a past president of the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY). She has served on ALA/SRRT's Rainbow List, ALA/ALSC's Notable Children's Books Committee and an earlier Newbery Award Committee. She chaired ALA/ALSC's first Committee on Social Issues in Relationship to Materials and Services for Children. Kathleen frequently lectures to librarians on issues in evaluating literature for children and young adults, and she was named the 2010 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecturer for ALA/ALSC.

Merri V. Lindgren

Merri is a librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Merri is a regular contributor to the Wisconsin State Journal, writing a monthly column about books for children and young adults. Merri was a member of the American Library Association ALSC/YALSA 2008 Odyssey Award committee and is serving on the ALA/ALSC 2010 Caldecott Award Committee. She served on the 2001 Charlotte Zolotow Award committee and chaired the 2002, 2006, and 2007 Charlotte Zolotow Award committees.

Tessa Michaelson

Michaelson is a librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Tessa is the producer of the weekly CCBC podcasts. Tessa is chair of the 2010 Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee, and served as a member of the 2009 Zolotow Award Committee.

Megan Schliesman

Schliesman is a librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Megan served on the American Library Association/ALSC 2005 Newbery Award Committee and is chairing the ALA/ALSC 2011 Laura Ingalls Wilder Committee. She has also served on the 1998, 1999 and 2002 Charlotte Zolotow Award committees, chaired the 2003 and 2008 Zolotow Award committees, and will chair the 2009 committee. Megan manages the CCBC Intellectual Freedom Information Services and "What IF . . . Questions and Answers on Intellectual Freedom" forum.

Through its de facto censorship mechanism, cunningly obscured behind the sterile nomenclature "Collection Development Policy," the American Library Association has become a corrupt, hypocritical organization committed to promulgating biased, subversive social and political views on the controversial topic of homosexuality. On this topic one thing's certain: if you're looking for intellectual diversity, stay out of your libraries.