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Dan Kleinman

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Monday, April 20, 2009

LISNews Disses Judith Krug Unwittingly

[LISNews](#) is an excellent news source for those interested in libraries. In addition to its daily activities, it podcasts weekly on library issues. Unwittingly, but justifiably, it mocked the American Library Association's [ALA] former *de facto* leader in the very publication dedicated to that leader.

The most recent podcast was "dedicated to recently departed freedom crusader **Judith Krug**." See "[LISTen: An LISNews.org Podcast -- Episode #68](#)," by **Stephen Michael Kellat**, *LISNews*, 19 April 2009.

Judith Krug was the [de facto leader of the ALA](#) for about 40 years. Thanks in part to [her ACLU heritage](#), she single-handedly changed libraries so they no longer protect children from inappropriate material like they used to.

For example, she alone created "[Banned Books Week](#)," ostensibly to decry censorship, even though no books have been banned in the USA for half a century and it is nearly impossible to do so now for reasons that have nothing to do with the ALA. Supposedly, according to Banned Books Week material, "[Censorship by librarians of constitutionally protected speech, whether for protection or for any other reason, violates the First Amendment](#)." More ominously, "[Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label 'controversial' views, to distribute lists of 'objectionable' books or authors, and to purge libraries. The problem is not only one of actual censorship](#)."

I say ostensibly because "actual censorship" by librarians, citizens, and local governments is impossible by definition; the real goal is different. The real goal is to ensure children retain access to inappropriate material by making false and scary claims about censorship. As one former ALA Councilor **Jessamyn West** rightly noted, "[It also highlights the thing we know about Banned Books Week that we don't talk about much — the bulk of these books are challenged by parents for being age-inappropriate for children. While I think this is still a formidable thing for librarians to deal with, it's totally different from people trying to block a book from being sold at all](#)."

By calling efforts of some librarians, citizens, and local government officials to keep children from inappropriate material "censorship," the ALA is misleading the entire nation. And in light of [US v. ALA](#), which the ALA lost big in 2003 in the US Supreme Court, the ALA's actions to mislead are evidently intentional, unless the Court itself is also censorious: "[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](#)."

The ALA does not agree; protecting children from inappropriate material is "censorship," according to the ALA. Now what is more authoritative, the ALA or the US Supreme Court?

Did you know that US Supreme Court case that allows Internet filters in public libraries to protect children (hence, Children's Internet Protection Act) was Judith Krug's biggest disappointment in life? The only means the ALA is forced to allow to effectively protect children is her biggest disappointment? Is it any wonder why the ALA intentionally misleads the public and the media? (And Judith Krug "["invented what they now call media training," said Art Plotnik, former editor of American Libraries.](#)")

Perhaps her greatest disappointment was the 2003 Supreme Court ruling that the Children's Internet Protection Act was constitutional, ending a battle over internet [sic] filtering that cost ALA over a million dollars. Adults, the court decided, could ask that filters be turned off for unrestricted access and Congress could require libraries to install filtering in exchange for funding. It was a decision that Krug had fought hard.

Source: "[A Tribute to Judith Krug](#)," by **Leonard Kniffel**, *AL Inside Scoop*, 21 April 2009.

But I digress.

Censorship has nothing to do with keeping inappropriate material from children. Nothing. Protecting children from such material is common sense, and it is legal. It is not censorship. The US Supreme Court already addressed that issue. Why does the ALA continue to raise it? Why does the ALA continue to misled local media, communities, and those who guide local communities? Why do people think the ALA is authoritative anymore?

So what is censorship?

Cries of censorship rang out over a relatively small, minor situation. [I]t is called censorship when [a selection of LGBT materials becomes harder to access within Amazon's catalog](#). While the English word "censorship" might be at the core in the Amazon story and others, it might be better to term such "inference of intended suppression." **Censorship more properly involves a government using its coercive powers to dictate what can be said, written, printed, or shown in a media form.**

As **Dan Gerstein** said, "[The ... elites have convinced themselves that they are taking a stand against cultural tyranny. \[T\]he reality is that it is those who cry 'Censorship!' the loudest who are the ones trying to stifle speech and force their moral world-view on others.](#)" Does that not perfectly describe the false claims of the ALA? (Speaking of stifling speech, get a load of a public library in West Bend, WI, refusing to hear a citizen complaint: "[West Bend Library Board Shuns Public Hearing Over Porn.](#)")

So censorship defined "more properly" has nothing to do with what the ALA is claiming, what Banned Books Week is espousing, what Judith Krug has created. As **Thomas Sowell** put it, Banned Books Week should be called "[National Hogwash Week.](#)"

The definition of censorship given above about a government using coercive powers is relatively accurate, but who said it? Who defined censorship in a way that is truthful and in total contradiction with the ALA's claims as promulgated by Judith Krug's creations? Believe it or not, it is the very source that dedicated the podcast to Judith Krug. It was LISNews! It was Stephen

Michael Kellat! [Listen for yourself](#). I'll have to add him to my "[Good Librarians](#)" page along with Jessamyn West, who's already there with others.

That's right, LISNews has dedicated a podcast to Judith Krug, then went on to define censorship accurately in a manner that total refutes Judith Krug's life work to mislead people about censorship. (She even made [racist statements when parents in Howell, MI, who attempted to keep public school children from reading school books containing bestiality](#).) An "inference of intended suppression" is twisted by the ALA into "censorship" in a effort to ensure children retain access to inappropriate material. But the two are "totally different," as Jessamyn West said.

Thank you, LISNews, for justifiably producing a podcast that contains such truth, such delicious irony. By defining censorship accurately as you have, you have struck a silver stake in the heart of Banned Books Week, in the very podcast dedicated to its creator, even while praising her. That is what I mean by the title of this post. Truly outstanding.

For the record, I am sad to hear of Judith Krug's death and particularly her illness. No one will ever replace her at the ALA. I looked forward to speaking with her; she never responded to my emails. I have such respect for her effectiveness in creating and promoting ALA policy vis-a-vis children that I applied to take classes on library law directly from her, among others. I wanted to meet her, to ask questions, to exercise my intellectual freedom. Alas, her [Office for Intellectual Freedom refused me access repeatedly in a fashion that illustrates the ALA's hypocrisy](#) perfectly and may have violated court rules. Apparently, some animals *are* more equal than others. I'll apply again for admittance to those classes, but they just won't be the same without Judith Krug.