

6-16-2009

# West Bend Library Controversy Continues to Escalate

Michael Zimmer

Follow this and additional works at: [https://dc.uwm.edu/west\\_bend\\_library\\_challenge](https://dc.uwm.edu/west_bend_library_challenge)



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

---

## Recommended Citation

Zimmer, Michael, "West Bend Library Controversy Continues to Escalate" (2009). *West Bend Community Memorial Library (Wisconsin)*, 2009. 429.

[https://dc.uwm.edu/west\\_bend\\_library\\_challenge/429](https://dc.uwm.edu/west_bend_library_challenge/429)

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](mailto:open-access@uwm.edu).

# West Bend Library Controversy Continues to Escalate

Posted on: June 16, 2009

Posted in: [Information Ethics](#), [Libraries](#)

Comments: [1 Comment](#)

The West Bend library controversy continues to escalate....with calls for book burning and growing national exposure (and, unfortunately, ridicule).

Here's the (abridged) history and escalation: [Updated on 6/19/09 to include ABC News coverage, and 7/22/09 to include CNN]

02/15/2009: Ginny Maziarka, who blogs at [WISSUP](#), files a formal complaint with the [West Bend Community Memorial Library](#) regarding the presence of LGBTQ-themed books in the library's young adult section. [In her words](#): "*Children as young as 11 years old have free access to propaganda-type reading material (I hesitate to call it literature, thanks) that glamorizes and encourages homosexual activity.*" Maziarka also shows frustration that the library does not appear to provide "*information about EX-GAYS, people who have left that lifestyle, and/or the TRUTH behind homosexuality and its origin.*"

02/26/2009: Maziarka meets with various library officials, [requesting that](#) (1) the library attain "balance" by including "faith-based and ex-"gay" books that oppose a pro-homosexual ideology" within the young adult section; and (2) removal of any book in children's and young adult section that contains "perverse and pornographic language". Both requests were denied.

03/03/2009: The scheduled Library Board meeting to discuss Maziarka's complaint is [postponed due to the crowd](#) of over 300 people exceeding the fire code (the meeting was already relocated to a larger room in anticipation of the turnout).

03/20/2009: Maziarka [receives a communication](#) from library director explaining that since (in his and the city attorney's opinion) the nature of her complaint has changed, the re-scheduled Library Board meeting to discuss the original complaint has been canceled. Maziarka is urged to submit a new, updated, complaint to re-start the process. [Maziarka responds](#) by stating the library's "withdrawal of our complaint is in gross error" and wishes to move forward.

03/26/2009: [Maziarka issues a petition](#) for a "child-safe, family-friendly library." The petition requests the library board take a roll call vote on the following five issues:

1. Reclassification of Youth-Targeted Pornographic Books into the adult section of the library.
2. Visual identification of explicit material with a parental advisory.
3. Restrict Library-generated Online Sexual Content.
4. Balanced Literature on Controversial Issues including homosexuality.

5. Children's Internet Protection – require the libraries to implement technology protection to protect minors from internet porn on public computers in accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act.

03/26/2009: Maziarka holds a [“town meeting”](#) about the library controversy. About 150 attended, reflecting both sides of the issue; no library officials were present. The controversy gains [additional media attention](#).

04/14/2009: UW-Milwaukee [School of Information Studies issues a statement of support](#) for the West Bend Library, hailing their “support of the principle of intellectual freedom in the face of pressure to abandon their professional and communal commitments.”

04/18/2009: Maziarka e-mails local media outlets, conservative commentators and the town of West Bend clerk, [asking they help stop](#) scheduled appointments to the Library Board until the controversy is settled.

04/22/2009: The West Bend City Council [refuses to re-appoint](#) 4 sitting library board members over their handling of the controversy, [sparking](#) statements of condemnation from the [American Library Association](#) and a collection of free speech organizations ([PDF](#)). Additional [national press coverage](#) emerges.

05/02/2009: The Milwaukee branch of the so-called “Christian Civil Liberties Union” [filed a legal claim](#) against the the city of West Bend, Mayor Kristine Deiss, the West Bend Library Board and Library Director Michael Tyree, arguing that the young adult book [Baby Be-Bop](#) is offensive, and that the book’s “words can permeate violence, and puts one’s life in possible jeopardy, adults and children alike.” The group demands \$120,000, Deiss’ resignation and the book be removed and *publicly burned or destroyed*. [Maziarka distances](#) herself from this group, as [others shoot it down](#) as [ridiculous](#).

05/18/2009: The West Bend City Council [affirms its original refusal](#) to re-appoint 4 sitting library board members.

06/02/2009: The Library Board (including the 4 members who were denied re-appointment, but not yet replaced) held a public meeting to discuss the issues presented in Maziarka’s petition. After listening to both sides for over two hours, the library board [unanimously concluded](#) that its existing policies regarding these texts were sufficient. Maziarka declares the [library “XXX-rated” and unsafe for children](#).

06/03/2009: In its report of the library board meeting, [the ALA notes](#) that members of the “Christian Civil Liberties Union” were present and distributed copies of their complaint to attendees, complete with their call to burn the library’s copy of *Baby Be-Bop*. This is [picked up \(and ridiculed\) by numerous bloggers](#) and online news agencies, most notably [Talking Points Memo](#), [Daily Kos](#), the [Drudge Retort](#), the [Times Online](#) and the [Guardian](#).

06/16/2009: Enter [Gawker](#). The immensely popular and snarky news and gossip blog [posts about](#) the blog wars that have emerged around the library controversy. The focus is on Maziarka’s

[WISSUP](#) and the anonymously-written [Sleepless in West Bend](#), described by Gawker as “this crazy book-burning lady and her angry liberal enemy.” The comments are less friendly.

06/19/2009: [ABC News](#) publishes a somewhat lengthy story on the controversy, focusing mostly on the CCLU claim, attracting a [long string of comments](#).

07/22/2009: [CNN.com reports](#) on the entire saga, also attracting numerous comments.

07/30/2009: The [Pew Research Center](#) states that the library controversy was the 3rd most blogged about topic from July 20-24, behind news about Obama’s first six months in office and gossip about the TV show Dr. Who, but drawing more attention in the blogosphere than the Dr. Henry Louis Gates arrest.

So, we went from a single complaint about GLBTQ books, to a canceled board meeting, a larger petition about “sexually explicit” books, a call for book burning, condemnation from various information professionals, ousted library board members, the upholding of library policies, and ridicule in Daily Kos and Gawker.

It is hard to imagine how this will escalate further, but it inevitably will....