
Stand Up for Intellectual Freedom

Judith F. Krug

When Leland Park suggested the title of "Stand Up for Intellectual Freedom" for my remarks today, I doubt very much that he thought he was being prophetic. And yet he could not have identified a more pertinent focal point — for never before has the concept of intellectual freedom been in greater need of people to stand up for it.

Since the turn of the decade, librarians and educators have been hearing about increasing numbers of censorship attempts at the local level. During the last years of the 1970s — in fact, through mid-1980 — the number of censorship attempts reported to the Office of Intellectual



Judith F. Krug is Director of the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom. Her speech was given at the Third General Session of the Conference. We thank Dr. Gene Lanier for providing North Carolina Libraries with the text of her speech. (Photo by Frank Sparger.)

Freedom numbered approximately three hundred annually. But in the fall of 1980, the number of complaints skyrocketed, reaching — on an annual basis — between nine hundred and a thousand. This was a three-fold increase over the number of incidents in the late 1970's. I should note here, that when I talk about incidents, I speak only about those that I can verify in the office files. We do not extrapolate from our figures, except to the extent that I believe we learn about only 20 to 25 per cent of the incidents that do occur. If my rule of thumb is at all accurate, the number of censorship incidents since the fall of 1980 might well have been as high as four to five thousand each and every year.

This situation may be changing. It's almost too early to tell, but I have a gut feeling that we have peaked and may begin to see a decrease in censorship attempts at the local institutional level. At the very least, I do not believe that the number of incidents is increasing.

Having made that optimistic statement, I should also tell you that during the last few weeks, the Office has received calls requesting help with challenges of the following titles:

- Blubber*, by Judy Blume—Luling, Louisiana
- San Domingo: The Medicine Hat Stallion*, by Marguerite Henry — Brazil, Indiana
- Mother Goose*, Arthur Rackham edition — Kirkwood, Delaware
- Life* magazine — Kinzers, Pennsylvania, School District
- The Shining*, by Stephen King — Campbell County (Wyoming) School District
- Firestarter*, by Stephen King — Campbell County (Wyoming) School District
- Bad Seed*, by William Edward March — Campbell County (Wyoming) School District
- Lisa, Bright and Dark*, by John Neufeld — Byron (Illinois) Middle School Library
- The Lottery*, by Shirley Jackson — Byron (Illinois) Middle School Library
- The Solid Gold Kid*, by Norma Fox Mazer — Yuma (Arizona) School District One
- Quartzsite Trip*, by William Hogan — Texas City (TX) High School
- Once I Was a Plumtree*, by Johanna Horwitz — Northbrook, Illinois
- Wee Wisdom* — Unity School of Christianity (Oregon school)

So much for my gut feeling — but then I wish on stars, too!

More about local attacks a bit later. For the moment, I would like to return to my topic. Earlier I implied that Leland Park deserved a vote of thanks for his prescience (foresight) in titling this program. For if there was ever a need to stand up for intellectual freedom, it is right now. Censorship pressures are growing. More importantly, they are impinging on the very heart and soul of librarianship. Our heart and soul — our substance — stated simply, is acquisition, preservation, and dissemination of information. Those three functions encompass our reason for being. Any effort which affects our ability to acquire, preserve, or disseminate information strikes at our heart. It is in this context, then, that I would like to review the growing pressures on intellectual freedom and why we must stand up and continue to be counted among those who seek to combat them.

Sources of Censorship Pressure

Censorship pressures currently can be traced to three main sources. The first is government secrecy, evidenced by the attempts to restrict the amount of information and the ideas that are available to the public. Such attempts encompass broadening the definition of what can be classified as secret, limiting the use of the Freedom of Information Act, censoring former government employees, licensing foreign publications, barring travel by Americans to some countries, refusing entry visas to foreign scholars, and controlling scientific research publications. There is no doubt in my mind that all of these attempts are seriously affecting librarians' ability to acquire information. And if the ideas are not available in our collections, we have nothing to preserve — and nothing to disseminate.

The second source of censorship pressures affecting intellectual freedom results from the new technological advances. Part and parcel of such advances are the new forms of communication media — forms which are inherently unstable and easily changeable. These characteristics directly affect our ability to preserve information. Compounding the problem is an emerging conflict and divergence of interests between the information producer and the information consumer. Such divergence of interests are already noticeable in a variety of areas, including electronic book publishing, copyright, media concentration, VCR and Betamax reproduction, and so on. All technological advances will affect intellec-

tual freedom in libraries because they affect the manner in which we acquire, preserve, and disseminate information. But to deal with the intellectual freedom issues generated by technological advances, I believe we must take a fresh look at our intellectual freedom position. For that position is print oriented.

The third and final source of censorship concern is the continuing attempts by individuals and groups to remove from libraries and schools materials containing ideas and information which the complainants believe to be inaccurate, untruthful, harmful to society, degenerative, and so on. In my opinion, such incidents will continue for as long as libraries maintain a semblance of their current structure and operation. In addition, such incidents will continue for as long as libraries maintain a semblance of their current structure and operation. In addition, such incidents will continue to be highly visible and, most probably, to be the focal points around which both professional and public efforts coalesce in support and defense of intellectual freedom principles.

With that overview, let me identify some specifics in each area of concern.

Government Efforts

There is no doubt, at least in my mind, that government efforts to control information and ideas have increased dramatically during the Reagan administration. In a recently released report entitled "Free Speech 1984," ACLU Executive Director Ira Glasser said that "the new tactic of suppression ... is nothing less than a covert action against the First Amendment and, ultimately, democracy itself ... The procedural rights to speak, publish, hear and read remain intact. But what we are permitted to speak about, publish, hear and read is increasingly limited to what the government wants us to know."

Glasser went on to say that "[those in government who support restrictions] see the free flow of information as a threat and seek increasingly to insulate governmental decisions from public debate. While this trend began before 1980, the Reagan administration has accelerated it enormously and seems to regard restriction of information as a central strategy of government."

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Such sentiments were echoed by Floyd Abrams in the lead article of the September 25 *New York Times Magazine*. In "The New Effort to Control Information," Abrams indicated that the present administration's information policy is "unique in history — clear, coherent and, unlike

that of some recent administrations, not a bit schizophrenic. More important, it seems at odds with the concept that widespread dissemination of information from diverse sources furthers the public interest. In fact, it appears to be hostile to the basic tenet of the First Amendment that a democracy requires an informed citizenry to argue and shape policy."

Abrams said further, "This is an administration that seems obsessed with the risks of information, fearful of its potential for leading the public to the 'wrong' conclusions ... It is a view that ... treats information as if it were a potentially disabling contagious disease that must be controlled, quarantined, and ultimately cured."

So you think Galsser and Abrams are paranoid? Unfortunately, the facts say they are not. For instance, the government attempted to sharply limit the scope of the Freedom of Information Act. Claiming that the Act weakens law enforcement and intelligence-gathering operations and has become administratively burdensome, the government sought to totally exempt the CIA from the Act's provisions. It did this even though the agency has won every case in which it has sought to avoid disclosure of properly classified information.

Of course, you may not think the administration's attempts to limit the Freedom of Information Act are too important since they don't affect us. Ah — but they do affect us, because the people who produce the materials that we acquire for our collections use the Freedom of Information Act. In fact, the files of the CIA, the FBI, and other federal agencies — which have played a pivotal role in this country's foreign and domestic affairs — are invaluable resources for political scientists, historians, and other scholars whose research often finds expression in textbooks, historical and other diverse works of nonfiction.

For instance, without the Act, Alan Weinstein's *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1978) would never have been written. Considered the definitive work on this controversial subject, the book became possible only because Weinstein had access, through the Freedom of Information Act, to agency records in possession of the State Department, the Justice Department, the CIA, the FBI, and various congressional committees. The book is a thorough investigation of the trial of Alger Hiss for perjury, the events and activities which led him to be accused of spying for the Soviet Union, and his long and contradictory relationship with his chief antagonist Whittaker Chambers.

Errol Flynn: The Untold Story, by Charles

Higham (Doubleday, 1980), probably would never have come to light had not the author had access, by virtue of the Act, to CIA and FBI files. It was in these sources that he unearthed the long hidden fact that Flynn performed espionage services for the Nazis during World War II. Higham's hypothesis was extensively supported by hundreds of documents available under the Act and has now been widely accepted as valid by historians and scholars.

Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story, by Peter Wyden (Simon and Schuster, 1979), is another book that was made possible through access to CIA files. It is, in brief, an account of the planning and execution of the "Bay of Pigs" invasion, with particular emphasis on the extent to which the CIA may have facilitated or directed the invasion. It spotlights, as well, the types of as well, the types of constraints which confront the president and executive branch in dealing with bureaucracy in a crisis situation.

I am pleased to report that Congress rejected the administration's attempt to exempt the CIA from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Nevertheless, that setback didn't stop the administration — it merely caused it to use different approaches.

Early this year, the Department of Justice reversed the policy established under the Carter administration of being "generous" in waiving the payment of processing fees to public interest organizations and individuals seeking information under the act. Among other things, the new criteria no longer permit fees to be waived *unless* the government first decides what the information sought "meaningfully contributes to the public development or understanding of the subject." In other words, the government itself now is to decide what information about its own conduct is "meaningful" and necessary to citizens.

Another action of the administration, and the one that may have the most lasting impact, are the decisions to classify more information and to subject government officials to lifetime publication review. There have been three distinct stages in the development of these changes.

The first step came just eight months after President Reagan's inauguration, when Attorney General William French Smith revoked the 1980 Justice Department guidelines which had sought to limit the effects of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Snepp v. United States*. In that decision, the justices upheld the CIA's right to make its employees agree to lifetime review of their writings to insure the security of classified information.

The second step in the process related to the classification system itself. That system has long been criticized for over-inclusiveness, and in 1978, an executive order signed by President Carter attempted to limit the amount of government paperwork being withheld from the public. By an executive order signed on April 2, 1982, President Reagan reversed the major component of the Carter decision. Now government officials are no longer required to even consider the public's right to know when information is classified. When they are in doubt, materials are mandated to be classified at the highest — not the lowest — level of secrecy. One of the most important aspects of the Carter attempt to limit classification was that such materials must be *identifiably* harmful to national security. The "identifiable" provision was also dropped in the 1982 Reagan executive order.

The third stage came in two steps. On March 11, 1983, a presidential directive was issued requiring a wide range of present and former government officials to obtain clearance from the government before publishing material that *might* be classified. On August 25, the administration released an "agreement" implementing the March 11 directive. This "agreement" established a new category of protected information, described as "Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI)."

The agreement released on August 25 has no precedent in our nation's history. To be signed by all government officials with access to high-level classified information, it requires these officials — for the rest of their lives — to submit, for governmental review, newspaper articles or books they write for the general reading public. The contract will affect thousands of senior officials and senior military and Foreign Service officers. Its purpose is to prevent unauthorized disclosure of classified information, but its effects are likely to go far beyond that. It gives those in power a new and powerful weapon to delay or even suppress criticism by those most knowledgeable to voice it. The effect of the directive, quite simply, is that those people most knowledgeable about subjects of overriding national concern will be least able to comment without the approval of those they wish to criticize.

I am very pleased to tell you that on October 20, the Senate voted to block implementation of the August 25 agreement for six months. There is an increasing concern in Congress that the administration's plan to censor writings and speeches of current and former federal employees will unconstitutionally violate First Amendment rights.

Despite this setback, the administration con-

tinues its activities on other fronts. It has intensified its use of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952, popularly known as the McCarran-Walter Act, to deny visas to controversial foreign speakers. Under a provision of the McCarran Act, consular officers are directed to deny visas to those whose activities would be "prejudicial to the public interest" or "subversive to the national security." Enacted during the height of the McCarthy era — over the veto of President Truman — the McCarran Act was intended to exclude those who would engage in acts of espionage, illegal incitement to violence, or who would otherwise threaten our national security. Today, it is frequently invoked to bar foreign lecturers, artists, and scientists who hold dissident political views.

Using the provisions of the McCarran Act, Mrs. Hortensia Allende, widow of slain Chilean president Salvador Allende, was recently denied a visa. Mrs. Allende was invited to the San Francisco area by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese there, Stanford University, and the Northern California Ecumenical Council. The topic she had been asked to speak on to California church groups was women's and human rights issues. Application for an entry visa was denied because her stated topic would be "prejudicial to U.S. interests."

Dr. Ernest Mandel, a prominent Belgian journalist and Marxist theoretician (but not a member of the Communist Party), was also denied a visa to participate in a series of academic conferences. Although Mandel's visa was denied, he subsequently addressed one of his scheduled audiences by transatlantic telephone. This situation does have its ironies. An alien Marxist may send his writings into the United States, or even discuss his views with Americans by long distance telephone, but he may not step foot in the United States to personally communicate those views.

A final example involves Dario Fo, an Italian playwright, actor, and director who is internationally recognized for his political satires and farces and his wife, actress Franca Rame. Both Fo and Rame were denied visas in 1980 to attend the New York Fifth Festival of Italian Theater. Fo was to perform his popular play *Mistero Boffo*, a comic dialogue in which Fo takes the part of over 100 different characters and speaks a nonsense language. The visas were denied on the grounds of the couple's alleged support of the Red Brigade and other terrorist groups — even though they have publicly denounced terrorism. But Fo does belong to an organization which provides legal counsel and aid to political prisoners, some of

whom are accused terrorists.

In some instances, individuals are denied the right to enter the United States to personally present their particular views, but their publications are permitted to cross our border. In other instances, the government seeks to restrict information imported from abroad. Under certain provisions of the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA), American citizens are severely impeded from receiving information, regardless of its form, from certain countries. Currently, materials from Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, and North Korea are effectively banned. (You'll note that Russia and China are not on the list.)

These regulations were recently invoked by Customs agents to seize several thousand copies of *Gamma*, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. The paper had been regularly delivered to subscribers through Canadian postal channels, but came to the attention of U.S. Customs authorities when the Canadian postal strike diverted the mail through Boston. After a lawsuit and negotiating for months with the Treasury and State Department officials, the regulations were modified to accommodate non-commercial, single-issue subscribers. The problem, however, continues.

Sometimes, even when material is permitted into the country, it is "labeled" in such a way as to undermine its effectiveness. A primary example of this tactic was the Justice Department's labeling as "political propaganda" three films produced by the prestigious National Film Board of Canada on nuclear war and acid rain, including the Academy Award winning *If You Love This Planet*. (A recent GAO report revealed that 41 per cent of the foreign films reviewed by the Justice Department from 1980 to 1982 were classified as "political propaganda.") That decision, by the way, was declared unconstitutional by a federal judge in Sacramento, California, on September 8. The judge said the disclaimer required by the Justice Department violated First Amendment guarantees on freedom of speech and unfairly stigmatized the films and those who exhibited them as distributors of distorted information on behalf of foreign governments.

Less well known is the fact that American-made documentary films destined abroad have not escaped either. Under a 1948 U.N. agreement, filmmakers pay no American export or import duties if the United States Information Agency certifies that their films are primarily "instructional" or "informational," rather than propaganda. In making its decisions, the USIA relies on relevant government agencies.

Under this administration, as revealed in the July-August issue of *American Film*, a 1979 Emmy Award-winning documentary on toxic waste, "The Killing Ground," was denied certification by the Environmental Protection Agency, which concluded that the program was "mainly of historical interest" since the U.S. "had made great progress in managing hazardous wastes." To the EPA, the news documentary is propaganda — not information — because its "tone . . . would mislead a foreign audience into believing that the American public needed arousing to the dangers of hazardous wastes [when] this is no longer the case."

There are a variety of other maneuvers currently in use by the government to keep information secret. One infamous example occurred last year when one hundred papers were withdrawn the day before the opening of the conference of the American Optical Society. Governmental officials threatened criminal prosecution should the *unclassified* information contained in these papers be shared with the invited guests from thirty-five nations.

While I have by no means covered the gamut of current government attempts to limit availability of and access to information, I suspect that I have given enough to show that government secrecy looms as a serious threat. It is, furthermore, an area about which we must inform ourselves fully and about which we must be prepared to stand up whenever action is required.

Technological Advances

I would now like to turn to the effects of technological advances on intellectual freedom. This is another area which warrants concern and in which positive action is a necessity. There is no doubt in my mind that such advances are going to substantially alter the manner in which the public receives its information and will also alter the manner in which librarians perform their acquisition, preservation, and dissemination responsibilities. For one thing, more and more of the information we need for our collections is being produced in non-traditional forms, for instance, on tape or on fiche. Now, this should not be a major philosophical problem. The profession has long contended that libraries are not the bastion of print — librarians make information and ideas available in whatever form they appear. But this may be easier said than done.

Let me give you a telling example. For its program at the ALA 1983 Annual Conference, the Intellectual Freedom Committee wished to devel-

op a twenty-minute videotape that would be used as a training tool. The tape was to be composed of two-to three-minute segments from various national television shows; the segments would be used to highlight visually the points the Committee wished to make. In order to produce this videotape, however, the Committee needed permission from producers of several shows, among them "60 Minutes" and "Phil Donahue." In every instance, permission to use such segments was denied.

I should note that one program was available for \$360. Another could be had for a similar charge — but with the caveat that it must be shown in its entirety. And even ALA's non-profit status and the one-time educational use didn't secure permission to use the others. As to accessibility, we dickered for six months before our requests were ultimately rejected.

The points that the television clips would have illustrated were subsequently verbalized — but there is no doubt in my mind that the effectiveness was substantially reduced. Indeed, there is a growing realization that the medium of communication can be as powerful in its capacity to persuade or deter as the message itself. It's been said time and time again that one picture is worth a thousand words. At this point, I would wager that one picture is worth even more! It's one thing to have a variety of messages in printed form residing side by side on shelves in a library. It's quite another matter to have one message in prime time on national television (television being the medium from which most of the people receive most of their information) and another message, which may be of equal importance but not as well known, liked, or accepted, relegated to 2:00 A.M. on a local station. The importance of any given idea, then, because a function of the time slot in which it is made available. How are librarians going to decide on what to expend substantial amounts of money? Many messages, by virtue of their original dissemination, are going to be viewed as less important.

There is, furthermore, an inherent censorship potential in the newer media of communication. The forms on which our messages can now be communicated are composed of plastic and other man-made materials. As a result, they are inherently unstable, with a life expectancy of only ten to twenty years. Videodisks, at best, have a life of ten years — and this time is substantially reduced the more the disks are used.

In my opinion, the magnitude of the preservation problem vis-a-vis the new technological advances is so great that I have difficulty convey-

ing it in words. Never before have we faced a problem of this magnitude.

Another major intellectual freedom concern associated with technological advances is that the media are easily manipulated. They can be added to or subtracted from with nary a second thought. Witness the eighteen minutes missing from the Nixon tapes. How are we ever going to determine that the information we acquire for our collections contains the original message and not an "edited" one? And place this question in the context of the current administration's drive to keep information from the public. I remind you that 1984 is merely two months away.

Never has the concept of intellectual freedom been in greater need of people to stand up for it.

The spectre such questions raise is both mind-expanding and mind-deadening! Not the least of my concerns involves the accuracy of the information we're responsible for. Some of you may remember that until the 1967 revision of the *Library Bill of Rights*, Point 2 of the document read, in part, and I quote, "Books and other reading material of sound factual authority should not be proscribed or removed from library shelves because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." During the 1967 revision, the phrase "of sound factual authority" became a primary target for removal. Criticism of the phrase arose when a librarian in Belleville, Illinois, used it to exclude a Protestant publication when he, being a Catholic, described as lacking "sound factual authority."

The phrase was removed by the Intellectual Freedom Committee when it determined that some of the most profound and influential publications in our culture lack the element of "sound factual authority," and the phrase itself could easily be abused to thwart the intent and purpose of the *Library Bill of Rights*. It was apparent that the phrase also effectively precluded the association from defending fiction or any of those great works which start from philosophical premises that have nothing to do with fact. Be that as it may, what is a librarian's responsibility for "edited" or manipulated information? A case in point, albeit in the print medium, is revisionist literature. During Banned Books Week, I received a complaint from a man in California who contended that his local public library refused to display some materials that had been "banned." Among others, these

materials included *Did Six Million Really Die?*, *Anne Frank's Diary: A Hoax*, and *The Hoax of the 20th Century*, by Dr. Arthur Butz, all of which have been published by the Institute for Historical Review, and all of which contend that the Holocaust never occurred but is merely a Zionist fabrication. Such materials, of course, do not constitute the first examples of revisionist history that we have seen. I remember back in the late '60s when Beria fell from favor in the Soviet Union, and we were requested to remove the pages dealing with Beria from the Soviet Encyclopedia. All libraries which had purchased the encyclopedia were provided with an article on the Bering Sea — of equal length to the one on Beria — and with instructions to pull out Beria and “tip in” Bering Sea! Had American librarians followed the directives of the Soviet officials, Beria would have been wiped out of our Soviet Encyclopedias. I suspect that this did not happen. But in regard to revisionist history, what is our responsibility? Are librarians responsible for having represented on their shelves information and ideas that we know are fabrications? Should we acquire this material? If so, where do we file it — under fiction? What do we do?

The question is much more serious in terms of the new electronic media. I can easily envision a situation — as I'm sure you can — where we don't even know what the original message is. Who had a hand in “editing” before it even came to our attention? We wouldn't have even known that eighteen minutes were missing on one of the Nixon tapes — if that section of tape had been physically removed.

There is no way that I am going to exhaust, in this brief amount of time, the potential problems that the new technologies may generate for librarians in their traditional roles as gatekeepers to the marketplace of ideas. But let me quickly give you two examples of problems — relating to the confidentiality of library circulation records — that have come to our attention in the last few weeks.

One librarian, stating that her library was part of a consortium of systems which had joined together to automate their circulation records, pointed out that all the libraries which contributed to this circulation base had access to all the other information in that base. The confidentiality of library circulation records was, in her opinion, a joke in her own system. She could identify extremely easily what every patron in every one of the consortium member libraries was reading at any given point in time.

The second example involves a library system

which also has automated its circulation data and, as a result, is in a position to easily tell any patron who calls on the telephone what materials that patron now has in his or her possession and the due dates for them. Leaving aside the question of an individual actually being the person that he or she claims to be, the librarian had called to say that a parent had telephoned and asked what materials her child had checked out from the library and when they were due. The mother, ostensibly, was concerned because she would be responsible for any fines incurred by her child. Now, the state where the librarian works does have a library confidentiality statute on the books. It was on this basis that the librarian refused the parent the information. Subsequently, she checked with her attorney and was told that the parent-child relationships did take a precedence over the state confidentiality law. In other words, the librarian must provide to the parent the information requested. In the past, I doubt we would have faced this question, and even if we did, it probably would have been extremely difficult to answer. Now it merely means flicking on a



North Carolina State University professor Elliot Engel, entertaining those at the conference banquet with a discussion of the life and times of Charles Dickens. (Photo by Frank Sparger.)

switch and giving one, or possibly a few, commands to a computer.

The world of libraries is changing and, occasionally, more rapidly than we can cope with. These changes are going to bring substantial and new problems regarding intellectual freedom in libraries. It is, indeed, a growing area of concern and one in which we must all participate to find the appropriate solutions.

"Traditional" Attempts

Finally, then, we come to the third area of censorship pressures, namely, attempts to remove from local libraries materials which contain ideas and information the complainants believe to be inaccurate, untruthful, harmful, or so on. As I mentioned earlier, such "traditional" attempts at censorship may be decreasing. While I cannot provide you with a figure, I can point out how these continuing attempts have changed in the recent past and how they are remaining "traditional."

First, censorship attempts in local libraries and schools continue to come from every state in the union and touch on almost every area of human knowledge. The complainants include those on the political left as well as on the right; members of fundamentalist religious groups and patriotic organizations; teachers and librarians (unfortunately); and most often, parents of school children.

The reasons for attacking specific titles remain the same today as they have been during the last few years, namely, that the materials are unAmerican, communistic, or immoral; that they handle sex too frank or in too adult a manner; or that they present members of minority groups or women unfavorably.

To be more specific, the targets of current censorship pressures are focusing on adolescent novels by authors such as Judy Blume, Gertrude Samuels, and Norma Klein; best sellers by writers such as Evan Hunter, Judith Guest, Harold Robbins, and Sidney Sheldon; sex education books; modern classics by John Steinbeck, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, John Knowles, and Kurt Vonnegut; elementary school social studies and reading textbooks; frank descriptions of ghetto life by authors such as Richard Wright, Gordon Parks, and Claude Brown; and materials dealing with witchcraft or the occult.

While censorship from the "right of center" has received the most media attention in the past few years, similar efforts by persons and groups holding other social and political views are also

In summary, then, not a lot has changed in the last few years. The number of censorship attempts may be decreasing, but the content of the attacks has not altered noticeably, and the people complaining are still our same old friends.

And yet there have been changes. They are not blatant, and on a case by case basis, they are rarely obvious. But when one looks at several hundred incidents over a period of months, a subtle change in the nature of the complaints begins to take shape. First, in a growing number of incidents, the attack is not against specific titles but rather against subject areas. One book might be singled out — say, a book on homosexuality or sex education or mythology. But the demand is to remove all materials "like it." It's the nature of the beast that while such demands create a lot of noise and provide the substance for a lot of press continuing. Groups like the Council on Interracial Books for Children advocate the adoption of "guidelines" to weed out allegedly racist and sexist materials. Women Against Pornography seeks to ban all materials that, in its opinion, degrade women. And special interest groups of an apolitical, ethnic, or religious character are also active. The urge to censor is the exclusive property of no particular political or social trend, be it right, left, or center. (In fact, I have a friend who claims that the urge to censor is man's *most* elemental drive!) conferences, they are rarely successful. Partially, this is due to the impossibility of the complainants reviewing every piece of material in any given library, to identify those which contain, in whole or in part, information deemed "inappropriate." More important in withstanding such demands, however, is that procedures for review of materials in many libraries are geared to individual titles not to demands for wholesale removal of areas of information.

A second subtle change in the nature of complaints against materials is rather ingenious (and far more serious in my opinion), for it involves the theft of the word balance — as in "balanced" collections, one of librarianship's cherished concepts. Phyllis Schlafly can take credit here. In November of 1981, she decried the lack of conservative materials in libraries and told her supporters "How to Improve Fairness in Your Library." The term "fairness" quickly metamorphosized into "balance," and in the process, this term became a numerical standard. In other words, if a library contains one book or magazine or film on one so-called side of an issue, then it *must* have one on the other side of the issue. The numerical standard assumes, furthermore, that there are *only* two sides to every question. The fact that grada-

tions of ideas and varying perceptions of issues lead to *many* sides of a question or issue has not been given serious consideration. "Balance" is a numbers game: "eighteen books in favor of abortion, but only four against abortion."

To counter a concept of libraries based on numbers, the Intellectual Freedom Committee identified new descriptive terminology, namely, diversity. Diversity of collections is, to me at least, a more accurate reflection of the library's societal role. For not only are libraries obliged to include many differing views in their collections, but materials representing the broadest diversity of human thought and creativity should be actively sought, irrespective of the opinions, prejudices, values, and tastes of the librarian and whether or not a given numerical or other balance of views can be achieved at any given moment.

The third and final shift in the quality of current censorship pressures comes from parents who previously demanded control over children's reading to protect them, but who now demand control over children's reading because "children belong to their parents."¹ Based on this philosophy, librarians in many communities are being told to restrict *all* materials and to permit children to read *only* those for which they have brought a note of permission from their parents. And in all too many instances, the "solution" of such pressures is restricted shelving.

This may be the first time you've heard this — but it really is comforting to know that our whole

world is not changing! Merely two-thirds of it!

And these changes are going to bring to librarians substantial and new problems regarding our responsibilities to acquire, preserve, and disseminate information. The pressures can be seen in the new technological advances and the current attempts by the government to keep information from the American people. Overriding it all, visibly and daily, are the continuing attempts on the local level to remove from libraries and schools materials containing ideas that someone or some group finds abhorrent.

I believe that the next several years are going to be crucial in how we deal with the ramifications of each of these three areas. And as we stand tall and step forward to meet the future, it is perhaps important to keep in mind James Madison's words of over 150 years ago:

A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or tragedy; or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

References

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