



Maintaining Diverse Collections in the Face of Book Challenges

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Who Are We?



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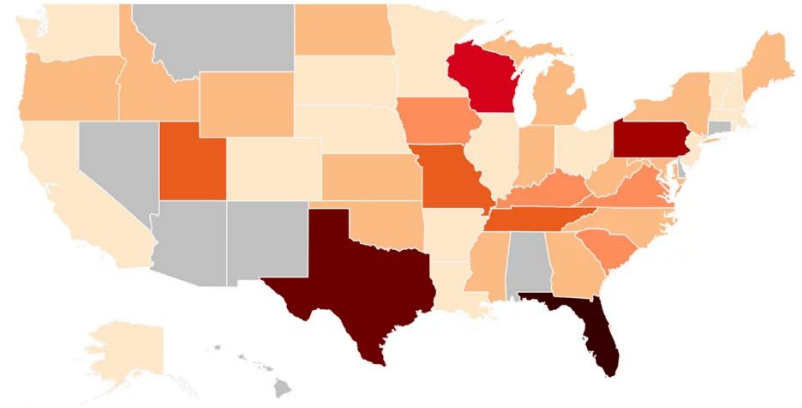


Amanda Walch
Raugust Library
University of Jamestown
NDLA EDI Committee

The State of Affairs

“[T]he movement to ban books that has grown since 2021... is an organized effort by advocacy groups and state politicians with the ultimate aim of limiting access to certain stories, perspectives, and information”

PEN America. Banned in the USA: State Laws Supercharge Book Suppression in Schools.
<https://pen.org/report/banned-in-the-usa-state-laws-supercharge-book-suppression-in-schools/>



*There are no states with 201-300 bans, 401-500 bans, 701-1,000 bans, and 2,001-5,000 bans

Data from PEN America's Index of School Book Bans.

July 2, 2021 - December 31, 2023

PEN America. Banned in the USA: Narrating the Crisis:
<https://pen.org/report/narrating-the-crisis/>

The State of Affairs

PEN America research found 10,000+ instances of book bans in the 2023-2024 school year—more than **double** the last school year.

ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom's preliminary 2024 data shows 414 attempts to censor library materials and services between January - August.

Book Bans are off the charts



Book bans recorded per school year, July 1, 2021-June 30, 2024



July 2, 2021 - December 31, 2023

PEN America. Memo on School Book Bans from PEN America:

<https://pen.org/memo-on-school-book-bans-2023-2024-school-year/>

Library Impact

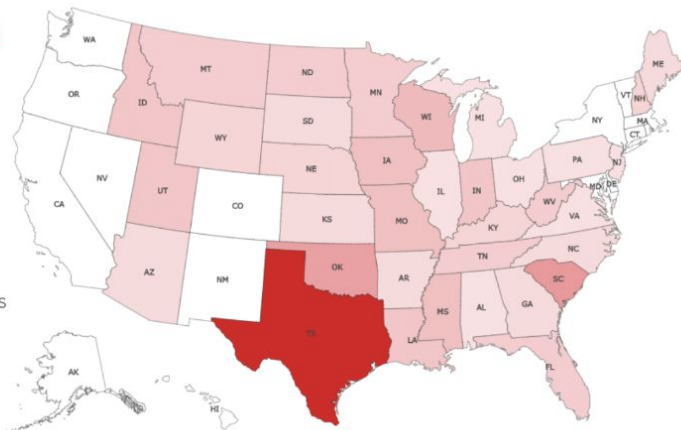
Legislation and political pressure play a large role in book bans; both through active book removals and creating a chilling effect.

In the 2023-2024 school year, PEN recorded **8,000** book bans in Florida and Iowa, largely because of state laws.

THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIES IS DECIDED IN THE STATES

158 BAD BILLS IN 8 CATEGORIES

1. Limit access to school library databases
2. Establish book rating systems
3. Mandate challenge policies
4. Override collection development
5. Expand parental control
6. Change definitions of "obscene"
7. Limit teaching of "divisive concepts"
8. Criminalize librarians and educators



EveryLibrary's 2023 "Legislation of Concern" Heatmap

EveryLibrary 2023 Impact Report: Answering Unprecedented Challenges for Libraries and Librarians. https://www.everylibrary.org/2023_impact_report

Library Impact

Silent censorship “[refers] to librarian choices to not purchase new materials, to weed ones already available to patrons, or to not sponsor a program for fear of a challenge from the community. This type of unseen censorship potentially limits community access to information about topics to which a vocal minority might object and which a vulnerable minority may need.”

- United for Libraries. Terms and Definitions Related to Intellectual Freedom & Censorship.
https://www.ala.org/sites/default/files/united/content/IF/if_censorship_terms_definitions_united_for_libraries.pdf



Panel from Maia Kobabe's Genderqueer, ALA's top challenged book in 2023

The Local Side



The EDI Piece

“Every challenge to a library book is an attack on our freedom to read. The books being targeted again focus on LGBTQ+ and people of color. Our communities and our country are stronger because of diversity. Libraries that reflect their communities’ diversity promote learning and empathy that some people want to hide or eliminate.”

- Emily Drabinski, 2023-2024 ALA President



ALA. Book Ban Data. <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data>



Why It Matters

- Books are “windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors” (coined by Rudine Sims Bishop, 1990)
 - Cultural literacy, empathy
- Authentic, relevant stories encourage more and deeper reading
 - Literacy leads to higher academic achievement
- Books on challenging topics can encourage conversation with parents and other trusted adults

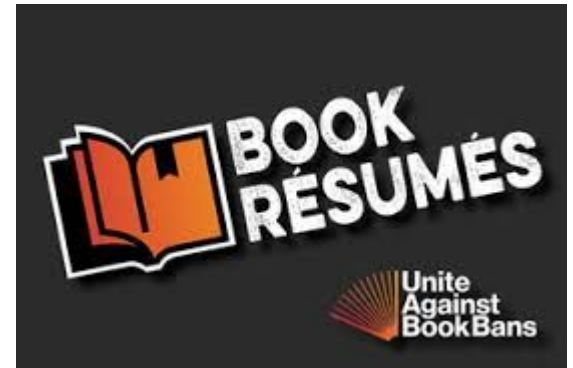
Why It Matters

- “Inaccessibility Cycle” by @PacingPixie
- Cycle addresses disability inclusion, specifically, but is more broadly applicable?



What Can We Do?

- Know why materials might be targeted
 - Resources: [banned books lists from ALA](#)
- Know your policies
- Know the value of the materials being targeted
 - Read reviews
 - Resource: [Book Resumes from Unite Against Book Bans](#)



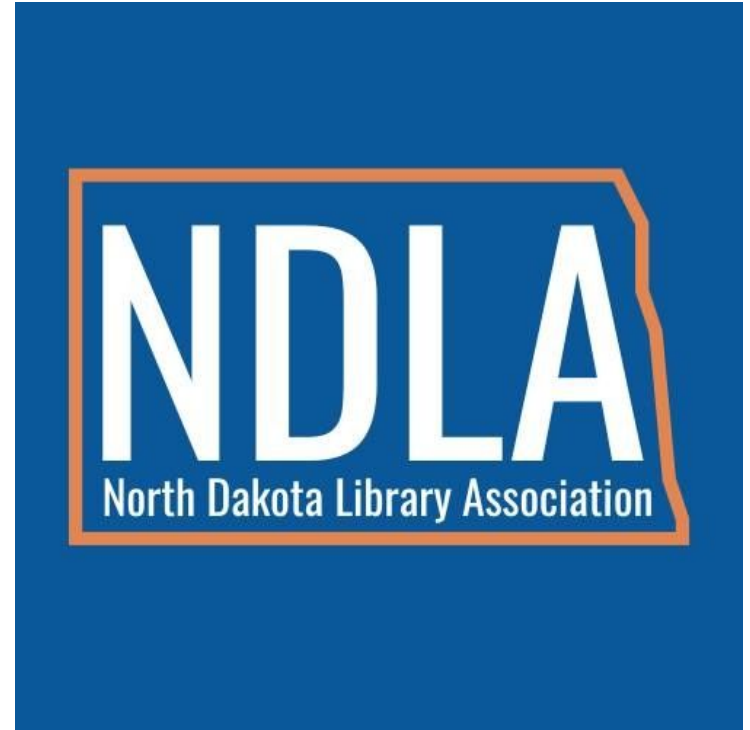


What Can We Do?

- Avoid self-censorship
 - Trust your collection development resources and professional expertise
- Report challenges
 - NDIA Intellectual Freedom Committee, ALA, PEN America, etc.
- Empower your allies
 - Resource: We Need Diverse Books [Resources for Parents & Allies](#), [Resources for Teachers](#)

NDLA Support

- Intellectual Freedom Committee
 - [Guidelines, checklists, sample policies and forms](#)
 - [Resources](#)
- EDI Committee: [EDI Grant](#)
 - Can be used for training, programming, collection development





Group Discussion

- Have you faced any book challenges in your library? What was the response?
- Have you been finding yourself self-censoring? What can we do to resist that urge?
- What are our options for not actually removing books? (Relocating, etc.)
- How else can NDLA support you?
- What's your best tip to share?



References

ALA and PEN America reports/data:

- <https://pen.org/report/banned-in-the-usa-state-laws-supercharge-book-suppression-in-schools/>
- <https://pen.org/report/narrating-the-crisis/>
- <https://pen.org/memo-on-school-book-bans-2023-2024-school-year/>
- <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data>
- <https://www.ala.org/news/2024/09/american-library-association-reveals-preliminary-data-2024-book-challenges>

Censorship legislation around the US

- <https://pen.org/report/book-bans-pressure-to-censor/>
- <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/state-laws-are-behind-many-book-bans-even-indirectly-report-finds/2023/05>

Why it matters:

- Windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors, Rudine Sims Bishop <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= AAu58SNSyc> (1 min); <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf> (1990 essay)
- Unite Against Book bans report <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Empowered-by-Reading-final.pdf>



References cont.

Why it matters, cont.

- ALSC white paper https://www.ala.org/sites/default/files/alsc/content/ALSCwhitepaper_importance%20of%20diversity_with%20graphics_FIN_AL.pdf
- Inaccessibility Cycle <https://www.pacingpixie.com/>

Resources

- <https://bookresumes.uniteagainstbookbans.org/>
- <https://diversebooks.org/resources/addressing-book-challenges/>
- <https://diversebooks.org/resources/book-banning-resources/>
- <https://ncac.org/resource/book-challenge-resource-center>
- <https://ndla.info/Policies-Guidelines-Forms>
- <https://ndla.info/Intellectual-Freedom-Resources>
- <https://ndla.info/EDI-Grant>

Final Housekeeping

Do you want?

- Today's slides
- Speaker notes
- [Group discussion notes](#)

We'll get these up as soon as we can!

