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Protection Against the Threat of Censorship: An Opinion Survey of School Librarians

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PROTECTION AGAINST THE THREAT OF CENSORSHIP
An Opinion Survey of School Librarians

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The research study was directed to Iowa school librarians and sought information in the areas of censorship and selection. A questionnaire survey was submitted to 155 elementary and secondary school librarians in the Spring of 1975. 130 replies were returned and tabulated.

The results of the study show that fifty-one percent of the schools had a materials selection policy. Of the sixty-six schools reporting materials selection policies all but three had policies which included procedures to be used when complaints against materials were lodged. The same number of respondents felt such policies do allow the librarian to use his/her professional judgment when selecting materials for the media center.

Forty-eight objections to materials included in the media center had been received during the years 1973-1975 by the 130 librarians responding to this study. "Vulgar language" was given as the reason for the objection in fifty percent of cases and the parent was listed as the source of the objection fifty percent of the time. The respondents revealed that in fifty-nine percent of the cases the final disposition of the objection resulted in the student being denied direct access to the materials in question either through restricted circulation or removal of the item. The same librarians who had been involved in censorship incidents reported they had felt they had the support and cooperation of their faculty colleagues in ninety-three percent of the replies, but less support had been received from principals (seventy-four percent), superintendents (seventy percent) and school boards (sixty-seven percent).

126 respondents predicted future support during censorship incident would be high from faculty colleagues and principals (eighty-seven percent and eighty-three percent, respectively), but would expect less support from superintendents (fifty-five percent) and school boards (forty-four percent).

The librarians were asked to rank a list of organizations from which they would consider seeking advice and support during future censorship incidents, and the librarians indicated the Iowa State Education Association would be their first preference if they felt the need to contact an organization for additional assistance.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Censorship and the threat of censorship have been continuing problems for the librarian throughout history. Although the subject has fluctuated in its level of concern in the mind of the public, it is once again a prominent topic of debate in the United States, because of the current frank and realistic presentation of ideas in every media format.

The professional library associations and others interested in the citizen's right to information have devoted much thought and time to establish standards which should be observed by persons charged with selecting materials for others. There is also a major emphasis placed on instilling proper selection standards during librarianship training. Yet there is a continuing appearance in the current literature of incidents of censorship or attempted censorship which may result in lengthy disputes, and/or removal of materials deemed "unsuitable."

Two questions arise from this current situation.

(1) Is there a lessening of commitment to selection standards by those practicing the profession of librarianship

when they select media? (2) Do others, not in the profession, lack confidence in the ability of the librarian to select suitable materials for others?

This study was proposed and undertaken as a result of informal interviews with local school librarians. The consensus of opinion was that selection decisions were their deepest concerns. Prior to, and during the time of this study several events occurred which directly affected the selection and provision of materials.

The United States Supreme Court issued an opinion in California Vs. Miller¹ which declared individual "community standards" could be used to judge whether media was considered obscene. Although the state of Iowa declared that the only "community" which could bring legal action in such a case must be the state itself, the librarians felt the original decision, coupled with the appearance of more materials for young people which dealt with relevant subjects in a realistic manner, might lead a local population to adopt a more restrictive attitude toward media center materials.

Parental objections to a textbook series used in Virginia,² which occurred during this same time span, received national publicity. Although the librarians

¹U. S. Law Week, June 21, 1973, p. 4925-4935

²L. I. Faigley, "What Happened in Kanawha County," English Journal, 64 (May, 1975), p. 5-9

conceded library materials were not required reading and therefore could not technically be attacked on the same basis, their concern centered on the lack of respect exhibited by the parents for professional selection judgments made in this case.

Another censorship attempt occurred geographically and professionally closer to Iowa school librarians during the time of this survey. An objection to inclusion of several books in the media center of the Grinnell High School was given state-wide publicity.³ The length of time involved in resolving the incident and the attention given it in the news media and the Iowa library and education professions made the incident a continuing issue during the winter and spring of 1974-1975.

The librarians informally interviewed stated that such publicized censorship incidents must be avoided because of the resulting embarrassment for the school and the erosion of confidence in the librarian which would prevent him/her from performing effectively in the future.

Briefly stated, the following factors were present in 1974-1975 to justify a study directed to the school librarian involving selection and censorship of school materials.

1. The emphasis placed on free access to information by professional organizations and library school

³Des Moines Register, December 8, 1974 - May, 1975.

educators.

2. The continuing appearance of writings expressing the concern that librarians limit their selection of materials because of anticipated censorship.

3. Concerns expressed by school librarians through informal interviews were:

- a. The dilemma posed by the appearance of more materials dealing with a subject and/or written in a style which might create objections.
- b. The effect of the local population's interpretation of the California Vs. Miller Supreme Court decision.⁴
- c. Potential parental interference in the selection of media which would be made available to school-age youngsters.
- d. A censorship incident which would focus public attention through the news media on the librarian and school.

4. The lack of recent studies which dealt directly with the school librarian in the areas of selection and censorship.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to ascertain (a) the

⁴United States Law Week, op. cit.

percentage of schools with officially-adopted materials selection policies, (b) the nature and handling of objections to materials, and (c) the librarian's perception of support from those within his/her educational circle and outside organizations in cases of censorship incidents.

HYPOTHESES

The study directed to school librarians was designed to obtain data to test the following hypotheses:

1. Less than fifty percent of those librarians reporting will have board-approved selection policies.
 - a. Of those reporting board-approved policies all will report that the materials selection policy includes procedures to be followed when objections to materials are lodged.
 - b. Of those reporting board-approved selection policies over seventy-five percent will feel said policies do give confidence to the librarian during the selection process.
2. "Vulgar language" will be cited fifty percent or more of the time as the reason for the objection to inclusion of certain materials in the media center.
3. Fifty percent or more of the objections to materials in school media centers originate from parents.
4. Removal of the item in question is the solution fifty percent or more of the time when librarians have an objection to materials.

5. a. Eighty percent or more of the librarians will feel confident they would receive support and cooperation from their faculty colleagues during a censorship incident.
 - b. Seventy percent or more of the librarians will feel confident of future support and cooperation from their principal during a censorship incident.
 - c. Sixty percent or more of the librarians will be confident of the support of their superintendent during a future censorship incident.
 - d. Less than fifty percent of the librarians will be confident of the support of their school board during a censorship incident.
6. Should the librarian feel the need of additional assistance seventy-five percent of the respondents will rank the Iowa Education^A Media Association as his/her first preference among a list of organizations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The survey sought to determine if a school had an officially adopted selection policy and a complaint procedure. It was not concerned with types or descriptions of said policies and procedures.
2. This study was only concerned with current (within two years) objections received by librarians.

This included the years 1973-1975.

3. The survey questioned only the person who selected materials for the media center. It was not submitted to other school personnel.

4. Lack of space precluded lengthy descriptions of censorship incidents. The librarian was requested to supply, in brief form, the identity of the objector, the title of the material in question, the reason offered for the objection, and the final desposition of the incident.

5. The study was only concerned with the selection process and censorship attempts. No other information concerning the media center was solicited.

Explanations about individual situations or circumstances which might have given depth and breadth to the results of the data were not feasible in this study.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions were used to facilitate the understanding of terms and concepts germane to this particular study.

Censorship - the policy of restricting the public expression of ideas, opinions, conceptions, and impulses which have or are believed to have the capacity to undermine the governing authority or the social and moral order which that authority considers itself

bound to protect.⁵

Objections to materials - written objections submitted in official form, verbal objections, or any request for the reason for including a particular item in the media center collection.

Censorship incidents - any or all of the following: the occasion of the objection, the attendant debate (public or private) of the objection, and the action or inaction which resulted in a decision concerning the disposition of the objection.

Relevant - "pertinent; timely; pertaining to the matter under consideration."⁶ The word realistic was used as "in art and literature the portrayal of people and things as they really are."⁷

Library and media center are used interchangeably in this study. The same is true of librarian and media specialist.

⁵Henry Abraham, "Censorship," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. (1968), II, p. 356

⁶David B. Guralnik, ed., Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language. (Rev. ed.; New York, 1973), p. 481

⁷Ibid., p. 474

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature reviewed for this study was concerned with those studies or writings dealing with the media selection process in general and those that dealt with the school situation in particular.

The severe lack of current studies concerning the school librarian has been noted before, but it was concluded that general trends could be observed in other studies which were concerned with schools and censorship.

Some studies which seemed to be relevant to this study were unavailable. However, articles written by the investigators about the studies were located and used.

STUDIES AND SURVEYS CONCERNING CENSORSHIP AND SCHOOLS

The most important study which has been done in the area of censorship and the school librarian was Marjorie Fiske's.⁸ It was conducted in 1957, and is still referred to constantly by writers as the outstanding study of its

⁸Marjorie Fiske, Book Selection and Censorship
(Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959)

kind. However, no similar study has been done since then. Through in-depth interviews with school librarians, book selection policies and procedures, ^{methods of} handling objections to books and attitudes and opinions of librarians were pursued. Fiske stated that:

Two themes are dominant: isolation and subordination - isolation both from the profession of librarianship and from faculty colleagues and subordination to the concepts and practices of their school administrators.

Other conclusions drawn from this study revealed that (a) fifty percent of the parental complaints involved morals and profanity, (b) twenty-nine percent of school librarians habitually avoid controversial material during the selection process, (c) the common resort of the school librarian to a censorship complaint is to remove the offending materials to her office, (d) the school librarian is most susceptible to removing the material when the request is initiated from within the school (eighty-five percent).⁹

The revelation of the basic insecurity of school librarians when selecting and defending controversial materials disclosed by the Fiske study, indicated a need to the researcher for further study.

The questionnaire study conducted by Burress¹⁰ sought to determine censorship pressures on the public

⁹Fiske, pp. 5-87

¹⁰Lee A. Burress, Jr., How Censorship Affects the School, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document DE053110, 1971.

schools of Wisconsin. Although this study was directed to English teachers, it revealed certain trends. Over one-third of the teachers responding revealed they feel the pressure and have experienced or expect to experience an overt expression of censorship. It also revealed parents were most active in objecting to materials. Seventeen percent of the reporting schools had policies for dealing with objections. The author noted "many teachers try to anticipate objections and attempt to ensure no one has grounds for complaints." He also found too many cases where offending items were "quietly removed."¹¹

The questionnaire study conducted by Nyla Ahrens of English teachers revealed that fifty percent of the complaints about materials came from parents and ten percent ~~was~~ ^{were} from school personnel. The study also noted that "vulgar subjects and coarse language" were voiced most often as the cause of objection.¹²

The Douma study used a questionnaire survey of high school English departments to describe various book selection policies and to compare the effects of said policies to defer or resolve censorship. He reported only nineteen percent of the reporting schools had written selection policies, and an even higher percentage

¹¹Burress, pp. 2-18

¹²Nyla Ahrens, Censorship and the Teacher of English, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED061224, 1972, pp. 18-19

(thirty-nine percent) did not have procedures for objections. Those schools with no policies (eighteen percent) were less successful in inhibiting or resolving censorship than those with policies, (thirty-five percent). Douma also found that parents objected most often to the selection of books.¹³

The common themes of these four studies which relate to this study are the predominance of parent-originated objections (Fiske excluded), the scarcity of selection policies and complaint procedures, and the tendency to defer to censorship or anticipated censorship when selecting and retaining materials for school use.

¹³Rollin Douma, Book Selectionship Policies, Book Complaint Policies and Censorship in Selected Michigan Schools, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED078448, 1973, p. 15-80

Chapter III

PROCEDURES

A mailed questionnaire (Appendix B) with accompanying cover letter (Appendix A) was used to obtain data for this study. The questionnaire sought information in three areas.

1. If the media specialist was employed in a school with a school board-approved selection policy, if that policy included a complaint procedure to be followed when objections were lodged, and if that policy provided the media specialist with a feeling of confidence or security during the selection process.

2. If the media specialist had received objections to materials during the last two years (1973-1975). If so, to what, lodged by whom, the reason(s) for the objection(s), the handling and disposition of the objection; and level of support from faculty colleagues, administration and school board during the complaint.

3. Perception of future support in the case of future consorship attempts from faculty, administration, and school board, and the librarian's order of preference of organizations from which he/she might seek assistance

in the case of a future censorship attempt.

The respondents were selected from a list prepared by the Department of Public Instruction of Iowa.¹⁴ This printout, with original information provided by the elementary and secondary schools of Iowa, listed the person (alphabetically by surname) who hold school library positions. The reliability of the information may not be total as there was no criteria for inclusion and no information was sought pertaining to the qualifications of the person listed. It was also incomplete as the list was compiled early in the first semester of the school year, and anyone filling a library position later in the year was not included. The list was numbered and a table of random numbers¹⁵ was used to select the names of those librarians who were to receive a questionnaire. One hundred fifty-five seventh through twelfth grade media personnel and fifty-five kindergarten through sixth grade media personnel were selected. More secondary schools were listed on the original printout as there are fewer elementary school libraries in Iowa schools and this was the reason for the number selected in each division. Two hundred ten

¹⁴Iowa State Department of Public Instruction. Personnel With Media Assignments in Iowa Schools, 1974-1975. (Computer Printout) Des Moines, Iowa: The State of Iowa, 1975.

¹⁵Herbert Arkin and Raymond Colton, Tables for Statisticians. (2d ed.; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), pp. 158-161.

questionnaires with accompanying cover letters and return envelopes were mailed March 10, 1975. No follow-up communication was possible because of financial reasons. The cut-off date for accepting returns was June 5, 1975, by which time one hundred thirty-two had been received. Of these, one was incomprehensible and one included a note stating no interest in taking part in any survey. However, one hundred thirty, or sixty-two percent, of the total replies were determined valid and were used in the study.

No coding device was used to identify the replies, so no comparison or comment could be made concerning respondents or non-respondents. The responses were tabulated and the number of schools in each category of building organization (grade span included) are listed below.

Kindergarten - Sixth grade - 25

Kindergarten - Ninth grade - 11

Kindergarten - Twelfth grade - 29

Fourth - Ninth grade - 20

Sixth - Ninth grade - 20

Ninth - Twelfth grade - 25

The number of respondent schools in each category is relatively close with the exception of the K-9 category.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The first question asked via the questionnaire was, "Does your school district have a materials selection policy officially adopted by the District Board of Education?" Table 1 shows fifty one percent of the schools surveyed had officially-adopted materials selection policies; forty-nine percent did not.

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Schools with
Board-Approved Materials
Selection Policies

Schools	Total No. of Replies	YES		NO	
		No.	%	No.	%
K - 6	25	19	76	6	24
K - 9	11	6	55	5	45
K - 12	29	12	41	17	59
4 - 9	20	14	70	6	30
6 - 12	20	8	40	12	60
9 - 12	25	7	28	18	72
Total	130	66	51	64	49

The schools in the first grouping (K-6) had the highest percentage of selection policies. This may be the result of the listings in the sample. Because it is not mandated by state law that there must be a librarian at the elementary school level, the preponderance of librarians in this grouping are from the larger school districts, which more frequently have selection policies. Those schools in the 9-12 grade grouping had a much lower percentage of board-approved policies than the other groupings.

Many comments were added to this question. Most of these referred to why a district had not adopted a policy. Mentioned most often were: "No complaints - no need", "I purchase carefully", and "No interest exhibited by the administration."

Comments added by some librarians from districts with officially-adopted selection policies indicated they were not always applying the policy. "Have policy but don't need it at elementary level", "Offbeat requests - cite budget cuts", "I just avoid popular fiction", and "I don't use the policy as it would just invite more objections" were representative of the explanations added by this group.

The sixty-six who responded "yes" to the first question were asked to indicate if these policies included procedures to follow when there were objections to the inclusion of certain materials in the media center

collection, and if they felt the officially-adopted policy allowed them to use their professional judgment when selecting materials.

Table 2 shows that sixty-three of the sixty-six or ninety-five percent of the policies do include procedures to follow when objections are lodged against materials in the media center. Also sixty-three or ninety-five percent of those librarians with selection policies feel such policies do allow the media specialist to use his/her professional judgment when selecting materials.

Table 2

Number of Officially-Adopted Selection Policies Which Include Objection Procedures and Librarians Who Believe Selection Policy Allows Use of Professional Judgment During Selection Process

Schools	Total No. of Replies	Procedures for Handling Objections		Allows Librarian to use Professional Judgment	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
K - 6	19	19	0	19	0
K - 9	6	5	1	5	1
K - 12	12	12	0	12	0
4 - 9	14	14	0	14	0
6 - 12	8	7	1	7	1
9 - 12	7	6	1	6	1
Total	66	63	3	63	3

The three schools listed with selection ^{policies} but no complaint procedure and those three responses which said that a policy did not allow the librarian to use his/her professional judgment during the selection process came from the same schools. All three librarians indicated a selection policy without complaint procedures was not helpful or as one put it, "It's just a worthless piece of paper." Even from the "Yes" answers there were again indications as in question one that there was not always a commitment to the policies and procedures and not everyone was following proper procedures. Some comments were; "Administrator handles complaints - then gets rid of the book", "Even with procedure, I feel insecure when buying materials nowadays", and "I just remove for awhile - year later put it back."

Main hypothesis 1 that less than fifty percent of the reporting schools would have board-approved materials selection policies was rejected because slightly more than fifty percent or fifty-one percent reported they did have such policies. If a further question had asked if the policies were applied or followed, the percentage of "Yes" responses might have been less than fifty percent. Sub-hypothesis 1-a was also rejected as the researcher had predicted all the schools which had policies would also have accompanying complaint procedures. Ninety-five percent of the reporting schools did have policies which included complaint procedures as had all the models

the researcher studied. Sub-hypothesis 1-b which predicted that all the respondents who selected materials under the auspices of a selection policy would feel that the policy allowed the librarian to use his/her professional judgment was rejected. Ninety-five percent of the respondents agreed, but five percent did not.

The second section of the questionnaire dealt with the number of objections lodged against materials in the media center during 1973-1975, a description and handling of the objections, and the librarian's interpretation of the support she received from colleagues, administration and school board during the time of the incident.

Table 3 illustrates that seventy-two percent of the 130 respondents had had no objections to materials in the media center within the last two years. However, seven of those ninety-four who indicated no objections added that the objections which they had received were not "real" or "important enough" for this study. There was also some indication from comments added that when fellow staff members questioned a selection or recommended it be removed it was not considered an objection.

Table 3

Number of Objections to Materials Received
by the Librarian during 1973-1975

Schools	No. of Replies	Number of Objections				Total ^a
		0	1	2	3	
K - 6	25	15	8	1	1	13 ^a
K - 9	11	10	1	0	0	1
K - 12	29	24	4	1	0	6
4 - 9	20	14	6	0	0	6
6 - 12	20	11	6	2	1	13
9 - 12	25	20	2	2	1	9
Total	130	94	27	6	3	48

a. Figures in this column were obtained by multiplying [↑]number under 2 by 2 and number under 3 by 3.

A total of forty-eight objections were reported. The objections were lodged against books and magazines, with the exception of one phonograph record. (For listing of titles, see Appendix C.) The K-6 and 6-12 grade groupings reported the most objections. Each of these had had thirteen objections within the last two years.

Table 4 provides information concerning the reasons given for objections to media center materials and the identification of the individuals or groups who made the objection. One-half of the causes of the objections were given as "vulgar language". In two

incidents both vulgar language and sexual explicitness were given as reasons for a single objection. They were tabulated separately, and the result is fifty reasons for forty-eight objections.

Table 4

Number of Reasons for Objections and Individuals and Groups Making Objections

	Reasons				Individuals and Groups			
	Vulgar Language	Sexual Explicitness	Irreligious	Other	Parent	Administrator	Faculty	Other
Schools								
K - 6	4	6	1	2	8	2	0	3
K - 9	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
K - 12	4	2	1	1	4	2	0	0
4 - 9	5	1	0	0	5	0	1	0
6 - 12	8	4	1	0	3	6	2	2
9 - 12	3	3	3	0	4	3	1	1
Total	25	16	6	3	25	13	4	6

Sexual explicitness was reported as a more prominent concern at the K-6 level than at other levels, but several media specialists at the secondary level

commented on a recent publication of "Time"¹⁶ which featured the entertainment industry. They felt the photographs were "unduly provocative", "unsuitable", and a "cause for trouble". Six cases were listed as irreligious, and of the other reasons given - racially mixed marriage, violence, and a communist author - were each cited once as the reason for the objection.

Hypothesis 2 which predicted that vulgar language would be cited fifty percent or more of the time as the reason for an objection was confirmed and is accepted.

Table 4 also reveals that the parent is most apt to be the objector to materials in a media center followed by an administrator (principal or superintendent). The administrator as the objector was more often cited at the secondary level than the elementary level. Other objections originated from ministers twice, a church group once, a library aide once, and one from a media specialist herself.

Hypothesis 3 is accepted as it had predicted the parent would be the objector to materials in the media center fifty percent or more of the time and ^{the data} this study shows ~~that~~ ^{the parent} to be ~~true~~ ^{the predominant source of objections.}

Table 5 reveals that there are a number of different methods of handling objections to materials.

¹⁶Time Magazine, "Cher," Time Magazine, Inc., March 17, 1975, p. 18.

The most prominent method shown in the table is to promptly remove the material in question.

Table 5

Number of Procedures Used to Handle and Dispose of Objections to Materials

	Procedures						
	Removed Promptly	Ignored	Referred to Committee - Retained	Referred to Committee - Removed	Discussion With Objector - Retained	Read by Librarian then Restricted Circulation	Other
Schools							
K - 6	1	1	3	2	3	2	1
K - 9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
K - 12	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
4 - 9	2	2	0	0	1	1	0
6 - 12	6	2	0	0	1	2	2
9 - 12	5	2	0	0	0	1	1
Total	16	9	5	2	6	6	4

Nine objections were ignored or dismissed by the librarian and no further action was taken. Of those referred to a committee, five items were ultimately retained in the collection while two were removed. Seven librarians discussed the complaint with the objector, and the results show six retentions and two removals after such conferences.

Another method of reconsideration mentioned by eight librarians was to read or reread the material which had caused the complaint and then decide on procedure. This process resulted in two permanent removals and restricted circulation for six items. Of these, two were labeled by grade, three were retained in the librarian's or principal's office and allowed to circulate to those students the librarian or principal deemed "mature", and one was affixed with a "secret coding device" with the circulation aide making the decision whether to check out the material to a particular individual.

Hypothesis 4 stated ^{that} removal of the item in question would be the result fifty percent or more of the time when a librarian had an objection to materials in the media center. This study confirmed ^{that prediction} and hypothesis 4 is accepted. Considering restricted circulation as, in effect, removal, fifty-nine percent of the materials objected to were inaccessible to the students after objection incidents had occurred.

The third part of ^e ~~this~~ question ^{naire} asked librarians who had been involved in a censorship incident if they felt they had had the support and cooperation of faculty, principal, superintendent and school board during the time of the incident. Twenty-seven of the thirty-six librarians reporting censorship incidents chose to answer this question. Table 6 indicates a decline in the level of support the librarian felt during a censorship incident as

the librarian moved outward in his/her educational circle. Comments added reinforced this as some librarians noted that their daily contact with faculty colleagues gave them a greater feeling of rapport than with a lesser-known administrator or school board.

Table 6

Number of Librarians Who Felt They Had or Did Not Have Support During Censorship Incidents from Faculty, Administrators and School Board

Schools ↓	Total Reporting ↓	Faculty		Principal		Super- intendent		School Board	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
K - 6	7	7	0	6	1	6	1	6	1
K - 9	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
K - 12	4	3	1	2	2	2	2	3	1
4 - 9	3	3	0	2	1	2	1	2	1
6 - 12	7	7	0	5	2	6	1	5	2
9 - 12	5	4	1	4	1	3	2	2	3
Total	27	25	2	20	7	19	8	18	9
Percentage		93	7	74	26	70	30	67	33

Several librarians commented that even when proper procedures had been followed, the superintendent and school board reversed a prior decision to avoid publicity or controversy. One respondent was informed by her district media director to "pull everything questioned until a more liberal-minded majority was elected to the school board".

Two librarians had decided the principal's secretary made the final decision to withdraw materials, and four librarians indicated their principal usually urged withdrawal of materials to avoid trouble emanating from his school.

All respondents whether reporting a censorship incident or not were asked to indicate if they felt their faculty, principal, superintendent, and school board would be cooperative and supportive in cases of possible future censorship incidents. One hundred twenty-six librarians chose to answer this question, and Table 7 reveals that they are much more doubtful of future support from superintendents and school boards than from faculty colleagues or their principals. Several librarians commented that they would rather not let a censorship incident proceed to the point where school board action would be necessary, two indicated their superintendent would not think a censorship attempt sufficiently important to involve the school board, and one declared, "My school board would never disagree with a taxpayer."

Table 7

Number of Librarians Who Felt They Would Have, Would Not Have
or Were Unsure of Support of Faculty Administrators and
School Board During Future Censorship Incidents

Schools	Total Reporting	Faculty			Principal			Superintendent			School Board		
		Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure
K - 6	24	22	0	2	21	1	2	17	0	7	12	0	12
K - 9	11	11	0	0	8	0	3	2	1	8	3	0	8
K - 12	28	24	2	2	25	3	0	18	4	6	16	2	10
4 - 9	20	15	0	5	15	2	3	9	0	11	6	1	13
6 - 12	18	15	0	3	14	1	3	9	2	7	7	4	7
9 - 12	25	23	1	1	21	1	3	14	1	10	11	2	12
Total	126	110	3	13	104	8	14	69	8	49	55	9	62
Percentage		87	3	10	83	6	11	55	6	39	44	7	49

Hypothesis 5-a which predicted eighty percent of the librarians would feel confident of support and cooperation from faculty colleagues in case of future censorship incidents is accepted as Table 7 shows a eighty-seven percent figure. Hypothesis 5-b predicting seventy percent future support from principals is also accepted as eighty-three percent of the librarians felt they would have the support of their principals. Hypothesis 5-c is rejected as the researcher had predicted that sixty percent of librarians would feel future support forthcoming from their superintendents during possible future censorship incidents and only fifty-five percent of the librarians felt likewise. Hypothesis 5-d is accepted as only forty-four percent of the librarians felt confident of future support from their school boards and the prediction had been fifty percent or less.

The librarians perceived much less future support from their superintendents and school boards when the "No" and "Not Sure" answers are totaled (superintendents - forty-five percent; school boards - fifty-six percent). Table 6 which pertained to support during a past censorship incident reveals the superintendents and school boards were more supportive at the time of an actual incident (seventy percent and sixty-seven percent) ^{respectively}. Faculty colleagues also were more supportive of librarians during an actual incident (ninety-three percent) than in a projected incident (eighty-seven percent). The librarian's

principal, however, did not prove to be as supportive of the librarian during a censorship incident (seventy-four percent) as the librarian would have predicted (eighty-three percent).

Seventy-nine librarians completed the portion of the questionnaire which requested them to rank ^{from} one to five those organizations they would contact in case they felt the need of additional advice or assistance in cases of future censorship incidents. The results indicated that should librarians feel the need to contact an organization, the Iowa State Education Association would be their first preference, followed by the Iowa Education^A Media Association, the Iowa Library Association, the Department of Public Instruction and the Iowa Civil Liberties Union as the last organization the librarians would contact for advice and support.

Some librarians chose to only select ^{one} or two organizations. Among these the Iowa State Education Association was the first preference followed by the Iowa Education^A Media Association and the Department of Public Instruction. Other choices were the National Union of Christian Schools, the University of Northern Iowa Library Science Department, the local media coordinator and in three cases - the local educational association.

Table 8

Number of Respondents Who Ranked Five Organizations
in the Order of Contact for Assistance in
Future Censorship Incidents

<i>ORGANIZATIONS</i> Total Replies	Ranks				
	1	2	3	4	5
Iowa Civil Liberties Union	4	2	16	15	42
Iowa Educational Media Association	21	20	15	18	5
Iowa Library Association	17	19	18	17	8
Iowa State Department of Public Instruction	14	12	19	16	18
Iowa State Education Association	23	26	11	13	6

This portion of the questionnaire generated many comments. Many expressed the fact that they did not care to respond to the question because they could never perceive of themselves being in a situation in which they would feel the need to ask for assistance from "outside" organizations. Comments from those who did rank the organizations indicated the same attitude. "I hope I never get to this stage", "You might as well resign...", "Outsiders just cause you trouble and then leave", and "Protect your job, not your principles at this point". This last statement may have been the reasoning which motivated respondents to select

the Iowa State Education Association as their first choice. This organization has been active in combating contract-termination cases. Many commented on the unfavorable publicity that would result from requesting organizations for assistance, and felt this would lead to parents wanting to investigate other materials in the media center. One librarian who completed the question added, "It's really silly to bother with these; just get your own lawyer and plead the Fifth Admendment."

Hypothesis 6 which predicted the Iowa Education Media Association would be the first choice of seventy-five percent of the librarians seeking assistance from an organization is rejected because the respondents' ~~in this survey~~ first preference would be the Iowa State Education Association if they felt the need of advice and support from this list of organizations.

Chapter V

SUMMARY

This study was an effort to obtain information from Iowa school librarians in the areas of selection and censorship of media center materials. A questionnaire answered by 130 school librarians gained information as to the number of schools which have materials selection policies, and if the librarian felt the policy allowed him/her to exercise his/her professional judgment during the selection process. The questionnaire produced information pertaining to the number of objections to materials in the media center during the years 1973-1975, who made the objections, to what materials, the reasons for the objections, the handling and disposition of the objections, and if the librarian felt those within his/her educational circle were supportive and cooperative during the time of the objection. The questionnaire also gave the librarian an opportunity to predict future support from faculty, administrators, and school board during censorship attempts, and to rank in order of preference a list of organizations from which the librarian might seek assistance when involved in a censorship incident.

The evidence collected from this study indicates that a bare majority (51%) of the reporting schools have officially adopted materials selection policies. This was higher than hypothesized, but still indicates a low percentage when there has been such great emphasis placed on the importance of such policies by professional organizations, library literature, and library educators. Among those reporting no censorship attempts, the comments indicated little concern for the need of a materials selection policy. Since the time of this survey the Department of Public Instruction has issued a materials selection policy model.¹⁷ The promotion of this model might have generated interest in adopting such policies.

Those asked to convey their feeling of confidence in their selection policy as it pertained to their being able to use their professional judgment in the selection process produced an overwhelming affirmative response. However, the researcher feels this question may have been inadequate or misleading because of poor phrasing and suggests further indepth study of this particular aspect.

Vulgar language was the dominant reason for objections to media center materials, and a parent was most often the person who placed an objection to materials.

¹⁷Committee of the Iowa Department of Public Instruction. Selection of Instructional Materials: A Model Policy and Rules. Des Moines, Iowa, State of Iowa Department of Public Instruction, October, 1975.

This was as originally predicted, but an administrator as the objector was cited more frequently than had been anticipated.

Prompt removal of the offending item was the prevalent solution to an objection to materials in the media center. This had been the prediction, but the number of cases in which the librarian simply ignored the objection or resorted to restricted circulation of the materials in question was higher than expected. The number of cases ^(?) which were handled by methods advocated by most policy and procedure models seemed depressingly low to this writer.

The librarians indicated a high level of support from faculty colleagues during censorship incidents, but somewhat less was felt from others within his/her educational circle. However, when those librarians who had not had censorship incidents were included and asked to project anticipated future support, uncertainty becomes much more evident when superintendents and school boards are compared to faculties and principals. The researcher had assumed the administrator would respect professional judgment of the librarian and not interfere in the selection or provision of materials which the librarian deemed suitable for the media center collection. It was of interest to the researcher that comparisons between percentages of past support felt by the librarians and projected future support from the above

mentioned parties revealed the percentages of support felt by librarians involved in past censorship incidents proved to be greater from faculty colleagues, superintendents and school boards than the larger group would have predicted. However, less support was felt to have been received from the librarian's principal during an actual incident than the larger group had predicted would be forthcoming.

The Iowa State Education Association was the organization which the media specialist would contact first if he/she felt additional assistance was needed in a censorship incident. This organization ranked slightly higher than the Iowa Education^{al} Media Association which the researcher had predicted would be the first choice for school librarians. The comments accompanying the answers seem to suggest the individual may have projected himself into a "job security" situation while answering this question, and this could be a reason for the Iowa State Education Association ranking first on the list. The writer suggests the Iowa Education^{al} Media Association may need to emphasize any policies or procedures which might be supportive of, or helpful to a librarian if she feels the need of assistance during a censorship incident. If such policies or procedures are not available through this organization, this area might be investigated for ways in which assistance could be provided its members.

Many librarians deplored the resultant publicity of a censorship incident, but there may need to be more

publicity which places emphasis on the proper basis for selection of materials and the correct handling of objections. The Department of Public Instruction's sample policy and procedures manual¹⁸ needs to have wide distribution and discussion throughout the state. One of the suggestions of this model is that the makeup of the reconsideration committee have a majority of community members. This emphasis on citizens' decision-making could perhaps allay the fears of the public, add credibility to the proceedings and reduce pressure on school personnel during cases of censorship incidents.

The writer feels that the study has indicated that in too many cases the school librarian feels she will not be supported or understood in her defense of media center materials, or is fearful that publicity which may ensue will erode the confidence of her employers in her ability to make proper selections in the future. This insecurity could lead librarians to limit their sphere of selection and become in effect, censors themselves. It might also compromise professional standards during the selection process because of anticipated objections, or accede to a request for removal, especially from those within his/her educational circle, without proper and deliberate reconsideration procedures.

¹⁸Committee of the Iowa Department of Public Instruction.

This study has been an attempt to research the opinions of librarians in the areas of selection and censorship. Further questions which might be studied are: Does the librarian truly adhere to the principles set forth in materials selection policies? Does the librarian properly implement the procedures recommended in written complaint procedures? What is the librarians definition of an objection to materials? Is an objection to material considered an objection or a "suggestion" if it originates from a faculty colleague or supervisor?

It is recommended that further studies be undertaken to provide greater understanding of the problems confronting school librarians in these areas.

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APPENDIX A

Dear Librarian/Media Specialist:

As a Master's candidate in the School of Library Science at the University of Northern Iowa I am conducting a survey among Iowa school librarians, and I am asking your assistance in this project.

You have been randomly selected to participate in this survey, which is an attempt to collect representative data concerning objections to school media center materials.

I ask you to answer frankly as your reply is strictly confidential, and no references to individuals or schools will be made in the study.

Would you please record your replies and return the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope by April 1, 1975?

Thank you for your cooperation and help in this study.

Sincerely yours,

Jane Martin
155 Berkshire
Waterloo, Iowa 50701

APPENDIX B

After you answer the questions, you are invited to add personal comments or further information which you believe might be helpful to this study.

A. School Information

1. Grades in school (e.g., 6-12, K-6, etc.,)
2. Does your school district have a materials selection policy officially adopted by the District Board of Education?

Yes _____ No _____

3. Does this policy include procedures to follow when there are objections to the inclusion of certain materials in the Media Center Collection?

Yes _____ No _____

4. Do you feel your school district's policy allows you to use your professional judgment when selection materials? _____

- B. On the following page will you please describe incidents of objections to media center materials from persons within the school or in the community within the last two years. If you have had no objections, please go to question C2.

INCIDENT #1

1. Title of material
2. What was the reason(s) given for the objection to this material? (e.g. vulgar language, sexual explicitness, irreligious, etc.)
3. Identify the individual or group who made the objection. No personal names please. (e.g. parent, faculty member, administrator, minister, organized group, etc.)
4. Briefly describe the procedures and final decision in the handling of the objection. (e.g. removed promptly, ignored the objection, referred to committee for review, remained in collection)

INCIDENT #2

1. Title of material
2. Reason(s) for objection
3. Individual or group objecting
4. Disposition of objection

INCIDENT #3

1. Title of material
2. Reason(s) for objection
3. Individual or group objecting
4. Disposition of objection

If you have had other incidents, would you please attach a sheet and give the same information about each incident.

C. 1. If you have given information about incidents or objections to materials, do you feel you had the support and cooperation during those incidents of the following:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|----------|
| A. Faculty members | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| B. Principal | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| C. Superintendent | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| D. School Board | Yes _____ | No _____ |

2. If, in the future, objections were made to media center library materials, do you feel you would have the cooperation and support of the following:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--------|--------------|
| A. Faculty members | Yes ___ | No ___ | Not Sure ___ |
| B. Principal | Yes ___ | No ___ | Not Sure ___ |
| C. Superintendent | Yes ___ | No ___ | Not Sure ___ |
| D. School Board | Yes ___ | No ___ | Not Sure ___ |

C. 3. If in the future, objections were made to materials and you felt the need of additional assistance, which of the following organizations would you contact for advice and support. Please rank the organizations by using 1 for the first contact, 2 for second contact, etc.

A. Iowa Civil Liberties Union _____

B. Iowa Education Media Association _____

C. Iowa Library Association _____

D. Iowa State Department of Public Instruction _____

E. Iowa State Education Association _____

F. Other _____

(please specify)

Thank you again.

Jane Martin
155 Berkshire
Waterloo, IA 50701

APPENDIX C

TITLES OF MATERIALS WHICH CAUSED
OBJECTIONS TO BE FILED

The following is a list of titles as reported in the questionnaire. In some cases the answer was simply given as, "A book", or in one case, "A record". If a title was cited multiple times, it is marked below.

Andersen, Hans Christian. Little Claus, Big Claus.

Bad Men of America - no listing - Books in Print -
1972, 1974, or 1976.

Briggs, R. Father Christmas. New York: Coward, 1973.

Cleaver, E. Soul on Ice. New York: McGraw, 1968.

Coleman, H. Diary of a Frantic Kid Sister. New York:
Crown, 1973.

Go Ask Alice, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1971.

Gregory, Dick. Nigger! New York: McGraw, 1970.

The Human Body - many listings - Books in Print -
April, 1976.

Keyes, D. Flowers for Algernon. New York: Harcourt-
Brace, 1966.

Koenig, L. Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane. New York:
Coward, 1974.

Man and Woman - many listings - Books in Print - April, 1976.

Miller, M. Black is Brown is Tan. New York: Prentice-Hall,
1974.

- Monjo, F.N. Indian Summer. New York: Harper Row, 1968
- Neufield, John. For All the Wrong Reasons. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Neufield, John. Sleep, Two, Three, Four. New York: Norton, 1974
- Parks, G. The Learning Tree. New York: Harper Row, 1963.
- Possessed by the Devil - no listing - Books in Print - 1972, 1974, or 1976.
- (5) Puzo, M. The Godfather. New York: Putnam, 1969.
- Reiss, J. The Upstairs Room. New York: Crowell, 1972.
- Salinger, J. D. Catcher in the Rye. New York: Little, 1951.
- Searde, R. The Addict. New York: Greene, 1972.
- Sendak, M. In the Night Kitchen. New York: Harper, 1970.
- Stewart, F. Mephisto Waltz. New York: New American Library, 1970.
- Sunday Morning - 2 listings - Books in Print - 1972.
- Schultz, Florence. New York: John Knox, 1965.
- Viorst, Judith. New York: Harper Row, 1962.
- Toma, D. and M. Brett. Toma. New York: Putnam, 1973.
- (2) Vonnegut, K. Cat's Cradle. New York: Delacorte, 1971.
- (2) Vonnegut, K. Slaughterhouse Five. New York: Delacorte, 1969.

The following magazines were listed:

Ingenu

Newsweek

MS

Time

Mad