Ethics of Censorship in Libraries

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Introduction and Scope

The following bibliography covers the ethics of censorship in libraries. Included articles provide an overview on issues of selection vs censorship, Internet and filters, the merits and faults in censorship, and the different types of censorship. Many articles discuss the position and policies of library associations, particularly the American Library Association (ALA), concerning censorship and intellectual freedom. In addition to including articles that directly deal with the ethics of censorship, a few articles have been included that either oppose censorship in every form or advocate censorship to some extent so as to provide a balanced view of the subject. Furthermore, several articles touch on the subject of censorship and use of filters on the Internet in public libraries, as the use of libraries solely for Internet access has exponentially increased in recent years. The articles were published from 1995 to 2011. More recent articles tend to focus on the issue of the Internet and filters. Article publications vary from the Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Description

Censorship dates back centuries and is an issue that was discussed heavily by ancient philosophers. Today, “[in the context of libraries, censorship means either the exclusion or removal of objectionable or dangerous materials from a library’s collection or, if the library has a role as an access portal, the restriction of access to such materials” (Frické, Mathiesen, & Fallis, 2000, p. 473). Extensive research has been conducted on the issues of censorship, particularly by librarians, for whom censorship plays an integral role, as they are essentially guardians and purveyors of information. Frické et al. explain that "[there are two ethical concerns with censorship: one connected with free speech and the other with autonomy." (Frické, Mathiesen, & Fallis, 2000, p. 473). Essentially, ethics is a concern with censorship because it either hinders one’s freedom of speech and expression, or because it strips a person from the freedom to choose what to read or write, and these ideals come into conflict with the desire for some people to pull offensive material that may harm society as a whole.
Summary of Findings

In the United States, where intellectual freedom and free speech are held dearly, censorship would appear to be a simple issue: in order to preserve freedom of speech, do not permit censorship. However, the issue is not so clean cut, as the First Amendment does not protect all forms of free speech (Marco, 1995; Frické, Mathiesen, & Fallis, 2000, p. 477). Furthermore, questions arise asking if it is morally permissible for depraved works, which have negative effects on society, to go uncensored. The issues of censorship are complex and multifaceted, and no two authors quite agree on how it should be approached.

Although research on censorship dates back to the late 1800s, sources in this bibliography have been limited to the 1990s and 2000s, a time in which book banning became a common occurrence (Staples, 1996) and the emergence of the Internet brought about new censorship issues (Wilson, 2008, p. 696). Originally, “[t]he debate did not center on whether there ought to be a library censorship but rather on how much and what kind” (Doyle, 2001, p. 45-6). The philosophy on library censorship began to change in the 1920s when librarians began to rally for more democratic libraries which included all sides of an argument (Doyle, 2001, p. 47). Libraries are largely concerned with censorship as “library functions are human targeted, and librarians, like physicians or teachers, are morally responsible to their users” (Trushina, 2004, p. 418). Marco (1995), though disagrees that censorship is the library’s concern, as society has designated librarians to act as gatekeepers, to either accept or reject material as the library’s local community sees fit. “It is not [librarians’ decisions] whether or not certain books can be harmful; the community determines that, exercising its collective will” (Marco, 1995).

Regardless, librarians have done extensive research on the topic, and as the main purveyors of information, there are multiple means for intellectual freedom to be limited and materials to be censored.

There are many types of censorship within the library, the most obvious of which is what Frické et al. (2000) call “macrocensorship.” Macrocensorship is when a governing body bans a material or certain type of material by law for the entire society. In America, child pornography is an example of macrocensorship, as it is not permitted in any medium by law. New Zealand actually has a censorship system, in which a committee examines all materials in the country and labels it accordingly, banning certain materials outright or limiting them only to adult consumption (Wilson, 2008). The other side of the coin to macrocensorship is microcensorship, which is the banning of a material or certain type of material locally, either at a single library,
city, or state (Frické, Mathiesen, & Fallis, 2000). Frické et al. (2000) argue that microcensorship is not really a problem, although potentially inconvenient, as a user could simply get the desired material from a different bookstore or library, and that it is actually permitted by the First Amendment (p. 475).

According to Staples (1996) the most common form of censorship is what she describes as “stealth censorship” where “books quietly [disappear] from libraries. Sometimes a parent who objects to a book but doesn't want to go through a formal challenge just slips it off the shelf. Frequently a librarian who may fear for her job removes a book that has become controversial.” She also describes how many books are censored well before they are even published, as publishers may only select non-controversial novels out of fear of legal battles, which results in further censorship when some authors remove parts of their writings to make themselves more publishable.

A form of censorship unique to the library is selection and classification. The purpose of a library is to provide information for the community or support its parent organization, such as a school or university; as such, a library will select or reject materials based upon the community’s or school’s needs (O’Sullivan & O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 202). Some materials will be rejected, either due budgetary constraints or the lack of need or desire for the materials in the school or community. "The fact some materials may never be chosen does not mean the librarian has censored those materials" (O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 202). Wengert (2001) also explains that librarians may not select certain materials because users may not have the background knowledge necessary to interpret data as information. For example, a librarian selecting not to include German reference books for an entirely English-speaking community “is nothing more than the considered judgment of an expert” (Wengert, 2001, p. 492) Doyle (2003) asserts that the difference between a selector and a censor is that a selector thinks of reasons to include certain materials while censors think of reasons to exclude and limit certain materials (p. 18). Once library materials are selected, there is an opportunity for them to be censored according to how they are classified if they are classified incorrectly or in such a way that makes the material difficult to find or obtain, or according to how they are labeled, should materials be labeled pejoratively (CannCasciato, 2011, p. 415).

With the near-ubiquitousness and unfettered access to all kinds of information the Internet provides, Internet provision has resulted in serious censorship issues for libraries.
Traditionally, librarians select or reject materials for library collections, but “[the] internet is more complex. Librarians cannot easily remove particular items from its shelves” (Still & Kassabian, 1999, p. 17). On the Internet, good material is sorted right along with the bad. This has resulted in the option of filters, and some libraries are putting them to use. Frické et al. (2000) advocate their use, especially for minors, though Doyle (2002) disagrees, claiming that they are dubious at best, as they block many valuable sites while several pernicious sites still get through. Some libraries are even limiting what users are allowed to access on library computers. Trushina (2004) explains that in some cities where many users are trying to use the library computers for their information needs, having library policies that prohibit users from such things as e-mail and chat is not only acceptable but necessary, and is the practice in many Russian libraries. Still and Kassabian (1999) also advocate “[a] written policy on Internet use, for guests and the academic community” (p. 20).

Of course, the issue of censorship in libraries can hardly be discussed in America without mention of the American Library Association (ALA). Since 1938, ALA has had a code of ethics (Trushina, 2004) and actively lobbies for intellectual freedom. Although ALA frequently fights against censorship, CannCasciato (2011) mentions how “Asheim noted that censorship was undefined in the 1981 ALA Code. It remains so in the current version” (p. 414). Although ALA fails to define censorship, they encourage librarians to fight against it in the Library Bill of Rights (LBR), a document that is highly debated amongst censorship scholars. Duthie (2010) and Frické et al. (2000) claim that the LBR is too absolute and claim that there are instances in which censorship is called for and should be used. Duthie (2000) likewise claims that “introducing some form of censorship might be to act ‘in a more ethical manner than a professional association which tries to pretend that its members can stand aside from engagement with real ethical dilemmas and merely apply some simple rules.’” In his article critiquing Frické et al.’s argument, while Doyle concedes that certain inappropriate materials should arguably be censored, he asks “the time-honored question of just who is making the decisions about what is appropriate and what their agenda is” (Doyle, 2002, p. 289). In another article, Doyle points out that “[granting] someone this censorious power leaves open the possibility that valuable ideas will be stifled along with pernicious ones” (Doyle, 1998, p. 243).
The future of censorship will strongly veer towards Internet issues. Wengert (2001) points out that because of the Internet, anyone of any age can log on and access all qualities of information, the kinds of which parents and organizations have traditionally pushed to be censored. Due to this, he points out the possibility that censorship requests in libraries may “become as infrequent as requests to remove comic books from libraries; it is so easy to get them elsewhere that there is hardly any purpose to worrying anymore about their presence in the library” (Wenger, 2001, p. 497).

Bibliography

Entry 1:


Abstract: “This article re-visits a scenario from 1987: a university president required a library director to reclassify some materials into a science classification. The author looks at the prominence of the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association in the general library literature and in classification and cataloging practice literature. The issue of censorship is also discussed. The author then reviews classification for Creationism and Intelligent design and some decision-making processes one could use when deciding on the professional ethics of such a request, concluding that in some cases the ethical action might indeed be to go ahead with the reclassification.”

Annotation: This article is significant in that it examines a different form of censorship than what is commonly discussed—censorship in classification. Through the ALA Code of Ethics, the author lays out criteria for a librarian’s ethical responsibilities to the community and the institution it serves, and through this criteria asks the question: When is reclassification of materials censorship?

Search Strategy: Having exhausted my search in ERIC via the database and Dialog, I changed databases. I chose LISA because of its wealth of information on the field of libraries. I did a keyword search using similar terms from my controlled vocabulary search in Dialog. I accessed the full text via Taylor & Francis Online.

Database: LISA

Method of Searching: Keyword Search

Search String: censorship and (librar* or (public librar*)) and ethics
**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The website for *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* states “[all] papers in *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* journal have undergone editorial screening and peer review.”

**Entry 2:**


**Abstract:** “In “The Ethical Presuppositions behind the Library Bill of Rights,” Martin Frické, Kay Mathiesen, and Don Fallis argue that the presuppositions of the Library Bill of Rights regarding censorship, access, and paternalism need revision. They also maintain that a revised Library Bill of Rights needs to rest on a sound philosophical foundation. The foundation they propose is John Rawls’ version of social contract theory. I take issue with both claims. Regarding social contract theory, I argue that utilitarianism yields nothing to it regarding the types of materials that libraries should offer and who should have access to those materials. As for the Library Bill of Rights itself, I criticize parts of their interpretation and their positions on censorship, access, and paternalism. My main concern here is with the authors’ defense of paternalism in libraries, which would commit them to Internet filtering. I dwell at some length on the dangers of filtering.

**Annotation:** This article is significant in that it provides a critical discussion on the ethics found in the Library Bill of Rights, as discussed in Frické et al’s article. Doyle concedes on several points, and agrees that the Library Bill of Rights is perhaps too general, but he stands by his position that censorship poses the problem of who will be doing the censorship and what their agenda is. He also devotes a section to the problem of Internet filters and why they are dubious at best.

**Search Strategy:** Upon completing my controlled vocabulary search of ERIC in Dialog, I proceeded to the database to do a general keyword search to ensure I hadn’t missed any documents. For my keywords, I used similar terms in the Dialog search string; however, I did not enter the terms as descriptors from the thesaurus. I had several sources written by Doyle already, so I was reluctant to include this in the bibliography, but as it was a critique on another article I included, I thought it would be a good balance. I accessed the full text via JSTOR.

**Database:** ERIC

**Method of Searching:** Keyword Search

**Search String:** censorship AND libraries AND ethics

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Ulrich lists *The Library Quarterly* as “refereed” and “academic / scholarly.” Additionally, JSTOR’s abstract on the journal claims that “*The Library Quarterly* has maintained its commitment to scholarly research in all areas of librarianship.”

**Entry 3:**

**Abstract:** “Doyle examines John Stuart Mill’s opposition to censorship. It is better to let all ideas compete freely than to have a board of censors pass judgment about what can and cannot be owned by, or accessed in, libraries.”

**Annotation:** Doyle takes Mill’s argument that in order to have a healthy society, the society must hold more true beliefs than false beliefs, and the best way to do this is through open discussion, and therefore censorship is never justifiable. The article examines two arguments in favor of censorship and refutes them. Doyle is against censorship even in the form of filters on the Internet for minors. He asks the question of who should be granted this power of censorship, and how would the be prevented from including valuable ideas within the censorship?

**Search Strategy:** Doyle’s article “A Utilitarian Case for Intellectual Freedom in Libraries” was so detailed on ethics and censorship, that I wondered if he had written any more articles on the topic. I went to the library website and searched for this last name under “written by” and the term “censorship” under keywords in the advance option in Summon. I was able to access the full text of the article through ScienceDirect.

**Database:** N/A

**Method of Searching:** Author search

**Search String:** Found by searching the same author from source:

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Ulrich lists *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* as “refereed” and “Academic / Scholarly.” Additionally, the journal’s website describes the journal as a “refereed journal.”

**Entry 4:**


**Abstract:** “Outlines the history of censorship and intellectual and expressive freedom in American libraries; discusses the two main types of ethical theory, utilitarianism and deontology; and maintains that libraries have a special role to play in promoting unconditional intellectual freedom.”

**Annotation:** Doyle lays the foundation for discussing ethics concerning censorship by first providing two ethical points of view—utilitarianism and deontology. Within these two ethical positions, Doyle analyzes the faults and merits of censorship and examines absolute intellectual
and expressive freedom and asks if it is even attainable. Furthermore, through the the
vocabulary provided by the two ethical standpoints, Doyle logically uncovers the inherent flaws
in censorship.

Search Strategy: I selected ERIC after an initial OneSearch of INFOSCI in Dialog. The
INFOSCI search showed that out of the multiple information science
databases, ERIC was the only one to have relevant sources. The other
databases either repeated ERIC’s sources or rendered no results. I
perused ERIC’s thesaurus to find narrower or broader terms for the
subject and created a preliminary search string. I chose controlled
vocabulary as a starting point in my search, so that I could discover
what literature was available and potentially find additional sources
from the footnotes.

Database: ERIC [Dialog]

Method of Searching: Controlled vocabulary

Search String: ss censorship/de OR intellectual freedom/de
ss public librar?/de OR school librar?/de OR librar?/de
ss ethics/de OR moral issues/de OR role of religion/de
s DT=journal
s s1 AND s2 AND s3 AND s4

Scholarly/Refereed Status: Results in the initial search were limited to journals, and then I
checked if the journal was scholarly through Ulrich, which lists The
Library Quarterly as “refereed” and “academic / scholarly.”

Entry 5:


Abstract: “The terrorist attacks of September 11 pose a potential threat to intellectual freedom
inside and outside of libraries, particularly regarding information deemed to be useful to
terrorists. After a brief look at this threat I proceed to discuss the liberal position on intellectual
freedom in the light of Lester Asheim’s distinction between censorship and selection. I then
entertain a criticism of the liberal/Asheim position. The criticism suggests that the liberal
position requires at least some public and academic libraries to carry potentially dangerous
materials like bomb- making manuals. I defend the liberal position against this objection,
concluding that such materials do have a place in some libraries, terrorist
threats notwithstanding.”

Annotation: This article highlights the difference between a selector, who finds reasons to keep
a book, and a censor, who finds reasons to reject the book; these principles are based on Lester
Asheim’s writings, which are highly cited in the text. Doyle presents an argument that the
Asheimian ideal of an uncensored library, where the selections reflect what the librarian deems
is relevant and desired by the users, is unrealistic, and that librarians should play more of a
stewardship role. Doyle examines the argument and rejects it.
Search Strategy: Doyle’s article “A Utilitarian Case for Intellectual Freedom in Libraries” was so detailed on ethics and censorship, that I wondered if he had written any more articles on the topic. I went to the library website and searched for this last name under “written by” and the term “censorship” under keywords in the advance option in Summon. I was able to access the full text of the article through Taylor & Francis Online.

Database: N/A

Method of Searching: Author search


Scholarly/Refereed Status: Ulrich lists Collection Management as “refereed” and “Academic / Scholarly.” Additionally Taylor & Francis describes the journal as a “refereed quarterly journal that presents practical, research-based information.”

Entry 6:


Abstract: “This paper reviews a selection of literature pertaining to the subject of censorship in modern libraries. It interrogates the literature in terms of the ethical debates informing much of the contemporary academic writing on this subject. A multi-pronged approach to the subject is adopted. The review includes evaluations of the relevant aspects of particular professional codes and statements. It also evaluates opinions that have been proffered with regard to the use of Internet filters in public libraries. In public libraries, librarians must also decide whether to enable an entirely free flow of information from other mediums or to take it upon themselves to protect readers from material that might be considered harmful. These issues are complicated further in school libraries where the question of a particular duty of care to young minds arises. This paper also investigates recent representations of libricide, the most extreme form of censorship which manifests in the destruction of libraries and the burning of books.”

Annotation: This article is significant in that, in addition to discussing the faults of censorship, it explains how censorship, to some degree, is unavoidable. Duthie argues that anti-censorship policies endorsed by major library associations in American and Australia are too absolute. Additionally, the article discusses the dilemma of the Internet, which is quite different from a traditional library collection in that it provides unfettered information that was not selected by a librarian for the public’s consumption.

Search Strategy: This source was found in my initial search. I selected ERIC after an initial OneSearch of INFOSCI in Dialog. The INFOSCI search showed that out of the multiple information science databases, ERIC was the only one to have relevant sources. The other databases either repeated ERIC’s sources or rendered no results. I perused ERIC’s thesaurus to
find narrower or broader terms for the subject and created a preliminary search string. I chose controlled vocabulary as a starting point in my search, so that I could discover what literature was available and potentially find additional sources from the footnotes.

**Database:** ERIC [Dialog]

**Method of Searching:** Controlled vocabulary

**Search String:**
- ss censorship/de OR intellectual freedom/de
- ss public librar?/de OR school librar?/de OR academic librar?/de
- ss ethics/de OR moral issues/de OR moral judgment/de
- s DT=journal
- s s1 AND s2 AND s3 AND s4

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Results in the initial search were limited to journals, and then I checked if the journal was scholarly through Ulrich, which lists *Australian Library Journal* as “refereed” and “academic / scholarly.”

**Entry 7:**


**Abstract:** “The American Library Association's (ALA's) Library Bill of Rights is based on a foundation of ethical presuppositions. In this article, these presuppositions are spelled out and critically examined in light of several ethical theories (for example, utilitarianism, natural rights theory, and social contract theory). We suggest that social contract theory provides the strongest argument for a right to access to information (and to have that information provided by public libraries). We argue, however, that the right to access to information is not unlimited. Limiting access (including censorship) is appropriate, for example, when such a limitation is necessary to protect a more fundamental right. Finally, we argue that the ALA's advocacy of an unlimited right to access is based on a mistaken understanding of what follows from the fact that all of our judgments are fallible.”

**Annotation:** This article proposes two main distinctions in censorship: microcensorship and macrocensorship. The authors argue that microcensorship, censorship within a small area, such as an individual library or bookstore, poses no problem because, though inconvenienced, the patrons still have the option of finding the material elsewhere. They assert that the First Amendment upholds these claims. Furthermore, the authors argue that ALA’s Library Bill of Rights absolute stance against censorship is too extreme, and in some cases, censorship should be permitted.

**Search Strategy:** Upon completing my controlled vocabulary search of ERIC in Dialog, I proceeded to the database to do a general keyword search to ensure I hadn’t missed any documents. For my keywords, I used similar terms in the Dialog search string; however, I did not enter the terms as descriptors from the thesaurus. I accessed the full text via JSTOR.
Database: ERIC

Method of Searching: Keyword Search

Search String: censorship AND libraries AND ethics

Scholarly/Refereed Status: Ulrich lists The Library Quarterly as “ refereed” and “ academic/ scholarly.” Additionally, JSTOR’s abstract on the journal claims that “The Library Quarterly has maintained its commitment to scholarly research in all areas of librarianship.”

Entry 8:


Abstract: “Censorship is discussed as a misused term, and a poorly understood concept among librarians. The 2 false dogmas discussed are that censorship is evil in itself, and that it is a library problem. It is not evil, since society correctly authorizes certain officials to protect it from harmful speech or documents. Evil may result in the improper application of censorship authority, but in time the society will correct this. Society also assigns a gatekeeper role to certain occupations, to admit suitable persons or things and to keep out others. Librarians have a gatekeeper role with regard to documents. When a gatekeeper rejects a document, the act is that of a censor. Thus, librarians, as gatekeepers, are authorized censors of their societies, and censorship is a library responsibility rather than a library problem.”

Annotation: This article is significant that it advocates censorship to a certain extent. Marco defines the librarian profession as a gatekeeper role, and one that answers to society. He also points out that when librarians, who hold free speech so highly, deride a patron for complaining about something in the collections, they are in fact impeding the value which they aim to protect. Marco believes that instead of meeting complaints with derision, librarians should welcome the input as a way to evaluate collections development policies.

Search Strategy: Having exhausted my search in ERIC via the database and Dialog, I changed databases. I chose LISA because of its wealth of information on the field of libraries. I did a keyword search using similar terms from my controlled vocabulary search in Dialog. I accessed the full text via ProQuest.

Database: LISA

Method of Searching: Keyword search

Search String: censorship and (librar* or (public librar*)) and ethics

Scholarly/Refereed Status: This article was found under the Peer-Reviewed Journals tab in LISA. Additionally, ProQuest lists the source type for New Library World as “Scholarly Journals.”

Entry 9:

**Abstract:** “Purpose – To examine the strategies of the intelligent design (ID) movement and their impact on the selection policies for high school libraries and the science curriculum. Design/methodology/approach – Examines the process four public high school libraries in the US took to determine whether to accept a gift offer by a parent of two books, dealing with ID. This article deals with the importance of applying selection criteria to all materials, whether gifts or recommendations. Findings – School libraries are not immune to the tactics used by the ID movement to influence curriculum and collection development decisions. Research limitations/implications – While this article is a case history of the ID movement’s strategy to influence school curriculum, its implications and possible impact on other schools and their libraries. Practical implications – Provides advice to practicing school librarians on what criteria to use when selecting materials and poses the question of who should be involved in selecting materials for the school library. Originality/value – This article explores the critical aspects and the differences between selection and censorship. Emphasizes the importance of having and following board-approved policies that deal with gifts and the selection of library and instructional materials. Keywords Censorship, Schools, Libraries

**Paper type Case study**

**Annotation:** This article examines the issues of selection vs censorship through a case that personally involved the authors. It is significant in that it discusses a different side of censorship—not when someone wants to take materials out of a school library’s holdings, but when someone wants to put materials into the school library’s holdings. When the librarian declines a free gift to the library because the material does not adhere to the school district’s selection policies, yet the giver claims it is censorship, which is it?

**Search Strategy:** Duthie’s article provided a wide scope of the ethics of censorship, including the policies on censorship from several different librarian organizations, so I browsed the article’s bibliography for useful sources. I went to the library website and searched for the journal under the e-journal tab. I was able to access the full text of the article through WilsonWeb.

**Database:** N/A

**Method of Searching:** Footnote chasing

**Search String:** Referenced in:


**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Ulrich lists *Library Journal* as “refereed” and “Scholarly / Adacemic.” Additionally, *Library Review*’s website claims their papers
Entry 10:


Abstract: “Reviews latest developments in censorship efforts, including tactics and approaches used by those who would prevent children from reading certain books because of profanity or what they perceive to be negative moral implications in the books. Explains the reasons for the attempt at censorship and a list of the books most often targeted.”

Annotation: This article describes silent censorship, when books simply disappear from the library shelves or when publishers only publish non-controversial stories which results in some authors omitting lines or parts of their novel so they can be published. Staples advocates the freedom of choice in reading.

Search Strategy: This source was found in my initial search. I selected ERIC after an initial OneSearch of INFOSCI in Dialog. The INFOSCI search showed that out of the multiple information science databases, ERIC was the only one to have relevant sources. The other databases either repeated ERIC’s sources or rendered no results. I perused ERIC’s thesaurus to find narrower or broader terms for the subject and created a preliminary search string. I chose controlled vocabulary as a starting point in my search, so that I could discover what literature was available and potentially find additional sources from the footnotes.

Database: ERIC [Dialog]

Method of Searching: Controlled vocabulary

Search String: ss censorship/de OR intellectual freedom/de ss public librar?/de OR school librar?/de OR librar?/de ss ethics/de OR moral issues/de OR role of religion/de s DT=journal s s1 AND s2 AND s3 AND s4

Scholarly/Refereed Status: Results in the initial search were limited to journals, and then I checked if the journal was scholarly through Ulrich, which lists *ALAN Review* as “refereed” and “academic / scholarly.”

Entry 11:


Abstract: “Discusses ethical issues concerning public Internet access in academic libraries. Highlights include intellectual freedom, censorship, technical aspects of limiting or restricting
use, legal liability for public use of computers for illegal purposes such as child pornography, and the importance of priority use of terminals by the primary academic population.”

Annotation: This article is significant in that it solely examines the dilemma of the Internet and censorship. Still and Kassabian lay out the premise that the Internet provides for unfettered information, which is actually contrary to the traditional library, where a librarian has always selected appropriate materials for the patrons’ use and needs. The authors argue that, as what is described as “hard pornography” has never been available in any library, prohibiting users from accessing such sites online is not censorship.

Search Strategy: This source was found in my initial search. I selected ERIC after an initial OneSearch of INFOSCI in Dialog. The INFOSCI search showed that out of the multiple information science databases, ERIC was the only one to have relevant sources. The other databases either repeated ERIC’s sources or rendered no results. I perused ERIC’s thesaurus to find narrower or broader terms for the subject and created a preliminary search string. I chose controlled vocabulary as a starting point in my search, so that I could discover what literature was available and potentially find additional sources from the footnotes.

Database: ERIC [Dialog]

Method of Searching: Controlled vocabulary

Search String: ss censorship/de OR intellectual freedom/de
ss public librar?/de OR school librar?/de OR academic librar?/de
ss ethics/de OR moral issues/de OR moral judgment/de
s DT=journal
s s1 AND s2 AND s3 AND s4

Scholarly/Refereed Status: Ulrich lists Internet Reference Services Quarterly as “refereed” and “Scholarly / Academic.” Additionally, the journal’s website describes the journal as “peer-reviewed.”

Entry 12:


Abstract: “Libraries depend on ethical principles more than any other institution because library services are essentially human-oriented. Most national ethical principles for librarians are represented as professional ethic codes. Each of them eventually consolidates the ideology, the paradigm of national library services. Comparative analysis of national library ethic codes indicates the intellectual freedom principle as the key point and the superior ethical value for library services. With Internet technologies implemented in library services, the principle acquires a new significance and grave problems. Recent information filtering capacities provide a radically new censorship level, including anonymous censorship, violation of user privacy in Internet communications. On the one hand, librarians must follow the intellectual freedom principle, on the other, libraries are humanistic institutions, and librarians have a moral
responsibility to the patrons, adhering to the value of human life. This paper discusses these issues as they relate to the Internet as well as the correlation of professional codes and their implementation in library practices.”

**Annotation:** Intellectual freedom is not an ideal unique to any particular country or culture, and Trushina shows how library associations in many countries have ethic codes that encourage librarians to uphold intellectual freedom, the right to read, and freedom of access. With examples from multiple countries, Trushina illustrates how Internet filters are necessary in some cases, such as for protecting children or limiting access to dangerous materials. She also explains that in some cases, library regulations limiting Internet usage for things such as chat or e-mail, is essential for city libraries where large numbers of patrons need to use the limited supply of computers, as is the case in Russian cities.

**Search Strategy:** Duthie’s article provided a wide scope of the ethics of censorship, including the policies on censorship from several different librarian organizations, so I browsed the article’s bibliography for useful sources. I went to the library website and searched for the journal under the e-journal tab. I was able to access the full text of the article through WilsonWeb.

**Database:** N/A

**Method of Searching:** Footnote chasing


**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Ulrich lists *The Electronic Library* as “refereed” and “Academic / Scholarly.” Additionally, the publisher’s website describes the journal as having a “peer review system.”

**Entry 13:**


**Abstract:** “Questions whether a focus on ethics and rights leads to a narrow idea of the library profession and its clients, using issues of censorship as examples. Highlights include a proposed definition of information; information flow; privacy; ethical debates and consequences for libraries; and the American Library Association Code of Ethics.”

**Annotation:** This article augments several of the other articles in this bibliography in that it examines the question of selection or censorship. Wengert takes the stance that in some cases what might be called censorship is actually selection by a professional who judges a person not to have the knowledge necessary to interpret the data in a given material and therefore does not select it for the library’s holding (i.e., when a librarian doesn’t stock German reference books for a monolingual American library). Wengert also argues that the push for censorship will become obsolete because of accessibility of the Internet in users’ homes.
**Search Strategy:**
This source was found in my initial search. I selected ERIC after an initial OneSearch of INFOSCI in Dialog. The INFOSCI search showed that out of the multiple information science databases, ERIC was the only one to have relevant sources. The other databases either repeated ERIC’s sources or rendered no results. I perused ERIC’s thesaurus to find narrower or broader terms for the subject and created a preliminary search string. I chose controlled vocabulary as a starting point in my search, so that I could discover what literature was available and potentially find additional sources from the footnotes.

**Database:**
ERIC [Dialog]

**Method of Searching:**
Controlled vocabulary

**Search String:**
ss censorship/de OR intellectual freedom/de
ss public librar?/de OR school librar?/de OR librar?/de
ss ethics/de OR moral issues/de OR role of religion/de
s DT=journal
s s1 AND s2 AND s3 AND s4

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:**
Results in the initial search were limited to journals, and then I checked if the journal was scholarly through Ulrich, which lists *Library Trends* as “refereed” and “academic / scholarly.”

**Entry 14:**

**Abstract:**
"Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to outline some of the challenges for New Zealand’s censorship system created by developments in entertainment and communications technology. It discusses the impact of these issues for libraries as they provide information that increasingly encompasses new technologies.
Design/methodology/approach – The paper describes the development of New Zealand’s censorship system and how it has responded to the challenges of new technology.
Findings – New Zealand’s censorship system has adapted well to changing technology. Ongoing monitoring of technological developments is required and non-legislative solutions to future challenges will become more important.
Practical implications – New Zealand library and information professionals will need to be aware of their legal obligations. The Office of Film and Literature Classification has taken steps to inform libraries of those obligations.
Originality/value – The paper outlines changes in censorship law that will affect library and information professionals.
Keywords Censorship, Internet, Film, New Zealand
Paper type Case study”
Annotation: Although this article does not touch on the subject of the ethics of censorship, it is significant in that it describes the active censorship system in New Zealand. In this country, censorship isn’t a matter of ethics—it’s a matter of reality. New Zealand has a censorship committee that censors offensive material, such as child pornography or instructions on how to grow cannabis. The article discusses the difficulties arising due to the near-ubiquitous technology and Internet in New Zealand.

Search Strategy: Duthie’s article provided a wide scope of the ethics of censorship, including the policies on censorship from several different librarian organizations, so I browsed the article’s bibliography for useful sources. I went to the library website and searched for the journal under the e-journal tab. I was able to access the full text of the article through WilsonWeb.

Database: N/A

Method of Searching: Footnote chasing


Scholarly/Refereed Status: Ulrich lists The Electronic Library as “refereed” and “Academic / Scholarly.” Additionally, the publisher’s website describes the journal as having a “peer review system.”

Conclusion and Personal Statement

As the sources in this bibliography suggest, there is no simple or clear cut rule when it comes to censorship. There are many types of information that arguably should be censored from public consumption, due to their inherent detrimental qualities, but as Doyle pointed out several times, just who is going to make those value judgements, and what’s to guarantee that they won’t censor legitimately valuable information? Once someone is given censorship power, where will they stop? While ALA’s stance on fighting all types of censorship sounds good, in practice, it’s simply not practical. The Internet is a major issue for libraries, as it lets in all kinds of information that librarians normally would not select for their collections, and filters simply don’t work. In “A Utilitarian Case for Intellectual Freedom in Libraries,” Doyle quoted a passage from one of Thomas Jefferson’s writings, and though it is written primarily concerning censorship of religious materials, I believe it best summarizes the majority opinion found in the articles in this bibliography:

Are we to have a censor whose imprimatur shall say what books may be sold, and what we may buy? And who is thus to dogmatize religious opinions for our citizens? Whose
foot is to be the measure to which ours are all to be cut or stretched? Is a priest to be our inquisitor, or shall a layman, similar to ourselves, set up his reason as the rule for what we are to read, and what we must believe? It is an insult to our citizens to question whether they are rational beings or not, and blasphemy against religion to suppose it cannot stand the test of truth and reason. If [a book or idea] be false in its facts, disprove them; if false in its reasoning, refute it. But for God's sake, let us freely hear both sides. (Doyle, 2001, p. 68)

I certify that:

• This assignment is entirely my own work.
• I have not quoted the words of any other person from a printed source or website without indicating what has been quoted and providing an appropriate citation.
• I have not submitted this assignment to satisfy the requirements of any other course.

Signature       Kimberly Dyer
Date             12/4/2011