An Annotated Bibliography:

Censorship in Public Libraries

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Summary

Introduction:

This bibliography looks at the topic of censorship in public libraries. Articles have been chosen that will give not only a topical overview of the subject with issues ranging from self censorship by library staff to outside forces demanding censorship of materials offered to the public. Several articles were also chosen to show a historical look at censorship in public libraries in the past and how the issue has evolved over the years. The earliest article dates back to 1972 with the rest ranging in date from 1990-2010. The articles come from journals published in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia and are from journals that publish information related to library and information sciences.

Description:

The word censorship is difficult to characterize, a sentiment expressed in many of the articles in this annotated bibliography, and some have compared it to pornography in that sense (Molz, 1990). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as: “the action of a censor esp. in stopping the transmission or publication of matter considered objectionable” (p. 133). Censorship can take many forms and can be perpetrated for many reasons by different groups or individuals. It is because of those reasons that this bibliography is limited to censorship in public libraries and does not address issues like school censorship or internet filtering which are both common subjects within the literature. The topic of censorship has been much debated and discussed over the years both in the field of library science and in other areas like politics.
Summary of findings:

Censorship has always been an issue in this country and others with both sides of the issue feeling passionate about their position for or against it (Hannabuss & Allard, 2001). Censorship can involve anything from a book actually getting banned to the material simply being challenged (Long, 2006). The ALA has an office for intellectual freedom and even promotes programs like Banned Book Week to support their position opposing censorship (American Library Association, 2011). Often libraries will host their own programs like the one that Strothmann and Van Fleet talk about in their 2009 article, “Books that Inspire, Books that Offend.” The authors found that often what some people find inspiring about a book is the very thing that others find objectionable and serves as their motivation to have the book censored (Strothmann & Van Fleet, 2009). It has been argued that the act of challenging a book can in some ways elevate the status of the book and make it seem more valuable or worthwhile because others seek to ban it (Kidd, 2009).

As early as 1928 when Library Review published Berwick Sayer’s article, “The banning of books in libraries” censorship has been a topic of discussion within the profession of librarianship (Burton, 2007). In 1953 Lester Asheim’s seminal article, “Not Censorship but Selection” was published in the Wilson Library Bulletin and presented the idea of selection as a counter point to censorship and discussed the importance of freedom of thought (Asheim, 1953). Unfortunately many times in this country’s history the freedom of thought and freedom to read have come under attack. McCarthyism can be viewed as a classic example of the attempt to censor and punish people for what they read as was the Tenny Committee in California. The Tenny Committee predated the era of McCarthyism and was fought at every turn by the California Library Association in its attempts (Mediavilla, 1997).

Many in this country worried in the Reagan-Bush era of the 1980s and early 1990s and the growing conservatism of that time period that further efforts to censor materials would proliferate (Christensen, 1999). Unfortunately many worry that the opposition to free access can still be seen today with the USA Patriot act in this country and similar act in other countries like the UK’s The Terrorist Act 2006 (McMenemy, 2009). According to Doyle (2003) often times people don’t take the time to consider that these materials could be used by people researching
these topics or by those trying to prevent crimes and simply wish to remove them from public view.

In addition to political reasons there are several other issues commonly cited when someone tries to censor or challenge a book, these are: sexual, social, or religious (Oppenheim & Victoria, 2004). In his article Packard mostly focus on the “religious right” and how he feels that they are often behind pushes to censor materials based on several of these issues (Packard, 1999). Homosexuality is another hot button issue that has many groups polarized particularly when it comes to children’s literature. Spence (2000) went so far as to do a study to look at the collections of libraries to see if they have these sorts of materials and to compile lists various titles to help aid in collection development so that libraries could diversify their holdings. Another researcher Susan Burke undertook two studies one in 2008 on removal of “gay-related” materials, and another in 2010 dealing with racist materials. In both she utilized information from the General Social Survey from the National Opinion Research Center to find that in most cases even if people questioned objected to the materials in question they often didn’t advocate their removal. This information could be very important and used to help librarians in various ways from fighting attempts to remove materials to stopping a practice that is often referred to as self censoring.

Self censoring has been going on for some time in libraries and often even when librarians and library staff espouse to fully support ALA statements like the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement (Busha, 1972). In addition to self censorship incorrectly cataloging or labeling items can also be seen as what Moody (2005) refers to as more subtle forms of censorship. Moody (2004) sought to gather information on this trend in Australia because there was little to no research published on the subject there. While she encountered problems with response rates it was a good start to examining the issue in her home country. Some in the field feel that self censorship, which is often used to avoid what librarians see as potential issues, will never work because libraries could not possibly predict all of the reasons people or groups could have problems with certain books because each person experiences each book differently; an idea referred to as the reader response theory (Schrader, 1997). It is seen as a waste of time to try to predict potential problems and as more constructive to attempt to be
proactive and put policies in place to better deal with challenges or attempts to ban certain books (Schrader, 1997).

While libraries may not be able to predict what materials society will try to censor or why they certainly can predict that the discourse surrounding intellectual freedom and censorship will continue on. It is time for librarians to take a position front and center in that discussion and not allow it to be led by those outspoken people who wish to infringe on the freedom of access for others (Hannabuss & Allard, 2001). The best way to go about this is to use facts from research and studies (like some of those listed) to prove the point that censorship is wrong rather than just relying on an appeal to emotions (Duthie, 2010).

Bibliography

Entry 1:

Abstract: “Gay images have slowly become integrated into mainstream cultural venues over the last forty years, including publishing. Studies show that gay-themed materials in libraries are targets of censorship attempts. Are these attempts reflections of the opinions of the majority of the population or of a vocal minority? The information in this study contributes over thirty years of trend data on the general public’s views of the censorship of gay-themed materials in libraries. This information can be useful to library policy makers and those faced with materials challenges.”

Annotation: The article contains a long term look at attitudes towards homosexuality and censorship of “gay-related” material based on results gathered from the General Social Survey from National Opinion Research Center. While admitting the limitations of using someone else’s survey data the author still find information to back up their claim that most people questioned do not feel that “gay-related” materials should be censored and suggest further
directions for research in this area. The information provided could be useful to libraries when materials are challenged because of “gay-related” themes.

**Search Strategy:** I looked at the Dialog OneSearch groups and found Library and Information Services [INFOSCI]. I saw Library Literature and Information Science listed under INFOSCI and selected it because I knew it would have a wide variety of information related to library and information science.

**Database:** Library Literature and Information Science (Dialog)

**Method of Searching:** Keyword searching

**Search String:**
s censor? or banned(w)books or intellectual(w)freedom (became s1)
s s1 and public(w)librar?

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** When I access the full text of the article through Library Literature and Information Science on the Hagerty Library website the article was marked as peer reviewed. I also checked the title of the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed.

**Entry 2:**


**Abstract:** “When asked about a hypothetical book containing racist beliefs, do people support removing the book from their public library or not? The study examined responses to this question from surveys conducted from 1976 to 2006. Responses were analyzed for changes over time and for differences between demographic categories of respondents. Data were gathered by the General Social Survey, a well-respected social sciences data resource.”

**Annotation:** Like the previous article by this author this one also utilizes the General Social Survey but this time to examine attitudes towards racism and how that connects to censorship. Information from other fields is pulled into the discussion and the results could be a helpful resource for librarians facing challenges based on racist materials.
Search Strategy: I chose to look in the EBSCO database through the State Library of Louisiana link on the Ouachita Parish Public Library website; within EBSCO I selected Academic Search Complete. I chose EBSCO based on its wide range of information on various topics. I chose to add “intellectual freedom” into the search string because I had seen it listed as a descriptor in other searches that I had conducted.

Database: EBSCO

Method of Searching: Keyword Searching

Search String: censorship or banned books or intellectual freedom and public libraries

I used full text and scholarly (peer reviewed) journal options to refine my search.

Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the title of the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed. Also I refined the search to show peer reviewed journals. The journal’s website they have a “policy of double-blind refereeing of articles in advance of publication.”

Entry 3:


Abstract: “Purpose – To reflect on an editorial from an earlier issue entitled “The banning of books in libraries”.

Design/methodology/approach – A discussion of the argument presented in the original editorial and its connection to present-day concerns over the use and dissemination of information and links to other issues, together with the maintenance of a professional ethos in the face of those concerns.

Findings – A set of moral absolutes does exist from which librarians can derive an ethos for the operation of their services. Such absolutes take on a greater significance in the complex moral climate in which we now live, but are now under threat.

Practical implications – This article calls on library and information professionals to maintain their stand in the face of increasing pressures to compromise attitudes.
Originality/value – Reflects on the continuing (and increased) importance of professional values.”

Annotation: The author uses Berwick Sayer’s 1928 article to frame a discussion on professionalism and intrusion from outside sources who want to infringe on intellectual freedom. While I feel that a good point is made the article was somewhat confusing in its wording and flow; it would have been helpful to provide a list of citations for works referred to in the article.

Search Strategy: I decided to look in LISA because of the abundance of information on library and information science. I decided to add “intellectual freedom” to the search string because I had seen it listed as a descriptor in other searches and I wanted to get more variety in my search results.

Database: LISA

Method of Searching: Keyword searching

Search String: censor* or banned book* or intellectual freedom and public librarian*

I selected the peer review tab

Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the title in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed. There were two journals that appeared with this title one was marked refereed and one was not. I checked the publisher of this article (Emerald UK) to make sure that the article was from the refereed journal. I also selected the peer reviewed tab on the search in LISA. I went to the journal’s website and the articles are double-blind reviewed by both the editor and another reviewer.

Entry 4:


Abstract: “The rights of citizens of the United States to freedom of access to ideas and information have been firmly established in theories of public library service, and the degree to which librarians are committed to supporting and defending these rights is a socially
significant issue. An attempt to quantify the attitudes of more than 3,200 public librarians toward intellectual freedom, censorship, and certain antidemocratic ideas is reported in this article. Data upon which the study is based were collected as a part of the "Opinion Survey of Midwestern Public Librarians," which was conducted in 1970-71. Questionnaires containing three attitude scales were distributed to a randomly selected sample of 900 librarians in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin for the following purposes: to determine the extent to which librarians accept intellectual freedom principles contained in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement, to measure the attitudes of librarians toward censorship, to correlate librarians' attitudes toward censorship with their attitudes toward authoritarianism, and to determine the relationship between librarians' attitudes toward intellectual freedom with their attitudes toward censorship.”

Annotation: This article examined censorship and the attitudes towards it and actions related to it in Midwestern libraries in the 70s. This article serves as an historical perspective from which to ground the current discussion on intellectual freedom so that we can see how the attitudes and actions regarding censorship have evolved in the profession.

Search Strategy: I chose LISA because of the amount of information in the field of library and information science. I searched by keywords but also decided to use the “sort by relevance” option in addition to using the peer reviewed tab on the advanced search results.

Database: LISA

Method of Searching: Keyword search

Search String: censor* or banned book* or intellectual freedom & public librar*

sorted by relevance

Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed. I also selected the peer reviewed tab on the advanced search in LISA. According to a description of the journal found on JSTOR the journal is, “committed to scholarly research in all areas of librarianship.”
Entry 5:


**Abstract:** “In the fourth edition of the American Library Association’s *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, published in 1989, we witness conflicting ideologies in the Universal Right to Freedom of Expression (recently added to the Library Bill of Rights) and the Freedom to Read statement. The former appeals to natural, inalienable rights and the latter to American democracy in the attempt to fight censorship. Erosion of freedom of speech during the Reagan-Bush era suggests that we should try to reconcile the two positions by abandoning the appeal to American democracy. The Freedom to Read statement represents ideas elaborated by Alexander Meiiklejohn and Thomas I. Emerson in the early 1960s. However, later attacks on these positions by Robert H. Bork and Lillian R. BeVier show that the Constitution can be legitimately interpreted in a way that would allow much censorship of expression. Thus an appeal by the ALA to more abstract principles is in order.”

**Annotation:** Christensen argues that the concept of freedom to read should be grounded in the ideas of universal human rights and not the ideals of an American democracy because the Constitution is subject to interpretation by the courts. The author discusses infringement on rights during the Reagan and Bush presidency but does not provide many examples to back the statement up, but instead uses theoretical and philosophical reasons to support his position.

**Search Strategy:** I decided to search LISA because of the abundance of information on library and information science topics. I searched by keywords but also decided to sort the results by relevance in addition to using the peer reviewed tab on the advanced search results.

**Database:** LISA

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search

**Search String:** censor* or banned book* or intellectual freedom & public librar*

sorted by relevance

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** I checked the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as peer reviewed. I also selected the peer reviewed tab on the advanced search in LISA.
Entry 6:


**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 bombmaking manuals. I defend the liberal position against this objection, concluding that such materials do have a place in some libraries, terrorist threats notwithstanding.”

**Annotation:** The author uses Lester Asheim’s (1954) article to counter arguments made by Carol Hole (1984, 1985) and others in favor of rejecting the claim that it is a librarians role to protect the greater good. Doyle does an excellent job of showing that the idea of librarians protecting patrons by not selecting certain materials is essentially censorship. Doyle reminds the reader that even in the light of increasing terrorism after Sept. 11 librarians must remain committed to the ideas of intellectual freedom and by extension privacy.

**Search Strategy:** I decided to look at the references in the Moody article (2004) and found this article listed. I thought this article would be helpful so went to Hagerty Library’s website and searched by journal title. I found that they did have the journal and I accessed the full text of this article.

**Database:** N/A

**Method of Searching:** Footnote chasing

**Search String:** Referenced in:

Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the journal title in Ulrich’s and it listed as refereed. I also went to the publisher’s website and the journal is listed there as peer reviewed.

Entry 7:


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: The author suggest that while both sides of the censorship debate are wholly on opposite sides of the issue they have common ground in that they both feel they are morally in the right on the issue. The author suggests that research needs to be done on the opinions of those in the population rather than just the opinions of academics. The author did an exceptional job of using examples in the body of literature on censorship to illustrate her points.

Search Strategy: I looked at the Dialog OneSearch groups and found ERIC under Library and Information Services [INFOSCI]. I looked in INFOSCI because I knew it would have a wide variety of information related to library and information science.

Database: ERIC (Dialog)

Method of Searching: Keyword searching
Search String:  s censor? or banned(w)book? (became s1)

s s1 and public(w)library?

Scholarly/Refereed Status:  According to the journal’s website the articles are peer reviewed, I also limited the search when looking for the full text on Hagerty Library’s website to peer-reviewed. I checked the name of the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed.

Entry 8:


Abstract: “Censorship never dies: like intellectual freedom of which it is a part, it goes on changing its form. The discussion reviews some of the key social, political, religious, artistic and moral factors, suggests that censorship is an area which pre-eminently brings out the worst and best because it is more complex than it looks, because consensus is rare, because everyone thinks they are right, and because professional and personal roles work together and sometimes get confused. Statements about intellectual freedom and rights are aspirational for practitioners trying to make personal decisions about what is acceptable and accountable. Reference is made to political correctness, alleged harms, community standards, and the role of the information professional as an intermediary.”

Annotation: This article presents a unique way of looking at censorship by breaking down common reasons people want to censor materials and the harms of these reasons. It also suggests as a solution that librarians take over and lead discussions on censorship rather than letting the discussion be led by the loud minority who is currently pushing their opinion. The article is engaging and discusses the subject while offering practical advice for professionals to take back the discussion on censorship.

Search Strategy: After looking at the Oppenheim and Smith article (2004) I looked at the references and decided to look up some of the articles that I thought would be informative.

Database: N/A

Method of Searching: Footnote chasing
Search String: Referenced in:


Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed. I also went to the journal’s website and it stated that the articles are double-blind reviewed by both the editor and another reviewer.

Entry 9:


Abstract: “This essay calls for a fresh critical approach to the topic of censorship, suggesting that anticensorship efforts, while important and necessary, function much like literary prizing. The analysis draws especially on James English’s recent study The Economy of Prestige. There are two central arguments: first, that the librarian ethic of “selection”—introduced by Lester Asheim in 1953 as a counterpoint to censorship—has contributed to the unfortunate construction of the censor as a “moron”; and second, that anticensorship efforts more generally tend toward uncritical canon-making, attributing value to books simply because they’ve been censored or (more typically) challenged.”

Annotation: Kidd states that prizing and censorship can be looked at as opposite, positive and negative, sides of the “cultural process of evaluation” (p.198). He shows that the censorship or challenges to a book can elevate a work and add value to it the same way that prizing often does. The author brings a fresh look to censorship and the affect that book lists can have in bringing cultural significance to a work.

Search Strategy: I selected Library & Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA) because I knew it would have a wide variety of articles related to my chosen topic.

Database: LISTA

Method of Searching: Keyword searching
Search String: censorship or banned books and public libraries

I used the options on the side to refine my search with, “linked full text”, “scholarly (peer-reviewed)”, “publication type, academic”, and “document type: article”.

Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the title of the article in Ulrich’s and found that it was refereed; I also used the option to refine my search to peer reviewed articles. The publisher’s website lists the journal as peer reviewed.

Entry 10:


Abstract: “Purpose: To provide background on annual Banned Books Week's event that promotes intellectual freedom issues in the USA.

Design/methodology/approach: Historical and philosophical overview, including current celebration activities.

Findings: This year the American Library Association was notified of 547 challenges, up from 459 last year. Three of the ten most challenged books were cited for homosexual themes, the highest in a decade. Most of the books featured during Banned Books Week were challenged, but not actually banned. This is due to the efforts of librarians, teachers and booksellers to maintain them in collections.

Originality/value: Banned Books Week draws attention to the danger that exists when restraints are imposed on the availability of information in a free society.”

Annotation: The article lists the most common reasons for challenging or trying to ban a book. Information about Banned Books Week and the differences between “challenges” and “bans” is very informative and useful. I think that it would have been helpful for the author to list the references used in the article.
**Search Strategy:** I decided to search LISA because of the abundance of information on library and information science topics. I used a basic search just to test the waters and see what results my search would yield.

**Database:** LISA

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search

**Search String:** banned books

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** I found the journal listed as refereed in Ulrich’s. I also selected the peer reviewed tab in the LISA search. According to the journal information on the Emerald web site the articles are first reviewed by the editor then double blind peer reviewed.

**Entry 11:**


**Abstract:** “**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to discuss the nature of the debate in terms of a recent consultation in England on guidance for public libraries in selection of controversial materials. Also discussed is the issue of censorship in terms of how it relates to the practice of librarianship.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper provides a reflective and critical overview.

**Findings** – The laws that limit thought are potentially dangerous and to criminalise ideas is a notion that is anti-democratic. Librarians must always be wary of censorship from the state and any selfcensorship they feel obliged to undertake through fear of unclear laws.

**Practical implications** – The paper discusses a pertinent topic in current library practice and should be of interest to practitioners who are debating the issues on the front line.

**Originality/value** – The paper concentrates on a current issue of practice in the UK, and also wider issues facing professional librarians throughout the world.”

**Annotation:** The article looks at The Terrorism Act 2006 in the UK and discusses the concern for librarians who could be seen in violation of that law for having materials in their collection that could be interpreted as encouraging terrorism. This is a unique perspective
and gives an opportunity to compare post 9/11 laws in other countries with those enacted in this country under the pretext of protecting citizen from harm.

**Search Strategy:** I decided to look in LISA because of the abundance of information on library and information science. I also did the search under the advanced search option and chose to enter my search terms as descriptors.

**Database:** LISA

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search

**Search String:** DE= “censor*” or DE= “banned book*” and DE= “public library*”

I looked under the tab for peer reviewed journals.

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** I check the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed. There were two journals that appeared with this title one was marked referred and one was not. I checked the publisher of this article (Emerald UK) to make sure that the article was from the referred journal. I also refined my search to peer reviewed journals tab in LISA.

**Entry 12:**


**Abstract:** “Using primary sources and related documents, this article chronicles the California Library Association's (CLA) battle against anti-Communist censorship attempts from 1946 to 1956 in schools and public libraries as well as on the legislative front. An overview of the "Fiske report," published in 1959, is offered as an explanation of how intellectual freedom challenges impacted California librarians of the period.”

**Annotation:** The fight censorship in California that was fueled by Tenney Committee and later McCarthism are shown as an important part of the history of intellectual freedom. This article gives a wonderful look at this history and the important fight that the CLA was involved in how professionals in that state were thrust into the greater country wide dialog about Communism and the rights of citizens.
**Search Strategy:** I looked at the Dialog OneSearch groups and found ERIC under Library and Information Services [INFOSCI]. I looked in INFOSCI because I knew it would have a wide variety of information related to library and information science.

**Database:** ERIC (Dialog)

**Method of Searching:** Keyword searching

**Search String:** s censor? or banned(w)book? (became s1)

s s1 and public(w)library?

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** I limited the search to peer-reviewed and found the full text in Academic OneFile and I also checked the name of the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed. The journal is published by The Johns Hopkins University Press.

**Entry 13:**


**Abstract:** “Two types of censorship pervade contemporary society. The first, regulative censorship, aims at the suppression of values inimical to the safeguard of such orthodoxies as religion, the protection of the state, or personal morality and purity. As a result, books or other media professing alleged blasphemy, heresy, sedition, or immorality are liable to be banned. A second form of censorship, existential censorship, is linked to monopolistic domination by either the state or the market to subvert or deny public access to some forms of knowledge and information. The protection of the state may lead to a control of information under the aegis of national security, and then needs of the market may lead to a delimitation of information through the imposition of fees and charges. The author sees evidence of the first form in the attacks on materials deemed unsuitable for young readers (school library censorship) and of the second in stricter governmental controls over the dissemination of information (the FBI Library Awareness Program). She believes that a distinctive change from a liberal to a conservative stance in American regime values has contributed to the present state of censorship activity in this country.”
Annotation: The article looks back at censorship in the late 1970s and 1980s and argues that the progressively conservative climate has framed the censorship landscape. Court cases and public record are used to highlight the author’s point of view and questions are raised as to how issues of censorship will be viewed in the future if the current conservative thinking continues.

Search Strategy: After looking at the Oppenheim and Smith article (2004) I looked at the references and decided to look up some of the articles that looked like they would be helpful.

Database: N/A

Method of Searching: Footnote chasing

Search String: Referenced in:


Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed. When I went to Hagerty Library’s website to obtain the article the journal was listed as peer reviewed.

Entry 14:


Abstract: “Public librarians have long held to the social justice philosophy of free access to information for all people. The issue of censorship relates to the professional principles of the Australian Library and Information Association and to the role public librarians play in nurturing social capital in communities. This paper considers the philosophy of free access to information in the context of contemporary item selection and classification processes within public libraries. A survey of Queensland public librarians identified attitudes towards the public right to information, and determined the degree to which censorship is practiced or prevented in public libraries. The findings support those of international research that anticensorship attitudes are not always indicative of censorship behaviours, and that some librarians employ self
censorship of materials to avoid censorship challenges. Edited version of a paper presented at the 2004 Alia biennial conference Gold Coast Queensland under the title ‘Zero censorship! Who are we kidding? An exploratory analysis of the opinions and experiences of Queensland based public librarians with regard to the censorship of materials in public library collections’

Annotation: The author seeks to study and evaluate the opinions and actions taken in regards to censorship in Australian public libraries, something which had not been previously done to any significant extent prior. Moody is very honest about possible limitations of her study due to the low response rate to the survey (copy of which is attached at the end of the paper) and feels that more research needs to be done especially in light of the current social and political climate in the country. This author was cited and referenced frequently in the research on this topic.

Search Strategy: I looked at the Dialog OneSearch groups and found Library Literature and Information Science under Library and Information Services [INFOSCI]. I selected it because I knew it would have a wide variety of information related to library and information science

Database: Library Literature and Information Science (Dialog)

Method of Searching: Keyword searching

Search String: s censor? or banned(w)books or intellectual(w)freedom (became s1)

s s1 and public(w)librar? (became s2)

Scholarly/Refereed Status: When I looked up the journal to obtain the full-text of the article the journal was listed as peer reviewed on EBSCOhost. I checked in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed.

Entry 15:


Abstract: ‘Librarians, through their professional associations, have long been committed to the social justice principle embedded in the concept of 'free access to information'. External
censorship challenges to library collections threaten this principle overtly. However, censorship can also occur in libraries in various covert and often unconscious ways. This discussion paper raises concerns about current practices and processes which can effectively censor library collections from within. The paper concludes by highlighting areas of practice in which librarians need to be vigilant for such covert censorship.”

**Annotation:** Moody examines some of the less obvious forms of censorship and offers some suggestions to combat these sometimes unintentional actions or lack of actions. The author’s suggestions are well thought out and backed up by references and I feel that the article greatly contributes to the discourse on censorship in all of its forms.

**Search Strategy:** I decided to search for articles by Kim Moody since I kept seeing her name come up in searches and her work referenced in of the works I was reviewing.

**Database:** LISA

**Method of Searching:** Author search

**Search String:** Advanced search, AU= Moody, K

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** I found the journal listed as refereed in Ulrich’s and I also selected the peer-reviewed journal tab on the LISA search. The journal’s website states that the articles are peer reviewed as well.

**Entry 16:**


**Abstract:** “Censorship is an issue which has been present throughout recorded history. From the beginning, it has been used by individuals and groups to prevent and control the creation, access and dissemination of ideas and information. It has taken many different forms and occurred for many different reasons. The relationship between librarians and censorship is, and has been, a troubled one. The difficulty lies in the conflict of between the obligation the librarian has to serve his or her community, users and governing bodies for which they work for and are funded by. Religion, politics and sex cause particular problems. This paper attempts to examine what the
role of the librarian is in facilitating access to controversial information. It reports the results of research involving the questioning of key figures in the Michael Moore “Stupid White Men” case study and the following organisations and people: ALA, CILIP, Judith Krug of the Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) and Corey Mwamaba (librarian, Derby Library). The paper concludes that there is an intellectual freedom ideal in the library profession. This ideal is difficult to implement in a public library, but is still a worthy ideal and one which forms the core of the role of a librarian.”

**Annotation:** The interviews with different professionals are an interesting approach to the greater discussion on censorship they offer unique perspectives from those in the field and provide indispensable firsthand knowledge from the profession. The author calls for a greater active involvement from the British organization CILIP and its members in the fight against censorship.

**Search Strategy:** I decided to look in LISA because of the amount of information on library and information science. I decided to add “intellectual freedom” to the search string because I had seen it listed as a descriptor on other articles and I wanted to get more variety in my search results.

**Database:** LISA

**Method of Searching:** Keyword searching

**Search String:** censor* or banned book* or intellectual freedom and public librar* I selected the peer review tab

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** I checked the title in Ulrich’s and it was listed at refereed. I also selected the peer reviewed tab on the search. When I looked up the journal information EBSCOhost lists the journal as peer reviewed.

**Entry 17:**


**Abstract:** “Examines censorship in US public libraries in the 1990s and looks at the origins of threats and what public libraries can do to combat the problem. Censors here include those
patrons and other persons who attempt to influence or alter collection development decisions by librarians usually on the basis of moral, philosophical or ideological grounds.”

**Annotation:** Packard primarily focuses on censorship by the “religious right” of materials based on their sexual content. While he begins the article with facts and statistics (which he cites) to back up his statements as the article moves on he seems to move away from that and attempts to appeal to the emotions of the reader.

**Search Strategy:** I decided to search in LISA because of its wealth of information for library and information sciences. In my previous author search for Moody I made a note of the descriptors listed for the article. I took a cue from those descriptors and decided to do a descriptor search with some from that article, “censorship” and “public libraries” and added the term banned books as well. I also saw that the truncation character was “*” from the example below the search box and used that as well.

**Database:** LISA

**Method of Searching:** Keyword searching

**Search String:** DE = (“banned book*”) or DE= (“censor*”) and DE=(“public libraries”)

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** I checked the journal title in Ulrich’s and it was shown as refereed. I also selected the peer reviewed journal tab from the LISA advanced search. According to the website for the journal it is peer reviewed.

**Entry 18:**


**Abstract:** “Because there is considerable pressure on public librarians to censor materials in their collections, it is no wonder that some staff will go to almost any lengths to avoid challenges, criticism, and controversy over which titles and which kinds of materials should be made available to their communities. Nevertheless, while these reactions are quite understandable, a close reading of recent censorship research suggests that they are not solutions. The purpose of this article is to explore the reasons why this kind of avoidance behavior-
"censorproofing" is eventually doomed to failure, and to suggest alternative strategies that might make more effective use of the time, energy, imagination, and resources of public library staff.”

Annotation: Instead of just discussing the practice of self censorship the author also discusses why this “censorproofing” doesn’t work grounding the discussion in the reader response theory. This article breaks down areas in which complaints often occur and how libraries sometimes try to prevent those challenges. Ways to circumvent the self censorship and help libraries develop policies and procedures to fight against challenges are very useful in the overall discourse of censorship in libraries.

Search Strategy: I decided to look in LISA because of the amount of information on library and information science. I decided to add “intellectual freedom” to the search string because I had seen it listed as a descriptor and I wanted to get more variety in my search results.

Database: LISA

Method of Searching: Keyword searching

Search String: censor* or banned book* or intellectual freedom and public librar*

I selected the peer review tab.

Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the title in Ulrich’s and it was listed at refereed. I also selected the peer reviewed tab on the search.

Entry 19:


Abstract: “This study examines an area of book publishing that has generated some controversy for public libraries. A checklist of thirty English-language children's picture books with gay characters or gay-related contents is presented. "Picture book" is broadly defined to include highly illustrated works of various degrees of difficulty which are directed to an audience aged from approximately four to eleven. Titles were checked against the catalogs of 101 public library systems to determine number of titles and number of copies of
titles held. Libraries were drawn from each of the fifty American states and ten Canadian provinces, with some representation also from New Zealand, Australia, and Britain. Comparisons of holdings among library systems show large differences. Similarly, comparisons among titles show some works to be much more widely held than others, and, in support of Serebnick’s earlier findings, there is a pattern of increase in the number of holding libraries when there is an increase in number of mainstream library journal reviews. The rating scheme applied to the reviews from six mainstream journals offers some guidance to the reader and highlights divergence of critical opinion with regard to some titles.”

**Annotation:** The article addresses the need to find out about library holdings of gay-related “picture books” for children. The study reviewed many libraries in several different countries and resulted in the compiling of a checklist of books which is provided in the appendix and could be helpful for other libraries looking to diversify their collections. The checklist provides the opportunity for other libraries to see how they measure up in the inclusion of gay related children’s materials in their collections and offers them an opportunity to better diversify their collections.

**Search Strategy:** I decided to try searching Google Scholar. I have never used it before so I decided to do the regular search and used keywords.

**Database:** Google Scholar

**Method of Searching:** Keyword searching

**Search String:** censorship or banned books and public libraries, excluding patents

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** I looked up the journal in Ulrich’s and it is listed as refereed. According to a description of the journal found on JSTOR the journal is, “committed to scholarly research in all areas of librarianship.”

**Entry 20:**

Abstract: “A content analysis of 298 statements describing books included in the University of Oklahoma Books That Inspire exhibit was conducted to identify the reasons members of the academic community found particular books inspiring. Twenty-six recurrent themes in seven concept clusters were identified. Books from the exhibit that have been challenged or censored were examined to compare the perceptions of exhibit contributors and book challengers in the context of those themes. These responses often focused on very different aspects of literary works; however, some relationships did emerge between the reasons books were found variously inspiring and offensive. Findings are analyzed in the context of the academic mission and the role of academic librarians in promoting leisure reading.”

Annotation: The article shows that what inspires some people about a book is often the same thing that offends others and makes them want to censor a work. The study was conducted in conjunction with an exhibit and while the author is clear about the possible bias and limitations the article overall provides valuable information for the discussion about why some people want to censor certain works.

Search Strategy: I looked at the Dialog OneSearch groups and found Gale Group under Library and Information Services [INFOSCI]. I looked in INFOSCI because I knew it would have a wide variety of information related to library and information science.

Database: Gale Group Trade & Industry DB (Dialog)

Method of Searching: Keyword searching

Search String: s censor? or banned(w)book? (became s1)

s s1 and public(w)library?

Scholarly/Refereed Status: I checked the title of the journal in Ulrich’s and it was listed as refereed. The journal’s website they have a “policy of double-blind refereeing of articles in advance of publication.”
Conclusion and Personal Statement

This project has taught me a lot about doing research and about how I do research. I have learned many ways I can improve my search habits and methods and hopefully become a more skilled searcher as I progress through my program of study and into my professional life.

I have a much better understanding of censorship now than when I started this project. I had never done research in any way related to censorship before and while I had a basic understanding of the topic I knew nothing about any research connected to it. I feel now that when someone asks me why I oppose censorship I will be better able to explain my position and back it up with facts from the articles that I read for this project. I feel that it is always easier to defend one's position on a topic, especially a controversial one, when your position can be grounded in factual information from reputable sources and not just emotions. In addition to learning about my topic I have learned so much about searching in general.

I feel more comfortable looking in databases now than I ever have before in my academic career. I never knew how databases were structured before and I feel that now that the structure is more clear I am better able to manipulate the information to obtain more results and more accurate results. Knowing to look for things like descriptors and keywords, what truncation is, and how to use Boolean operators properly has made me more able to get the results that I want. I hope that I will become a better searcher as I practice more.

As for what I learned about this assignment that could fill 10 pages rather than just one with that information. I should have started earlier, I waited later than I should have and that ended up making me feel rushed and pressured. My notes on my searches were not clear or specific enough and that resulted in me having to retrace my steps a lot which was difficult and time consuming. The suggestion on the discussion board from one of my classmates about keeping track of the refereed status of journals was incredibly helpful and something I wish I had started doing from the beginning. Overall I think the most important thing that I learned about this assignment is the importance and usefulness of an annotated bibliography. I gained valuable information about my chosen topic.
Works Cited

