



## Promoting and Celebrating the Freedom to Read

Tuesday Topics: September 2025

*Welcome to Tuesday Topics, a monthly series covering topics with intellectual freedom implications for libraries of all types. Each message is prepared by a member of OLA's Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) or a guest writer. Questions can be directed to the author of the topic or to the IFC.*



### Banned Books Week

Fall brings the intellectual freedom celebration known as [Banned Books Week](#) (BBW), which some library staff now refer to as “Celebrating the Freedom to Read” – a more positive way to frame the event. While the observance usually occurs in late September, this year it runs from October 5-11. However, the [Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee](#) encourages libraries to participate anytime in September or October.

The 2025 theme is “Censorship is so 1984. Read for Your Rights.” This theme highlights the similarities between current efforts to ban books and information held in schools, libraries, archives and bookstores, and the extreme censorship represented in George Orwell’s cautionary tale *1984*. It is a reminder to stand up in defense of our First Amendment right to read freely.

### First Amendment & Core Tenets of Librarianship

The purpose of the observance is to highlight and promote intellectual freedom and the freedom to read, core tenets of librarianship. The American Library Association (ALA) “actively advocates and educates in defense of intellectual freedom—the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession, and a basic right in our democratic society. A publicly supported library provides free, equitable, and confidential access to information for all people of its community” ([source](#)).

In response to an increase in challenges to library materials in our state, the Oregon Library Association and the Intellectual Freedom Committee adopted the statement below. The ultimate intention is to consolidate and unify our message statewide and give library staff a go-to answer when asked for responses about intellectual freedom-related tensions within libraries.

First Amendment Rights Statement:

The Oregon Library Association adheres to the guiding principles of the American Library Association's [Code of Ethics](#) and [Library Bill of Rights](#). As such, we fully support the First Amendment rights of every individual to the intellectual freedoms to explore ideas, opinions, concepts, topics, and thoughts. Not every library resource is right for every patron, but the rights of every patron to make their own personal choices should be honored. We support the right of parents and guardians to guide their child's reading and viewing choices, but that right does not extend to removing choices for others. The work of libraries and librarians is to serve everyone in their community and provide resources that are reflective of the world around us.

## **Programming, Displays, and Social Media...Oh, My!**

So, how do libraries participate in Banned Books Week/Freedom to Read Week? It's common to schedule related programming, displays, social media posts, and the like.

- *Programming:* Programming could include inviting a guest speaker or panel to speak about a related topic, organizing a book club to encourage reading books that are often or recently challenged, or touching on the concepts of book access or representation in books in a storytime for older children or a teen event.
- *Displays:* ALA has a [page](#) of display ideas that primarily focus on banned books, while in a [post](#) for Book Riot, Kelly Jensen, a librarian in New York, shared great suggestions and tips about incorporating advocacy and the freedom to read. There's also a [Pinterest collection](#) featuring pictures of displays.
- *Social Media:* Another option is to schedule a series of social media posts to highlight diverse authors, share quotes about the freedom to read, etc. ([ALA templates](#)). Or, repost what others have shared. For example, author [Kelly Yang](#) is vocal for representation and against censoring books, as seen in this [reel](#). Remember to tie the posts together by using a hashtag such as #FreedomToRead or #BooksForAll.
- *Promotional Tools:* Additionally, the organizers of BBW offer [promotional tools](#) to download and merchandise to purchase.
- *Your Ideas:* If your library participates, we'd love to know what you did! Or, share stories about a banned book that is meaningful to you. Please send a description, links, pictures, and/or stories to [ifc.chair@olaweb.org](mailto:ifc.chair@olaweb.org). Each submission received by the end of October 14th will count as an entry in a raffle to win the top 10 banned books of the year or items from the ALA store via a gift certificate or reimbursement! In the meantime, take a look at what Oregon library staff [shared](#) in our last Banned Books Week Show-and-Tell.