



## Intellectual Freedom Committee

Oregon Library Association

**May 2026**

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 or a guest writer. Questions can be directed to the author of the topic or to the IFC Committee.

### **OLA 2026 Awards**

With great excitement, the IFC would like to share this year's Oregon Librarian of the Year and the Intellectual Freedom Champion Award winner. We are thrilled to announce two deserving recipients of this award:

**Librarian of the Year: Marie Felgentrager.** Marie was honored for outstanding leadership and her talent for cultivating community among students, educators, and school library staff in southern Oregon. She also was recognized for steady, expert and courageous support for Oregon library staff navigating challenges to intellectual freedom. She serves as the District Librarian for Roseburg Public Schools and is a member of the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee.

**OLA Intellectual Freedom Champion of the Year Award: Jennifer McKenzie.** Jennifer was recognized for her unwavering commitment to students' freedom to read during her tenure as the District Librarian in Siuslaw School District. She is currently serving as the Dean of Students in the Mapleton School District.

### **Marie Felgentrager – Award Presented by Emily O'Neal**

Several years ago, I had the honor of meeting one of my favorite authors, Max Brooks. When he signed my copy of *World War Z*, he wrote a simple inscription: "Librarians are the core of

civilization.” Few statements have stayed with me more powerfully—and none could be more fitting for this year’s Oregon Librarian of the Year.

As we all know, librarians truly do keep society running smoothly! They connect us to information, to stories, and—when we’re really lucky—to ourselves. Today, we honor someone who does all of that across an impressive number of ZIP codes, I might add – I did ask her last night to remind me how many, and I in fact lost count!

At a time when courageous, principled library leaders are essential to keeping books in hands and ideas alive, Marie Felgentrager exemplifies the very best of our profession: service, leadership, innovation, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to students and intellectual freedom. And she does it with her own personal dose of humor and joy while she’s at it! Such as, remembering to bring breath mints to her conference session presentation held right after lunch, like she did yesterday!

Marie serves as the District Librarian for the Roseburg School District, supporting all eleven campuses. Within Roseburg, she has built inclusive, student-centered library programs that serve learners across grade levels with extraordinary care. Her collections aren’t just curriculum-aligned—they reflect the real, diverse lived experiences of Oregon students. She doesn’t simply manage libraries; she elevates them into essential learning hubs that foster inquiry, equity, creativity, critical thinking, and a lifelong love of reading.

Marie understands something critical: libraries should be places students *want* to be. Through creative programming like “Bob Ross Fridays,” she has transformed lunchtime into a space for painting, decompressing, and community building. If you’ve ever tried to run a calm painting activity during a middle or high school lunch period, you know that alone qualifies as a minor miracle. So, when others talk about social-emotional learning, Marie hears that and thinks, *Great—let’s add acrylic paint.*

Her commitment to access doesn’t stop when the school year ends. Marie has worked to keep Roseburg school libraries open during the summer, because learning doesn’t magically stop in June—no matter how much students might wish it would. She also supports high school teachers with research instruction and literary analysis, she teaches literary units in the Pathways Program for students 18+ focused on independent living and vocational skills, she organizes writing and essay contests, and still somehow finds time to serve on everything from her District’s Behavior Team to the Sunshine Committee—because apparently “statewide influence” wasn’t quite filling her schedule.

Beyond her district, Marie’s impact is felt across Southern Oregon and throughout the state. As a consultant for the Southern Oregon Education Service District, serving the regions of Three Rivers, Rouge River, Central Point, Phoenix-Talent & Ashland, she supports districts with professional development, collection development guidance, and strategic planning. When librarians across the region are asking, “What do we do next?” there’s an excellent chance Marie already has a color-coded document, a policy citation, and a calm reassurance ready to go.

At the regional and state level, she organizes an annual regional Library Symposium, she presents regularly at OLA and OASL conferences, and facilitates monthly meetings in southern Oregon that foster collaboration and shared learning among librarians across the region. Her beloved “Fun Friday” newsletter offers resources, encouragement, and joy—proving once and

for all that librarians *can* be both highly professional and genuinely fun and because Marie understands that when librarians feel supported, students feel it too. Nowhere is Marie's statewide impact more evident than in her leadership around intellectual freedom. I've had the honor of working alongside her on the Intellectual Freedom Committee, where her steady leadership has guided review committees, grounded in policy, transparency, and professional standards. In crowded board meetings, emotionally charged challenges, and moments when librarians feel isolated or afraid, Marie has been a calm, comforting voice. Because of her work, books have remained on shelves, administrators have reconsidered assumptions, and librarians and media specialists across Oregon have found confidence in their professional voice—and sometimes courage they didn't know they had.

And she does all of this with kindness.

I have personally watched Marie present complex intellectual freedom issues with clarity and grace in rooms where tension was... let's politely call it *palpable*. Her courage is matched by humility, and her expertise never overshadows her compassion.

What makes Marie truly extraordinary is that she doesn't seek recognition—she seeks impact. As a matter of fact, I know she would a thousand times over rather be building a program that welcomes students into the library, or hand our pocket poems to remind you all that it is National Poetry Month, than standing up here and getting an award, but lucky for us, her impact is undeniable. Oregon's libraries are stronger because of her care. Oregon's educators are more confident because of her willingness to lead and mentor. Oregon's students have greater access, greater belonging, and greater opportunity—because Marie stood beside them.

It is my honor to present the Oregon Librarian of the Year Award to my friend, and a state-wide mentor, advocate, and leader whose influence reaches far beyond any single school or district, and whose work is shaping the future of libraries across our state.

Congratulations, Marie Felgentrager!

## **Jennifer McKenzie – Award Presented by Marie Felgentrager**

Dr. Jennifer McKenzie is a force. Her accolades and accomplishments span far and wide. They include being an Army veteran, Fulbright Teacher for Global Classrooms, Past-President of the Oregon Association of School Libraries, and esteemed leader of fierce kazoo-sing-alongs.

In 2025 in her role as district librarian, she faced an intense and, at times, threatening campaign to [remove books](#) from the libraries of the Siuslaw School District. True to her nature, Jen met this turmoil with leadership, professionalism, and focus. She rose to the challenge with aplomb, followed all established protocols, and fought hard to protect the intellectual freedom rights of the library patrons in the district despite attacks on her character and incidents on her property.

Concurrently, Jen was earning her Doctorate of Education and presenting her formal dissertation, aptly titled, *Status-Based Microaggressions Experienced by Teacher-Librarians and Advocacy Strategies to Address Them*. The work “explor[es] the lived experiences of

Oregon certified teacher-librarians through the lens of microaggression theory and consciousness-raising practices.” When the book banning situation ignited around her, Jen stated, “I’m earning my administrator license and muscling up.” Her librarian position was cut at the end of that school year, but she pivoted and is now the Dean of Students for the Mapleton School District.

Jen is so deserving of this recognition from the Oregon Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee. Passionate about school libraries and educating both students and staff, she demonstrates the executive characteristics of diligence, commitment, and orchestration. Jen’s phenomenal record of service, her commitment to the right to read, and her dedication to supporting *all* students are stellar. In each facet of her career, she has not just achieved; she has excelled. Dr. Jennifer McKenzie is a force for positive change and inclusion, and it is a great honor to congratulate her and to recognize her as the Intellectual Freedom Champion of 2026.