

OLA's IFC Presents

Frontline Intellectual Freedom

How to have hard conversations and stay grounded

SSD Conference

2026

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Library Manager

Alyssa Donoho

Alyssa grew up in her parents' classrooms and her local public library which set her on a path to becoming a lifelong advocate for intellectual freedom. For the past decade, she has worked and volunteered in schools and public libraries. Her passion is at the intersection of intellectual freedom, libraries, and education.

She has been a member of OLA IFC since 2022, recently completed serving as co-chair of the committee for two years, and is an ALA Law 4 Librarians trainer.

Marie Felgentrager

Marie Felgentrager is the certified District Librarian/Media Specialist for Roseburg Public Schools and a contracted Library Specialist for the Southern Oregon Educational Service District, supporting the districts of Ashland, Phoenix-Talent, Central Point, Three Rivers, and Rogue River. Marie is a Division Leader and a member of the Behavior Team. Additionally, Marie serves as the secretary of the Douglas County Library Foundation and is the OASL IFC Representative.

Marie enthusiastically supports the right to read for all individuals.



District Librarian

What is the IFC?

The Oregon Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee (OLA IFC) is a standing committee empowered by the OLA Board to educate and support the value of intellectual freedom, and help provide public oversight of any potential violations of the First Amendment in Oregon libraries.



Intellectual
Freedom
Committee

Oregon Library Association

Intellectual Freedom Basics

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

- Comes from the 1st Amendment in the US Constitution
- Protects both the right to speak and the right to receive information
- Includes privacy
- Applies to adults as well as minors
- Integral part of our democracy
- Applies to government entities, not private entities
- Legally, only a court of law can decide what is and is not protected speech

Soft Censorship

“Quiet censorship — also known as soft censorship or self-censorship, terms used interchangeably — is when materials are purposefully removed, limited, or never purchased at all despite it being a title that would serve a community.”

- Kelly Jensen “Soft and Quiet: Self-Censorship In An Era of Book Challenges,” Book Riot

It *does* happen:

- Choosing not to display materials that may be seen as controversial
- Removing books under the guise of “weeding”
- Moving books to a different location without a formal challenge
- Patrons or students hiding materials they disagree with so that no one can check them out
- Reviewing entire collections for “inappropriate material” with no formal challenge

Types of Challenges

The Clear Challenge

- The challenger tells you directly that they are upset
- The challenger fills out a formal request for reconsideration

Informal Challenges

- Often the challenger uses indirect means to challenge a material
- Includes soft censorship, feeling pressured by outside factors

Beyond Books

- Includes other materials like DVDs, video games, Library of Things, and displays
- Includes non-material items like bulletin boards, meeting room use, and programs

Directed at People

- Usually, directed at library staff, either an individual or the collective
- This is a different kind of challenge, but it is included for completeness



Preparing for a Challenge

When Confronted by a Complainant

Stay Calm

Breathe deeply

Ground yourself in intellectual freedom knowledge

IRL Tip: Print a happy or comforting picture to add to your binder, should be relatively neutral to avoid personal assumptions.

Speak Slowly

Do not engage in argument

Be aware of your body language

IRL Tip: Standing with a book or binder in one arm can also help create a feeling of security for you while giving you something to do with your hands.

Materials in Hand

Have a script ready

Prepare library policies, procedures, and processes in advance

IRL Tip: Prepare your materials in advance and find someone you can practice with, long before a challenge ever happens.

Navigating a Formal Challenge

Be prepared

Have and use a Request for Reconsideration form

Follow procedure

Have and follow procedures for reconsideration committees

Missing procedures or forms?

Reach out to IFC- we can help!

Review the Material

Follow procedures for the review committee

Document

Document the process as best you can while protecting the privacy of staff, complainant, review committee members

Report the Challenge

Once there is an outcome, report the challenge to the OIFC

* if a reconsideration committee votes to remove an item, it is *not* a failure on your part*

Report a Challenge

Submit a Report

What should be reported?

Report challenges that have occurred your library and/or in your school.

A challenge, as defined by the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, is "an attempt to remove or restrict access to material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others."

 **State Library of Oregon**
Library Support and Development Services

Intellectual Freedom Incident Report Form

- Please submit one form for each incident.
- Forms are viewed by staff at the [State Library](#); learn more at the [Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse site](#).
- If you have questions about the form, please [contact us](#).

When did the incident happen? *

Exact dates are helpful, but we'll take a best guess.

Please describe the incident. *

In your own words, please tell us what happened.

What materials (if any) were challenged? *

Please list the titles and authors of any books, graphic novels, films, or sound recordings challenged.

How to report a challenge

1. Go to
<https://slo.oregon.gov/oifc/report>
2. Click "Submit a Report."
3. Fill out the form. Please include as much information as you feel comfortable sharing.
4. Reach out to IFC if you would like support with the challenge.

What support does IFC offer?

Feedback through an intellectual freedom lens on policies (collection development, displays, meeting room use, etc.) for all library types

Help in navigating intellectual freedom challenges

Trainers certified through ALA's Law 4 Librarians

Training for library staff, administration, and school or library boards on:

- Intellectual freedom basics
- Legal information about intellectual freedom
- Facilitating review committees

Contact Information:

ifc.chair@olaweb.org

Committee Co-Chairs, Emily O'Neal and
Shelby Paulson

ifc.members@olaweb.org

all current IFC committee members

<https://www.olaweb.org/if-home>

Questions?

We're here to help!