

“Material challenges and intellectual freedom issues”



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**DON'T
TELL ME:**

WHAT to Read

HOW to Read

WHEN to Read

WHERE to Read

WHO to Read

WHY to Read

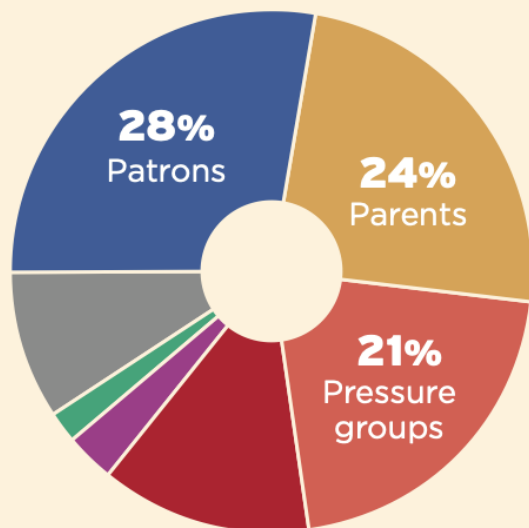
Material Challenges: Why now?

- ▶ Books have been banned and burned going back to 259-210 BC when a Chinese Emperor felt that if all previous historical records were destroyed, he thought history could be said to begin with him.
- ▶ Over the last 2000 years, the Bible, the works of Shakespeare, Charles Darwin, Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut, Tony Morrison and hundreds if not thousands of others have had their works banned or threatened to be banned
- ▶ Fictional characters of Mickey Mouse and Harry Potter have had their problems with censorship as well.
- ▶ Today: History, Race, LGBTQIA+, Sexuality or on the line

Nationally Organized Challenges

- ▶ PEN America has identified at least 50 groups operating at the national, state, or local levels to campaign and mobilize around what they view as the dangers of books in K-12 schools and advocating for book restrictions and bans.
 - ▶ Moms for Liberty
 - ▶ US Parents Involved in Education
 - ▶ No Left Turn in Education
 - ▶ MassResistance
 - ▶ Parents' Rights in Education
 - ▶ Mary in the Library
 - ▶ County Citizens Defending Freedom USA
 - ▶ Power2Parent (5).
- ▶ While some of these groups have existed for years, the overwhelming majority are of recent origin: more than 70 percent (including chapters) were formed since 2021.

WHO INITIATES ATTEMPTS TO CENSOR BOOKS?



- 13%** Board/administration
- 3%** Librarians/teachers/staff
- 2%** Elected officials/government
- 9%** Other/unknown

Statistics based on 954 cases.

WHERE DO CENSORSHIP ATTEMPTS TAKE PLACE?



54%
Public libraries



39%
School libraries



5%
Schools

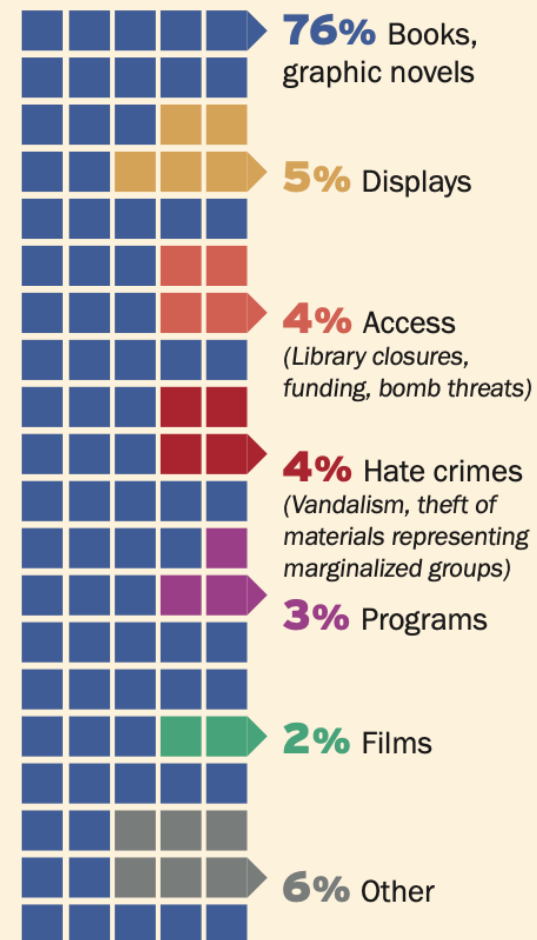


2%
Higher education/other

Statistics based on 1,247 cases with known locations.

BOOKS AND BEYOND

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked **1,247 censorship attempts** in 2023. Here's the breakdown:



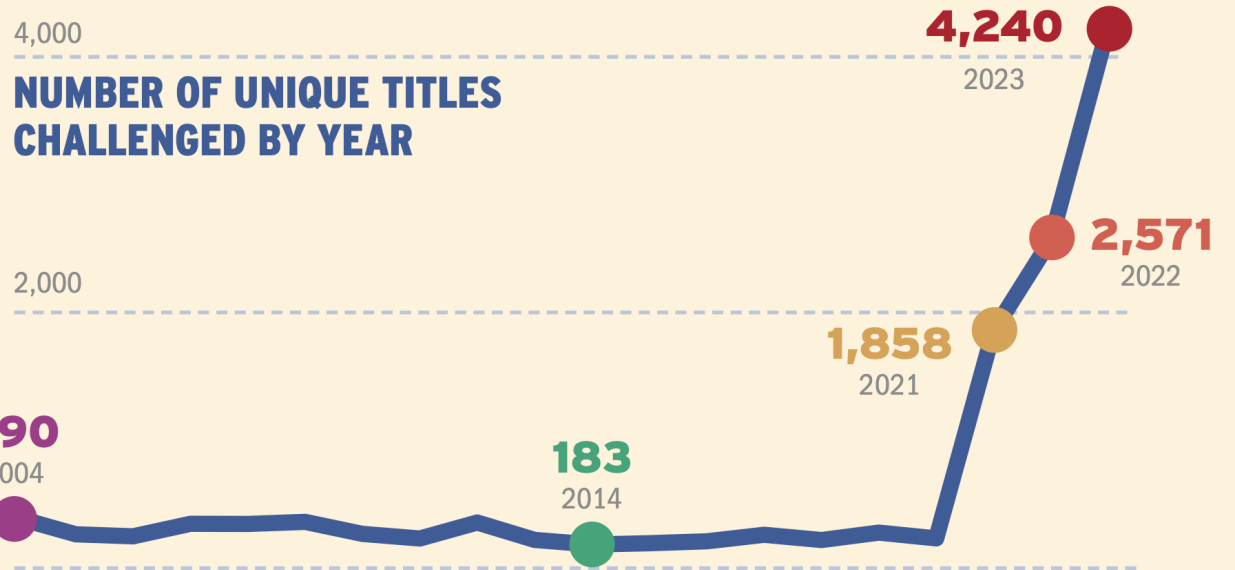
CENSORSHIP ON THE RISE

The unparalleled number of unique titles targeted in 2023 marked a 65% increase over 2022. During the two decades prior to 2021, the average number of unique titles targeted per year was 273.

CENSORSHIP
STATISTICS
COMPILED BY:

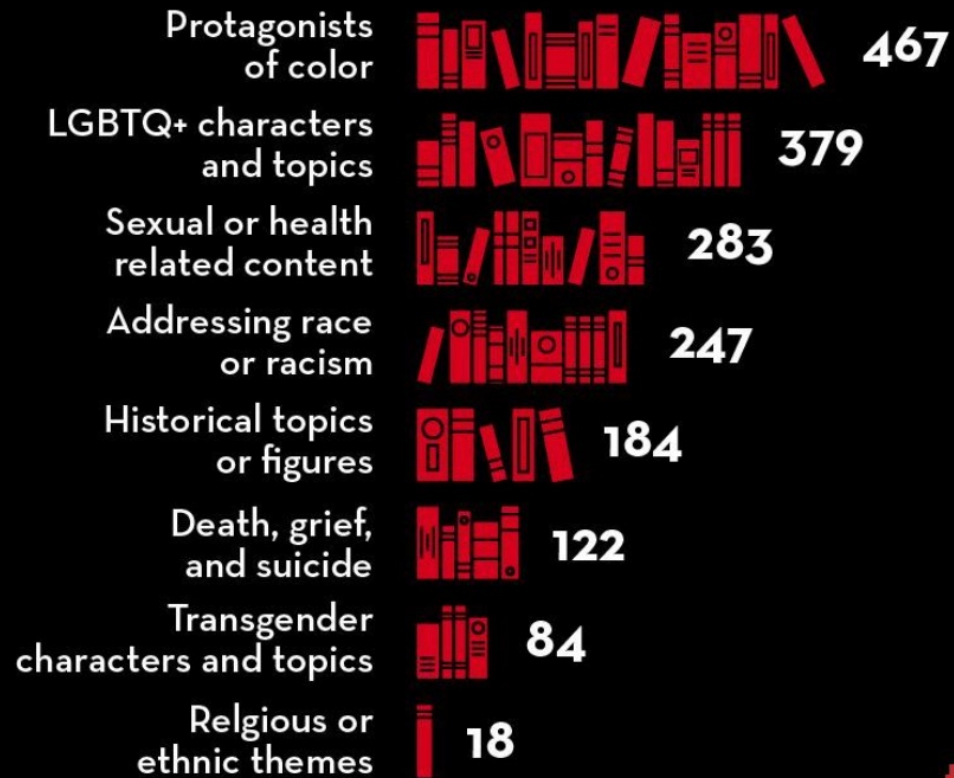


OFFICE FOR
Intellectual Freedom
American Library Association



Which stories have been banned?

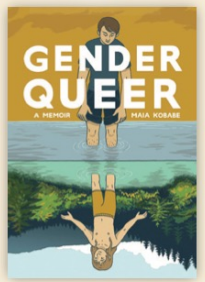
*Many of these categories overlap



Based on PEN America's Index of Book Bans, which documents decisions to ban books in school libraries and classrooms in the United States from July 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

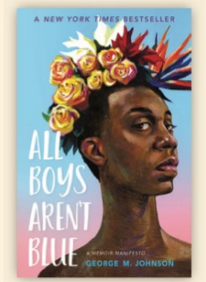


1



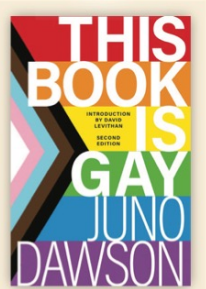
GENDER QUEER
by Maia Kobabe
REASONS: LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit

2



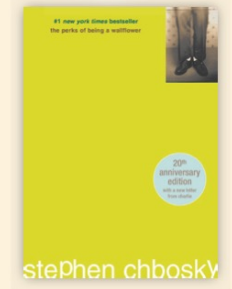
ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE
by George M. Johnson
REASONS: LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit

3



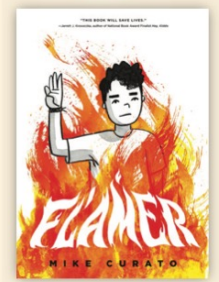
THIS BOOK IS GAY
by Juno Dawson
REASONS: LGBTQIA+ content, sex education, claimed to be sexually explicit

4



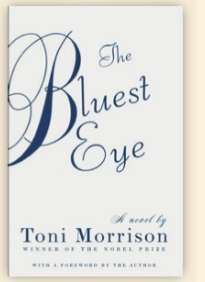
THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER
by Stephen Chbosky
REASONS: claimed to be sexually explicit, LGBTQIA+ content, rape, drugs, profanity

5



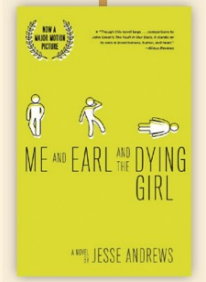
FLAMER
by Mike Curato
REASONS: LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit

6



THE BLUEST EYE
by Toni Morrison
REASONS: rape, incest, claimed to be sexually explicit, EDI content

7/8

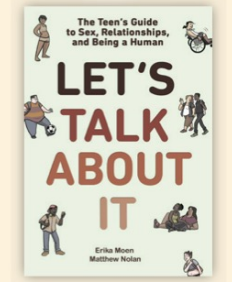


ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL
by Jesse Andrews
REASONS: claimed to be sexually explicit, profanity



TRICKS
by Ellen Hopkins
REASONS: claimed to be sexually explicit, drugs, rape, LGBTQIA+ content

9



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT
by Erika Moen and Matthew Nolan
REASONS: claimed to be sexually explicit, sex education, LGBTQIA+ content

10



SOLD
by Patricia McCormick
REASONS: claimed to be sexually explicit, rape

Four Key Messages to Protect Intellectual Freedom

Access

Diversity of
Collections

Protecting our
Constitutional
Rights and the First
Amendment

Qualifications of
Librarians

You are covered!

It is noteworthy to read in its entirety, MCL722.676, persons excepted from MCL722.675, sec. 6 as an ordinance cannot take away rights/abilities that the state statutes permit. Section 5 does not apply to the dissemination of sexually explicit matter to a minor by any of the following:

(a) A parent or guardian who disseminates sexually explicit matter to his or her child or ward unless the dissemination is for the sexual gratification of the parent or guardian.

(b) A teacher or administrator at a public or private elementary or secondary school that complies with the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.1 to 380.1852, and who disseminates sexually explicit matter to a student as part of a school program permitted by law.

(c) A licensed physician or licensed psychologist who disseminates sexually explicit matter in the treatment of a patient.

(d) A librarian employed by a library of a public or private elementary or secondary school that complies with the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.1 to 380.1852, or employed by a public library, who disseminates sexually explicit matter in the course of that person's employment.

(e) Any public or private college or university or any other person who disseminates sexually explicit matter for a legitimate medical, scientific, governmental, or judicial purpose.

(f) A person who disseminates sexually explicit matter that is a public document, publication, record, or other material issued by a state, local, or federal official, department, board, commission, agency, or other governmental entity, or an accurate republication of such a public document, publication, record, or other material.

**How Libraries
SHOULD
address
Intellectual
Freedom**

Collection Development

Library Policies and Procedures

Privacy and Confidentiality

Open Public Forum

Information Literacy

TOOLKITS



Intellectual Freedom Toolkit.

Resources for library staff, educators, and board members.



Intellectual Freedom Message Center.

Tips and templates for promoting intellectual freedom in your community.



Advocacy Resource Funds.

Request support as you take action to protect First Amendment rights.

Book Résumés

A new, useful tool from Unite Against Book Bans

Book Résumés help teachers, librarians, parents, and community members defend books from censorship. They detail each title's significance and educational value and are easy to share with administrators, book review committees, elected officials, and board members.

<https://bookresumes.uniteagainstbookbans.org>



RIGHT TO READ

“Protecting the Right to Read in Michigan”

<https://www.MiRightToRead.com>

- Initiative of the Michigan Library Association (MLA)
- Advocacy, education and engagement on behalf of all Michigan libraries
- Led by MLA’s Intellectual Freedom Task Force
- Intellectual freedom is core value of librarianship
- The right to read is a First Amendment right
- Education and access to information are foundational to democracy

Take Action!



1. Join the Coalition.

There is strength in numbers and we are growing stronger daily. We encourage you to invite friends, family, and colleagues to join the MI Right to Read coalition and be fully prepared to defend First Amendment rights.

[Join the Coalition...](#)

2. Post on Social.

Our message center has pre-written posts to help spread the word on social media. Craft your own message in support of the right to read or use any of our examples. Plus, be sure to follow **MI Right to Read** on **Twitter** and **Facebook** and share our posts.

Post on Social...





3. Write a Letter.

We encourage you to write a letter to your local media to let them know how much you value your library and librarian. Remember to keep your letter short, personal, positive, and proactive, and take a firm stance on protecting the right to read.

[Write a Letter...](#)

4. Attend a Meeting.

All politics are local. If challenges to materials arise in your library, it is of utmost importance that you show up and vocalize your support of First Amendment rights at your local school, library, and/or municipal board meetings. Elected officials want to hear from voting citizens of their community; showing up to support your library and vocally contesting misinformation and propaganda presented by groups trying to censor books is critical to protecting the right to read.

[Attend a Meeting...](#)





5. Give a Presentation.

Share a brief presentation on First Amendment rights and book challenges at your local service clubs, like Rotary, Diversity Groups, League of Women's Voters, Kiwanis, or the Chamber of Commerce to name a few. Present the facts and ask them to join the coalition.

[Give a Presentation...](#)

6. Lead a Local Group.

Book challenges are a national issue that must be FOUGHT LOCALLY. It is never too early to form and lead a local and vocal group of citizens. As Margaret Mead has stated, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Get inspired and follow our friends at **Free to Read Rochester** on Twitter **@Free_to_read**.

Lead a Local Group...





7. Be an Ally.

Let library workers know they have support in their community. It only takes a quick phone call, email, or thank you note to encourage and support library workers who are dealing with misinformation and personal attacks. Thank them for their work, ask if they need help, and share your contact information so they know they can call on you.

8. Fight Misinformation.

Authors targeted with book bans need our help. Censors are spamming Amazon with negative reviews of books. Help mitigate their actions.

[Fight Misinformation...](#)



10. Run for Office.

We need elected officials that protect and champion intellectual freedom, privacy, and access for all. We need you! Consider throwing your hat into the ring to run for your school board, your library board, or your city/township council.


Run for Office and Win...



Michigan Public Opinion Poll on Book Banning and Censorship

In March 2023, the Michigan Library Association contracted with EPIC-MRA, a full-service survey research firm with expertise in Public Opinion Surveys and Market Research Studies to conduct a statewide survey on library issues.

Our work with EPIC-MRA has produced a statistically valid, stratified survey of 800 voters in Michigan regarding awareness of, and attitudes toward, the increasingly intense and coordinated efforts to dictate the collection content of local public libraries. We produced a statewide summary as well as 11 regional summaries based on the Michigan Cooperative Library regions.




79% OF DEMOCRATS, 68% OF INDEPENDENTS AND 65% OF REPUBLICANS

gave public libraries in Michigan a **positive rating** for the job they are doing providing programs, services and a diverse collection of quality books and materials to their library patrons.



Statistics ($\pm 3.5\%$) collected from 847 randomly selected Michigan voters by EPIC-MRA. March 2023.



**86% OF DEMOCRATS, 76% OF INDEPENDENTS
AND 46% OF REPUBLICANS**

said books with discussion about sex,
gender identity or sexual orientation
should never be banned.



Statistics ($\pm 3.5\%$) collected from 847 randomly
selected Michigan voters by EPIC-MRA. March 2023.



75%

of voters said they agree “we need to **protect** the ability of young people to have access to books from which they can learn about and understand different perspectives and **help them grow** into adults who can think for themselves.”



Statistics ($\pm 3.5\%$) collected from 847 randomly selected Michigan voters by EPIC-MRA. March 2023.



83%

of voters would **support state legislation** that would protect the public's right to read any book they choose in public libraries and oppose book banning.



Statistics ($\pm 3.5\%$) collected from 847 randomly selected Michigan voters by EPIC-MRA. March 2023.

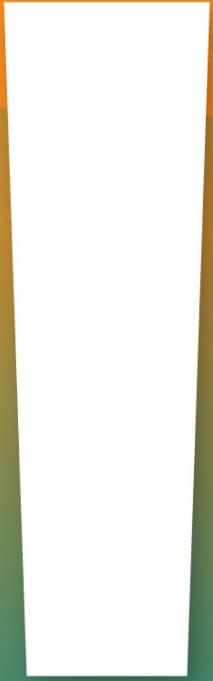


17%

of all voters stated that “we need to protect young people from books that they might find upsetting or that **reflect ideologies** and **lifestyles** that are outside of the mainstream.”



Statistics (±3.5%) collected from 847 randomly selected Michigan voters by EPIC-MRA. March 2023.



71%

of voters agreed with the statement that **“book banning is un-American, infringes on our freedoms, and harms our democracy.”**



Statistics ($\pm 3.5\%$) collected from 847 randomly selected Michigan voters by EPIC-MRA. March 2023.



70%

of voters said that librarians are **capable** and **trustworthy** to decide which books and reading materials should be included in local library collections.



Statistics ($\pm 3.5\%$) collected from 847 randomly selected Michigan voters by EPIC-MRA. March 2023.

Questions/Discussion



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