Banned Book Week

PRESS RELEASE
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Contact: Jude Smith, 453-0349
Great Falls Library

ALA releases Top Ten List of Most Frequently Challenged Books of 2011

Great Falls, Montana – Banned Book Week, September 30 – October 6, is celebrating 30 years of working to liberate literature. This work to bring awareness to our right as a society to have free access to information is most notable in public and school libraries. During Banned Book Week and the week prior, the Great Falls Public Library will have a special exhibit that will offer information about banned and challenged books, and also many of the books in question. Patrons will be able to check out these materials.

Book banning efforts were alive and well in 2011. The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) received 326 reports regarding attempts to remove or restrict materials from school curricula and library bookshelves. The Top Ten Most Frequently Challenged Books of 2011 include the following titles; each title is followed by the reasons given for challenging the book:

1) ttyl; ttfn; l8r, g8r (series), by Lauren Myracle
Offensive language; religious viewpoint; sexually explicit; unsuited to age group
2) The Color of Earth (series), by Kim Dong Hwa
Nudity; sex education; sexually explicit; unsuited to age group
3) The Hunger Games trilogy, by Suzanne Collins
Anti-ethnic; anti-family; insensitivity; offensive language; occult/satanic; violence
4) My Mom's Having A Baby! A Kid's Month-by-Month Guide to Pregnancy, by Dori Hillestad Butler
Nudity; sex education; sexually explicit; unsuited to age group
5) The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie
Offensive language; racism; religious viewpoint; sexually explicit; unsuited to age group
6) Alice (series), by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
Nudity; offensive language; religious viewpoint
7) Brave New World, by Aldous Huxley

Insensitivity; nudity; racism; religious viewpoint; sexually explicit
8) What My Mother Doesn't Know, by Sonya Sones
Nudity; offensive language; sexually explicit
9) Gossip Girl (series), by Cecily Von Ziegesar
Drugs; offensive language; sexually explicit
10) To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee
Offensive language; racism

*A challenge is defined as a formal, written complaint filed with a library or school requesting that a book or other material be restricted or removed because of its content or appropriateness.

In addition to book challenges, publishers limiting library e-book lending, and budget cuts are just a few library trends of the past year that are placing free access to information in jeopardy. These trends as well as other are detailed in the 2012 State of America's Libraries Report released by the American Library Association (ALA).

The rapid growth of e-books has stimulated increasing demand for them in libraries, but libraries only have limited access to e-books because of restrictions placed on their use by publishers. Macmillan Publishing, Simon and Schuster and Hachette Book Group refused to sell e-books to libraries. HarperCollins imposed an arbitrary 26 loans per e-book license, and Penguin refused to let libraries lend its new titles altogether. When Random House raised e-book prices, the ALA urged it to reconsider. "In a time of extreme financial constraint, a major price increase effectively curtails access for many libraries, and especially our communities that are hardest hit economically," Molly Raphael, ALA president, said in a statement.

The single-minded drive to reduce budget deficits continued to take its toll on essential services at all levels of society in 2011, with teachers and librarians sometimes seen as easy targets for layoffs. Even the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services suffered budget cuts, and the Library of Congress lost nearly 10 percent of its workforce.

School librarians faced especially draconian budgetary challenges in 2011. Cuts began at the federal level in May 2011, when the Department of Education eliminated fiscal 2011 funding for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program, the only federal program solely for school libraries in the United States. The effects were soon felt at the state and local levels.

Academic librarians and their colleagues in higher education in the United States also continued to navigate a "new normal," characterized by stagnating budgets, unsustainable costs, increased student enrollments and reduced staff.

Even during a period of budget battles, however, the library community, led by the ALA, stood firm against censorship. Internet-age versions of copyright and piracy issues shot to the forefront as 2011 turned into 2012, and the acronyms SOPA (the Stop Online Piracy Act) and PIPA (the PROTECT IP Act of 2011) became part of the vocabulary as the library and First Amendment communities took a strong stand against proponents of the legislation.

The State of America's Libraries Report documents trends in library usage and details the impact of library budget cuts, technology use and the various other challenges facing U.S. libraries. The full Report is available at http://www.ala.org/news/mediapresscenter/americaslibraries/soal2012.

Supporting Documents

Press Release - Banned Book Week 2012 (341 KB) (PDF)

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