**Book Challenges and Intellectual Freedom: Proactive Planning for Public Libraries**

<https://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction/book-challenges-and-intellectual-freedom.html>

Across the United States, there are increased reports of book challenges from community members, which have led to very public and heated discussions. As public library leaders and staff consider how to prepare for similar local challenges, being proactive about developing and sharing policies and procedures can help to create clarity and establish expectations around responses to book challenges. This preparation may also include engaging stakeholders, partners, and supporters around the value and essential need for intellectual freedom in the library. Join this discussion with panelists who are working through these issues in their communities, to learn about the resources they have found useful, and their suggestions for getting started.

Presented by: Amanda Vazquez, Library Director, Dubuque County Library District; Amber McLain, Digital Services Specialist, Lakeland Library Cooperative; Brianna Hoffman, WebJunction Project Coordinator, OCLC and Executive Director of the Washington Library Association; and Jennifer Pearson, Director, Marshall County Memorial Library

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| **What are your goals for viewing this webinar?** |
| **Personal Goals** |  |
| **Team Goals** |  |
| **Current Landscape in Your Community** |
| Reflect on examples of challenges you heard about in the webinar and **discuss/consider the current challenges landscape within your state** at this time. How is it similar to or different from the situations shared in the session? How do the examples provide you with insights that could help understand the importance of being proactively prepared? |

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| **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities** |
| The presenters emphasized that clarity around **roles and responsibilities** related to book challenges is key. Consider all of the players, both internal and external to the library, and the information and support they may need moving forward. Check off the roles that apply to your community and identify key steps specific to each role, as well as those relevant across all roles.* Library pages/shelvers
* Library assistants/librarians
* Library manager/director
* Board members
* Library patrons
* Friends of the library/other library advocates
* City/County council
* Public Information Board
* State Library staff/consultants
* State Law Librarian
* State Association, including lobbyists
* American Library Association
* City/County Attorney
* Outside counsel (another attorney)
* State representatives in government
* State bar association
* ACLU
* Other
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| **Inventory Challenge Policies and Procedures** |
| Up-to-date policies and procedures help to create clarity and establish expectations around responses to book challenges. Are you familiar with your library's policies and procedures, and when they were last reviewed? Are they available for all staff to access? To go a step further, consider the staff/roles that might need to be included in the review and approval process for new or updated policies. Related policies or documents might include:* Collection Development Policy
* Request for Reconsideration
* Library Bill of Rights
* Freedom to Read Statement
* Weeding Policy (if separate)
* Other?
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| **Strengthen Communication Skills** |
| The enormous toll challenges can take on staff and library advocates weigh heavy. Proactively participating in and/or providing resources and training on communication skills can help. Review the Empathetic Listening and De-Escalation Techniques shared in the webinar. Share the approaches with colleagues and add or make time in staff meetings to discuss handling challenges. It may also be helpful to provide time and space to prepare and build confidence to practice (create some scenarios to roleplay interactions around challenges), and apply listening and de-escalation techniques. Brainstorm scenarios, real or imagined, and after roleplaying, reflect on the steps or resources needed to improve, including policy and procedure updates. |