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## Academic Librarianship Reflection: Promoting Intellectual Freedom

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## Academic Librarianship Reflection: Promoting Intellectual Freedom

by *Rebecca Rose*, Professor/Assistant Dean of Libraries, University of North Georgia  
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Academic libraries support their institution's mission of educating and supporting research efforts of students and faculty. The library's role includes teaching critical thinking as it relates to developing their skills of inquiry, while providing access to diverse viewpoints and experiences that are found within quality resources. Within this environment, academic libraries can foster awareness of intellectual freedom issues that can threaten the free exchange of ideas, an essential component of a healthy democracy.

The American Library Association (2023) reports that book challenges rose 38% last year, impacting classrooms, public libraries, and school libraries. Additionally, state legislations ramped up bill proposals and passed laws that criminalize school and public libraries who offer books that are often targeted by groups who disagree with the ideas represented within their pages. As a result of the passage of these laws, libraries are vulnerable to civil suits for circulating banned books to children. Other bills are being enacted that restrict classroom lessons and conversations- under the guise of transparency of classroom curriculum (Stroshane, 2022).

Given the mounting of organized censorship efforts, libraries in Higher Education Institutions should consider expanding their programming related to intellectual freedom beyond annual Banned Books Week events. Ideas facilitating this expanded role could include: suggesting the banned book issue as a classroom instruction session theme; working with faculty on creating course assignments on the topic; creating and promoting research guides and making them available; hosting speakers that discuss intellectual freedom issues and the impact on an informed constituency; designing and publishing research projects related to censorship; hosting faculty and staff workshops that provide resources and activities; sponsoring a trivia night featuring banned books.

By promoting events that encourage open dialogue and diversity of thought, academic libraries can contribute to discussions and raise awareness on the dangers of instituting censorship on our plural society, helping to uphold and promulgate intellectual freedom ideals.

Gomez, B. (2023, April 24). *Banned books week: ALA releases top 10 most challenged books of 2022 list*. American Library Association. <https://bannedbooksweek.org/ala-releases-top-10-most-challenged-books-of-2022-list/>

Stroshane, E. (2022). For the record. *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, 7(1), 26-36. <https://doi.org/10.5860/jifp.v7i1.7887>