Don’t Roll the Dice:
Evaluating Research Library Readiness for Book & Resource Challenges
Our Team

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Study design
- Findings & takeaways
- Recommendations for policy development
- Audience discussion
Introduction

- Resource challenges are at record numbers
- Public and school libraries are the main targets
- ALA recommends reconsideration policies for all libraries, including academic
Why Reconsideration Policies?

“Long Arm of the Law” session at 2022 Charleston Conference

Rise of “divisive concepts” laws across the U.S.

Will academic libraries see more challenges? How prepared are we to face them?
Methodology

- 104 ARL-member libraries in the U.S.
- Collected publicly available collection policies
  - Contacted institutions directly when necessary
- Categories of analysis based on ALA toolkit and *Intellectual Freedom Manual* recommendations
- Close reading of 20 reconsideration statements
Themes

- Policy Framing
- Mixed Messages
- Reliance on Justifications
- Varying Procedures
- Borrowed Language
Policy Framing

- Censorship
- Issue with the information
- Soft “No”
- Non-endorsements
- Confusing preambles
Reliance on Justifications

- Purpose of academic library
- External statements
- Takes a village
- Get it in writing
- Form difficulty levels

Varying Procedures
Borrowed Language

- From each other
- Repeating phrases
Takeaways

Conflict Management Styles

Missing Pieces

Recommendations
Conflict Management Style

- Assertive -> +
- Cooperative -> +

Competing

Collaborating

Compromising

Avoiding

Accommodating

Based on Kilmann
Community Definitions
Who can participate?

Missing pieces

A successful challenge
What's the procedure then?
From the ALA *Intellectual Freedom Manual* (p. 39)

- Allow reconsiderations
- Explain procedure
- Use a reconsideration request form asking 1) why they don’t like it and 2) what they want to happen to it
- Explain the work will stay in place during reconsideration
- Be aware of your state’s open meetings/public record laws
- Make a plan for reporting to ALA
- Provide decision letter
Recommendations

- Allow requests.
- Be clear & to the point. Don’t hedge.
- Opt for an easier form.
- Embed with other collection policies.
Some questions...

01 Should there be notes placed in the record or the item?

02 Should we keep a publicly available list of challenges?

03 Is your state threatened with divisive concept laws? How do we protect our collections from top down threats?

04 These statements presuppose that people can figure out misinformation, but in this climate, is that outdated?
OR do we want to workshop a draft policy?

- Who is able to challenge?
- What conflict style appeals to your library?
- What would you do with a successful challenge?
- How does this align with your instructional values?
- Do you already have a collection development policy
- Who would handle challenges?


