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Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin

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ISSUES IN INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

by Janice Wood-Thomas
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Media Specialist
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Freedom of expression is essential to the dissemination of information. The major responsibility of the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) of the Rhode Island Library Association (RILA) is to anticipate and prepare for threats against this invaluable freedom of expression. The IFC has set goals, sponsored programs and kept abreast of intellectual freedom issues throughout the country.

The IFC has been charged by the Association to be responsible for maintaining an awareness of intellectual freedom among librarians, support staff and trustees. In addition, awareness of the meaning of intellectual freedom is to be fostered among local officials and citizens of Rhode Island. The IFC has set goals to help meet these charges. These are to:

1. create an awareness of the meaning of intellectual freedom;
2. educate both librarians and the general public about intellectual freedom;
3. inform RILA members and the executive board about intellectual freedom issues;
4. recommend appropriate responses to these issues.

In order to carry out these goals the IFC has sponsored several programs over the past few years. These programs have dealt with labeling (limiting the use of materials for

certain age groups or removing them from shelves and into "special collections"), writing library selection and collection policies which should represent both liberal and conservative viewpoints, school textbook selection policies, academic freedom, and individual cases of censorship. This year the committee has planned two programs. One program will deal with current rock music lyrics which some adults are questioning as appropriate for children. This program will be held February 23, 1987 as a Young Adult Round Table. The committee is also sponsoring a program at the RILA Conference, November 17, 1986 from 9-10 AM dealing with the Meese Report and its impact on censorship.

RILA's IFC does not work alone. The ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) issues a monthly bulletin which keeps its members aware of the intellectual freedom issues occurring throughout the States and in Washington, DC, as well as informs them of judgements handed down by the courts on censorship cases. The OIF also co-sponsors the annual celebration of Banned Books Week.

The 1986 theme for Banned Books Week, "The Worlds of Science and Technology: How Free?" is evidence of the ever-increasing efforts by the federal government to control scientific communication, and to place limits

on the availability of free access to technological information. This theme emphasizes both the historical reluctance of the "establishment" to recognize awareness in scientific knowledge, and the conflict between national security and the right to know, without which both the right to read and the right of free speech become rhetorical issues. Consider, also, that Galileo, Copernicus, and Darwin were not challenged for their unorthodox theories in only one era, they have been repeatedly censored up to the present as evidenced by the current creationism/evolutionism controversy. In fact, these specific issues of censorship recur time and time again according to the social, political, economic, or historical milieu of the time.

The issue of national security vs. the right to know is also repetitive. In the past, information has been restricted in time of warfare. However, the present trend began about 1980 when the U.S. government took the position that "our" scientific research should not be shared, thus restricting foreign scientists from working on any research under government contract. Because much of the scientific and technological research in colleges and universities is funded, at least in part, by the government, the participant in this research surrenders autonomy and intellectual freedom in exchange for that funding. These restrictions also place limits upon individual access to information.

Most recently, the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography published its final report popularly called the "Meese Report." It is a study of the effect of pornography upon various elements of the population. About twenty years ago, a similar commission was appointed to consider this same vexing issue. The report was presented to President Nixon in 1970. He refused to accept the findings of the commission which virtually exonerated pornography from any charges of harmful effects upon society. Since that report, several changes have taken place in the "climate" of society, and in the characteristics of the business of pornography. For example, pornography has found expression beyond print and films to include cable TV, videos, tapes, and computer networks. Pornography has also become "big business," broadening both its audience and its focus. The government felt it was time for another report.

The Meese Report, unlike the older study, was

a hastily researched, rapidly composed report which has succeeded or failed in its mission depending on one's stand on both intellectual freedom and pornography. The conclusions of the commission were not unanimous, and the dissenting members have issued a minority report. The remaining question is whether the Commission's findings provide proof that tighter restraints should be placed on pornography beyond what already exists in our laws. We must certainly reconsider what may be eternal questions: What is pornography? How do we define obscenity? and What is the "community" standard?

The IFC has digested and analyzed the lengthy Meese Report (2,000 pages) to see what effect it might have on the library community in Rhode Island. As stated earlier, the IFC will present a program at the conference in November where the speaker will address the issues of the validity of the sampling methods used by the commission, and the validity of the conclusions drawn from the data so obtained. Copies of the Meese Report are available from several libraries around the state. Although the Government Printing Office has sold out all copies of the report, a paperback reprint (priced at about \$10) should soon be available. (Editors Note: The Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography can be ordered from Rutledge Hill Press, 513 Third Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37210, (817) 772-7650 for \$9.95. Only 1500 copies were printed because little interest was expected.)

The dissenting report, The Meese Commission Exposed (ISBN 0-9611430-0-2) may be purchased from: The National Coalition Against Censorship, 132 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036 for \$3.00 to individuals, and \$6.00 to institutions. All orders must be postpaid.

The IFC would also like to recommend additional readings that will help one to understand how the recommendations of the report may affect our libraries. These readings will also provide good background for the RILA Conference Program.

Publishers Weekly, July 11, 1986, pp. 18 and 31-43. The following articles are included in this issue:

"First Amendment Watch: Two Members

Reveal Porn Commission's Approach," p. 18.

"An American Dilemma: The Meese Commission-and After," p. 31.

The Commission Speaks: Some Key Excerpts from the Meese Report," p. 32-35.

"A More Difficult Climate: First Reactions from Publishers and the ACLU View the Report with Alarm," p. 36-37.

"Are Americans Censorship-Minded," p. 40-41.

"A Morality Who's Who, the People and Policies of Citizens Groups Currently in Pursuit of Pornography," p. 42-43.

The RILA Intellectual Freedom Committee hopes this brief article gives some background to the issues involved in intellectual freedom, and the implications of the Meese Report on this inalienable right.

The Intellectual Freedom Committee has lost two members in the past nine months and would welcome new members. Anyone interested in the Committee should contact Janice Wood-Thomas at the Scituate Junior-Senior High School or Roberta Cairns, President, RILA, East Providence Public Library.

jobline

The Rhode Island Library Association has established a minimum recommended salary of \$18,250 for a full-time beginning librarian in 1986.

CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN: Responsible for Children's Services, collection development and programming. Qualifications: ALA accredited MLS. Will consider student who has almost completed course work towards an MLS with a concentration in Children's Services. Salary range: \$18,100 - \$21,800. Send resume and references to: Anne Toll, Newport Public Library, P. O. Box 8, Newport, RI 02840.

LIBRARIAN: To assist inmates with legal research at the Adult Correctional Institutions. Twenty hours per week at \$15.00 per hour. Experience with library or legal research is desirable. Contact Roberta Richman, Administrator/Educational Services, Department of Corrections, Cranston, RI 02920, or call 464-2688.

SUBSTITUTE SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST: Woonsocket Public School System. Must be certified as Teacher of Library Science by the Rhode Island Department of Education. Salary: \$40 per day. Application available from: Louis R. Leveillee, Coordinator of Media Services, 108 High Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895 (401) 762-4440.

REFERENCE LIBRARIAN: for busy city library. Duties include waiting on public and book selection with specialty in YA books. MLS required. 35 hour week; \$16,358. Excellent benefits. Letter, resume, and references to: Ellen P. Spilka, Director, Pawtucket Public Library, 13 Summer Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860.

LIBRARIAN; Youth Career Education Center, Rhode Island Training School, Cranston, RI. Certification required. Salary \$15,062 to \$24,239. Many benefits. Call 457-4844 or send resume to: Personnel Office, Department for Children and their Families, 610 Mount Pleasant Avenue, Building 8, Providence, RI 02908. EEOC.

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WHAT IS IT?

A \$250 stipend to help library science students attend the Rhode Island Library Association Conference, November 16-18, 1986.

WHO WILL WIN?

One graduate student will be selected on the basis of professional promise, interest and leadership ability.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Any graduate library science student who is a member of the Rhode Island Junior Members Round Table.

For more information contact:

Linda Walton
Isaac Ray Medical Library
Butler Hospital
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Providence, RI 02906
456-3869

calendar

OCTOBER 19-22 - North Atlantic Health Science Library Association Annual Meeting, Hartford Marriott, Farmington, CT. Call Fran Bernstein for information at 203-932-5711.

NOVEMBER 7 - Microcomputer workshop for librarians, 9AM - 4 PM, \$25. Includes handouts and box lunch. Sponsored by URI GSLIS; Rodman Hall Media Lab. For more information contact: Dr. Leena Siitonen, 792-2978.

NOVEMBER 16-18 - RILA Annual Conference, Providence Marriott.

NOVEMBER 17-21 - Children's Book Week.

JANUARY 17-22 - ALA Midwinter Meeting, Chicago, IL.

REMINDER

The Publications Committee would like to apologize for issuing the September Bulletin so late. Unfortunately, pertinent information for this issue did not reach us by our deadline. Please remember that after we receive material for the Bulletin it has to be typed, printed and mailed. In the future when submitting material for publication it must reach us by the following deadlines:

1st of the month for features,

15th of the month for news, ads,
jobline, ...

**WE WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY
MATERIALS SUBMITTED AFTER
THE DEADLINE!!**

FROM RESTRICTED USE TO CO-ED GIGGLING: THE EVOLUTION OF 612's by Diane Pacheco Barrington Public Library

We're all adults, right? As there's no need to disguise this topic with gentle euphemisms, I'll get right to the point. I'd like to discuss 612's. To many laymen, it might appear that this article will be about insect repellent. To others, the number might represent a good choice for boxing a quinela at jai alai. But to librarians, 612 means only one thing - it is the Dewey classification number for books with titles like Where Did I Come From? and What's Happening to my Body? This article doesn't pretend to present great original sociological findings. Instead, it offers a personal view of the change in 612's over the past 23 years.

When I was ten, my mother handed me a pink covered book with the imposing title When a Girl Becomes a Woman. Although I was too embarrassed to read it, I knew it didn't come from the library nor would I have thought to look for that kind of information there. I don't think our public library had many 612's available for anyone in 1963 - let alone a child.

When I was in junior high, my best friend's mother enrolled in a biology class at the local community college. Much of the required reading for the course was classified in 612 and locked in a case behind the circulation desk. The library's rules stated that no one under 21 could check out these subversive 612's. My friend's mother became the most popular person in her class as she checked out 612 after 612 for her fellow students.

The placement of 612's has changed dramatically since those dark days. Now they are available for browsing by anyone of any age. In my department, the children usually stumble upon them when they look for books for the perennial "Systems of the Body" assignment. They notice very quickly that near the The Story of Your Ear and You Can't Make a Move Without Your Muscles (titles that are 612 in number, but not in spirit) they can find much more interesting material.

Recently I've noticed a difference in the way the 612's are handled. It used to be that small groups of girls or small groups of boys would huddle in corners and laugh at what we all know are called "the good parts". Now, groups

of girls and boys are giggling together over the same books. I'm always a little shocked when that happens. When I was 10 or 11, the last thing I would have done is giggle with the boys while looking at Making Babies. I suppose with sex education in the schools, the 612's aren't showing these kids anything they don't already know. These are the times I see the generation gap widening before my very eyes.

Just how popular are the 612's? If the computerized records are checked, the circulation statistics don't seem very high. However, although computers don't lie, they can mislead. Doing an inquiry on a title such as So That's How I Was Born inevitably turns up the designation "On Shelf". Aha! The joke is which shelf? Certainly it is not where the shelf list says it should be. If it is still in the children's department, it is probably tucked between biographies of Abigail and John Adams as that part of the room is farthest from my desk. Most likely, it has been "checked out" without benefit of a formal visit to the circulation desk. I can understand why they do this. Remember, I was too shy to read a book given to me by my mother. I never would have brought a 612 to be checked out by a desk full of adult strangers. Still, it would be helpful if, instead of "on shelf", the computer could more accurately say, "Under Jill Johnson's bed" or "Stuffed in Sam Smith's locker".

Old copies of 612's disappear; new copies are ordered. It's a cycle that will probably continue so long as young people are interested in the subject. I guess that means that publishers of 612's can count on a long and successful future.

If you're going to purchase new books ...

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what's new(s)

PEOPLE -- PROGRAMS -- SERVICES -- EVENTS -- GRANTS -- CALENDAR DATES -- ETC

Submitted by: _____

NAME & LIBRARY

*** Return by the 15th of the month for publication the following month ***
5.

bulletin board

- The Association of Rhode Island Health Science Librarians (ARIHSL) announces publication of the 11th edition of the **Union List of Medical Journals in Rhode Island**. It is available for \$20 (postage paid) from Lynn Lloyd, Library Services (142D), VA Medical Center, Providence, 02908 (457-3001).

- The legal liability of trustees will be discussed at a program at the Barrington Public Library on Thursday, October 16 at 7:30 PM. Kelly Sheridan, an attorney who has been active in the United Way's Board Development Training Program will speak. A social hour for trustees will follow.

ALA OIF RESPONDS TO THE MEESE COMMISSION REPORT

The Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) of the American Library Association has issued an advisory alerting librarians to the "potential chilling effect of the report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography on the free flow of information and ideas."

In a statement released August 15th, the OIF said it found the conduct and conclusions of the commission's hearings flawed by an "inordinate number" of anti-pornography witnesses, visual materials "skewed to the very violent and degrading" and "an undemonstrated casual link of sexually explicit materials with sexual crimes." Most damaging, the committee said, is the report's potential for "heightening an already threatening pro-censorship climate in the United States." It described the tenor of the report "as a call to arms," which advises citizens groups that they may wish to focus on "materials which are not legally obscene and which are constitutionally protected from government regulation." The OIF also charges that the Attorney General's report advises that "to remain quiet" is to approve such materials, but fails to recognize that lack of protest may indicate tolerance for different points of view as protected by the First Amendment.

The OIF urges that librarians consult the document "Dealing With Concerns About Library Resources" and be prepared with written policies and procedures to respond to

challenges to materials and services, and that governing bodies, library staff, trustees, Friends, community groups and the media be informed about the report and the issues involved. Copies of "Dealing With Concerns About Library Resources" are available free from the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611.

people

BRUCE DANIELS has been appointed Acting Director and **DOROTHY FRECHETTE** has been appointed Acting Deputy Director at the Department of State Library Services.

DEBRA JECOY is now Assistant Director at the East Greenwich Free Library.

CHUCK MOORE has resigned as Director of the Woonsocket-Harris Public Library and will pursue a career in business.

KATHY PAGE, Principal Public Library Coordinator at Providence Public Library, has left the library for an Assistant Director position at the Oakland (CA) Public Library.

KATHY PAROLINE recently was named Head Librarian at the Knight Memorial Library in Providence.

ELIZABETH (BETSY) PECK will be the Architecture Librarian at Roger Williams College when the Architecture Building is complete next spring. Meanwhile, she is a member of the reference staff.

RAYNNA BOWLBY GENETTI will be the Medical Library Coordinator at Brown University. Raynna was previously librarian for Codex in Massachusetts.

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