

Material Challenges: ACPL's Journey of Training Staff

Who are we?

Matthew Etzel, Collection Services Manager, Allen County Public Library

Tonya Frandle, Public Services Manager, Allen County Public Library



1. Provide an overview of how we went about developing and implementing the training
2. An overview of what topics we covered and the response of staff to this training
3. Give some tips on how to implement at your library

Goals for
This training:

Development and implementation

1. Direction from administration
2. Meeting of core group
3. Training outline and timeline approved
4. Rolled out to branch and department managers first
5. Meeting with 13 branches and 7 departments during staff meetings
6. Fall 2024: return to department and branch meetings for role play scenarios



Goals for the staff training:

1. Overview of the challenge process at ACPL
2. Learn how to represent the organization, not our personal views.
3. Find a middle ground between:
 - Validating patron concerns
 - Not letting our own feelings influence the discussion
 - Standing up for everyone to read what they want and be reflected in the collection
4. Learn the skills to facilitate and address patron challenges and process them appropriately

Discussion

What is your experience with patron challenges?

What do you fear happening?

What can we do to help you prepare?

What do you need from us to help you?

What role playing scenarios would be valuable?



Why are Materials Challenged?



Material Challenges in America

HISTORICAL

- Challenges have been around as long as there have been libraries
- Spans the political spectrum
- Hyperlocal – specific schools and libraries are targets, not widespread

CURRENT

- Target is specific - LGBTQ+ and BIPOC characterizations in (primarily) children and teen materials
- Obscured using language such as pornography, obscenity or materials harmful to minors
- Using the power of state legislature to push this agenda



The initial conversation

Breathe!

Remain calm and courteous

Take the patron seriously

Thank them for bringing this to your attention

Avoid sharing personal opinions

Empathize without agreeing



Talking points

As a public library, we exist to provide information for all members of our community

Defend the individual right to read/ right to information, not the specific item

The library supports parent/ guardian rights in selecting materials for their family



How do I process what just happened?

Talk to your manager/
supervisor

Seek support from your team,
off desk and in a way that
protects confidentiality!

Social media is not a good
place to vent

Remember, written records are
all FOIA requestable, be
familiar with the Open Records
Act

Practice self-care

What do I do next?

Does the patron need to be
connected to a manager or
supervisor?

Does there need to be an
incident report?

Do you need to inform your
manager/ supervisor of the
conversation?

Follow up

Next steps

Review the
resources and stay
current on this
issue

Have ongoing
trainings – role
play anyone?



Resources

1. [American Library Association](#)
2. [ISL Webinar on Challenges](#)
3. [Unite Against Book Bans](#)
4. [Canadian Challenge Database](#)
5. [ALA Youth Resources](#)
6. [Indiana Public Access Laws](#)
7. [Indiana Public Access Counselor](#)
8. [Common Sense Media](#)
9. [VLA Book Resumes](#)
10. Do you have any resources to share?

Staff Response



Questions?

Contact

Matthew Etzel, Collection Services Manager, Allen County Public Library

- metzel@acpl.info
- 260-421-1284

Tonya Frandle, Public Services Manager, Allen County Public Library

- tfrandle@acpl.info
- 260-421-1303

