

Censorship in libraries

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Abstract. Censorship is an issue which has been present throughout recorded history. From the beginning, it has been used by individuals and groups to prevent and control the creation, access and dissemination of ideas and information. It has taken many different forms and occurred for many different reasons. The relationship between librarians and censorship is, and has been, a troubled one. The difficulty lies in the conflict of between the obligation the librarian has to serve his or her community, users and governing bodies for which they work for and are funded by. Religion, politics and sex cause particular problems. This paper attempts to examine what the role of the librarian is in facilitating access to controversial information. It reports the results of research involving the questioning of key figures in the Michael Moore “Stupid White Men” case study and the following organisations and people: ALA, CILIP, Judith Krug of the Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) and Corey Mwamaba (librarian, Derby Library). The paper concludes that there is an intellectual freedom ideal in the library profession. This ideal is difficult to implement in a public library, but is still a worthy ideal and one which forms the core of the role of a librarian.

1. Introduction

Censorship is an issue which has been present throughout recorded history [1]. From the beginning, it has been used by individuals and groups to prevent and control the creation, access and dissemination of ideas and information [2]. It has taken many different forms and occurred for many different reasons, whether it is the suppression of a culture, to stretch the understanding of a reader [3] or to retain power.

The relationship between librarians and censorship is, and has been, a troubled one. Information professionals typically feel that they should provide access to information regardless of content or conflict with their personal points-of-view. Where the difficulty arises is in the obligation of the librarian to the communities, customers and governing bodies that they serve [4] and are funded by. The area which can be particularly problematic is collection management, e.g., budgeting, selecting and cataloguing. Other problematic aspects are the legal one, e.g., copyright, race hate material, pornography and the ethical one, e.g., intellectual freedom versus protection of the individual.

The philosophy of intellectual freedom has not always been as widely held throughout the profession in the UK or elsewhere [5]. Public libraries and their librarians have not always promoted access for all or to all publications. Librarians have been as irrational and discriminatory as other censors and at times for the same uncomfortable reason: personal taste, as well as submitting to the practice of censorship due to pressure from external bodies.

This investigation was triggered by the case of Michael Moore and his book *Stupid White Men . . . and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation!* Originally, the publication of this book had been due in the USA on the 2 October 2001. However, after the incident of September 11th, the publisher, Regan Books/Harper Collins, stated that the book would need to be revised in respect of the new post 9/11 climate. The author refused to make the alterations the publisher requested, which were the renaming

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and removal of chapters, the re-writing of a large portion of the book, changes to the terminology used and the introduction of an opinion which was the publisher's own [6].

After hearing of Moore's difficulty at a citizen action council meeting in New Jersey, the librarian Anne Sparanese informed others in her profession of his situation through the discussion lists of The American Library Association's Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) and the Progressive Library Guild (PLG) [7]. The result was that an unknown number of librarians put pressure on the publisher to release the book and four months later, the book was released and went on to become a best seller in the USA and UK.

What arose from this case was a query of the role of the public librarian in facilitating information access and the subsequent questions of how are librarians providing and ensuring access to information and what are the hurdles a librarian needs to negotiate in order to achieve this. This paper attempts to examine these questions in order to define to what extent the duty of the librarian should extend into the issue of censorship, the capacity of the librarian to influence censorship issues, and to identify the solutions librarians have developed.

2. Literature review

2.1. *What is censorship?*

There are many definitions of the meaning of censorship; however, the general sentiment behind most definitions is that something is withheld from access by another. In this paper, the following definition is used: "an official with the power to suppress parts of books, films, letters, news, etc. on the grounds of obscenity, risk to security, etc. – to treat (books, films, etc.) in this way" [8]. The word "censorship" can be traced to its Latin root *cesere*, meaning to "estimate or assess" [9]. "Census" and "censure" also derive from the same Latin root. Since then, it has changed from a word whose meaning lay in that of duty and obligation to one which is currently associated with restriction and morality [10]. As yet, there is no agreed definition for the term "censorship" and this is because, as Molz [11] explains, censorship is "difficult to delimit".

Jansen [12] has addressed this matter by dividing censorship into what she calls regulative and constitutive, or existential, censorship. Regulative censorship is censorship which aims to put a stop to the expression of ideas that are perceived by some groups or individuals as threatening or harmful to the conventions or ideals of religion, personal morality or protection of the state. This is the most familiar and visible form of censorship. Constitutive/existential censorship instead is silent, and so the more troubling, of the two. It is when the powerful invoke censorship to create, secure, and maintain their control and this was achieved, in Molz's [13] opinion, by "monopolistic domination in which public access to some forms of knowledge and information is either subverted or denied".

There are two further areas of debate within the field of censorship. The first is whether censorship should or should not exist and the second debate accepts that censorship must exist, but is over what should be censored and in what way it should be applied. This is the issue of intellectual freedom and the right to privacy. To draw a line between material that requires control and of which that does not, could be another way to define censorship. However, before this is possible, what is obscene or pornographic (for example) should be defined. This is in itself very difficult, according to Jones [14], because attitudes to morality vary over time. The possibility of capturing a universally accepted definition of censorship grows more unlikely as external factors such as the Internet, which facilitates increased access

to information and an awareness of the wide range of material that can now be viewed by people of all ages. However, one thing remains unchanged: as Hannabuss and Allard [15] note Jenkins' [16] belief that "censorship never really goes away: it just changes its form".

2.2. *Censorship in public libraries*

Thompson [17] summarises the history of censorship in libraries by saying "censorship in public libraries is as old as the public library movement itself". This is borne out by Kelly [18], Noyce [19] and Black [20], who all cite instances from the previous two centuries when librarians or libraries have been the cause of, or subject to censorship. Even the twentieth century is littered with accounts of censorship in British public libraries. Library committees had a particularly strong hold on the selection of items for collections until after the Second World War. Professional librarians found this censorship difficult to overcome. The blacking out of racing news in newspapers was carried over as a practice from the late nineteenth century and only truly fizzled out in 1968 [21]. The Second World War had a surprising influence in that it brought about a drop in the number of cases of censorship in libraries, though there were still instances such as the defence authorities requesting that maps only be issued to "people whose motives are unquestionable" [22].

During the early 50s, the Cold War led to censorship of socialist and left newspapers [23]. The latter half of the 1950s and the 1960s saw literature containing sex, violence and obscenity [24] to become the focus of the censor. The 1970s brought no enlightenment on the issue either and in 1976 the issue of book certification was discussed again this time at the weekend school of the Public Library Group of the then Library Association. Noyce [25] wrote, as a contemporary of the time, that librarians of the 1960s and 1970s had a tendency to pretend that censorship did not exist when in fact it did. It is at the mid 70s that literature about the history of censorship in libraries appears to stop, but censorship in libraries continued.

2.3. *Legal aspects of censorship*

Information that is censored or challenged will generally fall into one of the four following areas: political, sexual, social, or religious. In each area, there are laws defining what is permissible. Malley [26] states "... the law does not always keep pace with society and its new standards, and consequently may be considerably out of phase with present society". Significant concern today comes not so much from legislation that is out of date due to it falling behind standards in society, but from legislation which has raced ahead. For example, in response to September 11th 2001, the US government passed the Patriot Act on 26th October that same year. The Act was intended to help fight terrorism, but has become the foremost issue of concern for librarians regarding intellectual freedom [27]. Although the Act itself does not enforce censorship, it does substantially weaken the privacy of individuals and their right to intellectual freedom. Censorship is not normally far behind such issues and the Act may encourage it indirectly, through the climate it generates, i.e., less tolerance and more criticism of the types of material and the validity of that material contained in a library collection, e.g., *The Anarchists Cook Book*.

A second area, and one that appears to cause the greatest moral discomfort, is obscenity. An item that is obscene is one in UK law which "... tend[s] to deprave or corrupt a person" [28]. The word "obscene" is sometimes used as a charge against material in libraries. Bosmajian [29] mentions that in the cases that he considers, the term obscene was very rarely mentioned in the charge brought against a book. The words preferred were " 'filthy', 'vulgar', or 'indecent' ". This would still seem to hold true from looking at 'Censorship Watch' in the January, February and April 2004 editions of *American Libraries*.

In recent times, the confiscation of the Robert Mapplethorpe book in 1997 by the police from the library of the University of Central England in Birmingham (UCE) has probably been the most significant incident of literary obscenity in the UK [30]. The book was confiscated after a chemist alerted the police to images taken in by a female undergraduate to be developed. The police removed the book from the library and referred the case to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a decision as to whether it contravened the UK Obscene Publications Act. The Vice-Chancellor of UCE staunchly upheld the principle of intellectual freedom by refusing to destroy the book, which Government lawyers had informed police they had the right to ask the University to do voluntarily. In March 1998, the CPS came to the conclusion that although the book by Mapplethorpe contained sexually explicit images [31], it was unlikely to deprave or corrupt as it would mainly be consulted by art students and artists and was found to be “for the public good” [32]. Oppenheim and Pollecutt [33] observed that it was not clear whether any librarian had asked the then Library Association (LA) for help or advice, but that the LA had written to the Home Secretary asking for his intervention with the police. Also a brief scan of British newspaper articles from the time revealed nothing of the library’s involvement, except for the place where the book was located. What this suggests is that the response of UK librarians to censorship is invisible and poorly documented.

Given less attention than pornography, but perhaps more worrying is the issue of racial hatred. Charlesworth [34], in discussing criminal law and the library, states that a person is guilty of such an offence if they intend “to stir up racial hatred, or if in the circumstances racial hatred is likely to be stirred up”. The offence in the UK falls under The Public Order Act 1986 and “may take the form of: the display of written material; the publication or distribution of written material; the distribution, showing, or playing, of a recording of visual images” [35]. All three clauses are applicable to a library and could cause difficulty for a librarian who is intent on upholding the ideal that a library should be committed to presenting as many sides of an issue as possible, even if that material challenges or criticises an accepted truth such as the Holocaust. Equally, it is believed that there may be instances when controversial material, e.g., race hatred, should be removed in consideration of the feelings of certain communities, e.g., Jewish, Black or Asian. However, there is the alternative opinion that if such material is to be included in any library, it should be the library of the targeted group and the material should be classified, for example, as racist [36]. Colley [37] writes in his discussion of political bias, “to ban the more extreme right-wing material invites the question how far right is ‘extreme right’?” The issue then of where to draw the line, and an ethical question quickly becomes a legal issue. The 1986 Public Order Act also makes it an offence to possess “racially inflammatory material with a view to its publication in circumstances where racial hatred is likely to be stirred up” [38]. Books of “genuine historic interest” are protected by the Attorney-General, but Robertson says that it “might be argued that uncritical displays of Nazi memorabilia or unvarnished publications of Hitler Diaries . . . could revive old hatreds”. Although remote, as libraries frequently display material, such a possibility may still need to be considered.

The Official Secrets Act is the strongest and most silent of the UK’s censorship laws. In 1987, the then UK government led by Margaret Thatcher attempted the total suppression of Peter Wright’s autobiography *Spy Catcher*. Wright was a former Senior Intelligence Officer of MI5 and the Government felt that his book would “lead to a loss of confidence in MI5’s ability to protect classified information, would damage national security and would violate secrecy oaths taken by intelligence officers” [39]. The Government invoked section two of the Act which relates to breach of confidence [40]. The Government took legal action against the book in the UK and Australia but failed in its attempt in the US. The outcome in each instance was that the book should not be suppressed; however, if Wright had been resident in the UK, the book would have been prevented from being published in Britain.

2.4. *Ethical issues of censorship in public libraries*

As previously mentioned, there are two questions which arise from the ethical discussion of intellectual freedom and censorship. These are whether should censorship exist or not, and, if censorship is to exist, what should be censored and in what way it should be applied. In discussing how to resolve these issues, there are two ethical theories, the consequentialist theory, from which utilitarianism comes from, and the deontologist theory. Ward [41] best describes them by saying that “consequentialist moral theories . . . hold that the rightness of an action is determined solely by the degree to which it produces good consequences” and that “deontological theories . . . hold that the rightness of an action depends upon factors other than the consequences of an action”. The most suitable theory in making a decision depends upon the individual and the situation.

The basic consensus within the literature is that censorship should not be practiced and this is in line with the guidance given by both CILIP [42] and the ALA [43] in their codes of ethics. The other conclusion that can be drawn on the subject is that although no ethical theory or ethical model is considered best practice, ethical consideration is felt to be a very important issue within the profession and one that should be practically applied in routine work such as book selection as well as to resolve *ad hoc* issues e.g., “resolving conflicting views about library collection policies between librarians and parents of school children” [44].

The most challenging issue of the moment is, without doubt, whether or not to filter internet access. What the librarian juggles here is the individual’s right to intellectual freedom and the individual’s right to not be exposed to material which they find objectionable. To filter means in effect that the librarian becomes a censor and is responsible for restricting access to information, be that information of a controversial nature or not. To not filter on the other hand can lead to offensive material, in particular pornography and race hate material, being accessed accidentally by a user at a terminal while searching, or viewing it over the shoulder of another user. The response of the ALA has been to treat the issue as they would approach any instance of censorship, i.e., to campaign against it. The response of users has been more mixed.

2.5. *Collection management*

When it comes to collection management, resolving an ethical issue in theory is far simpler than when applying it in a practical situation. It is relatively easy to come to the conclusion that censorship should not be tolerated in a public library no matter what, until faced with an actual problem. Emery [45] reflects on this issue by posing the following questions: “should librarians be expected to prevent such controversial items from being admitted into library collections? Is it a librarian’s job to decipher truth from lies? Is it morally and ethically acceptable to include in library collections information which may be morally offensive to those in the community they serve?” Oboler [46] has no qualms as to Emery’s dilemma. He lays the responsibility of the librarian clearly and only on the side of freedom. “[The librarian] . . . must, obviously, be a staunch defender of intellectual freedom. He must go beyond the perhaps comparatively passive posture of simply defending it, but most actively promulgate it”.

In 1994, Hielsberg [47] noted that librarians were “avoiding purchasing books they . . . feared could spark public out-rage”. This is perhaps not so unexpected when the librarian is faced with on the one hand the high probability of courting controversy by buying a certain book, or avoiding controversy altogether by choosing a non-controversial title that is equally as valuable to the library. However, to not buy a book because of the problems it might cause is still censorship. It is now hidden, self imposed

and comes from within the library. Asheim [48] defines the difference between selection and censorship in the following way “Selection . . . begins with a presumption in favour of liberty; censorship, with a presumption in favour of thought control”. He continues by saying that selection is a positive action which judges the book as a whole, while censorship is negative and purposely seeks out “vulnerable characteristics”.

In defending either the case for or against censorship, the ‘slippery-slope’ argument that has been used is that “if one includes/omits a book in/from one’s collection, that will unleash/restrict a wave of books of the same type, to be included or rejected” [49]. Froehlich and Stoker [50] argue that suppression of one text is not necessarily censorship, which, as Froehlich sees it, occurs “. . . in the systematic suppression or inclusion of certain types of material”. A better way to protect against censorship is the use of a collection management policy. Jones [51] gives eight points which a policy should incorporate to promote intellectual freedom, amongst which is that: “selection becomes censorship when the library decides against an item – even though it satisfies all the collection development policy criteria”. Froehlich [52] does not consider this as a complete safeguard against inconsistency and censorship in selection, as “selection development policies could be developed that *de facto* manifest some form of censorship”.

2.6. Publishers

It should not be forgotten that when a book reaches the library, it may have been censored during the publishing process. This censorship is self-imposed and is also often in response to external factors. There are three main factors in determining whether a book is censored and to what degree. These are: who owns the publishing house and what their objectives and agenda are; the legal risks of the text; and the public reaction to content, which might affect selling figures. In response to this, a publisher may reject, cancel and/or recall, or expurgate a book to remedy the perceived problem.

There is relatively little scholarly literature on this aspect of censorship although stories sometimes appear in the news, e.g., the suppression of Chris Patten’s memoirs by Harper Collins, a subsidiary of News Corporation because of its alleged criticisms of the Chinese Government. The attempted suppression of Michael Moore’s book is, of course, a more recent example [53]. This sort of censorship is hidden and unlikely to come forth unless exposed from inside the publishing industry. However, as Noble [54] states, “what is ultimately between the covers may reflect a basket of biases running up and down the editorial ladder” and this ultimately must affect the quality of information available through the library.

3. Methods adopted

One individual and representatives from three organisations agreed to provide their perspectives on censorship and intellectual freedom in the public library. The participants were Ann Sparanese, CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals), the ALA (American Library Association), and Derby Library (UK). Ann Sparanese had a previously established interest in the issues of intellectual freedom and censorship and familiarity with activist library groups. CILIP represents the British library profession as a whole, and provides the guiding ethical principles behind the profession in the UK. Guy Daines was chosen as the representative voice of CILIP as he is the Principal Policy Advisor to CILIP. ALA represents the North American library profession as a whole. Judith F. Krug, (Director of the OIF) and Michael Gorman (President Elect. of the ALA Executive Board) were amongst those who represent the organisation because of their positions. Corey Mwamba (Community Librarian:

African and Caribbean) of Derby Public Library was amongst those selected as representatives of the British public libraries system.

Email was chosen as the means of communication with the participants. A series of open ended questions were developed for each individual. Some of questions asked were developed by one of us (V.S.) and others were taken either from Curry [55] or from Goldberg's interview with Judy Krug [56]. This research was carried out in Summer, 2004.

Many of the questions were repeated in each questionnaire, so that comparisons between opinions could be drawn. In particular, the questions directed to the ALA and CILIP were written with such a purpose in mind. It was also hoped that by taking questions from other sources, specifically Curry's study of censorship, a comparison with the extensive data that she collected could be achieved. The aims of the questions were to discover what feelings are held on the issue of censorship in general, and further if there is still conflict in making the decision to censor or not and what the responsibility of the librarian is. Copies of the questionnaire can be obtained from the senior author.

4. Results

4.1. *Response from Guy Daines (CILIP)*

CILIP is still in the process of developing its policies within the areas of intellectual freedom and censorship and some of the viewpoints given were not those of CILIP but were Daines'. Therefore, Daines did not feel able to answer the question relating to *Stupid White Men* . . . He felt that librarianship issues are not limited to the confines of the traditional library space and that the concern of the librarian should extend beyond their immediate information environment, whether that be a public or virtual library etc., and should enfold "all parts of the information chain in order that librarians continue to inform their own work" and to fulfil "the ethical obligations they have to Society at large" [57]. Daines stated that actions which break the law are not approved of by CILIP, but there may be times when an individual feels there is a good reason to dissent/go against the general rule. Such a decision is the decision of the individual, "Different people will have different frameworks in which they try to address such difficult moral dilemmas".

His concerns for the future were spin-off issues from the events of September 11th, e.g., identity cards, surveillance, and exemptions from the UK Freedom of Information Act. Areas which might previously have been thought beyond the remit of the library and the librarian are now considered valid territory of CILIP.

Daines agreed that the ALA is a stronger and more forthright organisation than CILIP; however, he pointed out that the two are very different organisations. The fundamental reason given for this difference is the American Constitution and the First Amendment. Additionally, the expression of societal values is different. However, Daines conceded that CILIP could try to adopt certain ideas from the ALA.

4.2. *Response from Michael Gorman, Judith Krug and Janet Swan Hill (ALA)*

Regarding Sparanese's actions, Gorman stated that "Since [the] ALA is committed, in many official statements . . . to the free flow of recorded knowledge and information, it would clearly approve of any of its members facilitating that free flow" [58]; and Krug clarified the positions by acknowledging that while the ALA has taken no official line that "as a an association of professional librarians . . . [they] are delighted that the work is publicly available" [59].

Moreover, they all agreed that censorship outside the library is of concern to the ALA. Swan Hill referred to the 'Library Bill of Rights', Policy 53.1, as being amongst those policies of the ALA, which define the responsibilities of librarians and libraries to their users and their organisation, but restricted the area of concern to censorship which "limits the ability of libraries to provide information to their users" [60]; Gorman's response extended the scope of concern to all formats and provision of information, making particular reference to the media; Krug, also felt that as the responsibility of the library and the librarian is to be concerned about censorship "wherever it occurs". Swan Hill went on to state that the decision to act was on the onus of the individual, guided by "his/her conscience", the "ethical underpinnings of the profession", and "his/her circumstances". Krug likewise said that the ALA does not instruct librarians how to implement the six principles of the Library Bill of Rights.

For the future, Swan Hill felt that it was impossible to predict where or who might be the forthcoming source of censorship; Gorman defined it as an issue which has and always will have exponents on all sides; and Krug thought wishful that she could forecast the climate, anticipated that parents and guardians, government and librarians, may challenge intellectual freedom in the immediate future as they have done in the past, with particular reference to the new climate resulting from September 11th.

Krug thought that in future, the ALA will have to engage more often with the legal system. This prediction means that the funding for litigation will need to increase significantly. To alleviate this, Krug saw education playing a major role. The OIF has initiated the programme 'Lawyers for Libraries', which, "trains lawyers in library problems, policies and procedures within the First Amendment context"; and intends to start the programmes 'Law for Librarians' and 'training for trainers', which will "take basic First Amendment concepts into high schools and academic institutions".

Gorman concluded that "censorship is always on the losing side of history" and Krug stated that "democratic governance and decision making can only be ensured through making the wealth of ideas that there are, available to be accessed by all".

4.3. Response from Ann Sparanese

The first four questions aimed to look both at the motivation, which led to the action of emailing the SSRT and the Progressive Librarian's Guild (PLG), and the outcome of that action from the perspective of Sparanese. The drive behind the action of Sparanese came from the stunned awareness she experienced on finding out that even the work of a popular author/filmmaker could be stifled, but her motivation was wider in scope. The action she took was not simply on behalf of Moore, but on behalf of authors and the greater issue of censorship.

Sparanese felt that direct action should be part of a librarian's role and that it should be used whenever necessary. She felt strongly that activism is part of the responsibility and duty of a librarian. To the question of whether censorship outside the library is something that a librarian has the responsibility to address, she stated that it is a responsibility which includes educating people about information policy at every level and the possible abuse of that information.

In Sparanese's opinion, censorship which is visible is "only the tip of the iceberg" [61]. Any idea should be given a voice so that it can speak for its own worth, as "I believe in the worthiness of the battle of ideas". Choosing which of those ideas are to be included in a library is a process without a specific formula. In response to the hypothetical question of whether Mr Moore's book had been about a subject of a more controversial nature, would she have acted any differently; her answer was yes. However, her belief "that suppression of speech" does not lead "to the eradication of destructive ideas" means that she would still defend the right for the idea to be voiced and read. As for the future, Sparanese was in

agreement with Daines that governments and their actions and reactions are the increasing threat. Last, she felt that librarians should take pride in that their collective action led to the release of the 'Stupid White Men . . .' book, as the release of the book may lead the way for other similar publications that may otherwise be suppressed.

4.4. *Response from Corey Mwamba (Derby Library)*

Mwamba's reaction was two sided. He felt that the action of the US librarians was a sign of democracy in action. However, he followed up by saying that the role of UK librarians is more passive, implying that direct action is not in the nature of or part of the culture of UK librarians. Regarding the extent to which a librarian should take responsibility for making available material that has been labelled controversial, Mwamba's answer was simply that "Information needs to be there" [62]. He felt that though some material he buys may not be to his own taste, that material should be provided so that people can furnish themselves with all viewpoints. In selecting material, he stated that he has to be aware of the ideal of equal opportunities. This means in his selection of African and Caribbean literature, he felt that such criteria cut out most of the books from the US as "some of the views on white people are startlingly backward". That said, he does not feel it is his place to be arbiter of taste. However, Mwamba's attitude to the internet and in particular pornographic material is that censorship is necessary but does not need to be heavy handed. Filtering can be taken too far, which he felt was the problem with the current limited access given to child members of the library.

5. Discussion

Robotham and Shields [63] talk of the mythical figure of the librarian who stands "in the doorway to the collection . . . warding off those who would prevent the mind from roaming freely through the ideas contained therein". A superman or a superwoman using her powers to select materials fairly, with limited bias, and concern for equal representation of views in their collection, and fighting for the rights of others to access information which has not been Bowdlerised, suppressed, removed or cancelled in an effort to censor it. It is a legend which Robotham and Shields felt was being increasingly believed by librarians and played out. Even twenty years ago, it was an ideal, which had settled sufficiently for a librarian to respond with a shrug and say, "But what else can you do?" when faced with making a stand over a challenge to intellectual freedom in their library. However, librarians have found alternatives to confronting censorship with a resigned shrug. They keep books in basements, available on request only; avoid the purchase of materials, which might cause problems; classify materials as adult rather than children's; label material as possibly offensive, or remain silent when challenged.

Both CILIP and the ALA have created codes of ethics to guide their members. These policies advocate the ideal: the sanctity of intellectual freedom. These principles are values which the organisations put forward to guide the librarian in moments of ethical conflict but do not dictate when they should be applied or in what circumstances.

All individuals who responded to the research believed in the ideal of intellectual freedom and freedom from censorship. Also there was the acknowledgment of the difficulty of overcoming the gap between the ideal and the practice in a public library. There is also the idea that the same item may be an acceptable choice when classified as one thing but not as another; and that the notoriety of an item may legitimise its purchase because its prominence makes it part of popular culture and so, by familiarity, more acceptable.

CILIP and the ALA are very different in their approach to the issue of censorship; the ALA seems far more forthright than its UK counterpart; the dominance of literature from the US on the subject reflects this proportion of concern. Of the issues covered in the literature, the most profound distinction between the two organisations is the use of the law.

There is though agreement in the belief that it is the responsibility of the individual to decide when and how to fight against censorship. Both Krug and Swan Hill mentioned it and Daines stated that “different people will have different frameworks in which they try to address . . . difficult moral dilemmas”. His answer shows, like Swan Hill’s does, that he believes that the onus of ethical responsibility lies with the individual and not his or her professional organisation, and that this decision is likely to be affected by different factors of their personal and professional lives.

Sparanese appears as the embodiment of the mythical librarian. She was presented in news stories on the case study as a David figure, and one from a group of revolutionaries more commonly known as librarians. However, Sparanese sees herself in terms of being an advocate “for the information commons and the free flow of information”. Likewise, Mwamba defines his role of a librarian as a “sign poster” and not as a custodian of information. He directs his users, but does not protect them. This idea that a librarian is a guide rather than a protector was also the dominant opinion in Curry’s study of public library directors’ views on intellectual freedom [64].

It could be argued that the actions of Sparanese and Mwamba were restrictive and as a result they were censoring the material available in their libraries. Hole [65] states that censorship is inevitable but the level of censorship can be minimised by using selection criteria and being aware of one’s own prejudices. The difficulty highlighted here is that of making a theoretical ideal practicable and acceptable in a public library context. There must always be compromises, yet it seems that librarians are moving closer and closer to the unified belief that all information should be accessible to everyone.

Ethical conflict seems to be arising less within the profession and more between the ideals of the librarian and outside groups and individuals that come into contact with the library. Looking ahead for likely threats to intellectual freedom, Daines, Gorman, Krug and Sparanese identified Government reactions to the events of September 11th as a specific problem in the present and the immediate future. In the US, this can be seen in the rapid passage of the Patriot Act into law and in the UK delays to the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act and a push for ID cards containing biometric information.

The ALA is generally far more active in this area than CILIP. It has developed legal training projects and in the same time it tries to change attitudes and create awareness, through for example the Censorship Watch in the *American Libraries*’ magazine and the Banned Book Week. These activities imply that US librarians feel their responsibility extends beyond the limits of their own library.

6. Conclusion

The ALA has undoubtedly always been more audible, visible and active in its handling of censorship issues than CILIP. Since the establishment of the Intellectual Freedom Committee, the issues of censorship and intellectual freedom have become an important focus for the organisation. Even though initially there was some dissent in the adoption of the Bill of Rights, the uptake of the intellectual freedom ideal was rapid. In comparison, CILIP has been quiet, unobtrusive and passive.

What is considered to be controversial changes with time, and the definition of censorship remains ambiguous. The role of the librarian is to facilitate access to information, be that controversial or not,

and not to obstruct or hinder that access. The management of this can be difficult and cause conflict. It may also take public librarians outside of their environment and outside the public perception of the librarian.

Therefore, CILIP should aim to create greater awareness of its stance on censorship, i.e., that all information is accessible to everyone and to support this belief with audible and visible action. Such action would encourage likeminded thinking throughout the profession, give support to librarians in their ethical stance, and contribute to altering perceptions of the profession. Further, an office of intellectual freedom, as the OIF of the ALA, could be important in fighting against censorship. Although CILIP has a Freedom of Information Panel to advise it on how best to “promote the interests of the public and users” [66], the benefits of having one unit of CILIP which could follow through from start to finish the process of creating, implementing and promoting intellectual freedom policies of the organisation would be significant. Last, a closer partnership on the issue with ALA should be pursued. CILIP would be able to gain from the experience of the OIF and ALA would be joined to a like minded organisation and that could increase support and lend strength to its ideals.

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