

# The Basement Blotter



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## Radical Reference Librarian Visits LIS Students

by Elena Clariza

Militant librarians? Librarians are certainly not militant. However, Jenna Freedman begs to differ. Blue haired Freedman, a radical activist and one of the brains behind Radical Reference, met with us at Volcano Joe's on her recent trip to the islands. Radical Reference (<http://radicalreference.info>) is a collective of volunteer librarians from the United States and abroad. They work collaboratively in a virtual setting to provide professional research support for community activists, progressive organizations, and independent journalists. Freedman is also a reference services and zine collection coordinator at Barnard College in New York.

When Freedman asked us about activism at UH, we agreed that our campus lacks activism. "It is a commuter school," one person said, but we saw a few progressive movements last year such as Stop UARC. We also discussed the librarians' failure to network outside

of the profession. Someone from our group observed that although networking is emphasized in our classes, it rarely carries over into our communities. We then suggested that speaking at



Freedman prepares an "Ask Me" ready reference binder for a demonstration.

community events, churches, and other functions could help make library services more visible.

The informal gathering with Freedman brought up many issues that librarians and library students must deeply consider. What is our role in our communities? Is it enough to just serve our patrons or should we strive to bridge librarianship and activism? These are questions that we must think about because we are in a special position. We have access to vital information that could have a tremendous impact upon the world.

Some of our students and faculty are already taking action. Dr. Andrew Wertheimer and Elena Clariza of the LIS Department are now coordinating an HLA-SRRT Task Force to address social issues facing Hawaii. They are still in the planning stages, but will gratefully welcome volunteers and ideas. You can contact them at [mclariza@hawaii.edu](mailto:mclariza@hawaii.edu) and [wertheim@hawaii.edu](mailto:wertheim@hawaii.edu).

## Intellectual Freedom, Democracy and You

by Eric Leong

The phrase "intellectual freedom" often conjures up ideas of conceptual and philosophical battles fought over divisive social beliefs of the time, usually incorporating the eternal struggle of good over evil. However, the concept of intellectual freedom, thankfully, applies to a far greater number of issues and topics. So what exactly is intellectual freedom, and why is it important?

The ALA defines intellectual freedom as the "right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction." Concepts and policies put forward by the ALA's Library Bill of Rights emphasize the vigilance necessary to guarantee the patron's right to become in-

formed. This support of free flow of information expands from the rights protected in the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the United States Constitution. These principles of free expression and freedom of thought are inherent aspects of human dignity and are codified in global instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and the European Convention on Human Rights. The importance of intellectual freedom reaches across borders and extends back into history to the earliest Greek democracies.

Intellectual freedom enables self-governance and self-development. When individuals are allowed to seek, study, and disseminate the information they choose, society benefits by not creating limitations to guide or protect

people. Our founding fathers believed open discussion and expression of varying viewpoints were essential to ensuring the discovery of truth. British philosopher and economist, John Stuart Mill defended this "marketplace of ideas" by declaring, "[T]he peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race..."

So why is this important to students of library and information science? Well, for one thing, it's a topic on our oral exams. But more importantly, libraries and information centers serve a crucial role in sustaining a democratic society and the freedom to access information of any kind is the foundation of a functioning democracy.



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# Internet Filtering in Libraries

by Tammy Akiyama

The Internet has opened the world to an ever-expanding, infinite amount of information and opinion. As libraries today move to fully take advantage of it, one of the biggest dilemmas for librarians deals with Internet filtering. Depending on the software being used, Internet filtering may take several forms including keyword blocking and host or site blocking. Usually Internet filtering software, whose general aim is child protection, blocks sites containing nudity or sexually explicit material, violence, and drug use. Chat and instant messaging may also be blocked. While Internet filtering software is usually much more restrictive in school libraries, their presence is still felt in the public and academic arenas, leaving librarians in a dilemma.

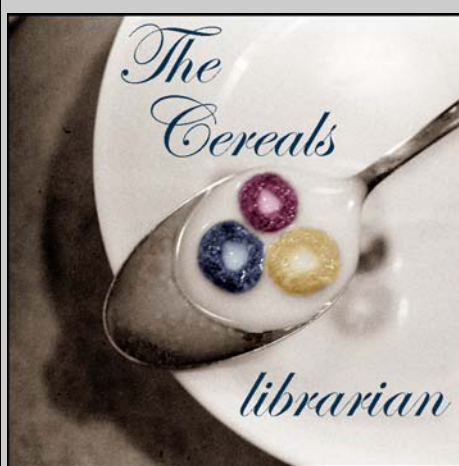
Though a large part of librarianship deals with granting open access to information, librarians also find themselves in the position to uphold the morals and values of society. On one side of the issue are those who are convinced it is not doing enough to protect the interest of minors and society at large; on the other are those who feel Internet filtering

limits First Amendment rights and intellectual freedom.

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) has been one of the major pieces of legislation supporting Internet filtering in libraries, withholding federal money from libraries unwilling to install internet filters. However, the American Library Association (ALA) has made a great effort to maintain intellectual freedom. Despite the American Library Association's unsuccessful attempts to have CIPA declared unconstitutional, CIPA has been declared constitutional only if it can be disabled upon the request of adult users who do not need to explain their needs. In addition, the ALA "does not recommend the use in libraries of filtering technology that blocks constitutionally protected information," and urges libraries using Internet filtering software to set them to the "least restrictive level"

Despite our best attempts, the issue of Internet filtering is something librarians will continue to struggle with into the future. We must continue to seek a resolution that can be mutually agreed upon by librarians and library users alike.

For more information, refer to the article "ALA and Filtering" at ala.org.



compiled by Wanda Wong

"I'm looking forward to it. You never know. She could become a librarian."  
- Madonna, on the prospects of her young daughter, Lourdes, rebelling against her, *New York Daily News* ∞

"Two trucks loaded with a thousand copies of Roget's Thesaurus collided as they left a New York publishing house last week, according to the *Associated Press*. Witnesses were stunned, startled, aghast, taken aback, stupefied, appalled, surprised, shocked and rattled."

- Alan Schlein, publisher ∞

Freedom means learning to deal with being offended.

- Andrew Sullivan, "Your Taboo, Not Mine," *Time*, Feb 13, 2006 ∞

"... you do not really leave a library ; if you do what it wants you to do, then you are taking it with you."

- Elie Wiesel, author ∞

A word after a word after a word is power

- Margaret Atwood ∞

# Banned Books for Young Adult Readers

by Diane Kunichika

On the ALA website, I found that a challenged book is “an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. Banning is the removal of those materials.” I took a look at a list of Banned Book of 2005-2006 and picked out a couple of likely candidates. If you know me you’ll understand why my first two books were titled *Born Too Short – Confessions of an Eighth-Grade Basket Case* (Hint: I’m 4 feet and 10 ¾ inches) and *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things* (draw your own conclusions).

*The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things* has 15-year-old Virginia Shreves as the main character. Virginia feels awkward and out-of-place as a member of her family, a student in school, and in her life. The objections to this book were due to sexual content such as kissing and date rape, as well as self-mutilation through body piercing and eating disorders.

The main character of *Born Too Short* is 13-year-old Matt Greene, whose best friend is the perfect teen-ager—tall,

good-looking, athletic. Needless to say, Matt feels slightly underwhelmed by his life and using a “magical” homeless man, Matt puts a curse on his best friend that he later comes to regret. The reasons for banning this book weren’t specified, but one can guess it may have something to do with magic.

If you examine the challenges re-



ported by the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom from 1990-2000, the top three reasons most of the books were challenged was “sexually explicit” material, “offensive language” and “material unsuited to age group.” 71% of the challenges were to material in schools or school libraries and 60% of the challenges were brought by parents.

The banned book I’m currently reading is *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the autobiography written by the poet and writer Maya Angelou. This book was removed as required reading for freshmen in Maryland because “the book’s content are too advanced for ninth-graders.” One of the advanced topics was the pivotal sexual molestation of Maya Angelou at the age of seven. There were an estimated 9,000 children victims of sexual abuse in the U. S. in 2002 according to the Department of Health and Human Services. One of the reason authors write about these subjects of alienation and abuse is so that children undergoing these life situations can read about others experiencing similar events and feeling, to connect. Parents can choose for their children not to read these books, but the books should be available to others that want and need them.

If you’d like to read more about banned books or start reading a banned book, you can go to <http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/bannedbooksweek/challengedbanned/challengedbanned.htm>.

## New Student Profile: Wendi Dotson

**Where did you get your undergrad degree/other degrees and what did you study?**

I went to Ohio University in Athens, Ohio for undergrad, and have a B.S. in Communications. I went to Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio to get my J.D. In law school I became interested in criminal law issues, particularly international criminal law and the death penalty. After passing the Ohio bar in 1999, I got a job with the Ohio Public Defender in the Death Penalty Division. For five years I reinvestigated death penalty cases, and represented 17 death row inmates. It took a lot of patience to learn how to work productively with such damaged personalities.

**What interests you about librarianship?**

I love to research, interact with people, give them answers, and organize. Li-

braries have always been my “secret space” whenever I’ve lived far from home or needed to get away. I also thought that with the new technology developing, now would be a good time to enter the field and help bring that change to libraries.

**Do you have any favorite librarians?**

Growing up, my best friend’s mother was our school librarian. She would bring home the reel-to-reel machine for us to watch old movies on the wall. I have great memories of watching *Gone With the Wind* and *Singing in the Rain* over at her house.

**Anything else?**

In most prisons I went to, particularly death row, the inmates really knew their stuff about law and judges. Many relied on old law books donated to the prisons, and our office donated old copies every year. The ability to get any kind of reli-

able information in prison is quite limited, and I think it’s important that inmates have some tools to help themselves. Often they have nothing else to do besides read, and I was continually surprised how many developed new skills in reading and writing even on death row.



# Movie Review: Two Library Students Duke It Out Over the Made For TV Movie *The Librarian: Return to King Solomon's Mines*

## Two Thumbs Up

by Carrie Ann Young

After two trips to my neighborhood Blockbuster, I finally nabbed one of the two copies of the made-for-television movie *The Librarian II: Return to King Solomon's Mines*, directed by Jonathan Frakes. Noah Wyle and the all-star cast of veteran actors, Bob Newhart, Olympia Dukakis, and Jane Curtin return in this action-packed sequel to *The Librarian: Quest for the Spear*.

In this latest quest of *The Librarian*, the endearing nerdy librarian, Flynn Carson (Wyle) stumbles his way through Africa piecing together clues to find the legendary Key of Solomon, a book that rivals the Tibetan Book of the Dead for power, mystery, and danger. Arriving at an archaeological dig in Africa, Flynn meets his intellectual match, archaeologist Emily Davenport, played by Gabrielle Anwar. Surpassing Flynn's academic accomplishments, the scholarly Emily both maddens and attracts Flynn and together they contend with a secret mason society, hungry hippos, family secrets, and duel with the evil General Samir, who is also on the trail of the book.

While the movie displays campy humor, mystery, love, and adventure with an *Indiana Jones* meets *The Mummy* portrayal, it also provides depth and seriousness as Flynn is torn between what he wants and what the world needs. Judson (Bob Newhart) sagely imparts, "Giving up what you want for the greater good is the difference between a good librarian and a great librarian."

*The Librarian II: Return to King Solomon's Mines* is as good as its pre-

quel and one of the best movies about librarians. This future librarian gives it two thumbs up!



Big debate over movie's authenticity

## Two Thumbs Down

by Jacob Rosen

With the definitive film about the search for King Solomon's Mines having already been made (*Congo*, 1995), the second *The Librarian* had a lot to live up to. And, like the Key of Solomon, the legendary Grimoire on which the plot is based, it goes down in flames. This heavy handed hodgepodge of scenes from other movies—*Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *The Mummy*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Casablanca*, and, of course, *Congo*—kind of stinks. What I think we all can learn from this film is that you can't make a movie about the mythical mines of Solomon without grey killer apes, Tim Curry doing a funny fake accent, and Tim Curry getting killed by grey killer apes.

The most disappointing aspect of the film was its portrayal of librarianship. While a large part of librarianship does, indeed, consist of fighting evil, horseback riding, and hitting people over the head, *The Librarian: Return to King Solomon's Mines* makes it look as if this is all there is. Librarian Flynn Carson's actions within his library largely consist of him playing around with a flying sword (which, might I add, is the most

annoying animated inanimate object in the film). And Carsen's professional choices out in the field hardly seem to be the choices of someone in possession of an MLIS from an ALA-accredited university.

The plot of the film, which could have ventured into more intriguing aspects of the occult and rare books, was quite thin. It is as if the film's researchers' work consisted of nothing more than google-ing terms such as "Key of Solomon" and scanning the top few hits (including wikipedia entries). While the inclusion of a reference to Ptolemy the Grecian is to be applauded, the lack of animal sacrifices to be offered to the summoned spirits during the denouement is mind-boggling. Also, the Order of the Cryptic Masons, the group charged with keeping the secret of Solomon's Mines over the centuries, seemed to me a problematic brotherhood. While employing super-sophisticated cryptography and an extremely elaborate security system, they could not seem to grasp even the simplest concepts of organization and classification when it came to the main treasure room. The room was presented in typical Looney Tunes style—a giant lump of golden and bejeweled objects—hardly what one would expect of the most special of special collections, especially from a group whose bloodline would breed the great librarian Flynn Carson.

Most disturbing, of course, was librarian Carsen's deselection policy and implied philosophy of information service. The overall message of the film seemed to be that knowledge is dangerous and that books that might potentially be used for unjust purposes must be destroyed. This pro-censorship message is made clear when the librarian, rather than acting for the preservation of culture, decides to burn an extremely rare and valuable book.

This movie is not a worthy depiction

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