

National
Coalition
Against
Censorship

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Christopher Finan
Executive Director

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Temple Library Board
c/o Alicia Vasquez avasquez@templetx.gov
2 N Main Street
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Dear Temple Library Board:

Our coalition of literary, artistic and educational organizations recently learned of your intention to develop a library display policy in response to a petition by the evangelical organization, Concerned Christian Citizens (CCC).

As organizations dedicated to promoting freedom of expression, we routinely advise public institutions that are in the process of developing such policies and best practices to ensure they are in keeping with First Amendment principles. To that end, we offer you some considerations that you may want to take into account when addressing the specific issues raised by CCC.

When organizing book displays, libraries should seek to represent diverse viewpoints that reflect the community they serve. However, no single display can possibly contain all viewpoints on a particular issue; nor is there any requirement that it should.

As public institutions, libraries may welcome displays from outside organizations that showcase their diverse viewpoints thereby enriching public discourse. In considering such proposals, public libraries may determine the time, space and manner in which the materials are exhibited, but they have a constitutional obligation to remain neutral when it comes to the viewpoints expressed in the materials on display.

Like other public institutions, libraries may also speak on their own behalf and freely choose the messages they wish to communicate with no obligation to show every viewpoint on a subject. For example, a public library may choose to erect a

NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association
American Association of
School Administrators
American Association of
University Professors
American Association of
University Women
American Booksellers
for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Jewish Committee
American Library Association
American Literary Translators
Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Society of Journalists
& Authors
Americans United for Separation of
Church & State
Association of American Publishers
Authors Guild
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
Dramatists Guild of America
First Amendment Lawyers Association
International Reading Association
Lambda Legal
Modern Language Association
National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
National Youth Rights Association
The Newspaper Guild/CWA
PEN American Center
People for the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation
of America
Project Censored
SAG-AFTRA
Sexuality Information & Education
Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers
& Illustrators
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Democratic Intellectuals
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ
Office of Communication
United Methodist Church
United Methodist Communications
Women's American ORT
Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West

display of books celebrating Jazz Appreciation Month and need not also showcase books about classical music. Nor does a display celebrating free speech on the occasion of Banned Books Week need to include books arguing for the value of censorship, even if some members of the community hold different views on these issues.

Currently, libraries are working to be more inclusive of a diverse array of voices through multi-lingual books, visual art displays and performances reflecting their community's cultural traditions. Libraries are free to independently organize displays that promote underrepresented voices or that celebrate the achievements of marginalized social and political groups. Thus, a display celebrating Black History Month need not include books representing racist views; a display celebrating Women's History Month need not include books about the achievements of men; and likewise, a display celebrating LGBT Pride Month need not include books arguing the immorality of non-heterosexual orientations.

Further information can be found in "Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards: an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" (although it primarily deals with community exhibits, rather than library sponsored ones) at:

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/exhibitspaces>

In addition, "Museum Best Practices for Managing Controversy" is a valuable resource to apply to libraries mounting exhibits or providing visual resources:

<http://ncac.org/resource/museum-best-practices-for-managing-controversy>

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further guidance or clarification.

Sincerely,



Chris Finan, Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship



James LaRue, Executive Director
ALA - Office of Intellectual Freedom

Cc:

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