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ALA American Library Association

Utah Education Network
101 Wasatch Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

October 19, 2018

Dear Mr. Walker and UEN Board Members:

At the October 1, 2018 board meeting, the Utah Education Network (UEN) voted to deny access temporarily "pending additional discussion and investigation of EBSCO and all other similar periodical services provided by UEN to public education students." We are writing on behalf of the American Library Association, American Association of School Librarians, Association of College and Research Libraries, Utah Educational Library Media Association, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Coalition Against Censorship to urge you to restore access to the EBSCO databases for educational institutions throughout Utah. We believe the outstanding educational resources contained in the EBSCO databases are key to fulfilling the UEN goal to "advance and promote a world-class public education in Utah with a network that supports collaboration, the exchange of information and access to electronic resources for K12 schools ..." (UEN acceptable use policy)

EBSCO is a longtime, well-respected distributor of educational content that is used nationally in libraries and schools, across grade levels and subject areas and accessible to all students, both rural and urban. The UEN Board "strives to attain representation from rural and urban constituent groups, and diversity of representation among gender, ethnicity, disability, technical and instructional expertise;" it should therefore provide every student in Utah with access to resources that reflect a similarly wide representation of viewpoints and expertise. Aggregated search analytics demonstrate that students are using EBSCO just the way one would hope: to do their homework, research educational topics, and find vetted resources. By committing to statewide access to EBSCO databases for all students, UEN is committing to a quality, equitable education for all Utah students.

EBSCO collects and indexes articles and books from traditional newspapers, magazines, journals, and publishers, and makes that content available to libraries and schools to facilitate research and expand the universe of information available to students. The ability to search, evaluate, and select information is integral to student success in the classroom, in post-secondary education, and in the workplace. The imperative of teachers and librarians to cultivate this skill in our youth is vital to an informed citizenry for the next generation.

It is the right of a parent to restrict access for their own child to information resources that they find incompatible with their beliefs or values; however, a parent does not have the right to determine what resources are available to every child in Utah. Access to information and quality educational resources is an expectation of Utah parents and an obligation of Utah teachers. UEN would be doing a professional

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disservice to all involved by continuing to ban access to these research tools and the content within them. Academic and journalistic publications do, on occasion, discuss sexual issues. The materials in EBSCO are neither legally obscene nor meet the standard for “harmful to minors,” as defined in federal or Utah state law. Moreover, any references to sexuality in the database are made in the context of academic or educational publications, none of which aim to appeal to the prurient interest. Some may find such content distasteful, however every community is home to a variety of opinions on what content is appropriate, safe, and serves the needs of its members.

For every person who objects to a resource, there are usually thousands of others who favor its inclusion. Educators and librarians have the skillset to help learners access age-appropriate resources that meet their educational needs.

The purpose of the Utah Education Network is “to connect people and technologies to improve education and healthcare in Utah.” By providing access to the vast resources of EBSCO to 700,000 students, teachers, and librarians in Utah, you translate your purpose into action.

Sincerely,



Loida Garcia-Febo
President
American Library Association



Lorraine Wyness
President
Utah Educational Library Media Association



Kathryn Roots Lewis
President
American Association of School Librarians



Chris Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship



Lauren Pressley
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Millie Davis
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