Committee Name: Intellectual Freedom Committee
Date Report Submitted: August 29, 2018
Name of Person(s) Submitting Report: Sam Helmick

Summary of Committee Activities & New Projects in 2018

A national increase in challenges submitted to libraries regarding materials in their collections, library programs featuring tendentious speakers, topics, and resources, and meetings held by public groups in library spaces has been tracked in 2016 and 2017. The Intellectual Freedom Committee has been working to update resources for membership to help meet their needs in processing censorship and challenges.

IFC members are contributing to a collaborative document which will provide an online guide with Frequently Asked Questions, a Step-by-Step Challenge Checklist for the library staff, director, and Board of Trustees. A draft of their work can be found here: https://tinyurl.com/ycquellf

The committee supported Iowa Library Association’s collaboration with the ACLU of Iowa to promote awareness of censorship with the Banned Books Week (September 23-29) initiative. Intellectual Freedom Committee and the ILA Ad Hoc Communications Committee encouraged members to participate in the statewide trivia initiative, provided trivia questions, and updated promotional materials.

IFC sponsored the 2018 ILA Pre-Conference “Intellectual Freedom in the Age of Trigger Warnings” with Emily Knox, Assistant Professor at University of Illinois Urbana and represented Intellectual Freedom issues on the Conference Planning Committee.

Two new members have joined the committee in 2018. Orange City Director Amanda Vazquez and Clinton Public Library Public Services Librarian Jill O’Neill joined this spring.

Optional: What did your committee do really well this year? What are you most proud of? What was your biggest challenge?

Intellectual Freedom Committee as well as members of the Iowa Library Association Executive Board provided support and guidance to Iowa libraries facing a range of challenges this year. Assistance encompassed meeting with library management teams to unpack intellectual freedom in context to public library programs and collection development, teleconferencing with librarians seeking a deeper understanding of the Library Bill of Rights. They worked with the State of Iowa Library to provide insight for State Coordinators and supported libraries challenged in Iowa and in various states. Some intellectual freedom matters within the purview of this committee have reached national awareness this year.


The current ILA IFC chair is serving as the chair of the ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table Membership Committee and as a member of the ALA Intellecction Freedom Manual Task Force working on Library-Initiated Programs and Meeting Room Use: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights. Serving in these roles has helped to share Iowa library needs for training, access, and representation in national policy making.

Please include any information you would like to share with ILA:
Thank you to the ILA Executive Board for supporting IFC activities and providing guidance throughout the year. Working directly with the Board to promote awareness, seek guidance, and inform membership has worked really well for the committee this year and we anticipate future collaborative efforts to serve membership.