

Discussing Intellectual Freedom in a
USA PATRIOT Act Environment

John J. Doherty

&

R. Sean Evans

Northern Arizona University



Cartoon by Bob Lang

Today's Agenda

- I. What Does It Mean to Be a Librarian?
 - a. Introductions
 - b. Intellectual Freedom
 - c. Moral Relativism
 - d. Brainstorming
 - i. ALA Code of Ethics
 - ii. What does it mean to be a librarian?
 - iii. Describe your community
 - e. BREAKOUT: Brainstorm a controversial topic, and then try to present it in neutral language.
- II. Presenting Controversial Material
 - a. Know yourself, know your audience
 - i. Examples from the Smith & Jones Show
 - b. How appropriate is the topic to your audience?
 - c. BREAKOUT: Work on a brief presentation of your topic
- III. Reactions
 - a. Discussion of participant's topics and presentations
 - b. The "one little finger" reaction
 - c. Strategies for responding to reactions
 - d. Q&A

What is Intellectual Freedom?

Some Initial Thoughts:

"...[T]he right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored. Intellectual freedom encompasses the freedom to hold, receive and disseminate ideas."
American Library Association

Intellectual freedom as long as you think like they think and support what they say.
John Berry, Assoc. Librarian, UC Berkley

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or **abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press**; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Your Thoughts

Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

- I. **We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.**
- II. **We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.**
- III. **We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.**
- IV. **We recognize and respect intellectual property rights.**
- V. **We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.**
- VI. **We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.**
- VII. **We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.**
- VIII. **We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.**

Adopted June 28, 1995, by the ALA Council

What Does it Mean to be A Librarian?

What does it mean to you to be a librarian?

What community does your library reside in? Use some keywords that describe your community.

How appropriate is the topic to your audience?