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Censorship of junior and senior high school library materials in Iowa, 1987-1988

Jessie Carmichael
University of Northern Iowa

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Censorship of junior and senior high school library materials in Iowa, 1987-1988

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to obtain information to determine if school districts had board-approved selection policies, with procedures for handling challenges to library materials when they occur. Another purpose was to determine how many censorship incidents occurred during the designated time, reasons for the challenges, who originated the challenges, what procedures were followed, and what was the final disposition of the materials challenged. The method used to collect the data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 116 junior and senior high school media specialists who had been employed in the same position for a minimum of two years. Eighty percent of the questionnaires were returned. Ninety-two percent of the school districts had board-approved selection policies, and 72 percent of these schools' selection policies included procedures to follow when challenges to materials occurred. Fifty percent of the challenges were originated by administrators and selection policy procedures were not followed. Selection policy was followed 50 percent of the time if the challenge was originated by a person of "equal" status. The final disposition of the challenged materials resulted in the materials remaining in the collection seven times, and five the materials were removed or access restricted. times The reason most often given for the challenges was vulgar language. The swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated was cited the most often as the challenged material.

Censorship of Junior and Senior High School
Library Materials in Iowa, 1987-1988

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Jessie Carmichael

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Read and approved by
Elizabeth Martin

Leah Hiland

Accepted by Department
Elizabeth Martin

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to obtain information to determine if school districts had board-approved selection policies with procedures for handling challenges to library materials when they occur. Another purpose was to determine how many censorship incidents occurred during the designated time, reasons for the challenges, who originated the challenges, what procedures were followed, and what was the final disposition of the materials challenged. The method used to collect the data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 116 junior and senior high school media specialists who had been employed in the same position for a minimum of two years. Eighty percent of the questionnaires were returned.

Ninety-two percent of the school districts had board-approved selection policies, and 92 percent of those schools' selection policies included procedures to follow when challenges to materials occurred. Fifty percent of the challenges were originated by administrators and selection policy procedures were not followed. Selection policy was followed 50 percent of the time if the challenge was originated by a person of "equal" status. The final disposition of the challenged materials resulted in the materials remaining in the collection seven times, and five times the materials were removed or access restricted. The reason most often given for the challenges was vulgar language. The swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated was cited the most often as the challenged material.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The concept of censorship is certainly not a phenomenon new to modern man, but has existed since humans banded together for common purposes. Society ultimately evolved into positions of controller or positions of the controlled. One form of control is to restrict access to information; thus, censorship is created. Censorship is defined as "the policy of restricting the public expression of ideas, opinions, conceptions, and impulses which have or are believed to have the capacity to undermine the governing authority or the social and moral order which that authority considers itself bound to protect" (Abraham, 1968, p. 356).

Censorship may be official or unofficial. Official censorship occurs when a governmental agency gives authority to the censorship procedures. Unofficial censorship occurs when pressure is focused on those in positions of authority not to follow legally established procedures for access to information. Therefore, schools are institutions where both official and unofficial censorship occurs.

Censorship in schools has become an issue which is often addressed in the media and has resulted in a

number of legal battles. The court decisions "appear to be part of a national balancing act that seeks to find a firm middle ground in the conflict among the traditional, statutory rights of school boards and the constitutional rights of teachers, parents, and students" (Jones, 1983, p. 9). Several landmark cases have been instrumental in determining the course of censorship in schools.

One of the most cited and celebrated censorship cases is Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District, 1969. Three students were expelled from school for wearing black arm bands to protest the Vietnam War. The students filed a suit, and two lower courts ruled against them. However, the Supreme Court reversed the decision. Justice Fortas wrote: students and teachers do not

....shed their Constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate....School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students. Students in school as well as out of school are "persons" under our Constitution....(Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District, 1969)

Although the case did not involve the restricting of books or information, it did effect future censorship cases. Students' First Amendment rights were recognized, and school officials were not at liberty to infringe upon those rights.

Other cases followed Tinker and have had far reaching effect upon school censorship. In Presidents' Council, District 25 v. Community School Board No. 5, 1972, the school board's authority to remove books was upheld. It stated:

The public school library obviously does not have to become the repository, at public expense for books which are deemed by the proper authorities to be without merit either as works of art or science, simply because they are not obscene within the statute.

Conflicting signals evolved in the Minarcine v. Strongsville City School District, 1976, case. The case concerned the removal of books from the library. The judge ruled that the school board did not have "an absolute right....to remove from the library.... any books it regarded unfavorable without concern for the First Amendment" (Jones, 1983, p. 9).

The first school library censorship case to reach the United States Supreme Court was Pico v. Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District, (1979), (1980), and Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico (1982). The case began in 1975, and over six years later the principles of the First Amendment rights for students were once again recognized. The decision left several areas of potential conflict to be settled at a later date, but the decision made it clear that "school library books

removals have potential constitutional implications, and that school authorities do not have unfettered right to remove books and other materials because they dislike the ideas contained in them" (Jones, 1983, p. 47). First amendment principles were not upheld by all of the justices, and in the minority opinion the opposing viewpoint denied "the very existence of a right to receive information in the junior high school and high school setting" (Hansen, 1987, p. 125).

Seven separate opinions were written by the Supreme Court justices, and not even the majority were in agreement in all areas. If the justices of the Supreme Court could not agree upon the principles of access to information for elementary and high school students and who should make such decisions, then the public is without definite guidelines.

Media specialists who are working in public schools are often confronted with such a situation. Several groups may attempt to play the role of selector and censor. These groups may originate outside of the school, or they may originate among individuals employed within the school.

How often do media specialists encounter attempts to censor and what procedures are followed? During professional training, media specialists are indoctrinated with the concept that as professionals it

is their responsibility to defend the Library Bill of Rights. However, do media specialists actively support each individual's access to information? This study was an attempt to find out how often official and unofficial censorship occurs within the schools, and if media specialists are fulfilling their role as protectors of intellectual freedom.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to determine the following:

1. How many challenges to library materials occurred within each specified semester?
2. Who within the school originated each challenge?
3. Was a school board approved selection policy with procedures to handle challenges in existence?
4. Were the procedures adhered to when challenges occurred from individuals employed within the school?
5. What was the final disposition of the material/materials challenged?

The data gathered tested the following hypotheses:

1. The majority of media specialists would report that their school districts have board-approved selection policies with procedures to handle challenges.

2. Fifty percent or more of the in-school challenges would originate with administrators (i.e. superintendents, principals, assistant principals).

3. Of those media specialists reporting board-approved policies, 65% or more of the time the challenge procedures were not followed when the challenge originated with a school administrator.

4. Of those media specialists reporting approved policies, the procedures were followed 50% or more of the time when the challenge originated from a peer of "equal" status.

5. Removal of the challenged material/s would occur for 50% or more of the challenges when board-adopted procedures were followed.

The underlying assumptions were that unofficial and official challenges to library materials do occur in Iowa's schools, and the procedures followed depended upon who originated the challenges.

The following were limitations of the study:

1. Questionnaires were sent to media specialists currently employed as media specialists in the same position for a minimum of two years by a public secondary school in Iowa.

2. The study was limited to challenges of library materials which originated from and were presented by persons or groups within the school.

3. The study was concerned only with challenges which occurred during the two time periods (September, 1987 to end of 1st semester, 1988, and beginning of second semester, 1988 to the end of second semester, Spring 1988).

The following terms were used throughout the study and are defined so as to achieve a common ground of understanding.

1. Censorship - "the policy of restricting the public expression of ideas, opinions, conceptions, and impulses which have or are believed to have the capacity to undermine the governing authority or the social and moral order which that authority considers itself bound to protect" (Lasswell, 1930, p. 290).

2. Administrators - individuals who are given the responsibility for management of the school. Individuals classified as administrators are district superintendents and assistants, school principals and assistants, and district business managers.

3. In-school censorship - is the occurrence of censorship when the censor is employed in the same school district or the same building where the challenge originates.

4. Challenge and objection - are used interchangeably to represent the suggestion for

restricting access to information in library material/s.

5. Librarian and media specialist- are used interchangeably to represent the professional whose responsibility it is to "provide the leadership and expertise necessary to ensure that the library media program is an integral part of the instructional program of the school" (American Library Association, 1988, p. 26).

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The frequency and intensity of censorship attempts have resulted in numerous articles and studies on the subject. The area of particular concern for this study is the issue of censorship that occurs within the public school. Several studies recognized the occurrence of "in-house" censorship, and collected a limited amount of data.

By using the studies which did possess limited data, trends could be established. The sources that contained relevant information were the Fiske study (1959), the Davis' study (1979), and the L. B. Woods' study (1979).

Marjorie Fiske's study (1959) was the barometer of censorship studies for the next two decades. She conducted a study in California which involved 204 interviews with school librarians and administrators, and with public librarians. She found that 68% of the school librarians interviewed supported the Library Bill of Rights; however, 58% of librarians who were involved in book selection reported incidents where the controversial nature of a book's content or an author's beliefs were considered when selecting materials (p. 124-125). Of the 95 respondents who objected to the controversial books, 42% were librarians, 23% were

administrators, 18% were parents, 8% were teachers, 6% were students, and 3% were classified as others (p. 123).

Woods' study (1979) found that administrators within educational institutions accounted for 51.7% of the attempts to censor and librarians for 5.4% of the attempts. The difference in findings between the Fiske and Woods studies is due to Woods crediting administrators with any attempts which originated from other sources, but for which they assumed responsibility (p. 102). Woods' study documented that over half of the attempts (53.2%) originate outside the educational institutions, and censorship is imposed from within the institution 46.8% of the time. He further concluded that if educational institutions hesitate to report incidents of attempts to censor from within the institution, then the rate of internal censorship could be significantly higher.

Woods attributed the increase in the percent of "in-house" censorship to pressures exerted from outside sources such as parents and organized groups (p. 102-106). In Jenkinson's (1979) book, Censors in the Classroom, the author states that pressures come from a variety of people who have a variety of philosophical and political opinions. The conservative element of society objects to books which contain alleged

obscenity and blasphemy, while proponents of racial and sexual equality raise objections to books and other media which contain alleged racial and sexual stereotypes (p. 125).

Reasons cited for objections to books were politics, sex and obscenity, profanity, race and religion, "controversial" or "unsuitable" information, literary merit, and others. Politics, sex, and obscenity were cited more than twice the number of times than all the others as reasons for objections. A majority of people believed that some books could be detrimental to adolescent readers. Such topics as sex and political propaganda were considered to be inappropriate topics for "immature" readers (Fiske, 1959, p. 24).

Charles Busha's study (1972) further documented the role that professionals play in the censoring of materials. His study was conducted among public librarians in the Midwest basically for the purpose of determining the attitude of librarians toward intellectual freedom principles and if in actuality they practiced the principles (p. 23). The study confirmed that as professionals, librarians are quick to give lip service to intellectual freedom and the Library Bill of Rights; however, in practice they also play the role of censor.

In order to test the extent of self-censorship when selecting materials, Woods' (1979) study provided media specialists with a list of the most controversial book titles (52). He concluded the following:

1. Librarians appear to avoid titles that are the most controversial.
2. Providing librarians with a list of the controversial titles did not inspire librarians to add the titles to the collections.
3. A large number of the material was on some sort of restricted access.

Media specialists often feel that they have succeeded in acquiring a collection which represents a wide variety of subjects. However, according to Woods, they have failed (p. 147-152).

The National Council of Teachers of English has periodically conducted national surveys among its members in an attempt to determine the extent that the practice of censoring occurs within the schools, and to gather other relevant information. The following information represents the increase in the frequency of reported challenges to school materials (Kelly, 1986, p. 79).

	1966 Survey	1973 Survey	1977 Survey	1982 Survey
Books	20%	28%	30.0%	34%
Periodicals	NA	NA	8.5%	17%
Films	NA	NA	7.5%	8%

The reasons for objections were basically the same as those cited by Fiske. The use of inappropriate language (grammar usage, profanity, and obscenity) was the major reason. The next most often cited reason was sexual content. Language usage and sexual content areas are so closely related that an overlapping effect occurs, and it is difficult to clearly separate one area of objection from the other (Hansen, 1987, p. 124). The above percentages document the fact that indeed a steady increase in censorship pressures has occurred during the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's. Lee Burress (1982) credits this steady increase to changes in society and in the role of the school. The following are the reasons that Burress attributes to the growth of pressures to censor:

1. The number of students who are attending schools.
2. The student population has become better educated than their parents.
3. The possibility that the success of the schools, not their failure, has produced criticism.
4. The increase in reading by Americans.
5. Education is divisive.
6. The cost of education.
7. Education is used as a scapegoat for many ills within society.
8. "The tendency of education is to reinforce the democratic values that are in the process of achievement, but which have not been fully realized" (p. 16).
9. The increasing tendency of people to protest actions of governmental agencies to which they object.
10. Schools do make mistakes, and are not readily willing to admit mistakes when made (p. 16).

Further findings of the Fiske (1959) study revealed that when objections were raised against materials used in schools, and if the objection originated within the school, 87% of the time the materials were either restricted or removed from circulation. However, if the objection originated outside of the school, materials were restricted or removed only 47% of the time (p. 132). The study did not reveal if prior procedures were established to handle objections nor if the procedures were followed.

Jenkinson's study (1984) also indicates that the fate of the material often depends upon from whom the objection originates. If a principal, librarian, teacher, or student made the objection, then the material was removed 80% of the time, and if the objection was made by a parent, the chances of removal were less than 50%. He also indicated that even when a policy to deal with the objection was available, it was often ignored (p. 108).

The common themes of all the studies are censorship is increasing, personnel employed by the school district are not immune to society's changes and pressures, and as professionals, teachers, administrators, and librarians have a tendency to make decisions based upon anticipated objections from pressures instigated from persons outside the school.

The sum total of all the influencing factions not only affect individuals and groups outside the schools, but also the individuals who are employed by the schools.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The method by which data were obtained was the questionnaire. Questionnaires were sent to media specialists/librarians who had been employed as media specialists by an Iowa school district for a minimum of two years. The two years of employment were determined by comparing the 1986-1987 Basic Educational Data Survey-Librarian and the 1987-1988 Basic Educational Data Survey-Librarian lists. The data for the surveys were compiled by the Iowa Department of Education from the information gathered by each school district. The school district's information was provided by the individual and was only as accurate and complete as the original providing source. The candidates for selection were employed either in a media specialist position for grades 9-12, 10-12, or 7-12. Grades included in a school were determined by using the Iowa Educational Directory 1987-1988. A list was compiled of eligible candidates, numbered, and a table of random numbers (Busha and Harter, 1980, p. 395) was used to select 25%, or a minimum of 100, of the eligible media specialists who received the questionnaires.

A letter (see Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the study and requesting cooperation accompanied the questionnaire. The questionnaire (see Appendix B) was

basically divided into three sections. The first section solicited general information, such as (1) whether or not a materials selection policy was board-approved and contained procedures for handling challenges, (2) the number of years the media specialist had been in his/her present position, (3) the size of student enrollment for the 1987-88 school year, and (4) grades for which the media specialist provided services. Sections two and three gathered data for each time period, and within each section the information requested addressed each incident of objection or challenge to library materials. The following is an overview of what was asked:

1. What was the title(s) of materials challenged? This could be one title or it could be works by a specific author. List each title separately.

2. What was the reason(s) for the challenge to the material? (e.g. biased/inaccurate information, racism, religion, obscenity, violence, morality)

3. By whom was the challenge presented? Then, if known, identify person(s) (other than the presenter) who may have instigated the challenge. Names of individuals were not to be given, but the position within the school or connection to the school were to be given. (e.g. teacher, secretary, principal, aide, student, superintendent)

4. What procedures were followed when the challenge occurred? (e.g. selection policy procedures, materials quietly withdrawn or placed on restricted access, opinion about retention of title/s solicited from peers)

5. What was the ultimate disposition of the material(s) which was challenged? (e.g. removed, restricted, available only with parental approval)

The cover letter, questionnaire, and stamped self-addressed envelope were mailed in May, and was requested to be returned not later than June 1, 1988. No follow-up letter was sent.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Data

Questionnaires were sent to 116 media specialists who had been employed for a minimum of two years in their present positions. Ninety-three (80 percent) questionnaires were returned. Two were not completed adequately enough to use in tabulating the data. Table 1 displays data about the number of years media specialists had been employed in their current position. Fifty-five percent of respondents had been employed in their present position for over nine years, and six per cent for two years.

TABLE 1
Number of Years Employed
in Present Position

Years	Number	Percent
1-2	5	.06
3-4	14	.15
5-6	10	.11
7-8	12	.13
+9	50	.55
Total	91	1.00

The first question was, "Does the school district have a board-approved materials selection policy?" Eighty-four (92 percent) of the schools surveyed had board-approved selection policies. Ninety-two percent of all the board-approved selection policies included procedures to follow when challenges to materials

occur. Table 2 shows the percentage of schools with board-approved selection policies and the percentage with procedures to follow when challenges to materials occurs.

TABLE 2
Number and Percentage of Schools with
Board-Approved Selection Policies
Containing Challenge Procedures

Enrollment	Total Number	Selection Policies		Challenge Procedures	
		Yes	%	Yes	%
100-299	24	20	.83	16	.80
300-499	25	24	.96	23	.96
500-699	19	19	1.00	19	1.00
700-899	8	7	.88	6	.86
900-1999	12	11	.92	10	.91
+2000	3	3	1.00	3	1.00
Total	91	84	.92	77	.92

The schools with enrollment of less than 300 had the lowest percentage, 83 percent, of board-approved selection policies. Twelve percent of the schools with 700-899 enrollment did not have board-approved selection policies. The difference is not significant and does not indicate that schools with smaller enrollment are less likely to have board-approved selection policies.

Two respondents indicated that the school districts did have board-approved selection policies which included procedures to follow when objections to materials occurred, but the policies were "very old" and "not current" and should be "updated". One of the

two respondents indicated the target date for revision was the summer of 1988. Another school district which did not have a selection policy indicated that the policy was "in the process" of being written. One respondent replied that the school district did not have a selection policy. "However, on several occasions in the past it has been urged that the district adopt one. The superintendent was not agreeable." Hypothesis 1, "the majority of media specialists will report that their school districts have board-approved selection policies with procedures to handle challenges," was accepted.

The next sections, B and C, of the questionnaire dealt with challenges to materials. Specifics asked were title/s and author/s, reason/s given for the challenges, by whom was the challenges presented, procedures followed, and final disposition of the materials challenged.

Table 3 shows 12 (13 percent) of the 91 respondents had challenges to materials during the specified time periods. An additional seven respondents reported challenges to library materials, but the incidents originated and were presented by individuals who were not employed by the school districts. Therefore, those responses were not included in the analyzed data.

TABLE 3
Number of Challenges to Materials during
Fall and Spring Semester, 1987-88

Enrollment	Total No. Respondents	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
100-299	24	2	3
300-499	25	1	0
500-699	19	2	1
700-899	8	0	0
900-1999	12	0	2
+2000	3	1	0
Total	91	6	6

Six of the twelve challenges occurred in the fall semester, and six of the twelve challenges occurred in the spring semester. Although 41 percent of the challenges occurred in schools with 100-299 enrollment, enrollment size did not seem to be the only factor contributing to the number of in-house challenges. All challenges occurred in schools with board-approved selections policies which contained procedures to follow when challenges occur.

Table 4 reveals the reasons given for challenges to library materials. Fifteen reasons were recorded for the twelve incidents. The reason most often given was vulgar language. Two of the reported challenges cited both vulgar language and sexual explicitness. Another reported both violence and "because another school had objections", the latter was recorded in the "other" category.

TABLE 4
Reasons Given for Challenge

Enrollment	Vulgar Language	Religious Reasons	Obscenity Sexual Explicitness	Violence	Other
100-299	1	0	1	1	3
300-499	0	0	0	0	1
500-699	2	1	2	0	0
700-899	0	0	0	0	0
900-1999	1	0	0	0	1
+2000	0	0	0	0	1
Total	4	1	3	1	6

Two of the "other" reasons were for challenges originated by administrators, but reasons were not given. The three additional reasons listed under "other" were (1) the material challenge was of "no educational value and disruptive," (2) "inappropriate view of women for junior high kids", and (3) "didn't want students to see those pictures." All of the above three were reasons given for challenges to the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue. Stephen King's books were objected to because of "violence (and) because another school had objections." Other titles challenged were In Country by Bobby Mason, Then Again, Maybe I Won't by Judy Blume, Evolution Book by Sara Stein, Ordinary People by J. Guest, The Computer Book by Peter McWilliams, Nontorious Ladies of the Frontier, "author unknown", and a video tape of All the President's Men.

Table 5 presents data about the originator of the challenges. Superintendents and principals originated six of the twelve challenges. One of the respondents indicated the challenge was presented by the principal, but was originated by a parent. The incident was not tabulated.

TABLE 5
Individuals Who Originated Challenge

Enrollment	Supt.	Prin.	Teacher	Student	Media Spec.
100-299	2	2	1	0	0
300-499	1	0	0	0	1
500-699	0	0	1	1	0
700-899	0	0	0	0	0
900-1999	0	1	1	0	0
+2000	0	0	1	0	0
Total	3	3	4	1	1

Hypothesis 2 was accepted. It was predicted that 50 percent or more of the in-school challenges would originate with administrators (e.g. superintendents, principals, assistant principals).

Table 6 reveals the procedures which were followed when an in-school challenge occurred. Six of the twelve in-house challenges originated with the administrators and six times selection policy procedures were not followed. Four of the six times the materials were removed or access was restricted, and two times the materials remained in the collection. From the six challenges, three respondents indicated

"other" when asked what procedures were followed. Two of the "other" procedures resulted in the materials remaining in the collection. Once the objectionable information was "vandalized", then the remaining material was placed back in the collection.

Four times the challenge originated with a teacher. Selection policy was followed 50 percent of the time. Each time the selection procedures were followed, the materials remained in the collection. The "other" two incidents of actions taken when challenges originated with teachers were resolved by discussing the materials. The result was the materials remained in the collection. The one incident originated by a student was resolved when the selection policy procedures were followed and the materials remained in the collection. The selection policy was not followed in the incident that originated with the media specialist. The media specialist indicated that she/he removed the objectionable "things", then placed the materials back in the collection. When the challenges originated with a teacher or student the selection policy was followed 60 per cent of the time.

TABLE 6
Actions Taken When Challenge Occurred

Originator of Challenge	Selection Procedures	Restricted or Removed	Other
Superintendent	0	1	2
Principal	0	2	1
Teacher	2	0	2
Student	1	0	0
Media Specialist	0	0	1
Total	3	3	6

Hypothesis 3 stated, ".....65 percent or more of the time the challenge procedures were not followed when the challenge originates with a school administrator." Each time the challenge originated with administrators, the selection policy procedures were not followed. The hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 4, ".....procedures are followed 50 percent or more of the time when the challenge originates from a peer of "equal" status, was accepted. Table 7 displays data about the final disposition of materials challenged and by whom the challenge originated. Six of the twelve challenges originated with administrators (Table 5), and four of the six incidents resulted in the removal or restriction of the materials. Selection policy procedures were not followed (Table 6).

TABLE 7
Final Disposition of Materials Challenged

Originator of Challenge	Removed	Restricted Access	Remained in Collection	Other
Superintendent	2	0	1	0
Principal	1	1	1	0
Teacher	0	0	4	0
Student	0	0	1	0
Media Specialist	0	0	0	1
Total	3	1	7	1

Hypothesis 5 stated, "Removal of the challenged materials will occur for 50 percent or more of the challenges when board-approved adopted procedures were followed." The hypothesis is rejected. Seven of the twelve incidents of challenges resulted in the materials remaining in the collection. Respondents indicated selection policy procedures were followed three times, and each time the challenged materials remained in collection. Nine times the selection policy procedures were not followed, and five of those times the challenged materials were removed from the collection or placed on restricted access.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary

The study of in-house censorship of junior and senior high school library materials was conducted over a period of one academic year (1987-1988). The number of challenges to materials was relatively small. Thirteen percent of the 91 responding library media specialists reported challenges. Several respondents reported incidents which were not appropriate for this study because the originators were not employed by the school districts. The Wood's study (1979) indicated that one-half of the attempts (53.2%) to censor originates outside the schools. Wood also indicated that schools might hesitate to report incidents to censor from within the school. Therefore, the overall numbers of incidents would be greater if all incidents were reported. This reasoning might also account for the small numbers of reported incidents for this study.

A large majority (92 percent) of the schools do have selection policies. Two respondents reported the selection policies needed to be revised. This high percentage might be attributed to the emphasize placed on the importance of having board-approved selection policies by professional organizations and by the Iowa Department of Education. Recent media coverage of

attempts to censor might also generate an awareness of the need to have a current selection policy.

The data also indicate that if the challenge originated within the school, selection policy procedures are not always followed. Each time the challenge originated from an administrator, the selection policy procedures were not followed. However, if the challenge originated with another teacher or student, then selection policy procedures were more likely to be followed. Media specialists may be intimidated into not following procedures when the challenges originate with a person higher in the chain-of-command and by whom they are evaluated.

The final disposition of materials is likely to be removal or a restriction placed on access when the challenge originates with an administrator. If the challenge originates with a teacher or student and selection procedures are followed, then the materials are more likely to remain in collection. Media specialists may feel more confident in insisting that procedures be followed when the challenges are presented by a peer or student.

The writer feels that the study has indicated that in too many cases the media specialist does not insist upon following the selection policy procedures when

someone who he/she views as "boss" originates the challenge.

Future studies which attempt to solicit information about in-house censorship of library materials should explain more thoroughly exactly what an incident entails. An incident could very well not be considered an incident if the occurrence is settled by the media specialist and presenter. This informal discussion is usually the first step in the challenge procedure of selection policy guidelines as published by the Iowa Department of Education and should be considered an incident. The personal interview process might be a better data gathering method by which the researcher could collect more accurate information.

Media specialists as pre-censors were not included in the study. Future studies could seek information on the media specialist's role in the censoring process, and how often the fear of materials being challenged plays a role in the selection process.

The purpose of the study was to obtain information to determine if school districts had board-approved selection policies with procedures for handling challenged materials, how often in-house challenges to library materials occurred, reasons for the challenges, who originated the challenges, what procedures were followed, and what was the final disposition of the

) materials challenged. The method used to collect the data was by questionnaires sent to 116 junior and senior high school media specialists who had been employed in their present positions for a minimum of two years. Ninety one usable responses were returned.

Twelve in-house challenge incidents were reported. The evidence collected indicates that a large majority (92 percent) of the school districts do have selection policies. Eight percent of the schools with selection policies did not include procedures for challenges to materials. Hypothesis one stated the majority of schools will have board-approved policies was accepted.

) Six of the twelve challenges were originated by administrators and, therefore, hypothesis two, "50 percent or more of the in-house challenges would originate with administrators," was accepted. Six out of the six times the selection policy procedures were not followed when administrators were the originators. Hypothesis three, "65 percent or more of the time the challenge procedures were not followed", was accepted. Four times the challenge was originated by a teacher, and the selection policy procedures were followed 50 percent of time. Hypothesis four was accepted. It stated procedures were followed 50 percent or more of the time when the challenge originated from a peer of "equal" status. The final disposition of the
)

challenged materials resulted in seven items remaining in the collection and five times the materials were removed or access was restricted. Hypothesis five, "50 percent or more of the challenged materials would be removed when selection policy procedures were followed," was rejected.

The reason most often given for the challenges was vulgar language. Obscenity and sexual explicitness was cited as the second most often reason for materials being challenged.

The titles and authors of challenged materials covered a variety of topics. Fiction books such as Ordinary People, In Country, and all of Stephen King's books were challenged. Nonfiction materials such as The Computer Book, The Evolution Book, Notorious Women of the West, and All the President's Men were also challenged. The swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated was cited the most often as the challenged material.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire Cover Letter

May 10, 1988

Dear Librarian/Media Specialist:

Demands upon your time are great. However, I would appreciate it if you would take time to complete the attached survey as it relates to your school. It is late in the school year, but it should take only a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire.

As a candidate for a Masters Degree in the School of Library Science at the University of Northern Iowa, I am conducting a survey among Iowa secondary and junior high school librarians. The questionnaire is soliciting information about in-school censorship. Researchers who have conducted studies about challenges to library materials have concluded that if all in-school incidents were reported the findings might be substantially different. I ask your help with this project.

You have been randomly selected from the 1987-1988 Basic Educational Data Survey-Librarian list which was compiled by the Iowa Department of Education. This project is an attempt to collect representative data concerning objections to library materials by individuals who work for the school. Therefore, the questions apply to challenges which occur within your school or school system.

Your reply will be confidential, and no references to schools or individuals will be made in the report.

Please record the information and return the survey in the enclosed envelope by June 1, 1988.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

Jessie Carmichael
Route 2 Box 300
Brooklyn, Iowa 52211

Appendix B

CHALLENGES OR OBJECTIONS TO LIBRARY MATERIALS,
QUESTIONNAIRE

A. General Information

1. Does the school district have a board-approved materials selection policy?

_____ Yes
 _____ No

If yes, does the policy include procedures to be followed when objections to library materia/s occur?

_____ Yes
 _____ No

2. How long have you been employed in your present position?

_____ 1 to 2 years	_____ 7 to 8 years
_____ 3 to 4 years	_____ + 9 years
_____ 5 to 6 years	

3. What is the student enrollment of the school/s for which you provide library services? (1987-1988 school year)

- B. The questions in this section apply to all incidents or challenges to materials from September, 1987, to the end of the first semester. An incident is any time a verbal or written challenge or objection was received from anyone in the school, e.g. teacher, secretary, principal, aide, student, superintendent. Please supply that information for the following items, 1-5 for each incident. If you can recall no objections to materials or if there were no objections during this semester, write "none" as a response to Incident # 1 and proceed to Section C.

Incident # 1

1. What were the title and author of materials challenged? If the objection was a specific author, list the author and all the titles cited.

2. What were the reason/s given for the objection to the library material/s. (e.g. biased/inaccurate information, racism, obscenity, violence, profanity, etc.)

3. (a.) By whom was the objection presented? Do not give the name of individual, but identify the person by position in or connection with the school. (e.g. teacher, secretary, principal, aide, student, superintendent)

(b.) If you believe you know that a person other than the presenter instigated the objection, identify that person only by position or general description.

4. What procedures were followed?
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Selection policy procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted or withdraw |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opinions solicited from others | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
5. What was the final disposition of the materials challenged?
- | |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Removed from the collection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Placed on restricted access |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remained in collection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Made available with parental approval |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Incident # 2

1. What were the title and author of materials challenged? If the objection was a specific author, list the author and all the titles cited.

2. What were the reason/s for the objection to the library

Incident # 1

1. What were the title and author of materials challenged? If the objection was directed toward a specific author, list the author and all the titles cited.

2. What were the reason/s given for the objection to the library material/s? (e.g. biased/ inaccurate information, racism, obscenity, violence, profanity, etc.)

3. (a.) By whom was the objection presented? Do not give the name of individual, but identify the person by position in or connection with the school. (e.g. teacher, secretary, principal, aide, student, superintendent)

- (b.) If you believe you know that a person other than the presenter instigated the objection, identify that person only by position or general description.

4. What procedures were followed?
 _____ Selection policy procedures _____ Restricted or withdrawn
 _____ Opinions solicited from others _____ Other

5. What was the final disposition of the material/s challenged?
 _____ Removed from the collection
 _____ Placed on restricted access
 _____ Remained in collection
 _____ Made available with parental approval
 _____ Other

Incident # 2

1. What were the title and author of materials challenged? If the objection was directed toward a specific author, list the author and all the titles cited.

-
-
2. What were the reason/s given for the objection to the library material/s. (e.g. biased, inaccurate information, racism, obscenity, violence, profanity, etc.)
-
-

3. (a.) By whom was the objection presented? Do not give name of individual, but identify the person by position in or connection with the school. (e.g. teacher, secretary, principal, aide, students, superintendent)
-

(b.) If you believe you know that a person other than the presenter instigated the objection, identify that person only by position or general description.

4. What procedures were followed?
_____ Selection policy procedures _____ Restricted or withdrawn
_____ Opinions solicited from others _____ Other
5. What was the final disposition of the materials challenged?
_____ Removed from the collection
_____ Placed on restricted access
_____ Remained in collection
_____ Made available with parental approval
_____ Other

If more than two incidents occurred during this time periods, please attach a sheet with answers to the same five questions above for each incident.