

Libraries Alive **Library Basics Series**

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Library Basics / Vernita Kennen

Dealing with challenged materials



Sooner or later every library will have a patron who is unhappy with the materials that are available. They

may object to the author, the content, the language, the photographs, or any of a number of other things about the material. It is vital that every library be proactive and has a written policy that tells how challenged materials will be handled. Knowing that a challenge form must be filled out, (including a statement that the material has been read, viewed or listened to in its entirety) may be enough to nip a challenge in the bud!

Our church library has chosen to have a very specific form on which the challenge must be specified in detail. The request must be submitted to the pastor on staff who works with the library. He/she will then seek input from others on the staff and discuss the challenge and his/her recommendation with the members of our Library Action Group before a final decision is made. The decision shall be based on the selection policy of the library and the specifics of the challenge. The final decision is that of the pastor.

The pastor is the person who discusses the decision with the person(s) making the challenge or request for reconsideration. If the challenge is upheld, the item shall be removed from the library collection, not just from circulation.

Don't be caught in the unfortunate situation of having something challenged with-

out both a policy on challenged materials and a selection policy that spells out in detail the criteria on which the library chooses to add materials, both print and nonprint. We all hope that we never have to use these policies but it is far better to be proactive and prepared.

Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

A form with the following information is requested by our library committee when someone wishes to file a challenge:

- Author, title, publisher, copyright date
- Name of person request is initiated by
- Telephone, street and e-mail address
- Do you represent others than yourself? If so, whom?
- What do you object to in the material?
- What of value is there in this material?
- For what age group would you recommend this work?
- Are you aware of the judgment of this book by critics?
- Are you aware of why this book was purchased?
- What do you believe is the theme or purpose of this material?
- What would you like the Library Action Committee to do about this material?
- In its place, what work of equal value would you recommend that convey as valuable a picture and perspective of society or set of values?
- The challenger is then asked to sign and date a statement reading, "I have read/listened to or viewed the entire material in question." ■