



Library podcast

Intellectual Freedom & Libraries - Part 2

[00:00:05] Welcome to The Seattle Public Library's podcasts of author readings and library events. Library podcasts are brought to you by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation. To learn more about our programs and podcasts, visit our web site at www.spl.org. To learn how you can help the library foundation support The Seattle Public Library go to foundation.spl.org

[00:00:36] This podcast is being presented in two parts. You are listening to part 2.

[00:00:43] How would you define intellectual freedom for an everyday person. Can you share a few important examples of moments Susan and Becky where we've had breakthroughs for intellectual freedom.

[00:00:57] Well of course I have to say that David covered most of territory here but intellectual freedom. What does that mean for. For an individual. I mean it's really your ability to pursue knowledge and express yourself in any way you want. And I think when we looked at those definitions before no restrictions no oversight. You're doing what you want to do in a free environment. And then just in terms of the groundbreaking for intellectual freedom you know as David referred to this really it was a very long battle for the Children's Internet Protection Act and librarians took a tremendous amount of heat for that. Basically because we were arguing and I lived through these battles not that all of us haven't. But I actually was in these battles we were we were arguing really to help people understand and this was 10 or 15 years ago a while ago. And so it filters were required. We're going to be require our required on all library computers and all staff computers. If you were to receive these subsidization subsidy from the for the education rate which is access to broadband this is really important to get broadband and Internet connectivity in our libraries to provide the access for everybody that we were talking about and plus.

[00:02:26] And then along comes this you know this additional restriction about the about filtering so librarians were extremely articulate and I'm sure Becky can say more about the ineffectiveness of filters that they weren't going to do the job anyway. And on the flipside of that we made cogent arguments. We were kind of identified as pawnbrokers or Yeah we're OK. We want to allow porn in the libraries. I mean we certainly don't want to do that. But as David mentioned it's really more about accessing placement of computers how much do we want to see that other people are looking at. But really they have their own choices to do that. And there were many communities that went through very deep discussions about this in fact at the time I was working in San Francisco I was the city

librarian there at the San Francisco Public Library and my governing authority the Board of Supervisors said if you ever filter a computer. Well they didn't even say that we can fix it. We will make up the difference of the money you're losing by not filtering computers.

[00:03:36] And even though David you said that wasn't too much money depending on the let that money that subsidy is allocated by the level of poverty in the neighborhood that's being served in some cases it represents 90 percent of the cost of your internet so libraries gave up a lot. When they stuck with their original or many of their original decisions not to go with the CFA and that was fought in court for many years and it's still standing and it was unfortunate to me as a member of the Obama administration that the Obama administration never wanted to take that on. So we're still living with that.

[00:04:17] Secondly USA Patriot Act which we talked about a little bit you did mention that right. You did you mentioned the Patriot Act. Oh OK. So does anybody here remember the Patriot Act. Still in effect. But this was you know this was our reaction to 9/11 and here librarians were on the front lines of advocacy for personal privacy and our ability to not respond to federal requests for information about who would read what and those federal requests had virtually no backing that we were aware of. And I know Becky has some more information about that that she's going to share. But the one thing I wanted to share about the Patriot Act was again I was in San Francisco during this time period. And again our Board of Supervisors are very engaged group like your city council here. Passed legislation that even if the FBI came to me or any department head in San Francisco we were not allowed to let anybody know that the FBI had come and made one of these requests. But. Setting that aside we were not allowed to respond to the FBI and had to forward the request to our. Local government agency the Board of Supervisors who would go to the city attorney. So there was that. Because that was such such an emotional time after 9/11 for the librarians to come out and say Hey. Hey wait a minute you know we all love our country but this is going a step too far. It was a huge stand and I think really one us considerable considerable respect what she said.

[00:06:00] Now one thing that won the many things that I picked up when I started working at Seattle Public Library when we're talking about how do you talk about intellectual freedom for to others who might not have the background or history in libraries or information or other types of relevant backgrounds.

[00:06:27] And there is this one phrase it's an elevator pitch which if you're going to define something an elevator pitch and a catchy phrase goes a long way.

[00:06:39] And that is access not content. Defend access and not defending the content because again we talked about there. There are particular items in the library that are available that

[00:06:55] For some folks have strong emotional reactions to goes against their belief systems goes against political views and philosophy philosophical views or I found a cookbook that says use using shortening is the best pot. Using Shorten is shorter is the best fat that you can use for our pie crust. And I religiously believe it's lard just to use a very light hearted example which has been heavy here

but explaining that giving people the opportunity to research different viewpoints different ideas that are not their own they might disagree vehemently but we're giving them the opportunity to do so without judgment without tracking without giving you know without making a list of what they all are reading and then handing it off to

[00:08:00] Places of authority either be a government or a corporation or parents or school or work and so on just making sure that people have the access and making sure that access is as confidential and as private as we can make it with the available tools and resources that we have many people may not know that one thing that many libraries typically do that you regard as perhaps frustrating which is we don't automatically save a lot of information about you.

[00:08:37] People continually will come up to us and say hey I would like to see all the books I've read for the past five years and we'll say well we have a thing you can opt in and do that. But if you didn't we haven't saved that we flush that information as quickly as we could. And for the longest time quite understandably the public would say Well that's this really horrible customer service and viewed one way it is now in the light of things like Equifax. People are beginning to realize oh maybe it is good that you don't save my information. A lot of that was in the result was in response to the USA Patriot Act where the government had greatly enhanced powers to come and see what you were reading and what you were viewing without you ever knowing about it without any of us who worked here ever knowing about it and so in order to make sure that happened as little as possible.

[00:09:27] We have set all over our defaults to just get rid of your information unless you unless you tell us otherwise say that that was a that was probably a very positive result of the Patriot Act because many libraries I think who had not been as diligent as you might want them to be in terms of their record retention and privacy approaches and how they used their systems in terms of managing their records privacy audits became a very very important. And we're done by the all public libraries across the country and we really understood that you know you can't provide what you don't have.

[00:10:13] And Section 215 of the Patriot Act which is called which was meant was the particular section that referred to library records.

[00:10:26] Government can subpoena and there was a gag order. We can't say if we've been. We've been. Given an order to hand over records. So one of the very you know small small acts small acts of courage build. Build a sizable resistance so when we had. That particular gag or staring down at many libraries who are concerned that the Government's looking at getting information and the librarians can even say a word if they got subpoenaed.

[00:11:08] So there are a few librarians one including Jessamine West came up with this little sign that showed up on a library one day. And for those who cannot read it it says the FBI has not been here and in small print watch very closely for the removal of this sign

[00:11:30] Now technically we're not saying that we've been subpoenaed by the FBI so this was a work around. And this is still a work around because even though. The Patriot Act Section 215 did

sunsets in 2015 it was follow up by the U.S. Freedom Act which renewed the renewed the Patriot Act but didn't say specifically which parts of the section were renewed so you're not quite sure

[00:12:06] Are we still under that gag order if we get a subpoena saying please hand this please hand over all this information so you'll have Web sites that will have digital forms of this side. You'll still have libraries still hanging the sign up. Next to their entry ways or somewhere in the stack somewhere so that is I would say a lot smaller active. Of Courage amongst libraries in relation to the Patriot Act you can look up.

[00:12:44] We won't go into it here. I don't think that Connecticut 5 which was a group of library 4 7 0 4. I'm sorry. I rounded up to find we're all the 5th Connecticut. You're right he's librarians who got in serious trouble four for standing up to the Patriot Act. Let's uh. I've got one for mostly for you Sarah.

[00:13:05] Sarah. What are the challenges that you can see for artists interested in engaging libraries and library patrons in changing political times and as notions of cultural wars continue to play out. And as Susan and Becky can you speak to how libraries have handled controversial content over time we may have covered some of this but um I wanted to open that up to say so. Uh. One thing that I have discovered and and worked very hard to maintain consistently as to how it

[00:13:45] How it manifests in aesthetic and in conversation and in marketing copy is just how tied my personal and my professional belief systems are.

[00:14:03] I cannot separate my personal and personal encompasses political social economic religious or otherwise with my professional which encompasses everything that I do to make money.

[00:14:19] I can't separate those things. But I was actually taught at a college that in order for me to make money I had to separate those things I had to in the world of theatre make myself as neutral as possible so that I had unlimited potential for transformation depending on where I was working as an actor. I was also discouraged from having a strong political and social mission statement because having that would cut me off from potential opportunity which could make me money like if we talk about being an artist professionally. It's easy to understand that in terms of capital in terms of. Money making as a capitalist system here. And here in America I think it's safe to say that when people think of theatre or film

[00:15:20] If you were to ask somebody what is this. A lot of people would say entertainment is there for me to enjoy and to entertain me. Some people would even say that it's escapism that it's a place for them to to see a version of themselves that they wish they could be or they see people living lives that they wish they could live. And I have found that that is not my artistic aesthetic because it is not my personal aesthetic.

[00:15:52] So I think about a library.

[00:15:56] Again having a wealth of information how it can help artists and I mean I can say that I think that artists having really strong political statements the fact that my artistic mission says that I am devoted to destroying white supremacy in America is a pretty strong stance to take and I think that a lot of people are afraid of making that statement and saying that it's integral that articulating that it's a necessary component of how they make work and how they see the world because I can't I cannot deny the fact that my identity has been shaped almost entirely by political social and economic systems that I am a product of constructs that were created outside of me. I think that there is this liberal humanist idea that we are like inherently something when we're born and we the whole journey of our life is meant to like find something that we're meant to be but when you're a child and you grew up poor you grew up as a woman or somebody who is brown like myself and you see just how much of your life is set up for failure here in America specifically based on political social and economic constructs.

[00:17:20] You start to internalize those things so long winding journey back to how can a library help artists. And I think again is it's all about engagement with the community because I can come here as an individual and find whatever I want to find thanks to incredible people here who will help me as much as they can gain access to the material that I'm looking for. If I don't have the context of the community that I'm creating it for and creating it with then I don't really know what I'm doing as an artist. And so I can say that. The last five times that I've come to the library is actually not to search for a book but because of events like this. I came here to do a performance that was a musical adaptation of a youth novel and families were here and kids were here and before that it was to hear another speaker talk and engage with the audience regarding the subject material because I can be in a room full of books but if I don't have any context outside of that just like you said before is it a right if you don't know that you have it.

[00:18:32] If you don't have context then what is really the information that you're storing or that you have access to help and answers the question that that was a wonderful answer and I'm going to piggyback on it just a little bit as you pass the mike. This is something we both remarked on earlier but I am I work in Reader Services and I work with largely fiction. But the you know we've been talking about information and like all you know getting access to ideas. But I think it's important to remember that a huge part of this has to do with story and this and tragedy of story to how we perceive ourselves in the world to how we perceive what is possible for us. You know we're often you know we think of that in terms of escapism and that's not really important stuff that's recreational but as you know in your own work. And I think we find in our work too that access to story. And a wide range of story and stories that don't end like you maybe think that they're they're going to and that's also really really huge at all ages.

[00:19:32] So that's another big part I think of how we how we do this together that's fine.

[00:19:44] I think I've got one more but I think your answers Sara and David too I mean your answers were extremely extremely eloquent and I think that the question posed for us was you know about how libraries have dealt with banned books and challenged content and you know we again here we are in terms of fighting those battles on the front lines and it was interesting to see some folks walking

around the building tonight before the program started and they were just amazed that some of the titles here on display that were banned were banned. And it was in a way what do I want to say inspirational for me to see that because I know the battle is worth it but those battles constantly occur in many different venues. And what is very important to have in place and I don't mean to sound too luxury about this but you really need to have a transparent process when an individual identifies a book and audio material magazine whatever that they feel is controversial or shouldn't be included. You would need to have a very clear process to give that person opportunity to articulate what the what the issues are and yet still bring together a very very balanced panel of experts from many different fields to try to make those recommendations. Now I know we just finished celebrating banned books week hooray hooray hooray. And I just so also have to shout out if anybody's really interested in this topic American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom just check it on your phone or whatever. They have tons of information about these very critical struggles to keep all kinds of literature available to all of you.

[00:21:40] The state of Oregon is just set up a really good website for things for their state as well. We need to do the same here although I guess fortunately and sadly they have a bit more activity than we need to.

[00:21:51] But yeah they've got a good one if you're interested in what's going on in the northwest we covered a good portion with the filtering with zip and the Patriot Act particularly with filtering and the tying of federal funds for controlling what what type of content you should be able to access. And while in the past you'll while in the past we had that type of tie to content with funding.

[00:22:25] I'm wondering a little bit in the future how much is that going to increase in terms of more federal funding being tied to stipulations about what type of content that we provide as a library in terms of either resources or events. Or state level

[00:22:47] Or a local level so that is something that I'm wondering in the future it's not be you know how we dealt with controversial content in the past. It's just I see that as a potential challenge especially with funds becoming less available because you have a lot more

[00:23:14] A lot more items lot more resources vying for funding and you're getting to a point where how what what would it look like for in a future where more funding is tied to certain stipulations such as performance such as filtering such as you have to have access to this particular type of material in order to get this funding. So I just have to jump in. That's a really scary thought. But

[00:23:48] I have to tell everybody. Rest easy because even though we've talked a lot about this federal money for broadband federal support for your local public library is absolutely minimal. So no I mean it's theoretically they could make a big statement but it is you know these institutions are funded locally. So that's why I talk. But that's why I talked about your value system at the institution being integrated with the value system of your community which here in Seattle we have an absolutely great situation. And you're doing that every day so not I. I totally respect your answer but I just want everybody know that the Fed money for libraries is like next to nothing and let me know. I know

because I ran the agency that doled it out. It just wasn't that much important but not much so we should we go to the audience.

[00:24:39] Yeah yeah sure. Here. I'm gonna. So um we're now. If anybody in the audience has any questions that they would like to ask. Um I. We're gonna. We've got mikes available for you. Um so we'll have a little bit of interaction if you want it.

[00:24:56] Thank you.

[00:24:57] So my question is I think one of the popular series on Netflix was the Handmaid's Tale and a lot of people have been talking about authoritarianism.

[00:25:07] And I'm curious how do you think libraries would respond if we had a push to close down access.

[00:25:18] Because I think that's something that's on people's minds well first of all that was.

[00:25:26] I love that book in the series and it was really so this dystopia that I. I don't mean to be in any way pessimistic although I was my class pessimist in high school. If anybody wants to know that but my fear is that so many of the services and even so much knowledge as as David was mentioning about the Constitution is either not understood by many of the members of our public currently or just assumed to be in place. So I think it could be a very challenging situation if authoritarian and ism really came into play and we began to see our. Valuable community institutions of democracy being shut down. I would valiantly work with all colleagues and supporters and invest in citizens to rally the troops to make a difference. But my fear is that could be a huge battle to fight I agree.

[00:26:40] And I think that there would be lots of people who don't frequent libraries who would say well that's fine. Well we still have access thanks to technology to information and I think that's really scary because even when you propose that question I was like oh what I would what would I do.

[00:27:00] Amazon on gap.

[00:27:03] Mm hmm. I just go online and as a goal I really do. But then again. Thinking about what was said earlier is I am privileged to have that type of access to information. A lot of people are not. Libraries provide a different type of access. And so I would hope that there would be a huge battle for that. That there would be people who even if they don't benefit from a library if they don't frequent a library that they would at least fight and stand on the behalf of people who do Yeah it scares me too and I'm scared that what you say what you hope will happen.

[00:27:44] Might not you know for many of us who work in libraries one of the things that we struggle with most or one of the most poignant and painful moments is when we're talking with somebody and the first thing they say or the first comment in the comments dream about a library related story is oh that's where the homeless people are. And they say it so blithely. And with such a degree of I don't I

don't know I don't even know what to call it but it is very disturbing the degree to which people don't seem to care or even feel like it is their right not to know or deal with any of that.

[00:28:27] And so the fact that they don't understand the kind of access that we provide that many people don't otherwise have.

[00:28:37] The fact that just people are kind of in their little in there. They see their condition. They say Oh I'll be fine.

[00:28:44] That's fine I've got my phone and and that's really really disturbing to me.

[00:28:50] And I see that with the greater role that technology is playing in our lives. That's one more way for us to leave people behind.

[00:29:00] Yeah in dramatic fashion.

[00:29:02] So I'm disturbed.

[00:29:09] What can libraries do better than they're doing now to promote and encourage and sustain intellectual freedom.

[00:29:20] One thing that is starting to ramp up quite a bit. It's ramped up a bit after the Patriot Act.

[00:29:28] But a lot more libraries are starting to get in to the business of teaching patrons how to protect their privacy as they go through their lives seeking resources about particular materials that you know the government or more or more days a corporation would love to know what they're reading or love to know what they're buying what to know what they're browsing and not. And so there is a particular group called the library Freedom Project. It started off as a Knight Foundation grant and now it's being funded by I I. The I m I s acronym soup and they are leading the charge along with a couple other library folks out there and teaching patrons how to use Tor. How many of you are familiar with Tor

[00:30:33] So tor allows you to browse the internet without giving away your location so essentially scrambles your location where you are. That is one way of making yourself a little less trackable by either government or corporation. They are also delving into ways about how to teach patrons how to keep themselves secure online as well as making sure that they have at least some sort of notion of what they can do control their privacy in privacy settings. So one thing that libraries could do better in terms of the way that they approach intellectual freedom is advocating that patrons do have that right to privacy and confidentiality beyond just a policy because policies that we have in libraries traditionally focus more on physical materials and we work with again technology vendors on the library side that have patron data both personally. Well when you talk about personally identifiable information you have two facets you have a facet about the person the data about the person so

name address bar code number and so on and then information about that person's activities including web searches what they've checked out and reference questions.

[00:32:02] So after the Patriot Act as David said law libraries went well for keeping a lot of this information in-house.

[00:32:12] We might want to do something about that with library vendors on the other hand or other vendors that work with libraries they are still tracking a good amount of information that I personally am not comfortable with. And. Libraries on that end need to do a. Heck of a lot more

[00:32:36] In terms of making sure that vendors espouse the same confidentiality and privacy goals that we have in mind in ensuring making sure that our patrons are able to do what they need to do in terms of accessing information without any fear repercussions.

[00:33:02] I mean I just eat the mike and see if it goes you know I think that we can be much stronger advocates as organizations around public policy.

[00:33:14] I find it deeply ironic that we that we you know we're striving we're going around with hot spots and we've got a limited number of hotspots and for Wi-Fi access so that people who don't can't pay for it can get Wi-Fi access and there's a ridiculously long line for these It's our attempt to sort of make up for this the state of things with you know teaspoon at a time and and the fact that this is not just something that is universally available. And part of our government access and you're right to the airwaves and all of that but is still regarded as as a largely commercial service that you have to pay for.

[00:33:52] You don't get. We need to be advocating for that. That's totally in our line of business. That's that you know. And I think that we are maybe a little too ready to accept some of the commercial realities that actually are not true to our own ideals and we could probably step up and be a bit more strong in that regard. But I don't know how we would do that.

[00:34:15] Maybe someone else here.

[00:34:20] Hello my name is Maury. First I would like to thank you for sharing your knowledge about this. Before I ask my question I want to make sure we're on the same page. What would you define as intellectual freedom.

[00:34:36] So intellectual freedom has to do with not just the freedom of speech but the freedom of information the freedom to hear different ideas. I have it written down here somewhere but basically Actually I can.

[00:34:55] Yeah.

[00:34:57] Yeah I think it's fairly clear.

[00:35:03] I've lost track of it. OK. Ability for individuals to pursue knowledge and express themselves in any civil way without imposition or interference of another person or another institution's belief system. Well

[00:35:22] That's a good thing. My question was Did you now follow the whole. Debate. I was upstairs and uh. Could you guys. Could you jump on board. You were mentioning how the Nazis were gathering in order for them to celebrate their ideology. And that was like shocking to the community where that happened. I wanted to see. I wanted to understand what is the link between that. And this topic of a because you just define what you call intellectual freedom right. So

[00:36:12] So good.

[00:36:14] This is actually sort of a case in point. So libraries have a responsibility to sort of reflect all the needs of their community and they try to they strive to be open to people of all views. That's really part of the intellectual freedom. What that means is that if a group wants to use your meeting room doesn't really matter who the group is. I mean unless they're actually building a bomb in there. It's OK. And. That. Leads to some strange bedfellows. And and so often libraries get associated with groups that they have no association with. They're striving to be neutral points and not reflective of or promoting any point of view which means they may seem to be or perceived to be siding with groups that are really quite pernicious.

[00:37:03] Now it's been said and Becky had a really interesting observation which is what happens when. What's what. You know the prevailing Moray is is threatening intellectual freedom itself. When we start to feel like well you know our rights may be going away. And

[00:37:21] When that situation occurs what is library's responsibility and what is all of our responsibility around trying to preserve a place of tolerance and a place where this freedom of thought.

[00:37:34] That's what we've been talking about. Anyway what I'm what I'm asking here is a lot of times what you have is people that are actually targeted individuals or you have

[00:37:53] This wrapped in the Patriot Act about taking away our freedoms and things like that. But I want it to know that I have not heard much of it. How are we protecting people's rights. And then also to making sure that the laws followed. How are we keeping this balance because I know I'm a targeted individual of the government and sometimes people seek to take away my rights to even read a book or even be in the library. There's I've had that happen. And then also too. So how do we keep people's individual freedoms good in all of our freedoms. Good. Well we follow the law I don't want to.

[00:38:41] I don't mean to make any assumptions on your question.

[00:38:43] So please if I'm going off base you know I think the library is a public institution is here to serve using individual and also serve the entire community. So it's very important for us to protect your rights as an individual. And I hope speaking just for the library community and knowing what the Seattle Public Library. I'm sure that's a priority for the library. Yet. As in civil society we have a number of different interests and individuals in this institution it's a very open institution and we do have to have structures here in place to make sure that everyone is safe and everyone's rights are honored and respected. So I don't mean to be going off base. Correct me if I am but I have to just make one. One comment because David did bring up this case of Kramer in Morristown many years ago that really set. Into motion the discussion and the acknowledgement of of the these public institutions providing safe and regulated spaces for so that everybody can enjoy the use of the institution. And as I was coming into the program tonight I noticed the rules of conduct and the multiplicity of that policy on a poster here and there many around the building. So it's very transparent.

[00:40:21] But I think there can be challenges in protecting one individual's privacy and rights and also in terms of maintaining a healthy and safe atmosphere when you have many different individuals with a variety of points of view and and approaches to life in one physical so I wanted to know.

[00:41:04] I see that as I read books I wanted to know I guess what goes into the approval process of what books do come in the library. What is the process of banning or unbanning books. And are there any banned books to day.

[00:41:26] And there's that process I guess still current and relevant.

[00:41:33] Ok well first of all I'm happy to report that in this particular library we don't get a lot of challenges and one of the things that that Susan was mentioning which is really key to our lot of our policies here is we have very transparent and very deliberate processes around that. So when as as will sometimes happens somebody comes to the library and says hey this item I don't think should be in your collection. We take that very seriously so seriously in fact that that person then gets a form to fill out and they have to sit down and put into words why they don't think I've read that that really they're there. They're invited to sit down and think about that so that they can tell us interestingly enough in the vast majority of cases it ends right there because very often when people are challenging a book in practice we find any way they just really kind of want to express their opinion they just want to say you know I don't I don't like this book and it's like OK well you are asking us to make sure that nobody in the city can have access to it. Please tell us why. And the vast majority of cases that's as far as it ever goes which is telling. But sometimes then people will go ahead and submit a challenge to materials. And that goes through a full process. And it's generally explained to them why. This material is deemed worthy of the collection and is going to continue to be included in the collection. Now there have been cases even recently where we have looked at.

[00:43:14] How or how an item the kind of access that people have to an item. So I will actually call up a specific case which had to do with a set of graphic novels comics banned. This way my hair gave the 10 10 books which are largely regarded in this day and age as being full of some pretty

intense and retrograde racial stereotypes some of them were sort of ironed out in the process of those books coming to America. Many of them were not and this issue was raised it was raised by staff. And in the end what we decided to do was these materials. Out there you know they're of great artistic merit. We want them in the collection they're important books. But we didn't want them in the children's area of the collection. That is not to say that children can't read them. It's just to sort of reduce the degree of inadvertent sort of exposure so that children are less likely to stumble upon these and discover them on their own. It's usually a parent will be involved or a more deliberate act before they can access those materials. We haven't placed limits on them but that's the kind of decision that actually will sometimes happen and it often has to do with age appropriateness and issues like we're brought up with Dr. Seuss where materials that are for many people beloved childhood classics and you go back and read them today. OK. This this reads a little different now than maybe it did 50 or 100 years ago. So libraries I think are continually having to face that and maybe adjust their approach.

[00:44:52] I don't know if that fully answers your question and I think we're down to it. Yeah we. We have to do last question because we have to close the library too. Thank you very much. That was an excellent question.

[00:45:06] All right. So first off I'd just like to say thank you to the panel for a very interesting discussion from multiple viewpoints. My question is actually for all of you and it's what has been your biggest challenge professionally as it relates to protecting intellectual freedom biggest challenge professionally as it relates to protecting intellectual freedom Hello I would say my biggest challenge if I were to talk about my own intellectual freedom is I'll put it in the context of myself as a as an art maker.

[00:45:46] The information that I had access to about how to be an artist or what an artist meant or the value of art I learned that entirely within the context of Western American liberal arts pedagogy. So the context of that a the people who perpetuate that context are largely white and largely male and largely of a certain age academically the stuff that I was exposed to were the works belonging to those people. And the challenge that I felt very clearly throughout my entire undergrad was that this is the information that I have access to. I'm extremely privileged to be here in the first place to have this information. And yet I find this information to be incomplete. But I am being told that this is exactly the information I need to know in order to be successful artist or to be an artist who is contributing in valuable ways to my community. So already there was a huge challenge. I was being told that something was all I needed to know. I felt that that was incorrect but I didn't know what else to look for because I had internalized 20 plus years of this same pedagogy Western American classic writings and philosophy perpetuated by white males. And so as a woman of color I didn't have any type of representation or context for myself so I didn't really know where to turn. I didn't even know what to look for. I had these vague ideas that I wanted information that wasn't from dead white guys. But did I want it from dead white women. Did I want it from black activists to I want it from Asian women writing about diaspora.

[00:47:35] I mean now and I consider this class that I took my junior year which was about theory it was theoretical practice and the theory of colonialism post-colonialism feminist theory all of a sudden I had access to information that provided me a completely different vocabulary and a rigorous vocabulary to articulate the vague feelings of unease that the information that I was told was complete was so I hope that answers your question inspirational answer so I'll keep mine brief and it's tough for me to say this but you ask the question so I will.

[00:48:22] It's been very challenging for me over my career.

[00:48:30] Even though I'm a strong proponent of intellectual freedom and the ability of individuals to get whatever and for that nation they want to strike a balance between completely open access to the Internet no matter what the individual chooses to view and how what that person is viewing might impact the experience of library staff or other patrons. That's always been. A challenge for that's been also another challenge for me as well as balancing that striking that balance between what type of resources we have in the library and its effects on other library patrons and staff especially on materials that advocates arm or dehumanization or some sort of not seeing another

[00:49:28] Part of the of our person being a human. On my technical end when I have people who say to me I have nothing to hide

[00:49:42] So explain to these people why confidentiality and privacy. Over and over and over and over again why they are essential pieces of intellectual freedom. And it's still going to be an uphill battle and I'm still climbing that hill

[00:50:01] And I'll be climbing that hill for the foreseeable future.

[00:50:05] It's like climbing from Third Avenue to Fourth Avenue from from the bust up to from Marion to SPL Central Branch forever that hill.

[00:50:15] But it's got to be climbed about just very quickly say is as a public service librarian. For me the really tough things are usually around access. There are certain policies that we have that just inevitably perpetuate inequities in society often around the rules of conduct and they're very difficult because often the people that we're trying to protect are also marginalized people. So there are situations where there's just sort of no good answer. And that's that's very hard. Or there doesn't seem to be a good answer. Maybe we just haven't found it yet. And one of the things that's heartening. I want to refer back to Sara's comments is over the 15 years I've been doing this more and more people when they come to us looking for reading suggestions are really upfront about what they're interested in and how nontraditional it is. It's really been fascinating to see the shift in the behavior of our readers and what they're seeking and how vocal and upfront they are about that and that's heartening. Actually I feel we have a much more diverse readership and and a readership that is that has come to expect

[00:51:26] More diverse world of books among other things.

[00:51:41] Do you mind if we do one more round of applause for our amazing presenters. And also I would be extremely remiss if I did not think David and Ashley for their incredible help with planning this and also to our presenters for just having really really wonderful insights. Thank you thank you thank you.

[00:52:08] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.