



Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse 2023 Report

On challenges in Oregon libraries and schools July 1, 2022—June 30, 2023

Published August 2023, Updated 9/7/2023

Scope of This Report

The [Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse](#) (OIFC) collects reports about challenges to materials, services, and programs in Oregon libraries and schools.

A challenge, as [defined by the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom](#), is “an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. [...] Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others.”

Challenges can be any of the following:

- Materials challenge (books, movies, music, magazines, digital content)
- Internet-related challenge (filtering issues, access to computers, use policies)
- Library service (meeting rooms, programs, author visits, exhibits, displays, hold shelf practices)
- Patron privacy or confidentiality issue (personally identifiable information, circulation records)
- Hate crime (defacement of library property to target a specific group; use of swastikas or other symbols of intimidation, harassment or assault on library property)
- Other (student publications or performances, access to libraries or library cards, social media, artwork, "First Amendment Audit"¹)

Challenges come in many forms. Some follow library policy and include a formal request for reconsideration. Others may be direct complaints to a governing board or authority; social media or news campaigns; or hiding, stealing, defacing, or trashing items.

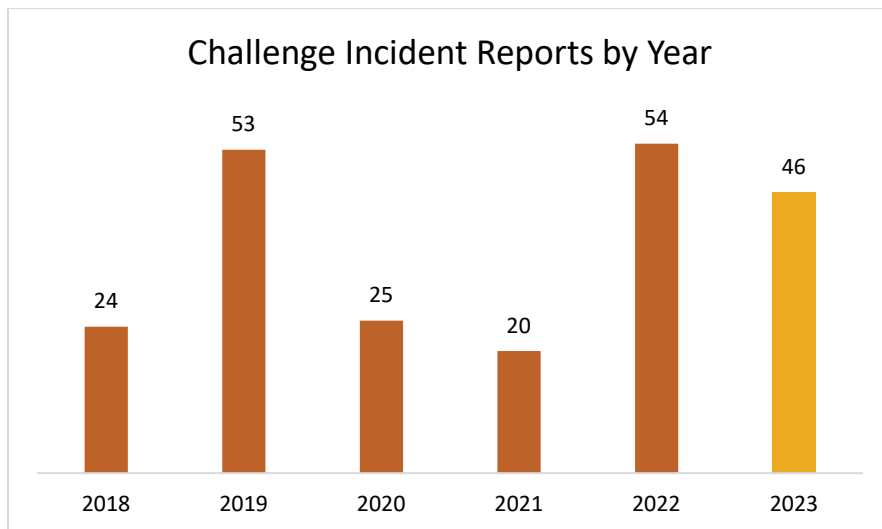
¹ A “First Amendment Audit” involves individuals or groups who enter public spaces, such as libraries, with cameras and record their interactions with staff and the public. Their aim is to test constitutional rights; specifically, the right to photograph and video record in a public space.



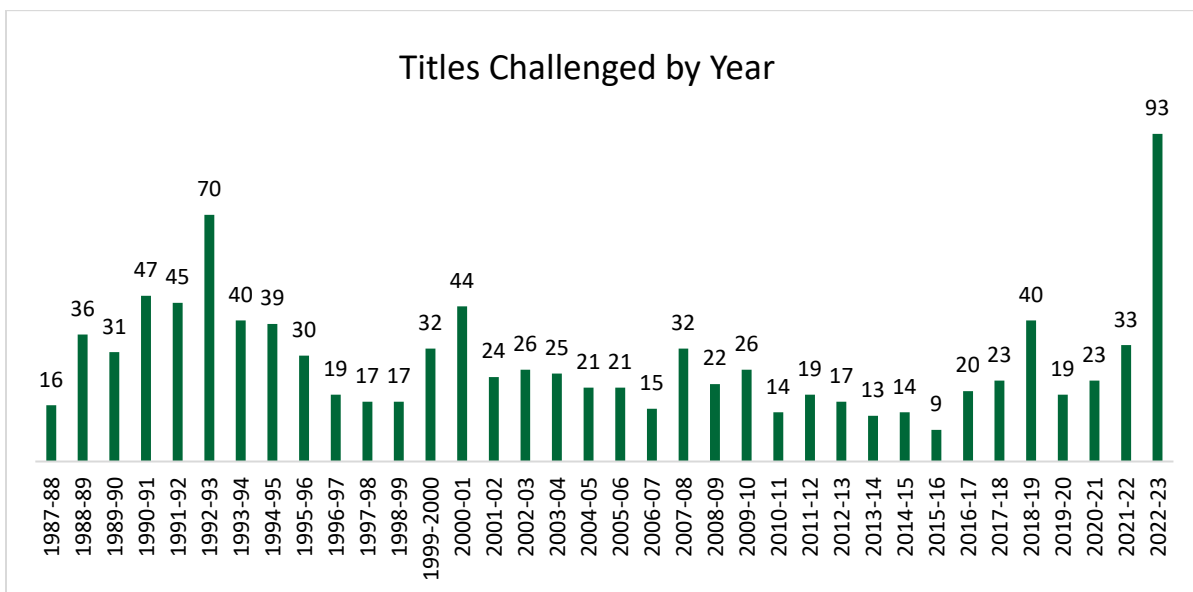
Organizations report challenge information to the OIFC on a voluntary basis. The State Library also tracks challenges reported in media sources.

Summary of Challenge Incidents Reported

The OIFC received 46 reports of challenge incidents.

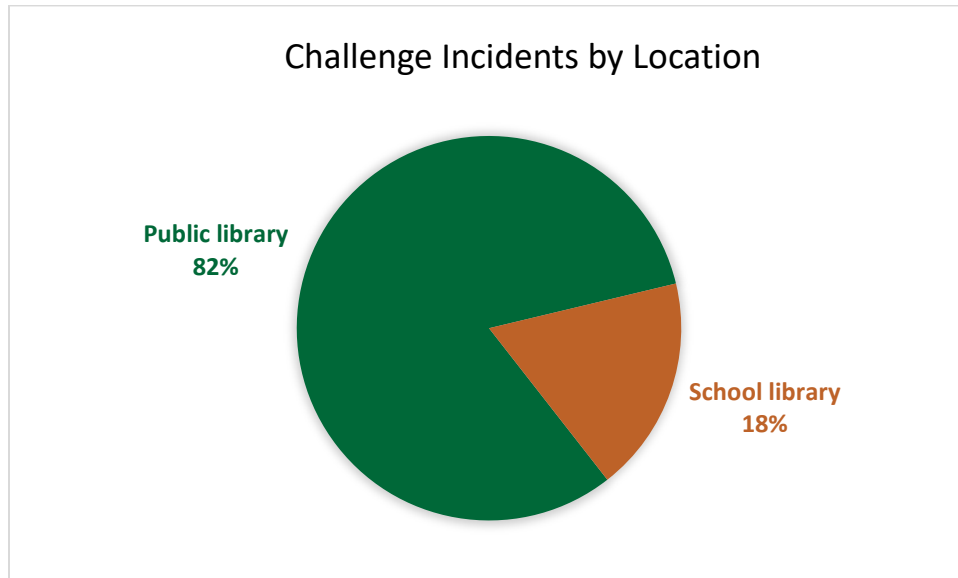


While this year saw a slight dip in the overall number of challenge incidents, several involved multiple titles. Incidents have been tracked since 1987, and the number of challenged titles is at a historic high.

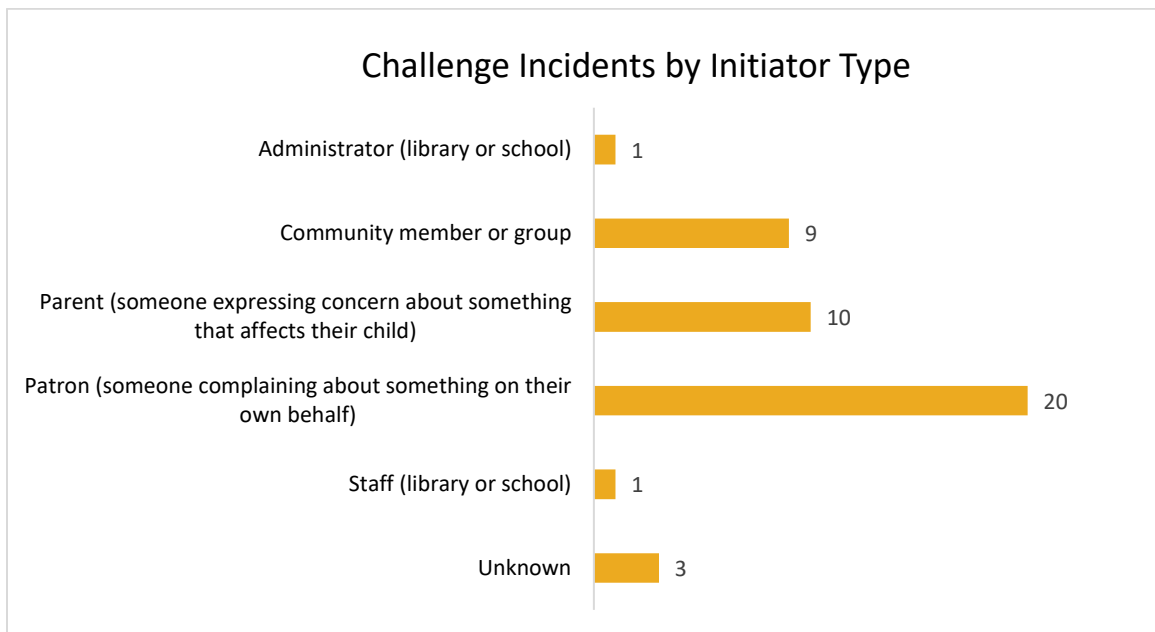




Of the 46 reports received, the State Library determined 44 were official challenges.² These came from 27 libraries and schools, and most occurred at public libraries.



Many challenges came from patrons, parents, and community members or groups.



² Complaints that do not go beyond talking to the patron in the moment are not considered official challenges, unless they escalate to the library taking further action (receiving a formal reconsideration form, the complainer asking to meet with the library director, etc.).



Library Service Challenges

12 incidents dealt with library service challenges.

Seven were challenges to the library's Pride Month display. Initiators objections included "the exposure of children to LGBTQIA materials," "promoting anti-faith and pro homosexual activities and lifestyle," and "not represent[ing] all points of view." All the displays remained.

Two others were also challenges to displays:

- At a school library, a group of students objected to the library's Banned Books Week display, claiming "they no longer felt 'safe or comfortable'" visiting the library. Staff were directed by administration to take down the display.
- At a public library, a patron asked to have a title removed from a display because "the title is vulgar and on the main display next to the children's reading area." The library moved the item to a display unit located in an adult reading area.

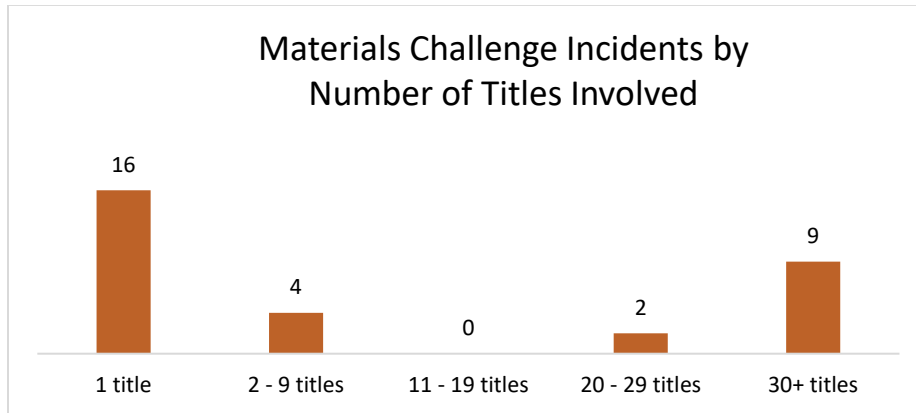
Three other reports concerned library programs:

- At a public library, a community member contacted a government official about the library's Social Justice Book Club, stating "the topic was too political and shouldn't be held at the library." The official asked the library director to discontinue the program.
- At another public library, the director received threatening emails calling them a "pedophile" and "groomer" after the release of an article about the library's Gender Affirming Closet event. The director sought the advice and support of the City Manager and City Attorney, as well as local law enforcement. The event was held as planned.
- At another public library, a drag queen story time was cancelled due to threats of violence. The library itself was also closed for the day.

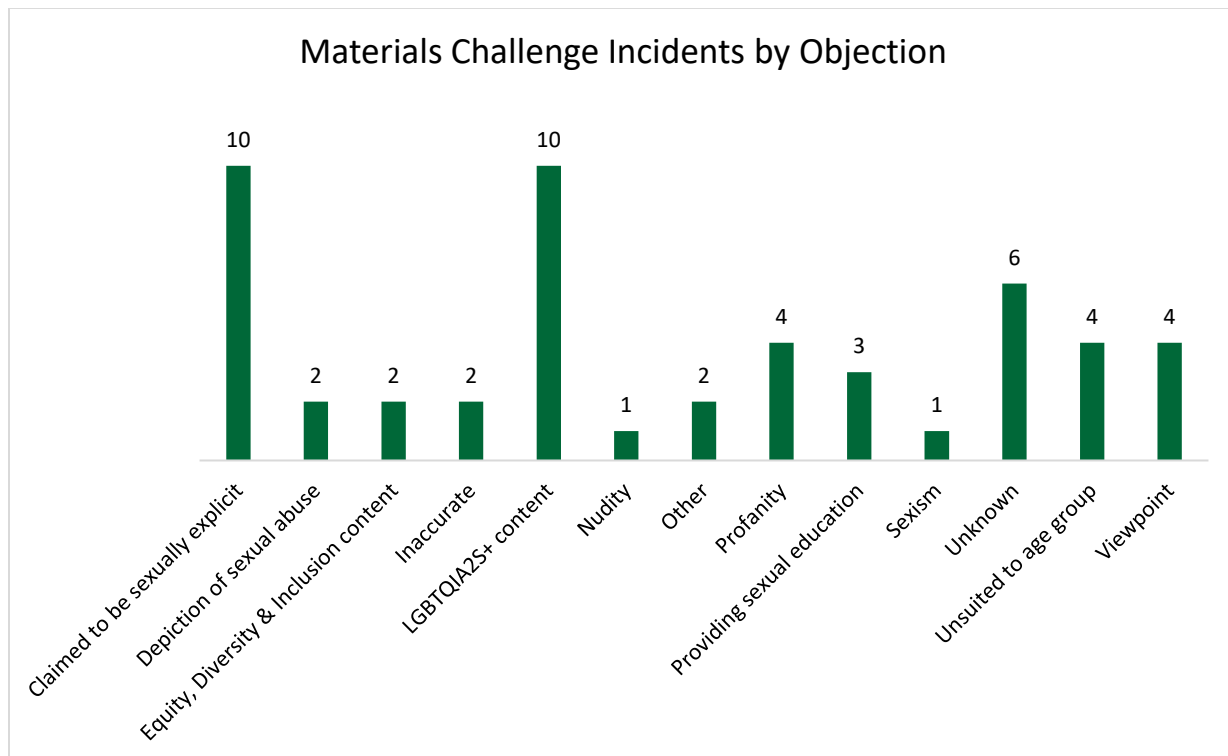


Materials Challenges

31 materials challenge incidents were reported. 15 incidents involved multiple materials and a handful were challenges to entire subject areas or collections (e.g. LGBTQIA2S+ children’s materials). 93 individual titles were challenged, the most since the OIFC was formed in 1987.³ (This figure does not include challenges to entire subject areas or collections.)



Materials were challenged for a variety of reasons. In many cases there were multiple objections.

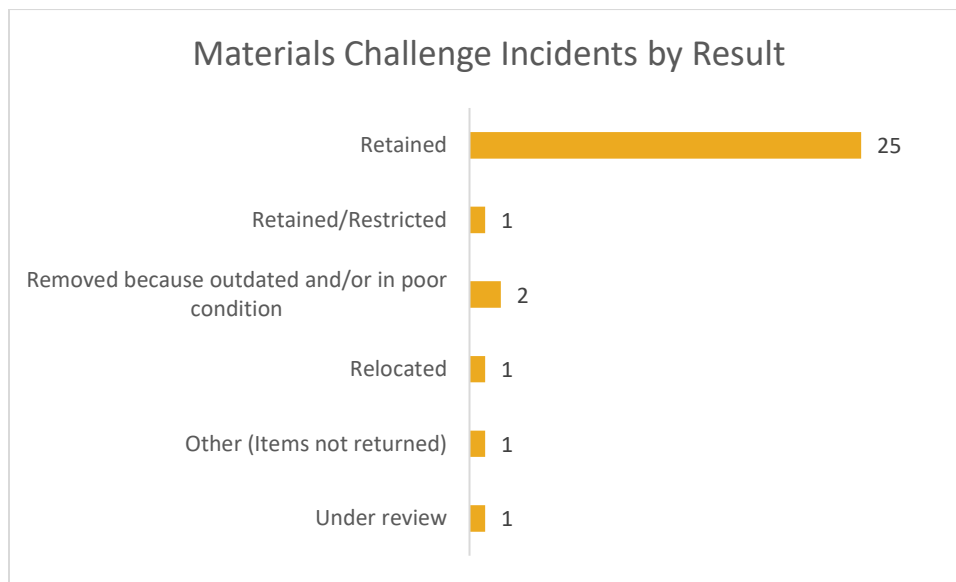


³ This number was originally erroneously reported as 85 and has been updated for accuracy.



16 reports indicated the challenge went through the library or school’s established reconsideration process. 10 challenges were brought straight to the Library Board, school administration, or local government. In 5 reports, staff noted items being hidden, stolen, or placed in the trash. This is the first year the State Library is tracking challenges that bypass established processes and we will continue to monitor this situation.

In 25 of the 31 incidents, the materials were retained.



Individually Challenged Items

The following items are organized alphabetically by title.

Item	Objection	Initiator	Location	Results
<i>ABC Pride</i> by Elly Barnes (book)	LGBTQIA2S+ content	Parent	Public library	Retained
<i>The ABCs of Diversity</i> by Carolyn B. Helsel (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Across a Field of Starlight</i> by Blue Delliquanti (graphic novel)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Adventure Time: Distant Lands</i> directed by Jeff Liu (film)	Unsuited to age group	Parent	Public library	Relocated
<i>Allegedly</i> by Tiffany Jackson (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review



<i>The Art of Racing in the Rain</i> by Garth Stein (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Beloved</i> by Toni Morrison (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out</i> by Susan Kuklin (book)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parent, community members / group	School library	Retained
<i>Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out</i> by Susan Kuklin (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>The Big Book of Pride Flags</i> by Jem Milton (book)	LGBTQIA2S+ content	Parent	Public library	Retained
<i>Big Wig</i> by Jonathan Hillman (book)	Unknown	Parent	Public library	Retained
<i>Big Wig</i> by Jonathan Hillman (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Bingo Love</i> by Tee Franklin (graphic novel)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Black Bird, Blue Road</i> by Sofiya Pasternack (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>The Blackest Night: Rise of the Black Lanterns</i> by Geoff Johns (graphic novel)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>The Bluest Eye</i> by Toni Morrison (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Breathless</i> by Jessica Niven (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Court of Mist and Fury, A</i> by Sarah J. Maas (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Court of Silver Flames, A</i> by Sarah J. Maas (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Court of Thorns and Roses, A</i> by Sarah J. Maas (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Court of Wings and Ruin, A</i> by Sarah J. Maas (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Crank</i> by Ellen Hopkins (book)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parents, community members / group	School library	Restricted
<i>Crank</i> by Ellen Hopkins (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>The Deep and Dark Blue</i> by Niki Smith (graphic novel)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Eleanor and Park</i> by Rainbow Rowell (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Empire of Storms</i> by Sarah J. Maas (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Fade</i> by Lisa McMann (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Felipa and the Day of the Dead</i> by Birte Muller (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained



<i>Flamer</i> by Mike Curato (graphic novel)	LGBTQIA2S+ content, Profanity	Patron and Parent	School library	Retained
<i>Flamer</i> by Mike Curato (graphic novel)	LGBTQIA2S+ content, Claimed to be sexually explicit, Profanity	Parent	School library	Retained
<i>Flamer</i> by Mike Curato (graphic novel)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parents, community members / group	School library	Retained
<i>The Gender Creative Child</i> by Diane Ernest (book)	LGBTQIA2S+ content, Claimed to be sexually explicit, Unsited to age group	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>The Gender Creative Child</i> by Diane Ehrensaft (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Gender Swapped Fairy Tales</i> by Karrie Fransman (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Getting It</i> by Alex Sanchez (book)	Unknown	Administrator	School library	Retained
<i>The Glass Castle</i> by Jeanette Walls (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>The God Box</i> by Alex Sanchez (book)	Unknown	Administrator	School library	Retained
<i>Guns & Ammo</i> (magazine)	Viewpoint	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> by Margaret Atwood (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>The Handmaid's Tale: A Graphic Novel</i> by Margaret Atwood and Renee Nault (graphic novel)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Heartstopper, Vol. 1</i> by Alice Oseman (graphic novel)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parents, community members / group	School library	Retained
<i>Heartstopper, Vol. 1</i> by Alice Oseman (graphic novel)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Heartstopper, Vol. 1</i> by Alice Oseman (graphic novel)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Other (Items not returned)
<i>Heartstopper, Vol. 2</i> by Alice Oseman (graphic novel)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parents, community members / group	School library	Retained
<i>Heartstopper, Vol. 2</i> by Alice Oseman (graphic novel)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Heartstopper, Vol. 2</i> by Alice Oseman (graphic novel)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Other (Items not returned)
<i>He's My Mom!: A Story For Children Who Have a Transgender Parent or</i>	Unknown	Parent	Public library	Retained



<i>Relative</i> by Sarah Savage (book)				
<i>Homegoing</i> by Yaa Gyasi (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Human Blues</i> by Elisa Albert (book)	Profanity	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter</i> by Erika Sánchez (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>If You're a Kid Like Gavin</i> by Gavin Grimm and Kyle Lukoff (book)	LGBTQIA2S+ content, Claimed to be sexually explicit, Unsuitable to age group	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Impulse</i> by Ellen Hopkins (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Indian Shoes</i> by Cynthia Leitish Smith (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Johnny the Walrus</i> by Matt Walsh (book)	Viewpoint, Anti-LGBTQIA2S+	Staff	Public library	Retained
<i>Lawn Boy</i> by Jonathan Evison (book)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parents, community members / group	School library	Retained
<i>Lolita</i> by Vladimir Nabokov (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Looking for Alaska</i> by John Green (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Martin McLean, Middle School Queen</i> by Alyssa Zaczek (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Me And Earl and the Dying Girl</i> by Jesse Andrews (book)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parents, community members / group	School library	Restricted
<i>Me And Earl and the Dying Girl</i> by Jesse Andrews (book)	Claimed to be sexually explicit, Profanity	Parent	Public library	Retained
<i>Me and Earl and the Dying Girl</i> by Jesse Andrews (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Milk and Honey</i> by Rupi Kaur (book)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parents, community members / group	School library	Retained
<i>Missing</i> (Japanese Title: <i>Sagasu</i>) directed by Shinzō Katayama (film)	Depiction of sexual abuse	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Monday's Not Coming</i> by Tiffany Jackson (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>My Friend Dahmer</i> by Derf Backderf (graphic novel)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>None of the Above</i> by I.W. Gregorio (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review



<i>The Nowhere Girls</i> by Amy Reed (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Omari McQueen's Best Bites</i> by Omari McQueen (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Once Upon a Potty</i> by Alona Frankel (book)	Inaccurate	Patron	Public library	Removed (outdated / poor condition)
<i>The One Who Loves You the Most</i> by Medina (book)	Unknown	Parent	Public library	Missing
<i>Our Skin</i> by Megan Madison (book)	Inaccurate, EDI content	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Out of Darkness</i> by Ashley Hope Perez (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Parenting Your LGBTQ+ Teen</i> by Allan Sadac (book)	LGBTQIA2S+ content, Claimed to be sexually explicit, Unsuitable to age group	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Perfect</i> by Ellen Hopkins (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> by Stephen Chbosky (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>Pride: An Inspirational Guide to LGBTQ+ Movement</i> by Stella Caldwell (graphic novel)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Pride: An Inspirational History of the LGBTQ+ Movement</i> by Stella Caldwell (book)	LGBTQIA2S+ content	Parent	Public library	Retained
<i>Raising White Kids</i> by Jennifer Harvey (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Rolling Stone</i> (magazine)	Sexism	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Sam is My Sister</i> by Ashley Rhodes-Courter (book)	Unknown	Parent	Public library	Retained
<i>Social Justice Parenting</i> by Traci Baxley (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Sold</i> by Patricia McCormick (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>The Stonewall Riots: Making a Stand for LGBTQ Rights</i> by Archie Bongiovanni (graphic novel)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>The Sun and Her Flowers</i> by Rupi Kaur (book)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parents, community members / group	School library	Retained
<i>The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez</i> by Adrianna Cuevas (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>The Truth About Alice</i> by Jennifer Mathieu (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review



<i>Two Grooms on a Cake</i> by Rob Sanders (book)	LGBTQIA2S+ content, "It teaches the false belief that the end justifies the means"	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre</i> by Carole Boston Weatherford (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Water for Elephants</i> by Sara Gruen (book)	Unknown	Parents	School library	Under review
<i>What is COVID-19?</i> by Sara L. Latta (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>What's Going On Down There?</i> By Karen Gravelle (book)	Claimed to be sexually explicit	Parent	Public library	Removed (outdated / poor condition)
<i>When We Say Black Lives Matter</i> by Maxine Beneba Clarke (book)	Viewpoint, EDI content	Patron	Public library	Retained
<i>Who is Kamala Harris?</i> by Kirsten Anderson (book)	Unknown	Patron	Public library	Retained

Other Challenges to Library Collections

- At a public library, a patron requested rankings on DVDs that were "not yet rated" to deter "access to materials not suited for the audience." The library shared that they don't enforce DVD ranking systems and would not be adding rankings. At another public library, a patron contacted the library about Kanopy streaming video and "the pornographic content that they are hosting in their film collection," asking for videos to be ranked. The library opted to ask Kanopy to consider flagging new titles with graphic content warnings and to create collections and portals for teens.
- At a school library, a parent requested that "materials pertaining to LGBTQ+ issues or sexual identity, descriptions (or scenes) of to sexual abuse, sexually explicit, or pertaining to sexual /gender/genitalia" be "contained in secure adults only space and only checked out to parents/adults who request them." The library did not relocate items but did follow the parent's request to add notes to their children's accounts limiting what they can check out.
- At a public library, a community members asked the City Council to remove children's books containing "explicit gender confusion and transgender" content. The city declined to remove the items.



- At a public library, a patron filed request for reconsideration for all materials in Spanish for all ages. The stated objection was that the materials were “Not available to all Americans equal access. Patronize funds 4 one ethnicity/people of nationality/origin.” The library retained the materials.
- Three public libraries have been receiving challenges to LGBTQIA2S+ materials for over a year. Initiators state that the libraries are "promoting" content, “distributing pornography to minors,” and encouraging “sexualization of young children.” Staff have been intimidated and harassed, called groomers and pedophiles, and received death threats. Materials have been hidden, stolen, and turned around. The Board and governing bodies have been involved in frequent debates, and local news has published numerous letters to the editor. These situations, not uncommon across the country, continue to be ongoing.⁴

⁴ See “Directors Under Attack” (*Library Journal*, March 1 2023, <https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/Directors-Under-Attack>).