



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



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September 18, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Salem, Ore – Libraries and schools in Oregon reported the highest number of challenges to books and other materials in 2023-24 since the State Library of Oregon began collecting data. Statistics on the past year's materials challenges and more are available in the latest report of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse.

The [Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse](#) (OIFC) was created in 1987 to collect information about intellectual freedom challenges at libraries and education institutions in Oregon. A challenge is any attempt to remove or restrict access to a library material, service, or program based on the objection of a person or group.

The [2024 OIFC Annual Report](#) shows that 63 challenge incidents were reported from July 2023 to June 2024 in public libraries, schools, and colleges. In total, 151 items were challenged in those incidents, with 127 unique titles. This year sets records for the most items and titles challenged in Oregon. The previous record was set last year with 93 titles.

This Oregon record comes amidst a similarly record-breaking national climate of challenges. The American Library Association (ALA) [reported](#) that 2023 saw the most attempts to censor library materials since they began collecting statistics. OIFC data is reported to the ALA and compiled in their national statistics.

The most common reasons people submitted challenges were that they felt the materials:

- Were sexually explicit or pornographic;
- Included content about people who are two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, or other identities related to sexual orientation or gender identity (2SLGBTQIA+);
- Were unsuited to the age group for whom they were intended;
- Contained profanity.

While most challenges were to books and other materials, 21% of official challenges were focused on library services or programs, vandalism, or entire categories of materials. These included antisemitic graffiti, challenges to all 2SLGBTQIA+ books in the library, defacement of library materials, and a Pride flag in a library window being shot with a BB gun.

A clear pattern has emerged in recent OIFC reports: incidents and challenged materials are disproportionately about, by, or center the stories of individuals who belong to an underrepresented protected class under Oregon

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law. In 2023-24, 87% of the items challenged told the stories of one or more underrepresented groups. 66% of challenged materials focused on 2SLGBTQIA+ people, while 22% centered Black, Indigenous, or people of color.

“Library and education staff in Oregon have once again shown that they are on the front lines of defending the intellectual freedom rights guaranteed to us all by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article I, Section 8 of the Oregon Constitution,” says Wendy Cornelisen, State Librarian. “In the face of fierce opposition and threats, these dedicated folks continue their work to ensure that everyone no matter their background sees their own experiences reflected in their school and library collections. The State Library of Oregon is committed to supporting libraries, schools, and their staff during this continuing surge in attempts to restrict the free flow of information.”

Libraries experiencing intellectual freedom challenges in Oregon are also supported by the Oregon Library Association (OLA) and the ALA. Volunteers on OLA’s [Intellectual Freedom Committee](#) respond to and advise libraries and schools during challenges, often serving as a first point of contact. ALA’s [Office of Intellectual Freedom](#) provides resources and consulting to help libraries prepare for and manage attempts at censorship. The State Library of Oregon relies on the expertise of both groups in its work on the OIFC.

To learn more about the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse and challenges in Oregon libraries, please visit the OIFC website at <https://libguides.osl.state.or.us/oifc> or contact Buzzy Nielsen, Program Manager for Library Support, at buzzy.nielsen@slo.oregon.gov or 971-375-3486.