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>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Yes, I got it. Welcome everyone. Thank you for joining us this morning for Building a Practical Toolkit for Censorship and Challenges at your Public Library. Good morning. We are going to do some quick introductions first. I am Amanda Vazquez. I am the director of the Dubuque County Library District in Dubuque County, Iowa. I'm also the chair-elect of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: Hi, good morning. My name is Sukrit Goswami. I'm the director at Haverford Township Free Library and the outskirts of Philadelphia. I'm also Intellectual Freedom Committee member and a Freedom to Read Foundation Board of Trustee. And right now I'm also serving the Executive Committee of Freedom to Read Foundation.

>> PETER COYL: Good morning, everyone. My name is Peter Coyl. I'm the Library director and CEO of the Sacramento Public Library president of their Freedom to Reach Foundation and Intellectual Freedom Roundtable Counselor.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: I have something I am supposed to read to all of you. ALA is aware of growing concerns related to the safety and security of library workers across the nation. Due to the sensitive nature of this session and the well-being of its participants, please refrain from capturing and sharing photos, videos, or other identifying information from this session. However, we welcome and encourage all to share their experiences and excitement for LibLearnX on social media throughout the weekend. So that's the official ALA disclaimer.

Our disclaimer here is we are not lawyers. We are going to make a lot of suggestions for you this morning. Please do your due diligence and confirm that these things are appropriate for your jurisdictions, wherever they may be. So take notes, but don't just immediately act on them, at least not most of them. So this

morning we are going to be doing a brief overview of the general challenge landscape, some of the trends and things that we have noticed in our work and we will get to the toolkit and your take home. So the take home toolkit is the handout that is provided along with these slides, which are available in the ALA app.

>> PETER COYL: And we will have time for questions at the end as well. The first thing we wanted to talk about is why people challenge materials. And we have found that there are a number of varying reasons that people feel that they need to challenge libraries having certain materials. One of the key pieces is that many people have sincerely held religious beliefs that object to certain materials, topics, and the themes.

There's been a- sorry I was going to use a different word, a skewing of what critical race theory is, and people are using that and weaponizing it to remove books about the black experience in America and other oppressed minority groups. There are some concerns over accurate representation, and sometimes those challenges are valid, that materials maybe don't actually represent a group. And we're seeing a lot of well, an uptick of people who are just generally concerned that they don't want their children to be feeling bad about what they read, whether it's portraying a historical incident or situation that casts their demographic in a negative light.

And so we are aware that these are varying differences, and not everyone has these reasons when they challenge, but these are kind of the underpinnings of most of the challenges that we're seeing lately. And whether or not these things are right or wrong or accurate these are the justifications and the place that the challenger is coming from. And I think it's important to recognize that and understand that.

And it's hard to argue with someone who has a particular worldview that is based on a belief that they have been taught or learned about from their family upbringing or just in their personal life. So when you try to have conversations that are logical it's hard to justify and explain when someone is coming at it from a lack of an illogical position. But it's purely an emotional and a belief-based position.

Most of these challenges that we're seeing are a concerted effort from groups. These are not grassroots organizations. This is not a mother or father or caregiver becoming surprised or concerned. These are orchestrated attempts by varying groups. We see have seen a number of groups, including Moms for Liberty.

And we saw last year around June, there was a group called Hide the Pride. I'm not calling it a specific religion, but it was a Catholic group that had an organized campaign encouraging people to check out books and not return them in some cases or to just put them on other place libraries, so you couldn't see it hence the hide the pride.

And these groups are using organized efforts and campaigns with social media. We've seen an uptick in people creating Facebook groups closed chats and sharing information on these platforms. And these include excerpts of books taken out context. These include pictures; these include lists of literally a plan of attack. This is what you need to do step by step by step, and this is how you respond to these challenges. This is what you say. And so it really is a different landscape than we've seen in before where it's maybe just a parent who's concerned or someone reads something.

This is efforts that are well-funded and well-organized from national groups. These are not people just down the street. And this is a great slide that was put together by Deborah Caldwell-Stone at the PLA conference. And this is an example of stuff from 2022 of three bills in different states in Georgia, Nebraska, and Indiana, which shows how these groups have organized and who influences who to get this legislation introduced and supporting it.

You can see from here this is not Sally and Bob down the road. These are groups that may not even be in your state. They are national, they're well funded. So this is the obstacle we face. Money and time is something that libraries as government entities don't have a lot of. But these are private citizens who often get some corporate backing from wealth or funding from people who are well-to-do an industry and business.

And they're able to fund it through also religious non-profits which can use their money for varying purposes. So again, if you're experiencing lots of challenges it's possible that it is not something that is organic in your town but is in part of an orchestrated national campaign and effort.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: So what is being, thank you. I'm going to keep it on. All right. So what is being challenged? It's material related to LGBTQIA+ also material related to CRT, critical race theory. Some programs like we all aware of Drag Queen Story time and issues most of our libraries are facing when they have these programs at the libraries. Recently in our

library, we had someone objected to our teen book club choice. They picked Gender Queer.

These were our teens. And the objections were basically the same which were anti-LGBTQIA+ material and programs we are all facing. And the questions were, why are we corrupting our children's minds? Oh, why are we picking sexual books, etc? Our response was still the same that we do not really pick these books. These are our readers. These are our book clubs. Adults are teens. They decide what books they would like to discuss in their book groups.

And then our job is to provide those books, provide that material to these book clubs, these groups who are reading these books. Our goal again, we mentioned to all our community members and people who are objecting that our goal is to provide the information to our community. We are not here acting as a referee that what books people should be reading and what books even kids should be reading because their parents are responsible for picking up books for kids a lot.

There are also displays being challenged for- we all know, again, pride displays across the country are being challenged. In our library, we actually had recently it was not really challenged which we will discuss that in our later slides, but we got couple of emails about why are we displaying Black History Month. It's the same people just those like a group of people who have been objecting for Drag Queen Story time, who have been objecting for like what kids should be reading.

And the same kid people are showing their views about this critical race theory and the books and displays we have in our libraries. Some databases and other resources are also being challenged. Abco Products had come under attack. The challenges were made concerning the inclusion of sexual content deemed inappropriate for children. Overdrive, Gale, ProQuest, etc were also held to account acquisition of providing pornography and enabling sexual exploitation were laid against school districts and libraries.

Next slide. And this is something new. Who knows what the First Amendment audit is? Okay. Quite a few of you know, so this is another scenario our libraries are facing these days. It is an American social movement where self-appointed citizen journalists known as auditors are using libraries and other non-profit public places to test their constitutional rights. In

most cases, they're testing their right to photograph and video in a public place.

And now this also, we have dealt with this situation, not at our library, but our member libraries in our library system. So that's why it become very important and it is growing nationwide. So that's why we thought we should discuss this, and we should have this information in our toolkit. We will need an entire session to discuss this but again we want to make sure that you have all the tools to address these issues when they arise at your libraries.

I would like to quote Deborah Calwell-Stone in an article in the second one over here where she said, we are not necessarily concerned with the recording in public library, per se. What we are concerned about is when the behavior crosses the line into harassment and invasion of privacy. Bottom line patrons should be able to use the library services without fear that their identity, location, or reading choices will be published or uploaded on the YouTube or any social media. One thing, which I have advised for our like staff, when someone comes in the library and they are recording, don't just say, "Hey, don't record me."

Politely say, as long as they're not recording what people are reading, what people are using it, it's okay. We are also creating new policies where we are what we can allow in the library and what we can't allow in the library. And the hardest part is convincing the staff because what these auditors are trying to achieve is a reaction from our staff. You know, if they come in and they start taking our pictures, if we don't react, those recordings are useless for them.

But as soon as we start saying, "Hey, can you please not take my pictures?" Or, we have a policy against not taking my picture, even though I'm working at a public desk, that's what they get ammunition from those kind of conversations. So these are the two really good articles I would advise you all to look at and read and to get yourself familiarized with what's going on when it comes to First Amendment Audits.

What to do. So make sure you have policies and procedures in place. Make sure your staff is trained. Make sure even trustees are trained about these instances. It's very important to have trustee training when it comes to material challenges. Trustees needs to understand that we have a policy and procedure set in place because they will be meeting community members, even the

members who are not really coming to the libraries. They'll be saying like, "Hey, why do you have Gender Queer in your selection?"

So we have advised our trustees not to say, "Yes, I don't agree with these either, but it's our librarian's choice. No, we don't want our trustees to even say that. We want our trustees to say, oh, okay. I'm glad you mentioned this issue. We have a process in place where you can challenge, and then there's a committee at our library who will be going through these challenges, going through your request of reconsideration, and then they will be making a decision.

It's also important to let your government officials, in our case, our local commissioners and certain township supervisors, that we are equipped to handle these questions and handle these requests. So if a constituents ask, talk to their commissioners about, "Hey, look what your libraries have." The commissioners should understand that libraries are equipped to answer their concerns and libraries also have a process and procedure set in place where they will be able to take care of those issues. And also, community messaging is very important. So make sure the community knows that you have a fair system set in place and where you will respectfully listen to their complaint and then give them your decision.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Something we highly recommend for all of you is that you know or are familiar with the laws and court decisions that you can have in your corner when you're facing these issues or writing your policies, or educating your board. So I'm going to note the URL at the very bottom of this, or the link at the bottom of this slide takes you to a page on the ALA website that is notable First Amendment court cases. It's a really quick way to see a lot of cases that are First Amendment adjacent and applicable. So Peter and I are each going to talk very briefly about the three that we have listed here.

>> PETER COYL: So the first case is the infamous Skokie case where a white supremacist nationalist group applied to use a meeting room at a library in Skokie, Illinois. And were turned down and the lawsuit eventually settled. The court said that libraries could not restrict who used library meeting rooms based on their viewpoint. This is a very controversial concept in library land right now because of the ability of any group to use the library.

So there are things you can do in your library if you are concerned about having the public forum be available to folks. You can restrict the time manner in place including restricting based on geography and other things. So check with your local jurisdiction on what requirements you can have if you are concerned about allowing groups that profess certain messages and topics in your library. The tip that is, you can't simply say Group A camp, group B and C can but there are ways that you can craft your policy to limit who can have access to your space.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: The second bullet point is for the Island Trees School District v. Pico case, which is one that I have been citing to a lot of school librarians in the state of Iowa lately that they might be finding very useful, I hope. So this was the first time that the Supreme Court addressed the removal of books from libraries in public schools and helped address the fact that students retain First Amendment rights even when they are at school.

And a quick quote about it, it found that the school official removal of books for the purpose of restricting access to political ideas, social perspectives, discussed in them, when that action is motivated simply by the officials, disapproval of the ideas involved was a violation of the First Amendment. So they pulled books out that they thought were filthy, and that was deemed unconstitutional because it wasn't based on anything really educationally relevant.

>> PETER COYL: And the third case is Sund versus Wichita Falls. And this was a case in Wichita Falls, obviously, where a group had organized to remove Heather has two mommies from the library. And the crux of this case was a couple of issues. One was, it was an organized effort by a church. They had passed out the forms and asked people to submit them. And a number of things in this ruling included the fact that that organized effort by a private group was not appropriate and the idea that potentially removing a book from one section to another section could be considered censorship as well.

Now, this was a district court case, it was not federal. So the ruling is maybe a little narrowly applied to that district, but it is still precedent and it still can influence other court cases. So also issues with a standard review process and some other things. But this was a very important case and still is cited. If you're familiar with the case that happened in Texas a

number of years ago in Grandbury this case actually influenced how that town responded to that challenge.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: So now we're moving on from the overview part of the program to that, which is maybe a little more actionable for us all going forward. So we, the three of us have been having a bit of a philosophical conversation throughout planning this entire presentation, and it's kind of been why do we let people challenge things? And I'm sure there's an answer to that.

>> PETER COYL: But we can't come up with one.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: I mean, I have an idea, which is especially in light of so many, in my experience, what I've seen school administrators ignoring the policies that they have, what recourse do community members or educators have if those policies aren't in place. So if there's no policy for how it's handled and you disagree with how it got handled, if they're not in violation of policy, then what do you do about it? You can voice your concerns, obviously.

But maybe Deborah has a really great answer for us about why, and we can talk to her later. And it's probably a question we've been asking that's born out of a lot of frustration why do we even have this procedure in place? Why do we even do it? I know there's a library in Iowa that does not take requests for reconsideration. You can express your disinterest to the board. But they don't have a formal process for it. I mean, they're Iowa City like UNESCO City of Literature, so they kind of get a pass, I guess or get to be a little braver maybe than the rest of us are.

But I hope that you all have that in the back of your mind and maybe try to come up with other good reasons for it and let us know. So one of the things that we suggest is maybe changing the conversation around this challenge process. So the Dubuque County Library District where I work, we have just recently changed our process and our policy around this. So we've changed it from a request for a reconsideration to a statement of concern, and we've also removed it from being part of our collection development policy.

And we did that for a couple of reasons. One, we wanted it to be less of a, "Hey, I am community member and I want you to get rid of this book conversation or this" whatever, to, "Hey, I have concerns about this thing, let's talk about it." So we are just

trying to reframe the conversation a little bit, but also it is not just library materials that are being challenged. So programs are often challenged displays as Sukrit mentioned earlier, and I believe even the ALA report form or statement of concern suggested form includes check a box here if this is what you're doing.

And it's not just materials. So we wanted to separate that so that it can be a more inclusive policy and we can tie it to the most applicable policy. So right now, we don't have a programming policy at my library, but that's something that we are going to add this year partly born out of this change to the request for reconsideration policy, sorry, I'm saying policy a lot. We also wanted to talk a little bit about how you can attempt to reduce challenges. It does say restrict.

And this is definitely where we're getting into, we are not lawyers don't take our advice without double-checking with someone more qualified than the rest of us. So in my personal experience, I had challenges come from people who do not live in my service area. But you, if you are a municipal library, you are answerable to the residents of your municipality and those who fund your library. So you could see if adding a restriction to your policy based on service area or whether they are users could be added.

We also kind of had a conversation about how you could attempt to limit the number of challenges to a particular item. So saying, "Hey, our board took a lot of time and we made a decision based on our current policy, and we're not going to reconsider it again for a year, two years, three years." And that's something I've seen more often in school library policies. But also, if your board is making a decision to decide if a material or a program or a display fits your policy, if your policy hasn't changed, that same resource should continue to meet the policy.

And this might be a two-part type of restriction where it's we're not going to review it more than once every two years unless there's been a revision to the applicable policy. But hopefully, these are some ways that you could try to, especially if you're facing multiple challenges to the same materials or a large group of people especially who are coordinating their challenges that you could try and reduce the load on your staff and board.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: So challenge process, okay, try it on again. So no challenge process; so if we have this request for reconsideration form, make sure it is on your website and make sure it's also available to all staff, make sure it's always available to all the trustees. And also to let people know what our process is like how do we deal with when we receive these and these challenge forms. In our case, when someone do this request for reconsideration form, then what do we do? We have a committee of three members.

Two of them are librarians and one is the non-library staff member. And you will see again later that why that is kind of important and what the process is when they appeal, we go through the committee. Our committee decides, they review their request, and recommend a decision to the library director, then library director reviews what the committee did and what their decision is. And in most cases I would say basically in almost all the cases, agree with the committee's recommendation.

And then write a letter to the person who challenged that request. And also make sure in that letter that person should know what their next step is. In our case, our next step is our board of trustees. They can do file a written request to our board of trustees challenging the decision of the director and decision of the committee.

Again, as I said, in our case, we have two librarians on our committee and one non-librarian. So we have our circulation manager, who does not have an MLS, but she is experienced, she has 20-plus years of experience in our library, so she knows the soul of the library. So that's why we can trust her with her judgment. Then we also have our reference manager and our youth services manager on the committee. And then three of us talked about, especially maybe in the larger libraries, always consider maybe someone who does not work at your library, maybe a school librarian, if there's a university in your town or city, maybe a university librarian.

And again, depends on how you feel, how comfortable you are. And, you know, and also your staff. You trust your staff. So sometimes when you are including someone from outside of your organization, how much do you trust? So that's something you have to be careful about, but it might not be a bad idea to look into these options.

>> PETER COYL: Sukrit, just one second, it also helps if you can overcome the objection of, well, it's only your staff that

looked at this. You can say, no. Other professionals from another library looked at this as well. They have no vested interest. They don't work for us. They did this. And you can overcome that objection, that it's a cabal that wanted to keep this book.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: Thank you, Peter. And staff training. Staff training is very, very important, at least annually on both these two issues, which we mentioned. One is on these challenges and other, on this First Amendment Audit at least annually what we have been doing we are being proactive. So in every staff meeting, we at least actually will talk about for five to 10 minutes some issue we might have encountered in that month. We talk about that. We bring our policy back onto the, in front of everybody and say, okay what are you not comfortable with saying?

Because our staff is basically never defending the book. Our staff is saying, okay, we respect your opinion, and this is the process, and we respectfully ask you to file this complaint in a proper channel. That's very, very important. Again, a few examples are like a service desk scenario. So we have actually even role-played our staff members that if a patent comes in and saying that what our response is going to be. There are resources or intellectual freedom and privacy bases, especially on like ALA website. There are local laws related to library records. So these are the materials you can, or resources you can mention during your staff training and have that information ready for your staff.

Now, trustee training is also very, very important. So a couple years ago, we actually got the membership of United for Libraries. It's worth every penny, and I believe it's about \$50 a year. And you get a trustee login, and we share that login with all of our trustees. And what other thing we do is every month or every other month, we pick up one or two good articles from what we see on United for Libraries when they post and we share that information with our trustees. It's very important that our trustees know what's going on.

Our trustees knows that, okay, all these challenges are happening. So they are prepared to answer, they're prepared to advise, okay, we understand you, and we have these policies set in place. We have a procedure to go through your request. So do this. There are state webinars and consultants available. In Pennsylvania, where I'm from we have web junction where we have trustees webinars. We also have a companion, which is issued by

Pennsylvania Education Department. So we also use those resources to train our trustees.

We regularly send this information to our trustees that this webinar is coming on that day, and this is about trustee training. We know they're volunteers. We know they have families, they have grandkids and all that in many cases, majority of cases. But it's still a good idea to give them all this information, give them all these resources. So we are opening their eyes no matter which side of aisle they stand, most of them are library board of trustees because they want our libraries to succeed. They might have left-leaning, right-leaning, but again, once they understand, okay, their role is to serve the library their role is to empower the librarians, it makes a significant difference.

>> PETER COYL: So we have heard stories of some staff who, when they buy materials, don't put them on the shelf. Someone retires and you find a trove of things in their cubicle and this happens. I've heard one library where a staff member who was in charge of receiving the books, if it was a book about it was GLBTQ topic, they would check it in, but put the status to be unavailable, and they had them at their desk.

And it wasn't until a staff member walked by and saw them and asked what's going with these? These are new books. People are waiting for them. And the staff member said, well, I just didn't think we should have them in the library. So we have professionals who have varying opinions of this topic as well. And so if you are a library manager or administrator or supervisor you should probably deal with those as you do with your other performance issues.

It's not something I think you can let slide, I think you have to address it head-on. And you may even have trustees in your library who disagree and they say, well, they may be the sole voice. They may cause lots of contention. But it's helpful to talk to the trustees and let them know what the role of the library is and the view of the library is, providing information. And one trustee should not be able to dictate the entire policy of the library.

These are hard topics that maybe not every frontline worker has to handle, but if you're a library administrator these topics may come up and I mention them as merely thought exercises at this point, because it happens rarely. But when it does, I think you have to have answers and how you're going to handle that

situation already decided in your head. Both of these things are rare but they do happen.

So just be aware of them. The other issue is government officials. It doesn't help when you have an issue if you've never met your local government or regional or elected officials. Best thing now is to start building that relationship. We just had in many states elections in November, your state legislators may have just been seated. Reach out to them, talk to them, invite them to the library, share with them what the library is doing. Tell them about the programs we provide. Show them the census data that shows who's in your community. Show them the programs that reflect the wide variety of users.

It's hard to have a relationship be built in the fire, but if you have one ahead of time, you can go to them for their assistance and their help. And then if someone were to come to them and say something, they say, well, I've talked to so-and-so at the library, I know them. That doesn't seem right versus them being blindsided. And it's part of being proactive in the community is that you have to show how we are serving everybody. Lots of times people, we don't need this book because our community isn't made up of this demographic.

Well, the census data shows that. The census data can prove that you do indeed have people in your community that meet a wide variety of demographics. It's hard too, for people to say something negative about someone that they know. So if your elected officials know you and someone comes and says something, the elected official is going to already know who you are, and they're going to hopefully think a second time about passing on those negative messages about the library, they'll have the ability to call you and talk to you about that conversation.

If they don't know you, they may not do that. So it's important to build that relationship before you have issues arise in your library. And this isn't just about censorship, this is about tax funding. This is about new Library Mileages and buildings and things. This is just in general, a good policy to have for your library. A good way to do that an easy way is many elected officials look for places to have meetings with their constituents, whether it's a district, town hall, or office hours. Maybe invite them to use one of your meeting rooms once a quarter or once a month, build that relationship. And it can be very fruitful if you need it later on. But it's also just good

practice as libraries to be in the community and serving our users as well.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Okay, the toolkit. So here is the toolkit in slide form. In a moment, our front, Dan, in the back corner is going to switch to a PDF version of this. That is the handout for this presentation. So I have the toolkit template that you saw on the previous slide here up at the top. But I also, if Dan would scroll down, completed this very briefly as if it were for my own library. So you can actually go down to below the line, please, Dan. Super. Thank you. Keep going.

Perfect. So a lot of the things that are involved or included in this toolkit are things that we have always be recommended to you today. So that first lengthy ALA notable court cases links to the First Amendment and information about that from the American Library Association and how our professional responsibilities are connected to that. And also information about the fourth Amendment.

You should also be exceedingly familiar with your state laws. So here I have a link to our Iowa Chapter 21, which is our open meetings law, which would be relevant to all of you who are in public libraries and participating in your public meetings. Dan, if you could scroll down to the next page, please? Thank you. Iowa Chapter 22 is the other most quoted part of Iowa code. It is the examination of public records, and we particularly quote 22.7, which is that library records are confidential. It has been very gratifying to respond to some requests for public documents with, I'm sorry, I can't share that with you, and this is why. So make sure you know what those laws are in your state.

Next, we have listed some resources from ALA again selection and reconsideration, policy toolkit. This is for all library types and is incredibly helpful. And then also how to respond to challenges and concerns about your library policy. So these are things that we think would be helpful for you in your preparations in helping to prepare your staff, your trustees, and can help you with community messaging as well. Some simple ALA- not simple, actually, some basic core, very, very important ALA resources, the code of ethics, and its interpretations.

I personally think the code of ethics doesn't get enough attention. So I hope you all go and read the code of ethics again and just like let it galvanize you as you go in back to your own home libraries. We link to the Freedom to Read statement, the Freedom to View statement, the Library Bill of

Rights, and its interpretations. I also hope that you all have one of these. I brought it with me all the way from Iowa, just so I could do this in this session and say like, you should buy this. I don't remember who it was, I can't see them, but somebody said they just bought one of these for every one of their managers so they can have them.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: Play no library.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Play no library. Yes. So we hope that just like the intellectual freedom manual is a handy reference that you can run back to in the moment that this toolkit can be something like that for you as well. Dan, if you would scroll down a little more. We hope that you look at the policies of your okay, a little too far, but I think everybody read it. You are comparing your policies to those of others in your state. So my library is a little bit weird.

It's a district in a state that only has three districts. We have 540 odd public libraries and only three our districts. So we don't have a lot of peers in a lot of ways, but we do a lot of research into other libraries in the state and how they are writing their policies. And we hope that you do the same. But here we have listed some policies that I like and go back to. So the Ames Public Library actually is where we got the idea to change from a request for reconsideration to a statement of concern. They also have a really good policy about public participation at meetings.

So that's something we're, I think we maybe have a draft of a policy from like 10 years ago on our server somewhere, but I don't know that it was ever adopted. And now I need to go and check and probably fix that. Iowa City has a great collection development policy, but we do note they don't have reconsideration and we are going to be using them as inspiration for library programming.

So as you have policies that are maybe up for review for your accreditation or whatever, if you are collecting as you go, it makes it a little less difficult or if someone questions why, you can say, well, here are three other libraries. These are like three of the largest libraries in our state. And should know best, hopefully. We also wanted to include some quick staff training resources and trustee training resources for you. So here are links to a web junction info, people on Niche Academy webinars for staff, and then also some for trustees. And I think

Peter looked up who the second one was from, and now I can't remember info. No, let me not.

>> PETER COYL: That was the staff training one.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: It was the staff training one. So I'm plugging Iowa here because I'm from Iowa. And if this is for my trustees and my staff, they should be familiar with Iowa law. One of our consultants does the boardroom series every other month. And this advocacy and action is specifically on intellectual freedom and being a community advocate for your library. The scenarios is a good thing that we mentioned using with staff, but we also encourage using that for trustees and then this web junction book challenges and intellectual freedom, proactive Planning for public libraries.

I'm plugging that because I helped to present that. And it was a good webinar. If you would scroll down a little more, Dan, I didn't find any good community messaging inspiration, but I know that it's in my inbox somewhere. We had a really great letter to the editor written by a librarian in Iowa and someone else shared it across our listserv saying, look at this person who wrote this. They did a great job. So it was just one of those little praise file moments, but also would be great for the rest of us. I just need to find it and I didn't.

When you're trying to remember what things need to be done, hopefully, these things are already in your policy, which is to report a challenge to both to the American Library Association for their purposes. But also if your state collects statistics or they have a contact form, be sure that you have their information as well. The Iowa Library Association, we have a form on our intellectual freedom committee page that it is a report but also a request for assistance or could be both.

So you can report anonymously, you can report, "Hey, I can foresee this coming and I need some help." We've had people just send us the letter that they sent to someone after the fact when it's all been settled because they didn't really need our assistance. But it helps us keep track of what's going on in our state and distribute the support work to our committee members. I also think it's really important to have your helpful contacts in your back pocket.

So Eunice is my local state library consultant and Mandy Easter is our wonderful, wonderful state law librarian. She got a lifetime award from us last year and got the best standing

ovation I've ever seen. She's fantastic. If you are part of your state library association, know how to contact them and get it in contact with their intellectual freedom chair as well. In terms of legal assistance, you should know who your city or county attorney is. Have a relationship with them.

I ask my county attorney for help with- generally it's me talking at him and saying, you agree with me, right? Okay, well now will you put all of that into an email? Like I do all the work for him and then I just get him to regurgitate that in an email to me. I've been fortunate that that is how that has worked out every time, and I haven't been wrong yet.

But we actually have a new county attorney, so I need to start this whole process over again, getting to know our elected officials. I also highly suggest this is a suggestion that I heard from Deborah last year, and I tell it to everyone. And so now I'm going to tell it to you. You should have independent legal counsel that is not dependent on your city or your county because your city county attorney does not work for you. They do not answer to you and they probably have a much better relationship with your police department than they do with you.

So if you have your police department coming and saying, "Hey, we need these things like hopefully your county or city attorney can be reasoned with, and you can, you know, call and be like, this is not how this works. I need your help. But should you have a disagreement with your city council or your county supervisors you should have someone else to ask questions of and who can help you.

And I would also recommend, and this is just me regurgitating what Deborah has said, but have them consult for you on something very small so that you are their client. So if you have a policy that maybe a new policy or something, you're changing a lot, or even, you know, your privacy that adheres to the state code policy, whatever that is, consult with them for one hour. It's probably only a couple hundred dollars, but it means that you are their client. I've been in a city where the city attorney went around and consulted with all of the attorneys in town on something so that the citizens who were unhappy about something could not use those attorneys.

Yes, not fun. So this person is in Des Moines which is not near me, but was recommended to me by one of the staff attorneys at the ACU of Iowa who I also know and have had a very brief conversation with. But I just called up Shefali and I left a

voicemail and she got back to me like six weeks later because she lost my sticky note. Just saying, "Hey, I just want to know this in advance." I'm looking for a good First Amendment attorney because I do direct support for other libraries and I want to have someone to recommend to them. Who can you recommend to me? So contacting your local ACLU, even contacting your city or county attorney to say like, "Hey, I had a question that's very specific, you know, do you have someone to recommend?"

You don't need to tell them. It's so that you have someone that's not them or contacting the Bar Association or maybe even other city administrators in your network. So these are a lot of things that we think that you should have. Oh, I thought of something else this morning, which is you should also know who your public information board is in your state. They would be able to help you answer questions like, you know, do we have to have public comment? Or how can we amend public comment rules in our meetings, you know, according to our own Iowa or your state law.

So Public Information Board is another great resource for you here. So that is the toolkit. very briefly, not super in depth. But feel free obviously to take this and change it however you need. Add who, whoever you need to add, add whatever resource you need to add, make this available to staff, make it available to your trustees, and make sure it's a living document that you just, you know, check in with every once in a while. Okay, handing it over for a second.

>> PETER COYL: One thing real quick. Skip, raise your hand. That skipped I, and he is with United for Libraries and he is a very fantastic, he was coming up, oh, sorry, I'm jumping the, again, I'm jumping the gun. You can do it again too. We'll do it twice. Okay. We'll do the plug twice. Skip has a great handout on trustee training. So if you want to see him afterwards, he can tell you more about the United for Library's trustee training. And then Amanda's going to do it again because I jumped the gun and interrupted her because she had planned to do that. So we'll hear it twice.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: Thank you Peter. And thank you Amanda for that beautiful work on this sample toolkit. This is something I think you might- It's lot of hard work she put into this and, you know, even like when I went through this it's just amazing. It's like everything we need as administrators is like all there. So I hope you all will find this very useful. So what I

have in our next slide is basically like policy review checklist.

So the first point is kind of like growing. If you believe that you kind of do away with this request for reconsideration form, then that will apply on you. But if not, then make sure your statement of concern or request for reconsideration is available and is updated. And you will see later that why my library is not listed. Because even though we do have a great statement of concern and request a frequent physician form and including our collection development policy, but it's not recently updated. Also like adopting ALA standards as guide documents again, like more you explore ALA website, more resources you will be able to find.

It's just amazing how much information is on there. Yes, it's hard to find sometimes because more information it is on the website, on any website, it becomes harder to locate. But hopefully, this toolkit will assist you in finding that information. And also you can create residency requirements for challenges. So this is something we want to add on our policy. I'm not sure if we have complete like board support yet because we have not discussed it at that level but lot of libraries are doing that. You know, the patrons who, like in our case, if someone who lives in California, should they be telling us what our kids should be reading? Sure we understand someone who lives in our township have some kind of like objections and questions, but why California? Why people from-

>> PETER COYL: [inaudible 00:51:36] California?

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: California right here or Texas if that makes you feel better, or Montclair, New Jersey. And also this is something also new lot of libraries are adding like time limits before an item can be challenged again. You know, like again, you might get multiple requests for reconsideration for a book. And once you decide on that, then somebody else might send you another request.

Is it worth going through that process again? So maybe create a policy or have a policy which states that, you know, once we go through a step, then we are not going to honor any other reconsideration request on this material for three months, six months, a year, three years, and so on. So it depends on, again, like what you guys are comfortable with, what your board is comfortable with and also like I mentioned earlier, outside library professionals on reconsideration committee.

So this can really make a difference, especially for larger libraries because you also are getting a support from somebody who is not part of your library community or who's not part of your library staff. So these are the few points on your checklist. I would recommend you guys prepare.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: And Sukrit you just mentioned that having folks outside of your library on your committee can be really great in large libraries. I might argue that it would be more important in small libraries where everything is personal, where everyone knows everyone, everyone knows your parents, they know who owned your house before you did. And things can descend into personal attacks because everyone knows everyone's business really easily. You know, a lot from small-town communities. And so having someone who is not involved, whose job is not on the line, who can speak more freely because they're not engaged in their own employment situation, this is something I very highly recommend for your policy.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: Thank you, Amanda. So on the next slide, you see these four libraries, these are the four excellent library policies. And again, my library is missing. But hopefully, if you'll put it next time when our policies are updated, but again, we also understand that different boards, different organizations will have different appetite for how detailed and how prescriptive or descriptive, or broad your policies should be.

I also suggest that when you are creating or modifying your policies to review policies of your neighboring libraries, also review policies of the large libraries that big city libraries of your state. And if you believe you have an excellent policy, email us, let us know and because maybe you will have an honor to be the fifth library on this list.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: See if you can beat Sukrit.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: That's right.

>> PETER COYL: And Sukrit maybe when you do your policy, a California policy can help you.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: I thought there was no policy for California. California libraries are independent libraries anyhow.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Okay, so as Peter said, I was going to mention this again. So in addition to a few things to do next week, we have something to do today. Go over and find our good friends, skip, and get one of these United for Libraries bookmarks that has a lot of excellent trustee training information. Good on you doing that right now.

>> PETER COYL: Quick, they're going fast.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: So like I said, something simple. You're probably already reviewing a policy right now. So even if it's something further back in your policy notebook, maybe put a sticky note on and say, contact your First Amendment attorney or just find them first. So, like I said, Bar Association, ACLU, other attorneys that, you know. You can send your trustees information on this webinar coordinating, which is later the next month.

Somebody from the Iowa City Public Library presented an excellent kind of primer for trustees on what intellectual freedom is, what their responsibilities are, what their role is. She's also an excellent presenter. She's very calm. So she is presenting this for Iowa trustees specifically. It's free. We're going to make it available on YouTube later. So I could just get to plug because I made this slide.

Also, review your current policy, review it with your staff, send out a reminder email, maybe even schedule reminder emails where it's like, "Hey, everybody, before we get together for our staff meeting, you should look at this policy and we can chat about it." I am a set-it-and-forget-it person. So scheduled emails are like my best friend. Also, introduce yourself to your elected officials, and this is the one I would struggle with the most. I don't know why, it's just very daunting sometimes. But just introduce yourself.

Send them some information about your library. Invite them to come. You don't even have to have a plan until they say they're coming and then you do the work of planning the visit. But here are some things for you to do. We want to just take it just to, oh, and of course download the toolkit and fill in the blanks. That's what you also need to do next week.

Our last few slides very, very quickly. We encourage you to donate to the Merritt Fund. Merritt Fund for those of you who

don't know Wanda is walking around with a sweatshirt and recording in Sharpie on that sweatshirt, who owes her money for the Merritt Fund. So go talk to Wanda up here in the front with the lovely Pink Care. So the Merritt Fund has a number of trustees who give money to librarians who require a financial support when they are denied employment rights discriminated against or they have legal fees.

My understanding is it can even just be, you know, they lost their job and they need to pay their bills. They lost their job because of intellectual freedom. I'm getting a nod from current or former?

>> JULIA WARGA: Former.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Former trustee Julia Warga in the back. Last I heard there were nine requests to the Merritt Fund this year, and the fund doesn't have enough money to pay for all of those requests to cover them all. So please scan this QR code, donate what you can, what you feel moved to the Merritt Fund to support the librarians who are really suffering the consequences of standing up for all of our intellectual freedom things. And keep your phone up for the next QR code.

>> PETER COYL: So if you are not a member of the Freedom to Read Foundation, I'd encourage all of you to join The Freedom to Read Foundation is a affiliate group of ELA that supports legal challenges for materials. We've been involved in a number of cases recently. The most recent one, if you are familiar with the case in Virginia where the there was an attempt to declare two books obscene and keep anyone, including Barnes and Noble, from selling it in the state Free to Reach Foundation was a supporter of that lawsuit and we're able to help get it dismissed.

The Freedom Duty Foundation is open to anyone. You don't have to be an ALA member. Your library can join, your state association can join, your barber can join, your mother-in-law can join. Anyone can join. And we'd encourage you to join us and take part in our work to protect the intellectual freedom and the right to read of everyone in our fantastic country.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Here is our contact information. Feel free to email us. Try to corner us. A couple of us are running off to council after this, so we won't have a ton of time after the session, but we do have 15 minutes left in our session time and we are willing to entertain questions. I know some of you

probably have stories you would like to tell. We would appreciate sticking to comments about how awesome we are and the things that we talked about and questions that you think we are qualified to answer.

>> PETER COYL: And I don't know if there's a microphone for questions or not. Oh, the one in the corner over there.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: Does it work?

>> PETER COYL: And we have a roving microphone. I think we're good. If you have a question, raise your hand and Sukrit will come to you. Oh, Sukrit. We have a question in the very back, back that way.

>> SPEAKER: I work at a mid-size suburban library with a diverse community, yet last summer we had a patron library card holder come in and to hide all our pride. She took out the entire collection on the display. We replaced it. She took out the rest. We finally put up pictures of the missing books with QR codes saying they're flying off the shelves. That made her very angry. The only thing we have changed with our policy since then was to limit the number of books that a patron can check out. But I'm wondering if there's anything else that we can do for next June.

>> PETER COYL: That's a good question.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Someone said what I was going to maybe jokingly say, which is just order more books. But that doesn't solve the problem. The problem is that you have them at all in this person's eyes of course. And unfortunately, I don't have a good recommendation for that. I think that maybe talking to some community members that you know about how we know that there are organized efforts to do things like this so that your community members can carry water for you in those conversations or make a big deal out of it on your behalf. So I often encourage librarians to quietly talk to their friends or parents of their students and just let them know within the bounds of what they're allowed to share what they're dealing with so that other people, like I said, can help carry that water for your organization.

>> PETER COYL: My question is did they return the items?

>> SPEAKER: They did. [inaudible 01:02:24].

>> PETER COYL: Unfortunately, like anyone can check out a book at any time, right? So they're following the policy they're doing, you know, but their motivation is, you know, obviously not correct. So that is an unfortunate thing.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Deborah has a comment.

>> PETER COYL: Deborah.

>> DEBORAH: Just wondering if- Deborah, Deborah, wait. Borrow a few tricks from the academic realm, putting seven-day limits on borrowing time. Simply putting display books on reserves so they can be read in the library for pride month, but not taken out of the library. Kind of, you know, it's not optimum but, you know, using those kinds of policies, which are completely legitimate to keep the books on display and in front of the larger constituency.

>> PETER COYL: Great, that's fantastic, Deborah. Thank you.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: I think that that plays really well with your, these are flying off the shelves, you know, if you can create a high demand status, even just temporarily, and maybe you use that for all of your policies just to kind of cover your butt. But yeah, that, thank you Deborah.

>> KEN OLIVER: Hi, Ken Oliver. This has been great basic information what to do preparing for when that the sensor comes. I would really like to encourage everybody to go to unite against book band's website. There's been a lot of work put into that. This material that we saw today is kind of what you do getting ready and be positioned for it. And there's additional information on the website that when they're writing your face, and it's a good follow-up. Just tons of good information. And I've been surprised at how many of our colleagues at this conference were not aware of that website. And so if you're in this room and you do not know about it, you're not alone. So please take the time to follow up this great information with taking a look at that information.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: Like Peter mentioned with the Freedom to Read Foundation that, you know, you can join or your barber can join or your association can join the same groups can all join Unite Against Book Bans. So it's actually on our next state association meeting to, you know, take action on that and

officially join even though I've joined on my own. So take that back to your libraries, send it to someone on your intellectual Freedom committee, and make sure that they're aware and then they can share that out with the rest of your association potentially.

>> SPEAKER: Hi. I'm in a Texas public library and we started to have patrons reshelfing books in wrong locations. And so we attempted to draft a policy or put into policy that was, you know, not acceptable to reshelve books in incorrect locations. But I was wondering in your research, do you know of any other libraries that have policies that address this behavior of patrons?

>> PETER COYL: I'm not familiar with any policies. I do know libraries sometimes have, you know, please put your reshelve books here just in general. And that may be, that may be something to do is maybe, you know, it's hard to-

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: I'd be tempted to implement an Adopt a Shelf volunteer program. And so you can have volunteers do some of your shelf reading for you and get them back where they need to go.

>> SPEAKER: But we have them on camera moving the books off the shelf. In the juvenile section, they took all the biographies of any democrats or people of color and took them way back in the back and hid them behind other books. So that's the behavior we're talking about. It's not just, oops, I put it in the wrong place. It's deliberately hiding the books within the library.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: I think the best course of action would be, especially when you have these cameras and you are able to identify these individuals to see if you can create illegal policy. So I think that's what the tricky part would be. You will have to discuss with your solicitor, like what, how far you can go, and what kind of policy or what kind of consequences you can place on these individuals who are moving books around.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: I feel like that could fit into your conduct in the library policy because it's interfering with other people's ability to use the library. Just like if someone was blocking off all of your public computers and not letting kids through, because, you know, for some other reason you would not stand for that and there would be consequences for that. And

so I think addressing it as that kind of behavioral impact on other users, Debra.

>> DEBORAH: I just created a display of books you found in the wrong place.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: I like that.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Does everyone hear that?

>> PETER COYL: Deb said you just created a display of books you found in the wrong places in the library. I also just-

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: See if anyone else can guess the theme, right?

>> PETER COYL: And you know, I would say that's a misuse of library materials as well. So if your policy doesn't address that, you can add that to your policy.

>> SPEAKER: So my question relates to the reconsideration committee. Are the names available of the committee?

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: So actually this is a very good question. So when we just recently went through this Gender Queer book challenge in Gender Queer Book Club challenge there were people, they were asking for names. They're like, well, we are taxpayers. This is a public library. And I ended up saying, you know what, after everything is my decision. So you can, you can decide that we are not going to give you the names of the committee members, but I am the ultimate signer of this letter I sent. So it's on me. Of course, they were not happy, but I think that response really worked in our case.

>> PETER COYL: And I think you'd have to check and see what your state law is. You know, any document we create is how disclosable is that, you know, if you have an agenda or an email assigning people, you know, I think you have to be, you have to check. But I understand that that is a concern. I'd encourage you just to verify what you would have to disclose, so any other questions?

>> MARGARET CONROY: This is really just a comment, not a question, it's a multiple comment. My name is Margaret Conroy. I'm the director of Dana Boone Regional Library in Columbia, Missouri. Our Secretary of state who oversees the state library has put in a rule to try to force libraries to publish their

challenges on their website, among other things have a reconsideration policy. If this passes, we wouldn't be able to have a statement of concern policy. I'm just urging everybody to pay close attention. What's going on in your state legislatures, and I know many of you probably already are, they're trying to take this out of our hands in some places. And this is absolutely a politician trying to mobilize a base. I personally am hoping that this passes so we can sue ACLU and the Office for Intellectual Freedom are your friends.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

>> PETER COYL: Thanks.

>> DEBORAH: I've been encouraged to share the information that we have a brand new resource. We are aware of concerns about the safety and security of our library workers across the country. PLA and ALA have come together to create a new resource guide for library safety and preparedness. It's now available on the website, but the press release hasn't gone out but we're announcing it today. We talked about this last night at the UABB event that we did with Tulane First Amendment Clinic and the Freedom to Read Foundation. But I encourage you to go to it and I could read you the URL off the slide I made for Leslie. What?

>> SPEAKER: It's a United Council.

>> DEBORAH: No, this is a slideshow from last night. That's what I'm using to reference, to talk about it. But it's called the Resource Guide for Library Safety and Preparedness. It's under the advocacy section of our website. And actually we can put, Betsy, can we tweet the link to the resource guide to the OIF Law Twitter account right now? Thank you. So go to the OIF Twitter account and you'll find the link to the new resource guide. But I did want to take a point of privilege to answer a question that you had, Amanda. The reason that there has to be an opportunity for reconsideration or a statement of concern is that your publicly funded entities and there's a right to petition the government about a concern.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Absolutely. And I think we understand that. I think our question is more, you know, do other city departments have similar policies and procedures about how those things happen in kind of the same way that we have set this up? It feels like libraries are different in some ways, or we handle

things differently. And I don't know if it's because we're such like-

>> DEBORAH: We've always been these really super responsible entities about having these ethics about and we honored that in ways that other city departments or county departments.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: So we're better than them, is what you're saying.

>> PETER COYL: Thank you, Deborah.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Not to put words in Deborah's mouth.

>> DEBORAH: No, I would say so, but you know.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: You heard it here first folks.

>> PETER COYL: We have time for one more question.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Yes. Should there be any.

>> PETER COYL: Should there be any? Oh, one question in the back.

>> SPEAKER: It's not so much a question, but a comment. I lived in Wichita Falls during the 2000 court case. It was a circus locally, like just the local media, people being debating about it with their friends and their neighbors. It was a mess. It was not a great turn.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: So don't need any horror stories. Go find you. You'll give us all the dirt.

>> SPEAKER: There's a reason I no longer live in Wichita Falls, and that was a lot of it.

>> PETER COYL: Alright, well thank you everyone for coming and listening. We hope this isn't helpful.

>> AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Enjoy the rest of your conference.

>> SUKRIT GOSWAMI: Thank you all. Take care.

>> PETER COYL: And join United Against Book Bans.