



## LIBRARIES

### Andover, Kansas

Three children's books with transgender characters—*George* by Alex Gino, *Lily and Duncan* by Donna Gephart, and *I Am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel—will remain in the juvenile section of the Andover Public Library.

Andover community member Marci Laffen had filed a written challenge, asking for the books to be moved to the adult section because of what she called “sexual content.” At a meeting on February 13, the library board of directors voted 6-1 to keep the books in place. Laffen's challenge referred to the books as part of a “sexual revolution agenda, indoctrination of children.”

Board members said they received feedback on both sides of the issue from Andover residents and people from elsewhere.

Previously the board had postponed the vote for a month, in part to give its members time to read the three books.

At the January meeting, board member Cindy Pfeiffer, a former school librarian, said they needed to be careful about moving books from their recommended section. “What happens when you move books to different categories is they can get lost from their intended audience,” she said. “In my experience with middle school and high school kids, they will not read down. If you're in sixth grade, you do not want to read about fourth-graders.”

*I Am Jazz*, a picture book biography of a transgender child, is classified as juvenile nonfiction at the Andover Public Library. *George* and *Lily and Dunkin* are both classified as juvenile fiction at the library. Both are about transgender kids, one in fourth grade, and one in eighth grade.

People who said they were members of the transgender community told the January library board meeting that addressing LGBT issues in children's books can help some kids understand what they are experiencing. Reported in: *Wichita Eagle*, February 13, 2019.

### Rumford, Maine

Books with lesbian and gay themes, including *My Lesbian Experience with Loneliness*, a manga graphic novel by Nagata Kabi; *Queer: A Graphic History* by Meg John-Barker and Julia Scheele, and *Two Boys Kissing*, a young adult novel by David Levithan, were challenged by three local church leaders but retained at the Rumford Public Library in Maine in September.

The church leaders saw the books in the library's Banned Books Week display. This prompted them to challenge Nagata Kabi's manga as “immodest and inappropriate for a public setting” on the basis of its cover alone. The letter challenging the display called out other books for “promoting homosexuality.” According to a Facebook post by local resident Katrina Ray-Saulis, one of the letter's signers “has verbally expressed that he would like to pursue the destruction of all books regarding homosexuality in the library.”

In addition to local citizens, several groups supported retention of the books in the library, including the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, and the National Coalition Against Censorship. Reported in: [cbdlf.org](http://cbdlf.org), December 31, 2018.

### Big Rapids, Michigan

*P.S. I Miss You*, a 2017 novel for middle grade readers by Jen Petro-Roy, was challenged but retained at Big Rapids Community Library.

A patron gave a negative review on the library's online catalog and stated it should be removed or red-flagged “before an unsuspecting patron reads this book.” According to a summary in *Goodreads*, the book focuses on “a girl who's questioning her sexual orientation,” who “writes letters to her sister, who was sent away from their strict Catholic home after becoming pregnant.”

The patron submitted a reconsideration request to the library board. The board voted in May 2018 to retain the book, and the patron was notified. Reported in *Big Rapids Community Library Board Documents*, May 8, 2018; [goodreads.com](http://goodreads.com), n.d.

### Oregon

[EDITOR'S NOTE: *The State Library of Oregon, through its Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearing House (OIFCH), collects information on challenges to intellectual freedom at libraries, schools, and academic institutions in Oregon. OIFCH's 2018 report, updated on February 15, 2019, covers challenges from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018. It does not release names of people, organizations, libraries, nor towns.*]

*Willy the Champ* by Anthony Browne was retained in an Oregon public library after a patron challenged it. The 2008 children's book is about a chimp who struggles with sports, then accidentally defeats a bully and becomes a hero. A patron complained to an Oregon public library about “violence used to solve problems with bullies for early readers. Violence celebrated.” Reported in: OIFCH, February 15, 2019.

*The True Adventures of Esther the Wonder Pig*, a 2018 picture book by Steve Jenkins, Derek Walter, and Caprice Crane, was reinstated after a challenge at a combined elementary school and public library in Oregon. (The public



library operates libraries inside local schools.) The book tells of a so-called mini-pig who eventually topped 650 pounds, leading her “two dads” to move from their small apartment to a farm, now an animal rescue sanctuary. The picture book was originally removed by the principal as “inappropriate” for the school. After school administrators reviewed the library’s collection development policy and a request for reconsideration form, the title was retained. Reported in: OIFCH, February 15, 2019.

*This One Summer*, a 2014 graphic novel by Mariko and Jillian Tamaki, was retained in an Oregon public library after a challenge by a patron who objected to language (“slut”) and mention of condoms in the dialogue. Reported in: OIFCH, February 15, 2019.

A number of videos were challenged but retained in Oregon. The annual summary of challenges published by the State Library of Oregon gives a separate report for each title but keeps the names of people and organizations confidential, so it is unclear whether all of these challenges were at the same library or different public libraries across the state. The challenged videos were:

- *Founding Fathers: The Men Who Shaped Our Nation and Changed the World*. A patron expressed concern that the DVDs didn’t respect or show the spiritual beliefs of early US leaders, and instead discussed “their moral indiscretions or sexual lives.” In accordance with the Reconsideration Policy, the director reviewed both videos, their usage, their availability in other libraries, and the featured speakers. She found that the DVDs are available in many public libraries and the speakers are

considered reputable. The patron was informed and did not appeal the decision.

- *Layer Cake*. A patron challenged this 2004 crime film starring Daniel Craig as a cocaine dealer trying to get out of the business. The objections to the film included gratuitous sex, profanity, violence, and drug use. The library retained the DVD in its collection.
- *Tightrope*. Citing concerns about sexism, nudity, and voyeurism, a patron challenged this 1984 thriller about a serial murderer of prostitutes. Clint Eastwood plays the detective. The library retained the title.

Reported in: OIFCH, February 15, 2019.

### Terrell, Texas

*A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo* by Jill Twiss was challenged but retained at the public library of Terrell, Texas.

This 2018 parody of a children’s book about Vice President Mike Pence’s rabbit (*Marlon Bundo’s A Day in the Life of the Vice President*) was challenged by a patron who stopped reading the book to her 8-year-old granddaughter when they got to the part about two male bunnies getting married to each other. The patron objected on religious grounds, believing the book encouraged her granddaughter to accept a lifestyle the Bible called sinful. After a public presentation to the library’s advisory board, the board decided to retain the title, citing the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement. Reported in: *Riter C. Hulsey Public Library Board Documents*, June 13, 2018.

### SCHOOLS Beaverton, Oregon

*The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky was challenged but

retained at the Beaverton School District. A parent challenged the 1999 book during the 2017-18 school year, deeming it a “trash novel,” featuring characters who are bad role models for teenagers, plus drug use, smoking, underage sex, drinking, and attempts to be “sexual and arousing in its graphic descriptions.”

Following the library’s policies, a review committee found the title to be consistent with the district’s general education goals, and recommended its retention, which was upheld by the deputy superintendent. Reported in: *Beaverton School District Board Documents*, March 12, 2018.

### Scappoose, Oregon

*George* by Alex Gino is one of the titles students in grades three through five may read in the Oregon Battle of the Books (OBOB), and its focus on a transgender protagonist has prompted some Oregon schools to curtail or limit their participation in the statewide reading program. At the Scappoose School District, the school board on January 14 voted down a resolution that sought to remove *George* from the local district’s OBOB reading list. The 5-2 vote means the school district will continue with the full catalog of OBOB reading this year.

Oregon Battle of the Books is a voluntary out-of-school reading competition where teams of students answer trivia questions about a set of preselected books. The students compete at the school and district level before moving on to regional and statewide competitions.

Had the book been removed, the school district would have competed only against other districts that also removed *George*.

*George* tells the story of a 10-year-old transgender student perceived as a male named George but who



identifies as a female with the name Melissa.

The book was announced as part of OBOB last spring and drew quick controversy. Two districts in Oregon chose not to take part in OBOB in 2018-19 because of *George*. Several parents in Scappoose approached the school board in December citing concerns about *George*, including children lying to parents and references to pornographic material.

At the January school board meeting, some parents, teachers, and OBOB coaches said many students have already read most of the OBOB books and have been preparing since October for the competition season, which was just starting. Jaime McHugh, an OBOB coach, said, "It's terrible to take this away and punish them."

Others said the book introduced an opportunity to discuss topics that might not otherwise come up with students, and ultimately parents should decide whether or not a student is allowed to read the book. One said "some transgender kids in this age range" were excited "about *George*

being included, because it's given them an avenue to talk about their experience."

Conversely, parents who favored removing *George* from the reading list said its inclusion in the school environment could prompt students to discuss topics or use words, such as "penis" or "sex," that could get them in trouble at school.

Others said they were not opposed to the content, but thought it was not age-appropriate for third-graders. Reported in: *Columbia County Spotlight*, January 18, 2019.

### INTERNATIONAL Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

*Drama*, a 2012 graphic novel by American author and illustrator Raina Telgemeier, is returning to elementary school library shelves, after Ottawa's English Catholic school board changed its mind in January. Officials at the Ottawa Catholic School Board had said the book was being removed from elementary school libraries because it wasn't appropriate for students of that age, according to emails obtained by CBC News. However,

the book was still being allowed for intermediate and high school (grades 7-12).

The graphic novel, which has a side story about two boys who are attracted to each other, is about a student who wants to be part of her middle-school theater production. The side story includes the two boys sharing an onstage kiss.

The author, local politicians, and parents criticized the book's removal from elementary school libraries after the news was published. The next day, the school board said it will allow it back on elementary school library shelves.

"The Ottawa Catholic School Board has listened to educators, parents, stakeholders and ratepayers," said spokesperson Mardi de Kemp in an email. "We remain fully committed to having safe, inclusive, and accepting schools."

She pointed to the publisher's classification of the book as appropriate for children age 10 and up. Reported in: CBC, January 16, 2019.