

**Challenges to Materials and Policies in Canadian Libraries 2011:**  
***Report of the Annual Survey of the***  
***Intellectual Freedom Advisory Committee, Canadian Library Association***

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In 2011, for the first time in six years of annual Canadian library surveys, an entire genre of resources – graphic novels – was challenged for removal from a library’s collection, based on objections to explicit sexuality and violence. A total of 16 titles within the graphic novel genre that were authored or illustrated by Jaime Hernandez in the *Love and Rockets* series were cited as an exemplar.

Overall, Canadian libraries reported 101 challenges in the 2011 survey, 93 challenges to materials and 8 to policies. These challenges came from 32 libraries spread across six of Canada’s most populous provinces. Comparison with the previous year shows 98 challenges were experienced by 24 libraries in just four provinces. Two other libraries took the time to report the unusual situation of having received no challenges in 2011.

The *Annual Challenges Survey* has been conducted since 2006 by the Intellectual Freedom Advisory Committee (IFAC) of the Canadian Library Association, with a view to shedding light on the nature and outcome of challenges to library materials and policies that are experienced by publicly funded libraries across Canada in each calendar year. A challenge to library resources is an attempt to remove or restrict materials based on objection(s) by a person or group, in order to prevent or limit access. A policy challenge is an attempt to change access standards for library resources and services.

The targeting of an entire series of creative works, whether in print or non-print, poses an exceptional difficulty in how such challenges should be counted – one challenge per series, or as many challenges as there are titles in a given series? Standard practice is to treat each title as one challenge. In the case of the targeting of an entire genre, it was considered a collection policy challenge.

*Love and Rockets* was not the only series targeted in calendar year 2011. Three other series were also challenged: Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy; one season of 4 episodes of an ITV series titled "Trial and Retribution" on DVD; and, one season of 9 episodes of "The War Years," volume 2 in "The Adventures of the Young Indiana Jones" television series, also on DVD. Reasons for objections to these three series were, respectively, Satanism, the occult, religious viewpoint, violence, and age inappropriate; explicit sexuality and violence; and violence and age inappropriate.

Altogether, seven titles challenged in 2011 had also been targeted in one or more previous surveys. Two prior challenges to Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy were reported in 2007, and all 7 titles in the *Harry Potter* movie series were targeted in 2010, while "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" was singled out for challenge in 2011.

Several other series were also targeted in previous surveys: Charlaine Harris's series of 10 novels entitled *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, challenged four times in one year in the same library; *Negima! Magister Negi Magi*, by Ken Akamatsu, a manga series of 29 titles known in Japan as *Magical Teacher Negima!*; Cecily von Ziegesar's series of 15 titles, *Gossip Girl*, which became the 2007 inspiration for the "Gossip Girl" teen drama television series; and the Dark Horse manga series of 14 titles based on four of the *Star Wars* movies.

Three unique titles were also targeted in previous years, "Angels in America," directed by Mike Nichols and starring Meryl Streep; the short story collection *Beyond the Dark*, by various authors; "Brüno," directed by and starring Sacha Baron Cohen; *Rolling Stone* magazine; and *NOW Magazine*, a free arts and current events magazine serving greater Toronto, which earned the dubious honour of being challenged twice in 2011 as well as twice in 2009.

At least one LGBTQ-positive title for children has been challenged in all six years of the survey. In 2011 it was *The Sissy Duckling*, by Harvey Fierstein. The LGBTQ titles reported in previous years were *And Tango Makes Three*, by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, which was reported four years in a row 2006-2009; *King and King*, by Linda de Haan; and, *My Princess Boy*, by Cheryl Kilodavis.

An unusual challenge reported in 2011 was to *The Mystery Method: How to get Beautiful Women into Bed*, by Mystery (Erik von Markovik) and Chris Odom, which was revealed to have been misbound in the cover of the children's novel *Twelve*, by Lauren Myracle. This was an interesting twist because Myracle is an otherwise frequently-challenged author of

children's/young adult novels in the U.S., and was in fact the most-challenged author in 2011 for her series *ttyl*, *ttfn*, *l8r*, and *g8r*.

As in previous years, the reasons prompting challenges to library materials in 2011 were multi-layered, almost always involving more than one rationale. Altogether, libraries reported a total of 241 grounds for 93 challenges to titles. The many-pronged objections about *Jihad and Genocide*, written by Richard L. Rubenstein in 2010, illustrate this phenomenon: "anti-ethnicity, insensitivity, inaccuracy, political viewpoint, and hate." Another example was a plethora of objections reported for one of the two challenges to *NOW Magazine*: "nudity, explicit sexuality, anti-family, drugs/drug use, offensive language, and age inappropriate."

Four major reasons accounted for two-thirds of all complaints to library titles: "violence," mentioned 58 times; "sexually explicit," mentioned 50 times; "age inappropriate," mentioned 39 times, and frequently for adult titles; and "offensive language," mentioned 16 times. There were 8 complaints about inaccuracy, 7 about nudity, 7 about religious viewpoint, 6 about insensitivity, 5 about homosexuality, and 5 about anti-ethnicity. Four or fewer complaints were reported on the grounds of occult, Satanism, political viewpoint, sexism, anti-family, sex education, or drugs/drug use; unspecified "other" grounds were indicated 20 times.

Of the 93 challenges to library materials, almost 60% involved books (52 titles) and almost 40% were to DVDs (34 titles). Four challenges were to newspapers or magazines and another three to sound recordings. Of books targeted, graphic novels accounted for 19 titles and non-fiction for 15 titles, of which 9 were to adult materials and 1 to a young adult title. Of the 19 graphic novels challenged, 18 were for adult titles and only 1 for a children's title. There were also 6 other challenges to children's fiction, 5 to children's picture books, and 4 to children's non-fiction. Four challenges were reported to adult fiction and 3 to young adult fiction.

Challenges were reported in all major sectors of publicly funded Canadian libraries – public, school, and post-secondary libraries. Almost all of the challenges to both resources and policies occurred in public libraries, more than 90%; only 6 challenges were in school libraries and 2 in libraries serving post-secondary institutions.

The vast majority of concerns were initiated by patrons (85%) or by parents and guardians (9%). Two challenges each were reported by school administrators, teachers, and library staff members, and one challenge each by a post-secondary student and a library board trustee.

A total of 87 titles or almost 95% of all 93 challenged items remained on library shelves. Three-quarters of those materials retained were unchanged in status, while 18% resulted in relocation or reclassification and another 3% in access restriction. Most challenges were resolved quickly, within a month, but a few took six months or longer.

Eight challenges to library policies were reported in 2011, a collection policy dispute, several borrowing and labelling policies for both print and non-print materials, and a software resource policy. One challenge was triggered by a library's failure to follow its own policy on restricted borrowing of DVDs; we have counted this as a policy challenge because the complainant's perception was that library policy endorsed unrestricted DVD lending, even though in reality the problem turned out to be staff failure to adhere to library policy of age-restricted access.

The specific challenges were to:

- a library's policy of collecting graphic novels – linked to the challenged graphic novel series *Love and Rockets* authored/co-authored or illustrated/co-illustrated by Jaime Hernandez),
- policies in four libraries of unrestricted borrowing by age – linked to the challenged adult DVDs “Antichrist,” “The Girl Who Played with Fire,” “In a Glass Cage” [“Tras el Cristal”], and “Brüno,”
- policies in two libraries of not labelling materials with an “explicit content” or “restricted” warning – linked to the challenged adult fiction book *Beyond the Dark*, and to challenged adult fiction audiobook “The Kid,” and,
- a school board's policy of restricting software necessary to download e-books from the provincial library to only two out of four computers in a school library.

Seven challenged policies were retained, including the one which was a simple reminder to staff to follow existing DVD borrowing policy; one was revised.

It should be noted that the survey is voluntary, and the self-reports forwarded to the Committee represent only a fraction of all challenges that occur during any calendar year. The American Library Association (ALA) estimates that for every challenge reported to them, there are at least 4 or 5 others that go unreported (“Frequently Challenged Books,” Office for Intellectual Freedom, on ALA's website, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged>). A small recent survey of U.S. libraries, asking about challenges that were reported to ALA and those that went unreported,

corroborates these estimates

(<http://librarianinblack.net/librarianinblack/2011/03/bookchallenges.html>). This under-reportage is no doubt greater in Canada, as the reporting mechanism is so new.

As CLA President **Karen Adams commented**: “Findings of the 2011 survey provide clear evidence that attention to the core value of intellectual freedom remains central to the advocacy work of Canadian librarians and their allies. Libraries have a basic responsibility to maintain the right of all persons in Canada to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity, and intellectual activity. I would like to thank those library administrators who participated in the 2011 survey, and strongly encourage everyone to report any challenges next year in the 2012 survey.”

Some members of the general public appear misinformed about the role of not only the survey but of the Association itself. One wrote to the Committee earlier this year about the frequently challenged book *And Tango Makes Three*, wondering “why is it that the book (even though it has been challenged) still remains as a part of the CLA? Do books get ‘banned’ after they have been challenged or are there really no repercussions?” Such misunderstanding of the fundamental nature of library governance in Canada points to continuing public education, awareness, and advocacy needs on the part of CLA.

The *Annual Challenges Survey* is now in its sixth year (conducted bilingually since 2009). The Canadian survey was inspired by two precursors, the Edmonton Public Library’s challenged materials spreadsheet, and the confidential database maintained since 1990 by the American Library Association (ALA). ALA’s online challenge reporting form can be found at <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/challengeslibrarymaterials/challengereporting/onlinechallengeform/index.cfm>. The form can also be printed as a pdf.

The goals of the CLA *Annual Challenges Survey* are to document objections to materials and policies in publicly-funded Canadian libraries with a view to informing the Association’s policy and advocacy work for intellectual freedom. An innovation in the Canadian survey approach, since 2007, has been the inclusion of questions about challenges experienced by libraries to those policies affecting intellectual freedom in relation to resources and services.

The Committee encourages all library administrators to contribute to future surveys if they experience resource or policy challenges. Institutions are not identified in any way in public documents or reports. In 2011 CLA Executive Council adopted a policy that the names of

institutions and municipalities identified in the *Annual Challenges Survey* will not be disclosed. Identifying data are collected for statistical purposes, verification of authenticity, and follow-up with reporting agencies if data elements are unclear. Permissible geographic and jurisdictional disclosures are as follows: province or territory; type of institution (school, post-secondary, public, etc.); and, type of complainant.

Survey results are widely shared with the CLA membership, other library workers and advocates, the Freedom of Expression Committee of the Book and Periodical Council and the annual *Freedom to Read Week* publication, the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association (ALA OIF), and the Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression Committee of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA FAIFE). Check their websites for reports.

For the first time in 2011, public access is available to the complete database of challenged titles and policies for each survey year, as well as to the complete listing of resource titles and policies. All six years of *Annual Challenges Survey* databases and listings of challenged titles and policies are now available for public consultation, but until they are uploaded to the CLA website, inquiries and requests for access may be directed to IFAC Convenor Alvin M Schrader at [alvin.schrader@ualberta.ca](mailto:alvin.schrader@ualberta.ca).

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### **List of Challenges to Resources and Policies Reported by Publicly-Funded Canadian Libraries, 2011**

Challenges are listed alphabetically, categorized by number of challenges per item. Note that slightly corrected bibliographic data are recorded here from what was originally supplied by library officials who contributed to the 2011 Survey.

#### Series – 1 challenge each:

“The Adventures of the Young Indiana Jones,” vol. 2: “The War Years,” DVDs (series of 9 titles/episodes), starring Sean Patrick Flanery

- reasons: violence; age inappropriate; other

*His Dark Materials* (series of three titles), by Philip Pullman

- reasons: Satanism; occult; religious viewpoint; violence; age inappropriate

*Love and Rockets* (series of 16 titles with Jaime Hernandez as author/illustrator or co-author/co-illustrator), by Jaime Hernandez

- reasons: sexually explicit; violence

“Trial and Retribution” [The First Collection?], DVDs (series of 4 titles/episodes of the ITV drama)

- reasons: sexually explicit; violence

Individual items – 2 challenges each:

*NOW Magazine* [free arts and current events magazine serving greater Toronto]

- reasons: sexually explicit; nudity; anti-family; drugs/drug use; offensive language; age inappropriate

Individual items – 1 challenge each:

“Angels in America,” DVD, directed by Mike Nichols, starring Meryl Streep

- reasons: homosexuality; sexually explicit; offensive language; age inappropriate

“Antichrist,” DVD, directed by Lars von Trier, starring Willem Dafoe

- reasons: sexually explicit; violence

“The Aristocrats,” DVD, starring Paul Provenza and Penn Jillette

- reasons: offensive language; sexually explicit

*As She Grows*, YA novel, by Lesley Anne Cowan

- reason: sexually explicit

*Beyond the Dark*, by Lora Leigh, Angela Knight, Emma Holly, and Diane Whiteside

- reasons: sexually explicit; offensive language

“Black Death,” DVD, directed by Christopher Smith, starring Sean Bean

- reason: violence

*Body Drama*, by Amanda Redd

- reasons: nudity; age inappropriate

*Bone Dog*, by Eric Rohmann

- reason: age inappropriate

*Boy O'Boy*, by Brian Doyle

- reasons: sexually explicit; violence; age inappropriate

“Brazil,” DVD, directed by Terry Gilliam, starring Robert De Niro

- reasons: homosexuality; sexually explicit; offensive language; age inappropriate

“Brüno,” DVD, starring Sacha Baron Cohen

- reasons: nudity; sexually explicit; age inappropriate

*Christmas Tapestry*, by Patricia Polacco

- reasons: violence; age inappropriate; other

*The Daily Show with Jon Stewart Presents Earth (the Book): A Visitor's Guide to the Human Race*, edited by Jon Stewart

- reasons: nudity; insensitivity;

*Fire and Ice*, by Anne Stuart

- reason: offensive language

“The Girl Who Played with Fire,” DVD, starring Noomi Rapace, directed by Daniel Alfredson

- reasons: homosexuality; sexually explicit; violence; age inappropriate

“Globe Trekker” [formerly “Lonely Planet”]: Panama and Columbia, DVD

- reason: drugs/drug use

*Go the F\*\*k to Sleep*, by Adam Mansbach

- reasons: offensive language; age inappropriate

“The Great Polar Bear Adventure,” DVD

- reasons: violence; age inappropriate; other

*Groovy Girls Sleepover Party #2: Pranks a Lot: The Girls vs. the Boys*, by Robin Epstein

- reasons: occult; Satanism; religious viewpoint

“Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,” DVD, Daniel Radcliffe

- reasons: violence; age inappropriate; other

*Hellboy Junior*, by Mike Mignola et al.

- reasons: sexually explicit; age inappropriate

“Hitman,” DVD, produced by Charles Gordon, starring Timothy Olyphant

- reasons: sexism; nudity; violence

“Hobo with a Shotgun,” DVD, directed and edited by Jason Eisener, starring Rutger Hauer

- reason: violence

*Hooray for Dairy Farming*, by Bobbie Kalman

- reason: inaccuracy

*How Israel Lost: The Four Questions*, by Richard Ben Cramer

- reason: anti-ethnicity

“In a Glass Cage” (“Tras el Cristal,” English), DVD directed by Agusti Villaronga, starring Günter Meisner

- reasons: sexually explicit; violence

*The Inuit* (Lifeways Series), by Raymond Bial

- reason: inaccuracy

“Iron Man: Extremis” (Marvel Knights series), DVD, directed by Joel Gibbs, written by Warren Ellis

- reasons: violence; age inappropriate

“Jesus,” DVD, directed by Roger Young, featuring Jeremy Sisto [listed as “TV movie” in IMDB]

- reasons: religious viewpoint; inaccuracy; age inappropriate

*Jihad and Genocide*, by Richard L. Rubenstein

- reasons: anti-ethnicity; insensitivity; inaccuracy; political viewpoint; hate

“The Kid,” audiobook, novel by Sapphire

- reasons: sexually explicit; violence; offensive language

“The Last Temptation of Christ,” DVD, directed by Martin Scorsese

- reasons: insensitivity; sexually explicit; inaccuracy; religious viewpoint

“Luke and Lucy and the Texas Rangers,” DVD, starring voice of Billy Ray Cyrus

- reasons: sexually explicit; violence; offensive language; age inappropriate

*Making Out in Korean*, by Peter Constantine

- reasons: anti-ethnicity; sexually explicit; offensive language; other (sexual exploitation)

“Murder Game,” audiobook, novel by Christine Feehan

- reasons: sexually explicit; age inappropriate

*The Mystery Method: How to get Beautiful Women into Bed*, by Mystery and Chris Odom

- reason: sexually explicit [misbound in the cover of children's novel *Twelve*, by Lauren Myracle – in an interesting twist, Lauren Myracle is a frequently-challenged author of children's/YA novels in the U.S. was the top-challenged author in 2011 for her series of YA

novels *ttyl*, *tfn*, *l8r*, and *g8r*

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/21stcenturychallenged>]

“Naked,” DVD, directed by Mike Leigh, starring David Thewlis

- reasons: sexually explicit; violence

“Princess on the Brink,” audiobook, novel by Meg Cabot

- reasons: sexually explicit; age inappropriate

*The Remarkable Maria*, by Patti McIntosh

- reasons: anti-ethnicity; inaccuracy; racism

*Rolling Stone* [magazine]

- reason: violence

*Ron Jeremy: The Hardest (Working) Man in Show Business*, by Ron Jeremy

- reasons: sexually explicit; age inappropriate

*The Sissy Duckling*, by Harvey Fierstein

- reason: homosexuality

*Sophie Crumb: Evolution of a Crazy Artist*, by Sophie Crumb

- reasons: nudity; sexually explicit; age inappropriate

*The Space Between Us*, by John MacKenna

- reason: other

*Spin* [magazine, published by Vibe/Spin ventures]

- reason: age inappropriate

*The Storm in the Barn*, by Matt Phelan

- reasons: violence; offensive language

*The Story of the Little Mole Who Knew It was None of his Business*, by Werner Holzwarth

- reasons: age inappropriate; other (excrement)

“Swept Away... by an Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August” [“Travolti da un insolito destino nell'azzurro mare d'agosto”], DVD, directed by Lina Wertmuller, starring Giancarlo Giannini

- reasons: sexually explicit; offensive language

*Tales from the Farm*, by Jeff Lemire

- reason: offensive language

“T.R.U.T.H. About the Dinosaurs,” DVD

- reasons: violence; age inappropriate; other

*Two Dumb Ducks*, by Maxwell Eaton

- reason: insensitivity

*The Two Marys: The Hidden History of the Mother and Wife of Jesus*, by Sylvia Brown

- reasons: inaccuracy; religious viewpoint

*Warlord*, by Ted Bell

- reasons: anti-ethnicity; insensitivity; racism; political viewpoint; inciting hatred

*Warriors: Rise of Scourge*, by Erin Hunter

- reasons: violence; offensive language

*What I Meant to Say: The Private Lives of Men*, edited by Ian Brown

- reason: sexism

*What's Happening to Me? An Illustrated Guide to Puberty*, [Boy's Edition], by Peter Mayle

- reasons: sex education; age inappropriate

“What's Up: Balloon to the Rescue,” DVD, produced by Gaiam Entertainment

- reasons: racism; plagiarism

*Why I Canceled my Health Insurance*, by Agneta Dyck

- reasons: inaccuracy; insensitivity

*Written in Blood*, by John Wilson

- reasons: violence; racism; age inappropriate

Policies – 1 challenge each:

Policy of collecting graphic novels – linked to challenge to the 16 titles in *Love and Rockets* series of graphic novel collections authored/co-authored by Jaime Hernandez

Policy of not restricting borrowing by age – linked to challenge of adult DVD “Antichrist”

Policy allowing those without an adult card to borrow any 18A rated movie – linked to challenge of adult DVD “The Girl Who Played with Fire”

Policy of not restricting adult DVD “In a Glass Cage” [“Tras el Cristal”]

Policy of allowing access to movies rated “restricted” to patrons 18 and over – linked to challenge of adult DVD “Brüno”

Policy of not labelling materials with “explicit content” warning – linked to challenge of adult fiction book, *Beyond the Dark*

Policy of not labelling materials for explicit content – linked to challenge of adult audiobook “The Kid”

Policy of restricting software necessary to download e-books from the provincial library to only two out of four computers in a school library.