

**Challenges to Canadian Library Resources and Policies in 2009:
Report of the Annual Survey of the Advisory Committee on Intellectual Freedom,
Canadian Library Association**

*Submitted by Alvin M Schrader, Convenor, on behalf of the CLA IFC**

September 2010

The most challenged author reported in the annual survey of Canadian libraries in 2009 was Charlaine Harris for her series of ten adult novels entitled *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*. The entire series was reported on four separate occasions within the same library system. Two other series were each challenged once, *Negima! Magister Negi Magi*, by Ken Akamatsu, a manga series of 29 titles known in Japan as *Magical Teacher Negima!*, and *Gossip Girl* by Cecily von Ziegesar, a young adult novel series of 15 titles that became the 2007 inspiration for the “Gossip Girl” teen drama television series.

Only three individual titles were reported twice on the 2009 survey, a teen comedy film “Fired Up!” directed by Will Gluck, a children’s picture book *Mummy Laid an Egg!* by Babette Cole, and *NOW Magazine*. The children’s picture book *And Tango Makes Three* was again challenged in 2009, making it the only title to appear on the survey every year since it began in 2006.

Altogether, 139 challenges were reported in the 2009 survey conducted annually by the CLA Advisory Committee on Intellectual Freedom. Of these, 137 were to library resources and two were to library policies. The complete list appears at the end of this Report.

With so many challenges attributed to entire series of printed fiction in 2009, it is no surprise that books in general accounted for 83% of all formats challenged, while 10% were DVDs and videos and 4% were magazines. The most frequent reasons for challenges to library resources were sexually explicit at 76%, age inappropriate 68%, offensive language 34%, violence 32%, nudity 28%, sex education 5%, racism 4%, and inaccuracy 4%. Multiple reasons for a challenge were common.

Two-thirds of all challenges occurred in public libraries in 2009, while school libraries reported 34% and academic libraries the remaining 2%. Teaching assistants were responsible for one-third

of all challenges, patrons for 30%, parents and guardians for 20%, and library staff for 15%. Library materials were retained in 41% of the 2009 challenges, relocated or reclassified in 32% of cases, and removed in 25%.

Also reported in 2009 were two challenges to library policies. One challenge was to a music collection policy of acquiring CDs with “clean” rather than original lyrics, that is, excluding CDs with “parental advisory” labels. The other challenge was to a weeding policy of withdrawing books that had not circulated in ten years or more regardless of their status as presumed “classics”.

Findings of the 2009 survey show that challenges continue to occur in publicly funded Canadian libraries, clear evidence that attention to intellectual freedom remains central to the work of Canadian librarians and sister association advocates across the cultural network. CLA President **Keith Walker** notes: "Libraries play a crucial role in the protection of intellectual freedom and have to be prepared to support the right of Canadians to read what they choose. Freedom to read can never be taken for granted."

Indeed, in recognizing that participation in the survey is strictly voluntary, the survey authors are keenly aware that far more challenges go unreported than are documented here, so consequently these data should be treated as indicative rather than definitive; they do not accurately capture the overall climate of intellectual freedom in publicly funded Canadian libraries.

In 2006, the CLA Advisory Committee on Intellectual Freedom initiated an annual Challenges Survey to gather data about the nature and outcome of challenges to library materials and policies experienced by publicly funded libraries across Canada in each calendar year. Data from the survey help to inform the Committee’s policy and advocacy work and results are shared with the CLA membership, other library workers and advocates, the Freedom of Expression Committee of the Book and Periodical Council, and the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association. The survey has been enhanced each year; for the first time the 2009 version was made available in both official languages. A driving aim of the survey project is to encourage library documentation, reporting, and transparency about challenges to materials and policies.

With the four years 2006-2009 of survey data now available, the Committee is devoting energy to comparing results and identifying trends. The chart below lists the number of challenges described by publicly funded Canadian libraries in each of the four survey years.

Survey year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Challenges reported	31	45	78	139

Total challenges in 2009 represented a significant increase over previous years because several large series of novels were reported that year. For the same reason, challenges to books were substantially higher in 2009 than before, while those to DVDs and videos were lower and those to sound recordings were about the same. The proportion of challenges reported in public libraries in 2009 was the lowest of the four years, appearing to mark a trend downwards. Challenges reported by school libraries in 2009 were the highest of the four years, and of particular note was the new phenomenon of teaching assistants, who initiated one-third of all 2009 challenges. Patron challenges were lower than in 2008, but about the same as for 2007. Parents and guardians initiated challenges in the same proportion as in 2008, while library staff members were responsible for more challenges in 2009 than in 2008.

The proportion of challenges on the basis of sexually explicit content was much higher in 2009, a marked trend upwards, and the same was true for “age inappropriate” materials. Challenges for offensive language were higher than in 2008, but about the same as in 2007. Challenges for violence were also higher than in 2008, but similar to 2006. Challenges for nudity were higher than in previous years.

Data over the four years appear to show a downward trend in materials retained, with more materials being reclassified and relocated from one area of the collection to another, e.g., from young adult to adult, as well as more materials being removed from library collections. There were higher levels of adult novels and young adult graphic novels challenged in 2009. Non-fiction challenges were about the same over the four years, as were picture books and young adult novels.

For more information about the annual Challenges Survey, please contact the CLA Advisory Committee on Intellectual Freedom at www.cla.ca or for the 2009 survey, Dr Alvin M Schrader, CLA IFC Convenor, at alvin.schrader@ualberta.ca.

**Special thanks to Donna Bowman and Toni Samek, colleagues on the CLA Advisory Committee on Intellectual Freedom, and Richard Beaudry, past president of CLA division the Canadian Association for School Libraries, who translated the English version of the survey into French.*

List of Challenges to Resources and Policies
Reported by Publicly-Funded Canadian Libraries, 2009

Challenges are listed alphabetically by number of challenges per item. (Note that unverified bibliographic data are recorded here as originally supplied by library officials who contributed to the 2009 Survey.)

Series – 4 challenges each:

The Southern Vampire Mysteries (series of 10 books), by Charlaine Harris

Series – 1 challenge each:

Gossip Girl (series of 15 books), by Cecily von Ziegesar

Negima! (series of 29 books), by Ken Akamatsu

Speak Spanish with Dora and Diego (series of 2 items), book and CD

Individual item – 2 challenges each:

“Fired Up!” DVD, with Nicholas D'agosta and Sarah Roemer

Mummy Laid an Egg!, by Babette Cole

NOW Magazine

Individual item – 1 challenge each:

“1900,” DVD, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci

Adbusters: Journal of the Mental Environment

The Anal Sex Position Guide, by Tristan Taormino

And Tango Makes Three, by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

An Anthology of Graphic Fiction, Cartoons and True Stories, edited by Ivan Brunetti

Azimi & Ramin Bahrani, directed & edited by Ramin Bahrani

“Bear Cub,” DVD

Beet, the Vandel Buster, by Riku Sanjo and illus. Koji Inada

Bended Elbow, by Eleanor M. Jacobson

“Borat,” by Sacha Baron Cohen

“Chop Shop,” film, directed by Ramin Bahrani

Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads, compiled by John A. Comax and Alan Comax
(published 1910)

“Creature Comforts,” DVD
Culture Smart! Canada
“Donkey X,” DVD, directed by Jose Pozo
Faithful Elephants
“Father Christmas,” video, by Raymond Briggs
Franklin the Fly, by R.O. Blechman
The Going Down Guide, by Emily Dubberley
Hand, Hand, Finger, Thumb, by Al Perkins
Hooking Up with Tila Tequila, by Tila Tequila
“Islam: What the West Needs to Know,” DVD
King & King, by Linda de Haan
The Krakow Ghetto and the Plaszow Camp Remembered, by Malvina Graf
“Leolo,” DVD
Leonard Maltin’s Movie Guide 2010 Edition, by Leonard Maltin
Mummy Never Told Me, by Babette Cole
My Mom's Having a Baby
“Noah's Arc,” video, with Jon Voigt
The Notebook Girls: Four Friends, One Diary, by Julia Baskin
“Outsourced,” DVD, Russell Peters
Paris Match Magazine, Aug. 12, 2009 issue
“Pink Flamingoes,” film, directed by John Waters
Qu'est ce que tu fais là?
“Relapse,” CD, by Eminem
The Sex Instruction Manual, by Felicia Zopol
Sports Illustrated, swimsuit edition
Steal This Book, by Abby Hoffman
“The Story of Seabiscuit,” film, starring Shirley Temple
“Taking Lives,” DVD
Vendetta, by Fern Michaels
A Walk with Jane Austen, by Lori Smith
Wetlands, by Charlotte Roche
Whole Pet Diet, by Ann Brown
“Xizang. The Folk Songs of Tibet,” CD
Ying Zai Qi Dian, by Xingwang Zhou

Policies – 1 challenge each:

Library policy of acquiring CDs with “clean” rather than original lyrics, that is, those without “parental advisory” labeling

Library policy of weeding books uncirculated for 10 years or more regardless of presumed status as “classics”