**Canadian Library Association Research and Development Grant Proposal**

*Fine Balances and Persistent Tensions*
*10 Years of Challenged Materials and Policies in Canadian Libraries, 2006-2015*

Submitted by
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**Project Goal**

The objective of the proposed project is to aggregate and analyse ten years of data from the Canadian Library Association's *Annual Challenges Survey*. Intellectual freedom is a mandated core value of the Canadian Library Association and has figured prominently throughout the Association's history. Intellectual freedom is identified as one of ten panel themes to be featured in the 2016 CLA Forum in Ottawa this June.

The intention is to present the findings as widely as possible, both to colleagues, for example, through professional conferences and journal articles, and to the general public, for example, through opportunities during Freedom to Read Week celebrations held across Canada at the end of February each year.

While reports and databases as well as conference presentations of the surveys have always been prepared and made widely available, these have been accomplished one calendar year at a time. It is an opportune moment, with a decade of survey experience at hand, to synthesize the data and to examine patterns and trends in the challenges experienced by libraries and library staff.

**Project Background**

Since 2006 the Intellectual Freedom Advisory Committee has conducted an annual Web-based survey for the Canadian Library Association of challenges to materials and intellectual-freedom related policies that have been experienced by publicly-funded Canadian libraries. We now have available 10 years of rich data for composite analysis.

The *Annual Challenges Survey* was inspired by two precursors, the Edmonton Public Library's challenged materials spreadsheet, and the confidential database maintained since 1990 by the ALA, whose online challenge reporting form can be found at http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/challengeslibrarymaterials/challengereporting/onlinechallengeform/index.cfm.

There are several goals of CLA's *Annual Challenges Survey*: to document the nature and outcomes of objections to materials and policies in publicly-funded Canadian libraries; to educate the Canadian public about library collection management and free expression principles;

to inform the Association's policy and advocacy work for intellectual freedom; to help library staff approach difficult issues surrounding uncensored library access in a professional and methodical manner by learning about colleagues' experiences.

The Survey also provides an opportunity for publicly-funded libraries to demonstrate their accountability to users and customers, stakeholders, elected officials, and the general public. The survey is voluntary so the snapshots developed through it are recognized as somewhat incomplete but indicative, and of significant value nonetheless.

Survey results since 2006 have been widely shared with the Canadian public, CLA membership, other library workers and advocates, the Freedom of Expression Committee of the Book and Periodical Council, its annual Freedom to Read Week Kit, 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). The annual reports and databases of challenged titles and policies 2006-2014 can be readily accessed on the CLA Web site, and 2015 results will be added when the survey finishes at the end of March 2016 and results have been analyzed.

**Project Design and Methodology**

The project entails computer file generation and mixed methods of quantitative and content analysis of patterns, trend, and narrative data. Challenged materials and policies variables to be analyzed are: format, title and title frequency, author and author frequency, publication year, reason, complainant, library sector, province, outcome, and amount of time to reach resolution.

Several steps are involved:

1. creation of a master database amalgamating the ten annual database files into one master data file;
2. creation of an SPSS data file for statistical manipulation;
3. quantitative analysis of overall patterns and trends revealed in the challenges to materials and policies over the last decade;
4. content analysis of the narrative accounts of the challenges as reported by survey participants;
5. preparation of a research report for submission to a Canadian professional journal, and a conference presentation, with slides, for sharing at one or more annual provincial conferences.

The intention is to present the findings as widely as possible with both colleagues and the general public, for example, through opportunities during Freedom to Read Week celebrations held across Canada at the end of February each year.

**Project Outcomes and Significance**

As intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession in general and of the Canadian Library Association in particular, project findings will be of significant interest.

They will be widely shared with professional colleagues to inform, educate, and provide models of how challenges have been handled and resolved. Of particular interest are those instances in which materials are withdrawn from library collections and library access principles are revised.

It is also important in a Canadian democracy with a strong emphasis on freedom of speech rights to share project findings with all Canadians who are interested in freedom of access issues in public spaces generally and in publicly funded libraries in particular.

**Project Timetable**

The anticipated project completion time is 6 months, based on the following projected timetable:

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| July-August | data files formatting, aggregation, descriptive statistics analysis and output |
| September-November | data analysis and research report |
| December | conference presentation preparation (slides and text) |

**Project Budget**

Research Assistant to undertake master database file creation,
SPSS statistical analysis, and narrative content analysis
(20 hours at $50 per hour)                                          **$1,000**

Data analysis and preparation of a research or journal report and conference text and slides will be undertaken by the principal investigator at no remuneration. No other grant funding is envisaged.