

# IFRT report

No. 33  
Winter 1991

Intellectual Freedom Round Table of the American Library Association

## Run for the Board!

Christopher Bowen,  
Nominating Committee Chair

We are looking for a few good people to serve on the IFRT Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is the governing body of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table. Nominations are sought for people to serve in the following positions: two directors, secretary, and vice-chair/chair-elect.

Elections will take place in the spring of 1992. Terms for directors and the secretary are for two years and begin after the 1992 Annual Conference. The vice-chair/chair-elect serves as vice-chair for the 1992/93 year and as chair for the 1993/94 year. All officers must be members of the IFRT and must be able to attend the mid-winter and summer ALA conferences during both years of their term.

To nominate someone (or yourself) please contact:

Christopher Bowen  
Director  
Downers Grove Public Library  
1050 Curtiss Street  
Downers Grove IL 60515  
(708) 960-1200

Nominations must be received by  
Wednesday, January 22, 1992.

## Surviving the Storm

The sky is falling! The sky is falling! As I write this message to IFRT members, another two to three inches of snow falls on top of the record 28+ inch Halloween snowfall. Snow is expected in Minnesota; it is part of the winter scene. In spite of all the winter weather preparedness, however, the first storm comes as a shock and catches all of us off guard. Subsequent snowfalls continue to take us by surprise and are often much worse than the experts predicted. Government systems we rely on disappoint us in how slowly and inefficiently they struggle to remove all that white stuff from our usual pathways. Storms disrupt lives and change routines. Scheduled events are postponed or cancelled as we cope with snow shovels and unplowed driveways. But, always, support we did not know we had emerges as friends and neighbors rally to help.

Censorship is like the snows. No matter how prepared we are, each challenge takes us by surprise. Even though challenges to resources can be expected, even predicted, each incident assumes huge proportions, is worse than expected, disrupts our routines, and interferes with providing service. Challenges force us to focus energy on repairing damage and to cope with the emergency at hand while neglecting our schedules. Like drivers in new snow, some people become very cautious when performing their usual activities, especially selection. But, a challenge often reveals sources of support that we did not know about. Individuals who had not voiced their opinions surface as vocal supporters of the right of access to information. And with help from professional colleagues and organizations, most censorship storms are weathered with everyone emerging more committed to defending the right to read.

The recent Minnesota storm hit while the Midwest Federation of Library Associations was meeting in Minneapolis. That the librarians at the conference were preparing themselves for the inevitable challenges was evident in the program sessions: video in libraries, a case study of the censorship of *Juggling*, discussions of fees and professional ethics. Dennis Barrie of Cincinnati and Mapplethorpe fame was a luncheon speaker. On the negative side, several members of the audience expressed disappointment about the lack of awareness of self-censorship in the remarks of one presenter as she distributed a bibliography of books for children and young adults that she labeled "safe and not going to cause you trouble."

IFRT activities are designed to help you prepare for challenges and cope with them when they happen. During this IFRT year, the San Francisco program will be about witchcraft and cults, a current problem in many libraries. A committee headed by Dorothy Broderick is exploring the issue of intellectual freedom implications of politically correct speech. The report of the Roll Call of the States distributed at the Membership meeting provides an unmatched resource of strategies and activities from intellectual freedom committees across the country. Every report carries unique program and activity ideas for use by intellectual freedom committees. The Soapbox at annual conference is always a lively and intense event as librarians

Continued

explore, discuss, and debate IF issues. IFRT will monitor and respond during the hearing on the ALA code of professional ethics. Awards will be presented to individuals and groups making major contributions to the intellectual freedom community.

One of our goals this year is to encourage more school library media specialists to join IFRT. The Membership Committee will be looking for ways of recruiting and involving school media library specialists in our Round Table. Another goal was to identify and appoint new workers to IFRT committees. Volunteers were identified through responses to a short article in the last issue of this *Report*, and through volunteer forms distributed during the Atlanta conference. Most of the individuals who volunteered were assigned committee slots. Volunteers who were not yet members of the Round Table were invited to join.

IFRT provides it all—professional support, information through programming, awards for those who persevere, a forum for discussion, state reports that provide ideas and inspiration, and an opportunity to support a grassroots intellectual freedom organization. Even though each challenge comes as a surprise, librarians are better prepared to cope because of the American Library Association intellectual freedom scene, of which IFRT is a major part.

## Committees at Midwinter

The Organization and Bylaws Committee is working on a revision of the IFRT Handbook. Anyone with suggestions concerning changes to the Handbook (or the Bylaws) should contact committee chair Sue Kamm. At Midwinter, the committee will meet on Saturday afternoon: all are welcome to contribute to the discussion.

Sue Kamm, P.O. Box 26467  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
(310) 412-5613

The Membership Committee is reexamining several IFRT publications and looking into new ways to recruit members. If you have any ideas to contribute, contact chair Eric Welch,

and/or bring your ideas to the committee meeting during Midwinter.

Eric C. Welch  
Director of Learning Resources  
Highland Community College  
2998 W. Pearl City Road  
Freeport, IL 61032  
(815) 235-6121 x256

Publications Committee will consider the role that the committee and the *IFRT Report* should play within the IFRT. The committee will also continue discussions begun during the 1991 Annual Conference concerning whether the editorship of the *IFRT Report* should be separated from the office of Publications Committee Chair, and a long-term editor appointed. Individuals with ideas or comments on any of the above subjects are invited to contact the committee chair and/or attend the committee meeting at Midwinter.

Paul Vermouth  
Rm. 14S-222  
M.I.T. Libraries  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
(617) 253-9352 / (617)253-3109 (fax)

IFRT's Coalition Building Committee is chaired this year by Doug Koschik of the Baldwin Public Library, Birmingham, Michigan. Members include Kent Oliver, Felicia Hoehne, Deborah Langerman, Mark Willis, and Kristine Hammerstrand.

The committee's purpose is to encourage contacts between librarians and other groups eager to work for First Amendment rights. This year the committee hopes to compile and publish a list of intellectual freedom coalitions nationwide. We will also consider revising several sections of a coalition building handbook.

At Midwinter in San Antonio the committee will get together on Sunday, January 26, from 11:30 to 12:30. We currently anticipate that our meeting slot at Annual in San Francisco will be on Sunday, June 28, from 11:30 to 12:30. Anyone interested is encouraged to attend the meetings. Please direct questions, comments, and suggestions to:

Doug Koschik, 4083 Wakefield  
Berkley, MI 48072  
(313) 288-4113 (h) / (313) 647-1700 (w)

See page 3 for a more complete list of committee meetings.

## Looking Ahead to 1993

Tom Budlong, IFRT Chair-Elect

The primary duty of the IFRT Chair-Elect is to plan and organize the intellectual freedom program for the following conference year. For me, this will be for the 1993 annual conference to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana. However, one of the great things about IFRT is that I don't have to do this alone and in a vacuum. The IFRT is a membership organization, and I have the great opportunity to call upon you, my fellow members, to suggest program ideas.

The intellectual freedom program is generally one of the best-attended programs offered during the annual conference. This has been true because we have provided programs which are informative, provocative, unique, thought-provoking, controversial, and attuned to the important issues and problems of the day. The intellectual freedom program is also an opportunity to remind the ALA membership of the principles for which the organization stands. As most of you know, there has been no shortage of censorship incidents in recent years and every year brings new targets and new issues to confront. The opportunities for programming are ample.

So just what should the program for 1993 be? As is usual by this time, a number of ideas have already been suggested. Some of these are: libraries and sexuality materials; the politically correct speech movement; the implications for intellectual freedom of the new make-up of the Supreme Court; "undercovered" censored news stories from "Project Censored"; government control of information during armed conflicts such as Grenada, Panama and the Gulf War; censorship in the arts; dissemination of AIDS information; and censorship of gay and lesbian materials.

These are just a few ideas. I'm sure that many of you have others that should be considered. Some of you may feel strongly that a particular topic merits attention this year. Others may have suggestions about how one or more of the above ideas could be turned into a program, or recommendations concerning speakers. Please contact me

# 1992 Midwinter Meeting—San Antonio

## Friday, January 24

Freedom to Read Foundation .....	8:30 am–12:30 pm
Board of Trustees .....	2:00 pm–5:00 pm
Freedom to Read Foundation Reception .....	5:00 pm–6:30 pm

## Saturday, January 25

Intellectual Freedom Committee .....	8:00 am–12:30 pm
IFC/IFRT/Div. IFC's Joint Meeting .....	2:00 pm–4:00 pm
IFRT Bylaws & Organization Comm. ....	2:00 pm–4:00 pm
Intellectual Freedom Committee: .....	8:00 pm–10:00 pm
<i>Hearing on Preparation of Guidelines Regarding Patron Behavior and Library Usage</i>	

## Sunday, January 26

Intellectual Freedom Committee .....	8:00 am–11:00 am
IFRT Program Planning Committee .....	9:30 am–11:00 am
IFRT State Program Award Committee .....	9:30 am–11:00 am
IFRT Coalition Building Committee .....	11:30 am–12:30 pm
IFRT Executive Committee .....	2:00 pm–5:30 pm
Committee on Professional Ethics .....	2:00 pm–5:30 pm
Committee on Professional Ethics: .....	8:00 pm–10:00 pm
<i>Hearing—the ALA Code of Ethics: Is it Time for Revision?</i>	

## Monday, January 27

IFRT Membership Promotion Committee .....	9:30 am–11:00 am
IFRT Oboler Award Committee .....	11:30 am–12:30 pm
IFRT Publications Committee .....	11:30 am–12:30 pm
Intellectual Freedom Committee .....	2:00 pm–4:00 pm

## Tuesday, January 28

Committee on Professional Ethics .....	11:30 am–12:30 pm
IFRT Executive Committee .....	11:30 am–12:30 pm
Intellectual Freedom Committee .....	2:00 pm–5:30 pm

NOTE: Room assignments will be available from your IFRT Staff Liaison after December 6. Be sure that you check the **Official Conference Program** for room assignments.

The *IFRT Report* is an irregular publication of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table of the American Library Association and is sent to members of the Round Table. Membership information and/or correspondence about your subscription should be addressed to IFRT, Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611. The current editor of the *IFRT Report* is Paul Vermouth, Rm. 14S-222, M.I.T. Libraries, Cambridge, MA 02139. Letters to the editor are welcomed.

with your suggestions, preferences, comments, and concerns. And if you can, please attend the IFRT Executive Board sessions during the Midwinter meeting in San Antonio. The 1993 conference program theme will be discussed at that time.

Tom Budlong  
 Manager—Video Services  
 Department  
 Atlanta-Fulton Public Library  
 1 Margaret Mitchell Square  
 Atlanta, GA 30303

## Soapbox

B. B. Rile,  
 Member, Publications Committee

For the second year, the IFRT hosted its Soapbox at the annual conference. Those who wished to speak could sign up for time slots, speak on any subject with intellectual freedom implications, and answer questions from the audience.

Christopher Bowen, chair of the IFRT, promised those who attended that no record would be kept of who spoke or what they said, but we thought that IFRT members who were not able to be part of the audience might be interested in the topics that were covered at the Soapbox meeting. This list isn't intended to be exhaustive, but it should give you some idea of what things were mentioned:

- Coalitions—with ALA and other organizations
- The Censorship database the Office of Intellectual Freedom is compiling
- Israeli censorship
- Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys in public libraries
- Is it harder to deal with censors who are our friends?
- Does library school do a good job teaching intellectual freedom principles?
- Do different kinds of libraries or librarians have different degrees of intellectual freedom responsibility?
- Should we be politically correct?
- What will happen if we don't serve our patrons without fees?

## **IFRT is Still the Largest Round Table... and still growing**

Once again ALA statistics on Round Table membership show that the Intellectual Freedom Round Table is the largest, with 2219 members. The only other Round Tables to have more than 1000 members are the Social Responsibilities Round Table, with 1489 members; the Government Documents Round Table, with 1371 members, and the Library Instruction Round Table, with 1166 members.

IFRT membership increased 13.21% in 1990/1991, the third highest percentage increase among Round Tables. The only Round Tables to grow faster were the SSRT, with a whopping increase of 37.36%, and the Ethnic Materials & Information Exchange Round Table, with an increase of 17.61%.

**Intellectual Freedom Round Table**  
American Library Association  
50 East Huron Street  
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**FIRST CLASS**