

# IFRT Report

Issue 82: Summer 2020



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## From the Chair

### by Audrey Barbakoff

At the beginning of my term as your IFRT Chair, I could never have imagined what this year would hold. In other times, I would have used this message to highlight a few of IFRT's key annual accomplishments:

- our virtual conference programs on the intersection of intellectual freedom and social justice
- our partnership with the Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table to promote banned comics ([bit.ly/GNCIFRT20](http://bit.ly/GNCIFRT20))
- our newly negotiated member discount on the Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy ([www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif/jifp25](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif/jifp25))
- our educational and thought-provoking discussion group IFRT Reads (<http://bit.ly/35bDeMU>)

Instead, I feel called to take this moment to reflect on what our value of intellectual freedom means in these times.

Intellectual freedom means we stand for people's right to privacy. As our nation struggles to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we face pressures to share patron data with governments or digital product vendors. We must develop new ways to keep people safe and maximize their access to information without compromising their fundamental right to privacy.

Intellectual freedom means we stand for every person's right to speak truth to power. We must fight to ensure that Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, all oppressed people, and their allies have the space to protest the ongoing, pervasive trauma of systemic racism and police brutality. We must defend journalists' right to cover protests free from intimidation or violence. We uphold the right to say that Black lives matter, and to say the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Abery.

This year, we have collectively experienced rapid, intense changes to the ways we work, live, and even see the world. But something that has not changed is the profound importance of intellectual freedom. IFRT needs you to join, participate, and volunteer. Let's keep the work moving forward, together.

Sincerely,  
Audrey Barbakoff  
IFRT Chair, 2019–2020



AUDREY BARBAKOFF

## Executive Board 2019–2020

### OFFICERS

- **Audrey Barbakoff**, Chair
- **Wanda Mae Huffaker**, Chair-Elect
- **Isabel Klein**, Secretary
- **Ashley Brown**, Treasurer
- **John “Mack” Freeman**, Past-Chair
- **Kristin Joy Anderson**, Director-at-Large
- **Stephanie Barnaby**, Director-at-Large
- **Angela Ocana**, Director-at-Large
- **Eric Johnson**, Director-at-Large
- **Martin Garnar**, IFRT Councilor

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- **Samantha Helmick**, Bylaws and Organization Committee
- **Shane Roopnarine**, Coalition Building Committee
- **Mary Kickham-Samy**, Education Advisory Special Committee
- **Cyndi Robinson**, John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award Committee
- **Rebecca Moorman**, Membership Promotion Committee
- **Ma’Lis Wendt**, Merritt Fund Support Committee
- **John “Mack” Freeman**, Nominating Committee
- **Trish Hull**, Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award Committee
- **Sarah Dallas**, Program Committee
- **Kristin Anderson**, Publications and Communications Committee

Learn more about members of the Executive Committee at [www.ala.org/rt/ifrt/biographies](http://www.ala.org/rt/ifrt/biographies).

## IFRT Councilor Update

by Martin Garnar

As your IFRT representative on ALA's governing body, I'd like to share a few updates from the ALA Council regarding next steps for the association. Before I dive in, let's review the current structure of Council. We have Councilors representing different constituencies: divisions, state chapters, round tables, and at-large members, giving us over 180 voting members on Council. All of our votes carry the same weight, though the size of our constituencies varies. For example, in the latest round of ALA elections, the minimum number of votes needed to get elected as a Councilor-at-Large was larger than the biggest round table, and the chapter Councilors from Wyoming and California have equal authority. In some ways, it's like mixing the representation principles of the House and Senate into one single body. Some people think Council is too big to be effective, while others like the broad representation afforded by the current model. With that in mind, here are those updates:

- In order to keep IFRT informed about what's happening on Council, I share reports at the conclusion of each conference. You can find them on the IFRT Connect page and I would encourage you to read them if you're interested in the workings of Council, including the actions we take, the resolutions we debate, and the discussions we have. There's always something interesting in addition to the more mundane business items.
- Much of Council's time is currently devoted to the Forward Together proposals, which would reshape the association's governance structures and membership participation opportunities. There's a separate website at [forwardtogether.ala.org](https://forwardtogether.ala.org) with their report as well as ongoing discussions on ALA Connect. I hope that we have some IFRT members who volunteered to be part of the working group that will be charged with looking at next steps.
- With the 2020 Annual Conference replaced with a virtual event, Council will have an opportunity to find out how to operate in an online environment – something it's discussed for years, but has never really done outside of a few isolated and controversial votes. Watch for my update on Council activities after the virtual event to see how it went.

My job is to represent IFRT on Council and to be a voice for intellectual freedom during our deliberations. If you ever have feedback for me or want to share your thoughts on something coming before Council, please contact me through Connect.



MARTIN GARNAR

## The Results Are In

The results of the 2020 ALA elections are in, and the results of IFRT's ballot are as follows:

- Directors-at-Large: Kristin Anderson and Jeremy Brett
- Secretary: Rebecca Moorman
- Vice Chair / Chair Elect: Sam Helmick

Congratulations to our new and returning officers. We look forward to all the great things we will do together in the coming years.

We also passed all five proposed Bylaws amendments in a landslide vote. The approved IFRT Bylaw revisions for Article IV, Section 5 read:

The Nominating Committee shall give to the Executive Committee a recommendation with at least two nominees for every office to be filled for annual election. The Executive Committee shall vote to approve the list of qualified candidates. Members shall be informed of the candidates. Members may also be nominated for candidacy for any office via a signed petition of at least fifteen IFRT members.

The election will be held by vote in accordance with ALA procedure. A plurality of all votes cast will be necessary to determine the successful candidate for each office. In case of a tie vote, the successful candidate will be determined by lot. All elections will be certified by the ALA Elections Committee.

The full text of IFRT's bylaws is available at [www.ala.org/rt/ifrt/bylaws](http://www.ala.org/rt/ifrt/bylaws).

Thank you to all the candidates who ran for positions and thank you as well to everyone who voted. Members of the Nominating Committee are John "Mack" Freeman and Stephanie Barnaby. Members of the Bylaws and Organization Committee are: Sam Helmick (chair), Stephanie Barnaby, Emily Knox, Clare Membiela, Edgar Mosshamer, and Angela Ocana.

The graphic features a purple header with the 'INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM ROUND TABLE' logo in white and teal. Below the logo, the words 'ELECTION RESULTS' are written in large, bold, teal letters. The results are presented in a two-column layout: a black box on the left lists the 'Directors-At-Large' as Kristin Anderson and Jeremy Brett, and a white box on the right lists the 'Secretary' as Rebecca Moorman and the 'Vice Chair/ Chair Elect' as Sam Helmick. A teal box at the bottom contains the heading 'Bylaw Amendments' and two paragraphs of text: 'All five amendments passed by a landslide, with "yes" vote percentages in the mid to high 90s.' and 'Thank you to the Bylaws committee for your excellent and thoughtful work!'

**INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM ROUND TABLE**

## ELECTION RESULTS

**Directors-At-Large:**  
**Kristin Anderson**  
**Jeremy Brett**

**Secretary:** **Rebecca Moorman**

**Vice Chair/ Chair Elect:** **Sam Helmick**

### Bylaw Amendments

All five amendments passed by a landslide, with "yes" vote percentages in the mid to high 90s.

Thank you to the Bylaws committee for your excellent and thoughtful work!

## IFRT Sessions at ALA's Virtual Event – Community Through Connection

For the first time since World War II, ALA's annual conference was cancelled due to a devastating global pandemic. To protect the health and safety of the library community, ALA pivoted their energies into building the summer 2020 online event, ALA Virtual - Community Through Connection, to take place on June 24–26, 2020.

While IFRT is rescheduling the annual awards reception and social events, we are still providing two sessions for virtual access. The IFRT Chair's program, titled "More Than Just Banned Books: Recent Research on Intellectual Freedom," is a live-streamed panel of two academic professors, authors, and intellectual freedom experts who will discuss recent empirical research in intellectual freedom and censorship. Shannon Oltmann will share some surprising information about librarian perspectives on intellectual freedom. She will also address the importance of intellectual freedom in conservative, rural areas as well as moderate or liberal urban and suburban locales. Emily Knox will discuss her projects on intellectual freedom and diverse books and the relationship between intellectual freedom and social justice. The panelists will also discuss their Mapping Information Access research project on restricted internet access and book challenges in Alabama, its inconclusive results, and the need for more research.

The second session is titled "Intellectual Freedom, Hate Speech, the First Amendment, and You." Recent concern over the 2018 ALA Meeting Room interpretation as being an invitation for hate groups to use the library, and the general concept of libraries as a "neutral" place, invites a continuation of the meaningful discussion about whether intellectual freedom allows for hate speech. Peter Coyl (director of the Montclair Public Library) and Nadine Strossen (author of *HATE: Why We Should Resist It with Free Speech, Not Censorship* and past president of the American Civil Liberties Union) will discuss how library workers can better understand and implement the principles in the *Library Bill of Rights*; what hate speech is, as well as how it affects those it targets; and why the First Amendment protects hate speech. Attendees will better understand the complex nuances of free speech and how to explain it so users and staff feel welcome.

These sessions are a product of the hard work of the Program Committee whose members are Sara Dallas (chair), Peter Coyl, Angie Miraflor, Kelley Rowan, and Josh Stone.

## Emerging Leader: Rhonda Evans

Rhonda Evans, assistant chief librarian at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, is the 2020 ALA Emerging Leader sponsored by the Intellectual Freedom Round Table.

The Emerging Leaders program is "a leadership development program which enables newer library workers from across the country to participate in problem-solving work groups, network with peers, gain an inside look into ALA structure, and have an opportunity to serve the profession in a leadership capacity."

Rhonda is one of 50 leaders in the 2020 class, and she is working on the Library Weather Resiliency Clearinghouse project, which aims to create a clearinghouse of information for libraries regarding the issues they may face as a result of climate change. The goal of the clearinghouse is to "collect this information and put it in one place" to help libraries explore issues from programming to protecting collections and staff from climate change and natural disasters. The project will look at how climate change, and the misinformation surrounding climate change, may impact libraries and their patrons. The project will be housed at [climatechangelibrarylab.wordpress.com](https://climatechangelibrarylab.wordpress.com).

In addition to participating in the project, Rhonda is looking forward to learning more about ALA and its inner workings, including ALA governance, as part of the emerging leaders program, with an end goal of taking on a more proactive role in ALA.

Rhonda received her master's in library science from the Pratt Institute in Manhattan and has been at the New York Public Library for five years. She sees intellectual freedom as very relevant to what is happening in the world today, and believes it is critical for people to have access to good information and to be ethical about how they spread information.

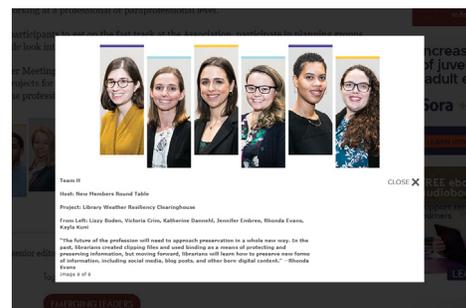
She is particularly drawn to the issue of access, which she has seen as particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. With library and school closures, the lack of internet access has been a significant challenge for many. While the NYPL, along with many other libraries, has shifted toward increasing virtual services, this primarily helps those who have reliable internet access. A lack of access prevents students from fully participating in school and "hinders how people explore information."

While NYPL had a hotspot program prior to the COVID pandemic, "we weren't prepared for our doors to be closed to the public this long," she said. Many libraries have reported users sitting in cars in parking lots to use Wi-Fi; while the NYPL doesn't have parking lots, Rhonda reported that users are sitting on the library steps and the nearby stoops trying to access the Wi-Fi. The current challenges facing libraries really emphasize the need to bridge the digital divide going forward.

In addition to the clearinghouse project, Rhonda has been working on research regarding the first Black librarian at NYPL and the history of Black librarians at NYPL.



RHONDA EVANS



EMERGING LEADERS 2020

## Member Spotlight: Kyle Binaxas

Kyle Binaxas is an ardent advocate for free speech, free expression, and equitable, inclusive access to information. After receiving their MLS from East Carolina University in 2017, Kyle's first librarian position was in a correctional facility library. After encountering several intellectual freedom issues there, "from not allowing library patrons to check out books one would consider classics to not allowing the newsletter and various programs that we envisioned coming from the library," Kyle joined IFRT to take advantage of the information and resources available when facing these issues.

Today, Kyle is the Student Success librarian at Richard Bland College of William & Mary, providing collection development services, instruction, reference services, and LibGuides to the students. Kyle works with a small but dedicated team of librarians that wear many hats and support each other in their ever-evolving roles. "What I enjoy most about my job is the ability I have had to be very innovative. I have a very supportive supervisor and administrative team that has allowed me to try new things within the library and redefined the role as I see fit to provide maximum student success and student satisfaction with library services." Kyle says burnout is an ugly beast, but the ability to try new things has produced some fantastic results amongst the students and that helps keep spirits high.

IFRT has been an invaluable source of information and support for Kyle. "Learning about censorship, how to handle challenges, and a librarian's perspective on intellectual freedom-related issues especially in these times is something that I desperately need. Not only that but this community is so welcoming and supportive to me." As an active member of the ALA, serving on several diversity and intellectual freedom committees, Kyle is able to stay up to date on the latest news and library trends and is grateful for this fantastic support system.

Kyle asserts that the most pressing intellectual freedom issue in today's society is privacy. As we increasingly rely on the internet as a source of information and community, we are also seeing our rights to privacy quickly being stripped away. "From lowering encryption, selling of data, and so much more I see that as the world continues to become more digitally focused, we need to continue fighting for the right to privacy and security." Kyle is a welcome addition to the IFRT team, bringing passion, enthusiasm, and a unique perspective. Keep up the great work!



KYLE BINAXAS

## Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy

The *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy* (JIFP) is the official journal of the Office for Intellectual Freedom, an office of the American Library Association. Quarterly publications include substantive essays, peer-reviewed articles, legal briefs, court rulings, and book-banning incidents. In addition, JIFP publishes book reviews, editorials, and reports from ALA Council committees on intellectual freedom and professional ethics.

Current IFRT members can contact the Office for Intellectual Freedom at 800-545-2433, x4226 or [oif@ala.org](mailto:oif@ala.org) to receive the reduced price subscription form. More information is available at [www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif/jifp](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif/jifp).



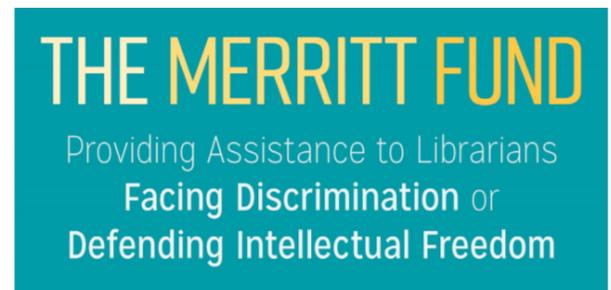
## LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund

While not officially managed by IFRT, the LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund is near and dear to the round table's heart. Dr. Merritt was known for his activities opposing censorship and promoting intellectual freedom, publishing many articles on the subject, and serving as editor of the ALA's Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom from 1962 until 1970. The Merritt Fund was established after his death in 1970 as a special trust in his memory and serves to help librarians who:

- are denied employment rights or discriminated against due to race or national origin, gender, sexual orientation, color, creed, religion, age, or disability, or
- denied employment rights due to their defense of intellectual freedom; i.e. defending intellectual freedom whether by defense of privacy rights or the promotion of the freedom of the press, freedom of speech, or the freedom of librarians to choose materials for their libraries.

The Merritt Fund is supported solely by donations and contributions from concerned groups and individuals. The Merritt Fund Support Committee has been a part of IFRT since 2008, with the aim of raising awareness of the fund and ensuring its viability as a resource for librarians facing discrimination and/or censorship issues. The committee works closely with the fund's elected trustees: Sara Dallas, Steve Norman, and Julia Warga.

More information about the fund and ways to donate can be found at [www.merrittfund.org](http://www.merrittfund.org).



## Immroth Award Winner: Rebecca Ginsburg

The 2020 John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award recipient is Rebecca Ginsburg, director of the Education Justice Project (EJP), which is based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. EJP offers education programs to individuals incarcerated at the Danville Correctional Center (DCC), a men's medium-security state prison. In 2019, more than 200 books were moved from the EJP library at the DCC, including *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum, and *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. Du Bois. The book removal was a part of the Illinois Department of Corrections' growing practice of restricting access to reading materials focusing on issues of race and prisons.

Ginsburg championed the fight to restore access to the books and raise awareness of prison censorship by creating the Freedom to Learn Campaign, a coalition of 67 organizations and hundreds of individuals.

Her work culminated in a special legislative hearing that changed the terms of future book access inside prisons to protect incarcerated readers across the state. She did this knowing the high stakes for the EJP and her students. Thanks to Ginsburg's advocacy, the books were returned to the EJP library and the Illinois Department of Corrections developed new guidelines for prison libraries.

Established in 1979, upon the death of John Phillip Immroth, the Immroth Memorial Award honors the courage, dedication, and contribution of a living individual, group, or organization who has set the finest kind of example for the defense and furtherance of the principles of intellectual freedom. The award consists of a citation and \$500. John Phillip Immroth was a teacher, author, scholar, advocate, and defender of First Amendment rights. He was the founder and first chair of the Intellectual Freedom Round Table in 1973.

The members of the John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award Committee are Cyndi Robinson (chair), Michael Furlong, Eric Johnson, Linda Parsons, and Lynda Salem Poling.



REBECCA GINSBURG

## Hodges Award Winner: Connecticut Library Association

The IFRT Coalition Building Committee selected the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) of the Connecticut Library Association (CLA) as this year's recipient of the Gerald Hodges Intellectual Freedom Chapter Relations Award.

The award committee noted the broad impact of their ongoing efforts and widespread support in selecting Connecticut's IFC for the honor. The IFC identified early emerging issues with LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com) and initiated a national conversation within the profession on the topic of privacy and the appropriate use of patron information. Beginning with statewide discussion, then a widely read blog post by Connecticut IFC Chair Samantha Lee, the advocacy efforts they initiated inspired a campaign that resulted in LinkedIn Learning changing its registration terms for library users and dropping the requirement to create a LinkedIn profile to access the service.



The state association shared this statement with the award committee: "The Connecticut Library Association is proud of its Intellectual Freedom Committee led by Sam Lee for receiving the ALA 2020 Gerald Hodges Intellectual Freedom Chapter Relations Award. Thanks to the tireless and coordinated national effort of librarians, LinkedIn Learning is now building a platform for public libraries." The members of the Coalition Building Committee applauded the members of Intellectual Freedom Committee, Sam Lee, and the Connecticut Library Association.

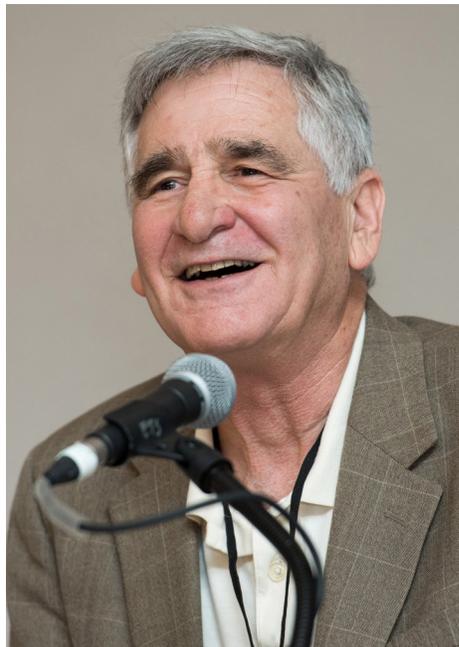
The Gerald Hodges Award recognizes an organization that has developed a strong multi-year, ongoing program or a single, one-year project that exemplifies support for intellectual freedom, patron confidentiality, and anti-censorship efforts. The award is named after Gerald Hodges, an ALA staff member from 1989 to 2006. Chapter relations and intellectual freedom were his passions, and he willed a portion of his estate to support those efforts. The award consists of \$1,000 and a citation and has been given since 2013.

The award will be presented at a date to be determined. Members of the Coalition Building Committee are Shane Roopnarine (chair), Stephanie Barnaby, Heather Hopkins, Eldon Ray James, Isabel Gordon Klein, and Amanda Vazquez.

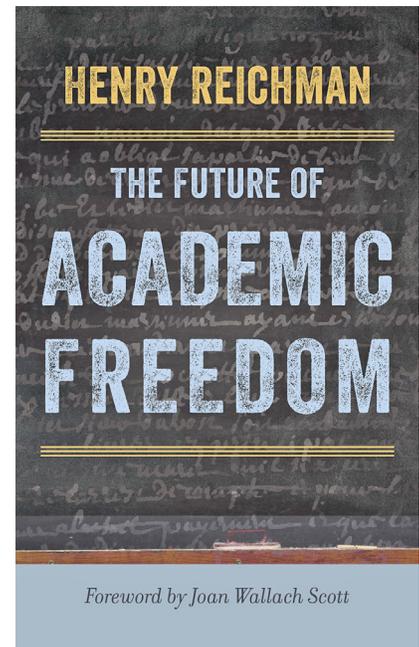
## Oboler Award Winner: Henry Reichman

The Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award honors a literary work or series of works in the area of intellectual freedom, including matters of ethical, political, or social concerns related to intellectual freedom. In the fall of 2019, five nominations were submitted for the award:

- "Lynda's Privacy Problem" by Samantha Lee (article)
- *Beyond Banned Books: Defending Intellectual Freedom Throughout Your Library* by Kristin Pekoll
- *The Future of Academic Freedom* by Henry Reichman
- *Lust on Trial* by Amy Werbel
- *Practicing Intellectual Freedom in Libraries* by Shannon M Oltmann



HENRY REICHMAN



The committee met in March and discussed the nominated works, which were all outstanding, and unanimously agreed to recognize *The Future of Academic Freedom* by Henry Reichman as the 2020 Oboler Award winner. This book had so much great information for all librarians and libraries, not just academic libraries. The writing was outstanding, the sources were complete and thorough, and the examples were so on point. Mr. Reichman also indicated he had met Eli Oboler, so it made the award very special to him.

Members of the Eli M. Oboler Committee are Trish Hull (chair), Hannah Duff, Steven Greechie, Carole Nowicke, and Angela Lynn Ocana.

## Intellectual Freedom News

Staying current with intellectual freedom issues is made significantly easier when you are [subscribed](#) to the Intellectual Freedom News, a curated weekly compilation from ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom. OIF staff and news editors pull pieces of interest from a variety of sources including but not limited to:

- current book challenges in libraries and schools
- articles about privacy, internet filtering, censorship, big data, technology, and privacy rights
- ALA activities, conferences, and institutes; products; eLearning; awards and grants; international exchanges; and more
- how to get involved and make the most of your ALA membership



# Thank you!

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**The Intellectual Freedom Round Table leaders are delighted to have such a robust and engaged membership. Thank you for sharing our interest in preserving and advocating for intellectual freedom.**

**The 2020 IFRT Report is brought to you by the members of the Publications and Communications Committee:**

- Kristin Anderson, Co-Chair
- Kyle Binaxas, Co-Chair
- Heather Biedermann
- Brittany Broz
- Jane Holt
- Lisa Hoover
- Andrea Puglisi
- Katie Spires