



Recorded Events

Intellectual Freedom & Libraries - Part 1

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[00:00:36] This podcast is being presented in two parts. You are listening to part 1

[00:00:42] First of all we want to begin by acknowledging that we are on DOMA land.

[00:00:47] How's everybody doing tonight.

[00:00:51] One of the things that I like about this audience is that you knew that tonight's conversation was going to be intimate. So I want to thank the folks who decided to sit in the front rows.

[00:01:01] Presenters need energy and your energy is good. Can you hear me okay. Okay see let me back up a little bit.

[00:01:07] My name is Davida Ingram and I'm the Public Engagement Programs Manager at the Central Library. I want to thank Ashley for kicking us off tonight. You may have noticed that we started by acknowledging that we're on Duwamish land we're trying to make sure that we do that in each and every program. It's part of our commitment to equity and inclusion. And for tonight you may have noticed that we decided to underscore intellectual freedom now for lay people that might not be a conversation that always appeals to them. And we decided tonight would be more like a radio podcast. We always live podcasts in the auditorium but we're trying to build a deeper understanding of what it means to think about civil liberties in these changing political times. And this program is part of a roster of programs that we've been doing to help people understand how to come together and to

build community at the library this program is also made possible with support from The Seattle Public Library Foundation and I also want to thank mine for allowing us to connect with Sara Paul Golub who is also going to do an opening reading for us. Tonight's program is about how do you bring dynamic thinkers together with library professionals. And Sara Porco Love is an award winning solo performer director and art arts activist. Is anyone in the audience aware that she also closed a one woman show. We're a very quiet audience.

[00:02:34] If you are aware because it's a five guys you have to clap or make noise.

[00:02:38] Otherwise no one will know about what I like about having Sarah here tonight.

[00:02:45] Is that arts in library sciences go together. We may not always see them together but they definitely go together. And I'm delighted that Sarah will be doing a reading right after Sarah finishes her reading. We will also have our moderator David Wright. David Wright host thrilling tells regularly at the library and he is a reader services librarian. He teaches at the U Dub ice school and reviews books since Seattle and beyond. David will introduce you to our other presenters tonight.

[00:03:16] But for right now can we give a warm round of applause for Sarah.

[00:03:27] Thank you so much for having me. Seattle Public Library and DVDs specifically for inviting me here. I'd love to start out the evening with a reading of one of my favorite poems for one of my favorite poets. It's called Ladies First.

[00:03:41] Pamela Percy old ladies first pushing in front of the ice cream line. Pamela Percy. Ladies first. Grabbing the ketchup at dinnertime climbing on the morning bus. She'd shove right by all of us and there'd be a tiff or a fight or a fuss. When Pamela Pearse yelled ladies first. Pamela her scream. Ladies first. When we went off on our jungle trip Pamela Pearse had her thirst was worse and guzzled our water every sip. And when we got grabbed by that wild savage band who tied us together and made us all stand in a long line in front of the king of the land a cannibal known as fry him up. Dan who sat on his throne in a bib so grand with a lick of his lips and a fork in his hand as he tried to decide who'd be first in the pan from back of the line in that shrill voice of hers. Pamela Percy yelled. Ladies first.

[00:04:42] Some of you might recognize this as a poem by Shel Silverstein.

[00:04:48] He's one of my favorite poets. Somebody that was read to me at nighttime by my parents and my childhood. And this poem is from his collection of poetry. A lot of us know it. Where the Sidewalk Ends. There was a time in my childhood where I was trying to find this book in the library because I didn't own a copy myself and I couldn't find it. I remember going to my librarian who was

probably six years old at the time and asking her. Have you taken a Shel Silverstein books and she was like Oh well that's on the banned books list. And I was like. What's

[00:05:25] That. And I found out that the book had been pulled because of this poem specifically and its references to cannibalism. At that time at 6 years old I was a little surprised. I was a budding feminist being raised by my feminist lesbian parents in Anchorage Alaska and I thought that people pulling this book for cannibalism made less sense than people pulling it as a potentially feminist propaganda for six year olds.

[00:05:59] When I was younger growing up in Anchorage I grew up very poor and my family and my parents would take me to the library every weekend. I was an only child as well so they really encouraged me to read. I think mostly to advocate for me spending time by myself so they wouldn't have to entertain me while they worked but also because they believe that reading helped develop the mind in a way potentially that television. So we would spend our weekends in the library and at that young age knowing that I was poor. I had already internalized the ideas that nice things nice buildings weren't places that I could be that those weren't places that I was entitled to. And it felt like that the first time I ever walked in to the anchorage public library because it was huge these huge steps leading up to four floors of things that I felt were not for me. Luckily my parents took me to the children's section and introduced me to a couple of really lovely librarians. And thanks to them I was able to really lose myself for hours at a time in this library. Moving from Bernstein bears to the witch at Blackbird Pond to reading the whole entire series of Adam Green Gables. When I was a little girl I I consciously modeled myself after Green Gables. Elizabeth Bennet from Pride and Prejudice Jane Eyre as well. Those were the three literary heroines that I that I modeled myself after and I really think too that my time in libraries and my parents passion for reading to me as well is one of the strongest motivating factors for my journey as an artist. Why I decided to go into theatre. I consider theatre to be the medium for storytelling storytelling. Storytelling is the primary mode of theatre. I am a storyteller and what is storytelling.

[00:07:53] But for me then the collection and articulation of words ideas and emotional experiences that we have as individuals but also experiences that we share as a community. It was really to this idea that we don't walk alone in the world as an individual but that we exist in communities and that everything we say everything we do everything that we think affects everybody around us in ways that we can see in ways that we couldn't possibly imagine. But. That was the motivating vehicle for me becoming an artist activist. The idea that I can use my chosen form of art storytelling slash theatre to push for social change the social change that I am invested in as a woman and as a person of color but also the social change that I'm invested in. As someone who truly believes that as a community if we want true equity for every single person one of the first steps towards achieving that equity or even talking about articulating it or creating action based solution plans is we have to look at our history in totality. We have to look at our our history that we share immediately with the people close to us but also our history here in America as Americans and I think that libraries are an

incredible source of information from so many different perspectives about our shared history about the culture that we have continued to build and perpetuate. And I think as well challenge and tonight as we begin to talk about intellectual freedom which is really the right that every individual has to seek out and pursue and receive information from as many different viewpoints as possible without restriction. It's just really exciting to me and I'm so thankful to be here to talk from the perspective as an individual artist of how I can use. The resources that the library has to activate my specific community as well as collaborate with as a community gathering place and as a place of engagement for social change. Thank you so much for having me.

[00:10:16] Thank you so much Sara. I we share something in common. When I was really young we had a 45 recording of Shel Silverstein reading Sara Cynthia Sylvia Stout who would not take the garbage out. And we listened. The grooves off that record we listened to it fast. We listened to it slow. We listened to it every which way that. And we also had this other 45 of this spooky story about the black velvet ribbons. And remember that story. Yeah right. Exactly snip went the we've been in off came her head and I told you you'd be sorry anyway. So we I'm sure many of us share the same the same childhood experiences and this is you know this is really a temple of story together with theater I think libraries are really a temple of story. I'm gonna. Kind of quickly go through a few slides here and there. Sara we will get to our panel briefly but first I'm going to talk a little bit in an introductory way hopefully not to luxury away and not a definitive way but we thought it would be useful to kind of walk around the grounds a little bit of intellectual freedom what that is. Issues that have been raised in libraries and just kind of put lay some things out on the table and then we will get to some discussion and questions and answers around that. So I'm hoping that our panelists don't hesitate to disagree with anything I say or contradict anything I say that's all very welcome. But let's begin by defining our terms what is this intellectual freedom of which we speak.

[00:11:53] It all really comes back to the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution which I've I've put up here and if it feels remedial to put that up. That ringing reassurance about our freedom of speech freedom of the press the right of people to peaceably assemble to petition the government for a redress of grievances and freedom of religion if you all are like you I already know all that then you're a rarefied group. There was recently in Annenberg study just came out last couple of weeks ago and I think 38 percent of Americans had no idea what any of those rights were that are guaranteed by the First Amendment. Over half of them had no idea that the freedom of speech was one of the rights that they're guaranteed by the Constitution. Over half I think 53 percent did not know that undocumented immigrants have any constitutional rights at all. That's not new. People have always not known things about their government and about their rights. But it does seem to be getting worse and that does raise concerns in a time when we are supposed to have more information than ever before it seems very poignant that we seem to know less and less about our rights. It also is a philosophical quandary if you have a right but don't know you have it. Do you really have that right. If you have a right and people with authority over you even the power of life and death over you don't know you have that right. Do you have that right. So starting with the First Amendment we get to intellectual free will add

in a little Fourth Amendment which is the amendment that says that the government can't spy on you and just kind of watch what you're doing all the time.

[00:13:38] They have to have really good reasons and state them ahead of time. We get to intellectual freedom which is the natural consequence of the right to free speech. If you have the right to speak to express yourself then it follows that people have the right to hear and to understand and partake in that and the freedom of speech in the round is really how we get to intellectual freedom. This here is the American Library Association's definition of it. I think it's a pretty good one accords library users the right to seek and receive information on all subjects from all points of view without fear judgment or restriction and without having the subject of one's interest examined or scrutinized by others. The United Nations has a good one too. You can look that up. I won't get into it. So the freedom of expression the right to read the free right to inquiry the right to privacy about that. That sounds really really good in practice. That sounds really really good in theory and practice it can be very challenging. What we're talking about is safeguarding the rights of people who you don't agree with the rights of people who you would never even want to associate with the rights of people to be stupid. That's that's part of what we're talking about here. Nevertheless libraries absolutely love intellectual freedom.

[00:14:58] This is in our blood and it's not just because we hate the thought of books being banned intellectual freedom is why libraries exist. It's why they were brought into existence literally at a progressive era. The same one that saw the rise of public education libraries public libraries were invented to help promote this idea that everybody had a right to think what they wanted to think and have exposure to whatever ideas were there. Every year we celebrate this in terms of Banned Books which is a really really great way to do that because it makes very clear what's at stake. This is not an academic issue. There are books that are banned and challenged in libraries every day all across the country not to mention the world. But it also. Crystallizes this because it's easier to express what you stand for when you have something to stand against like censorship or banned books. Often the real issues are a lot more subtle and and in the sort of by inches issues often issues of censorship don't have to do with removing books from library but just maybe putting them somewhere else in the library. And then we have the whole raft of issues around the Internet and what that brings into libraries and inadvertent viewing which isn't really about my not my wanting to control what someone else is doing but my not wanting to have to see it. That wasn't such a big thing when we had books and it was all about books. But when it's projected on a screen that's a different issue.

[00:16:32] When I introduce you to this acronym seep the childhood Internet Protection Act we'll probably talk a little bit about this but has anybody here aside from the people I know have anybody here heard of the childhood Internet Protection Act well for those of you who haven't.

[00:16:46] You actually have your library to thank because we don't abide by it at this library. The childhood Internet Protection Act was passed by Congress in the early 2000s a few times and it

requires libraries to filter content on computers for minors as well as to monitor the activity of minors on their computers. Now the way it works is if you don't do that then you forgo a little bit of federal funding. Is this this federal funding called E rate that has to do with how much we pay for Internet and this library together with many other libraries said you know minors have constitutional rights. So no thank you. You can keep your money. We're not going to do that. We do offer filtering as an option in our children's area. But but this was just a bridge too far. And this is one of the ways that libraries every day stand up for intellectual freedom. Another really interesting. No thank you. That some of you may have seen in the news recently has to do with this librarian right here. I'm not sure how to say your name I don't know her personally Liz Phipps so Eero who is a children's librarian in Cambridge Massachusetts. Did anybody hear about this case. OK. Well she a. Couple of weeks ago received a nice package of books from Melania Trump. They were 10 Dr. Seuss books. The first lady had sent books to 50 libraries one in each state that had been shining examples and she she is an award winning librarian. She's got a great library. So she was a natural person I suppose to receive this.

[00:18:17] She in a public letter in Horn Book which is kind of the thing that all children's librarians Read said you know thanks but no thanks. We're a very well-funded library. We have an actual our school has an actual librarian which isn't actually all that common. We have lots of money we don't really need the donation.

[00:18:37] It might be nice if you're secretary of education would stop taking money from schools that don't have money and stop rewarding places that don't really need the help and by the way Dr. Seuss is kind of old hat and kind of racist.

[00:18:58] And this of course provoked all kinds of controversy on several different fronts. People feel very different ways about this. Some people completely agree with everything she did and said some people agree with about half of it. Some people don't agree with any of it. And it's all a mix. I'd be curious to know what our panelists think. But it does bring up one issue that gets raised in libraries a lot. That might seem like an odd one to bring up and that's the issue of neutrality. We will talk about it tonight but why talk about neutrality what's the deal with neutrality. Well library neutrality stems from actually kind of a good place and that's why I want to sort of be an apologist and explain where it comes from. It has to do with our role as librarians and information providers when we're working in the library and the importance of our being neutral at those times. So we're government workers and we're here to provide access to all kinds of information doesn't matter what you want to know about we're not here to judge you we're here to help you to that. So I put up a bunch of buttons here and you can probably guess which buttons it's OK for a librarian to wear on the desk. When they're working with the public. And which ones they better save for their personal life after hours. It's great to you know promote books and to say libraries are for everyone but campaigning for a particular candidate or campaigning even for the bond measure for your own library while you're working in the library is strictly forbidden for very good reasons. That's a kind of library neutrality that most of us can

buy into it makes sense because we're not here to tell you what we think or convince you of any point of view.

[00:20:37] We're just here to help you find the way to your answers. However. In the larger context our library is neutral. Are they neutral in society have they ever been neutral. Probably not. There are all kinds of things and all kinds of ways that libraries take stands all the time. I'm throwing up here some pictures of various displays at different libraries and these may not seem like all that much to you to us here in Seattle to see these kinds of displays that are put on by libraries. But when you reflect that many of these are from libraries like Cheyenne Wyoming and Birmingham Alabama. This is a this is a pretty heroic act on the part of some librarians who are who are really welcoming unnecessary trouble into their libraries by doing things sometimes subtle and devious things like this star wars display. I love the resist the empire thing just about Star Wars that they will do in their libraries. Libraries have always existed in the world and we're not although we're idealistic institutions and we are trying to move towards better things. We are always learning and growing and we have a long way to go we are far from perfect. It's probably pretty obvious to all of you but to those of us who work in libraries we need to remind ourselves of that. And access is another touchpoint for libraries. It's very very crucial if we talk about freedom of information to talk about people's abilities to get. That. Access which has not always been not something that we've always lived up to.

[00:22:09] But it's seldom as simple as we think it is. It's not all just about an open door policy. It often has to do with us going out into the community. It also has to do with all kinds of other issues around library finds around our open hours around how to best spread around resources in ways that are equitable when we don't really necessarily have all the resources we would like to have. So there are a lot of really tough compromises that go around in libraries every day. I wanted to have a slide here of Richard Kramer to tell you about Richard Kramer. I quieted the slide because I thought I'd run out of time but I'll just mention it really briefly because I think I do. Richard Kramer was a homeless individual that's what we call them in the 90s who was frequented the Morristown New Jersey Public Library and the folks of Morristown New Jersey said well you know you're you're not real camped and you're kind of scary and we're not sure what to do with you you stare at people. And so we're going to tell you to go. And he sued and he won in federal court and it was turned over in court of appeals and it's a long long story but as a result of this man Richard Kramer libraries defined their way of dealing with people and have striven to do so not based on who you are which is a very very hard to do as I'm sure we can appreciate because there's just a lot of things sort of built in to the way we behave that do that.

[00:23:36] So also talking about access. I was I mentioned about going beyond the library's walls and that's also not just something we do now and these two examples which is an old bookmobile and also just this past year going out with Wi-Fi hotspots to shelters. This is really crucial to in terms of intellectual freedom. So what's the point of all this information. The idea of intellectual freedom is to

have an informed citizenry. It's for a democracy. How is that working for us. I have concerns. How many people are familiar with the term filter bubble.

[00:24:10] It's interesting yeah. This has to do with the way technology helps us way the way technology treats us like consumers rather than citizens by showing us just what it thinks we want to see. It's sort of borrowed from retail and now it's everything. So that means that if you lean left. You don't have to see any of that other stuff. That's fine. We fixed it so that when you search you'll just see that stuff or if you lean right or however you lean we'll just where you're going to tailor your experience. So the worst of the world doesn't exist for you. This is a serious issue. Confirmation bias is nothing new. Humans have always been prone to circuses you know looking for things that basically tell us you know what we think is right. But we have we have I think never before had technology helping us to to reaffirm that so well so that we don't even have to think about it anymore. It's just sort of all done for us.

[00:25:05] And then media tailor made media for your for your needs media I love this quote media cannot tell you what to think but he certainly does tell you what to think about something maybe we're not always conscious of. And so when librarians get fussy and upset about. How easy it is for people to say oh you can just google anything who needs librarians you can just google anything. It's not that we're jealous of the technology and it's not that we're Luddites it's that Google has a responsibility to its shareholders. Libraries have a responsibility to you. It's a huge difference in lots of big and little ways. There are some programs and things that we're trying to do to help counter this is a great series of programs at this library and in libraries all over the country specifically designed to help educate people about fake news and how that works. This is my colleague de Jong out doing that good work and I think you'll see a lot more things like that as well in the future. I think that that is about all I'm going to say because I've really said it all. I think so. Let's talk when I want to do now is introduce our panelists and bring them up here and we're going to launch into some questions that we've we've prepared for this.

[00:26:23] And so let me do so first of all let me begin again with Sarah Sarah parking lot. Sarah as you have heard is an award winning solo performer director arts activist. She is committed to dynamic storytelling community and the destruction of white supremacy in America. Next Becky use Becky is the library applications and systems manager here at the Seattle Public Library. She knows all kinds of amazing stuff about how our tech works and you can find her online at twitter at at y o underscore. B.J. And last but certainly not least we have Susan Hildreth. Susan is an ice School Professor of Practice at the University of Washington high school. That's the information school. And she has worked in libraries at local state and federal level including she ran this library for a little while not too long ago. And she is committed to libraries providing access to information. Welcome Susan. So we're gonna do is we're gonna we're gonna. I'm going to field some questions and we'll discuss them and we'll do that for a while. And then if there's time and if the other people here have questions or

comments and things that they want to share that are provoked by the discussion or the reading or what have you.

[00:27:40] We'll do that after afterwards. So know that you will have a chance to ask questions and be hurt if that's of interest to you. Excellent. So without further ado let me go ahead and launch into the first question is that OK with you. OK good. Great.

[00:27:57] Yes that's right. We were having microphones. OK. So. When we look at public figures like the old right speaker Milo you Annapolis and football player and black lives matter activist Colin Kaepernick freedom of speech and social justice crops up in different ways.

[00:28:19] How would you like to see libraries helping people navigate our political moment and what ways do you see having access to information building more shared ground or anything else actually pertaining to kind of freedom of speech in the current situation and thoughts you have on that whoever wants to speak first. I don't think we're going to go in order.

[00:28:44] Oh OK. Yes. I will be. Well first of all I want to thank David for his amazing kind of journey through the history of intellectual freedom.

[00:28:57] So David has covered all the points and it's just you did a great job David. I think it was it was amazing and really helped hopefully get all of us on some common ground. So. You. Doing. It is such a challenging time in our society in our communities and I think in terms of what the library can do and I guess I should share with everybody that I've been around libraries for a long time and I'm so excited to be on this panel with such a wonderful artist and a great tech person from the library so I feel like I'm kind of the old school person on here. I'll try to share some good stories with you but I think we have a role. Libraries have a role in providing curated information from a variety of viewpoints and we're going to talk about neutrality in a little bit as well but we're really here to provide both sides many sides all sides of a discussion no matter what the what the topic is. So it's not neutral as much as making sure that we're covering all the bases. That's not really neutral but providing this curated information from a variety of viewpoints is important. We want to make sure we're providing accurate information and not fake news Fake news is a huge topic.

[00:30:15] And I know we're doing great programming on that in libraries all around the country. There's many there's a lot of information online about fake news that can help you and those around you really acknowledge how we can determine what's what's appropriate. We also want to be careful and use useful approaches to vetting the validity of information that's really important. And you know the thing that I would like to jump to in terms of this particular question and then I'll pass it on to my fellow panelists is that we have an opportunity to provide a venue for civil community conversations in our libraries. Now we're already doing it here in Seattle and we do it really all the all around the country. But that is such an important role for the library to play particularly when we have lots of

different points of view that access to valid information is very critical. And I hope that the library can serve as a bridge if you will for individuals have who have many different points of view but hopefully are willing to try to listen and learn from each other and libraries and librarians can serve as facilitators in those conversations.

[00:31:32] I know we're going to talk a little bit more about the technology part later on in this presentation. But. As for the what ways do we see the library helping access to information for various patrons you have to realize that with the growth in technology in terms of born digital information how people are sharing information in the past decade and so where you're having a point where people can not get ahead or people can't seem to

[00:32:10] Advance in society because they don't have access to certain information or even certain technologies more or more you have to have access online to do job applications more and more you have to be online to take courses for job development or continuing education the library plays a part in making sure that we give equal access to technologies and to information that people might not otherwise have in other venues.

[00:32:44] And we tend to forget that for those of us who can afford a very good data plan with a good career that doesn't slow down speeds that not many people have access to the technology that they need so they can access the information that they might not otherwise have access to be it freely online or through a paywall.

[00:33:08] So a good portion of intellectual freedom goes into who has access to what in terms of what publishers decide to do in terms of making sure that they turn a profit and put articles research behind paywalls that only people who have the funds to pay to go to a certain institution or have the privilege of living in a certain area can have access to because again they're well-funded. So. In a way one huge way the library can help in making sure that we have a common platform

[00:33:49] For everyone to stand on is making sure everyone has equal access to the technology and the information that is provided by that technology.

[00:34:00] So I I often find libraries overwhelming because of the wealth of information that is here regarding a unified platform for searching.

[00:34:11] Technology has shown us of course that it will show us what it thinks we want to see based on a series of algorithms that we have plugged into the computer and so it shows us what we want to see and maybe that's not necessarily equal or correct information. So when I ask myself what what what can a library do as a place of engagement for example if we were to talk about the context for example of this. All right Speaker provide context for his ideology provide historical information track really the pedagogy that he is drawing his theories from I mean all of that information is present

in this library to talk about how common Copernicus next protest has become misconstrued and now mainstream media is portraying his taking a knee during the national anthem as a protest of American patriotic values and deflecting from his original intent of protesting and amplifying the fact that black unarmed men suffer disproportionately from white police brutality at the library as a source and as a place that has a wealth of information has the opportunity to frame and to provide context depending on who they want to engage with. Now I think that that already sounds a little bit cliquy that well. If they have the ability to do that. Doesn't that mean that they only provide context for these people. Are they providing context and equitable ways. And I think that through community programming for example to have a conversation really a dialogue happening between people in the community who can speak for example specifically to these two people in this first question but how can we frame the context of this maybe it's a conversation where we have very specifically high school students and we frame it in the context of all right. So now you have access through technology and you're seeing how people all over the world are taking a knee. But how this gesture has three different contexts taken on different meaning the library can provide amazing social political economic historical narrative context for that.

[00:36:36] And in that way provide I think a better equitable platform for specific individuals specific communities specific organizations.

[00:36:51] I'm actually going to join in a little bit because I sat down here with you and I had a thought and we were talking about you know the media tailoring itself and everybody kind of getting their own version of things and how distressed we are about that how things seem to be sort of flying apart. And I think we have to be careful not to indulge in sort of some golden ageism that there was a time when there were only three networks and there was a time when everybody knew what was true and we all had one story and we all believed in it. That's easy for me to think. But I suspect that traditionally marginalized people might say no no no no. That actually was never the case. You just didn't realize it because the story was your story. We were playing by your rules. It was your paradigm. And now you have perceived that it's not as simple as you thought it was. That is terrifying I think for many of us but not to be Pollyanna ish.

[00:37:50] But it also may be an opportunity there some new awareness dawning on people who never really perceive that that there were maybe different ways of looking at things quite so so much so. All right. Question number two I was calling trivia last night so I'm a little bit libraries are often considered neutral places in the sense that we are nonpartisan yet libraries also have core values that mean everyone should have unfettered access to information that is intellectual freedom and that the government should not be dictating what the public access looks like from the perspective of an artist and layperson Sarah

[00:38:34] And library professionals. Susan Becky how do we want to see libraries striking a strategic balance between being for everyone essentially while also protecting our civil liberties. Can you

repeat just that last year. Yeah I know. This is from the perspective of an artist and layperson. How do we want to see libraries striking a strategic balance between being for everyone essentially while also protecting our civil liberties.

[00:39:09] Mm hmm.

[00:39:12] That's a that's a hard question for me personally to answer. I I take issue with statements such as for everyone or universal or everybody has equal access to only because I I can't know for certain that that's true.

[00:39:30] So then my mind goes to what is the opposition to that question.

[00:39:36] The opposition would be well if I don't have access to this in my civil liberties are being challenged.

[00:39:42] It makes me think about intellectual freedom that you have the right to seek out and receive information from all different viewpoints. So that's what is what will the person then do with that information and is the institution that provides that information responsible for the actions of that individual. And this is where I get a little. I just have a hard time articulating this because intellectual freedom all boils down to like individual going out and seeking information or receiving information but I know and I truly believe that none of us really walk in a vacuum. So any information that we do receive affects how we think which affects what we say which affects our behavior which affects everybody around us.

[00:40:28] So how can I think that libraries are for everyone I think that there are questions of access that I definitely agree with and I'm not quite sure how to solve for people.

[00:40:42] And as far as protecting civil liberties or civic liberties I think that libraries do do that at least I can only speak as a Seattle light in my experience with the libraries here in Seattle and it's incredible privilege to be a citizen in this community and have access to this source of information. I'm sorry that I can't. Articulate. Further. Sorry. Sorry guys.

[00:41:08] No worries because as library professionals we're having a hard time ourselves and we've been having a hard time for a very long time and I'm going to have to push back a little bit David on something that you said about the book at the start of the public libraries in the US. There has been research and other histories done about the start of the public library systems in the US more as a way to have more as a way to influence the lower classes to become

[00:41:47] Civil What materials should they be reading to become proper. What language should they learn to become integrated into the U.S. so libraries themselves did not start off at

[00:42:02] At a neutral position. They started off with many of them started off with a hidden agenda or not so hidden agenda too not really hidden so hidden a bit obvious agenda to to groom the unwashed masses to become more

[00:42:23] Of those who were in power and privilege. And there's been one thing I do want to bring up

[00:42:31] And this is where I have to stay I am speaking for myself and not for SPL even though I am speaking in the SPL event. There has been discussions recently in various library publications research and so on about how far does free speech and intellectual freedom have

[00:42:56] In the library. When do we say this particular ideal idea or this particular type of speech is harmful for the rest of our community. So. A good example of this is not a US example it's a recent example from earlier this year Toronto Public Library had Nazis go in and hold a memorial ceremony in one of their meeting rooms and there was a huge protests and backlash from the community but they still held

[00:43:34] That particular event. So where do you go with a particular group that has advocated the eradication of another group or the dehumanization of other human beings.

[00:43:48] Does the library provide space provide resources for that group in that space and that comes in to the idea of the paradox of tolerance where you have tolerance taken to a point where you tolerate intolerance and that intolerance then tears down that tolerant society. Where do libraries sit within the paradox of tolerance. I'll just leave that there.

[00:44:22] Wow.

[00:44:24] That's quite an observation. Are we okay here. You know this is a very challenging topic but in response to Becky to some of your very eloquent thoughts. Libraries have been particularly public libraries have been struggling with the conflict of openness and tolerance for many years and I think one of the things we have to remember is that. Public libraries are publicly funded tax supported institutions so particularly with the meeting room room example which there there's many of these around the country it may very well be that members of that Nazi group I'm not speaking on behalf of their belief system but they paid taxes just as well as other individuals who may have other beliefs. So it becomes a much more complicated issue I think then than you might that might appear on the surface and in fact many things about. What we do in libraries is far more complicated than the general public would imagine. And not that we don't love the general public but it really makes working in libraries pretty interesting. But just a couple of things I wanted to add. Libraries are community institutions. And it is critical that the library somehow reflects the values of the community.

[00:45:53] Now it can be very challenging when a community doesn't have consensus on values. But I think it's also a conversation that the community and the library has to have to make sure the library is somehow in line with its community values. And there's also the challenge of individuals who serve in these capacities. Librarians how do we separate our personal values from what we know is our professional values. And that's always really been a challenge. You know it's interesting that that dynamic has come into the discussion about the Cambridge librarian that that David referred to now. I mean personally I think she's done a very brave thing by really eloquently calling out this kind of misdirected beneficence from the Department of Education. Yet. She yes she had not gotten the Council of the administration and that school district. And that's not the approach they would have taken in fact they said she wasn't authorized to make that response. And I'm not saying I'm not judging but I'm saying in that situation she had personal feelings that she used in a professional way and that is a very that can be a very challenging area for us in the profession.

[00:47:14] And I also want to add going back providing context for that information and for the decision that she's made and for certain types of materials that are in the library I come from both a technology background and an organization and information background. So. I both entered the information that


[00:47:39] Makes it possible for the system to provide you the search capability of finding that material. And so when you're dealing with material that is either controversial in terms of either being a hoax or some other particular types of materials that might be considered offensive or controversial. How does the person holding the material

[00:48:09] Catalog that book what what subject headings do you put on there because subject headings and other way and other information that you put into the system can possibly restrict access to that material. And so a librarian like librarians and library staff have to be mindful of how they're providing access to these type of materials that they might find objectionable or hoaxes in a way in a manner that the public can still find them but in a manner that

[00:48:46] Fully represents that particular topic in context.

[00:48:52] You know if you get the chance to go and read this librarians open letter in Horne book you can look it up. And I do recommend reading it it's very interesting. It's very polished and sweet with a real sort of Tiger's edge in it.

[00:49:06] She's she's the model librarian and she recommends a book list of much more diverse choices to Melania and so forth and it's it's really an interesting thing to read in and hear how she does that and how she kind of turns the knife. I think I will move on to our next question. I had something else to say but I forgot what it was. So wasn't that important.



[00:49:33] This concludes Part 1. Listen to Part 2 for the conclusion of this podcast

[00:49:42] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.

