

Libraries Shadow Ban Books and Periodicals, Part I

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Questioning and Challenging What the Journalists Fail to Question and Challenge

by [G. Tod Slone](#) (March 2023)



Composition, Nicolas De Staël

I just cannot believe that a Marxist lesbian who believes that collective power is possible to build and can be wielded for a better world is the president-elect of [@ALALibrary](#). I am so excited for what we will do together. Solidarity! –Emily Drabinski, President of the American Library Association



Emily Drabinski

First a footnote. Personal experience, in my humble opinion, is excellent for illustrating points made in essays, for they are points lived personally. My advice to critics: engage personally and use that engagement to reinforce your criticisms.

Now, Since when is Marxism open to free speech and the free flow of information? In the USSR? Cuba? China? What does “collective power” really mean? Well, self-proclaimed Marxist Emily Drabinski, the new president-elect of the American Library Association, does not say. Nevertheless, what it

obviously means is an end to the power of individual thinking. And what does a “better world” imply? Again, Drabinski does not say. Well, is it not one of ideological conquest and groupthink? And what does solidarity mean, if not absolute conformity? That is now officially the state of the American Library Association.

For more on Drabinski and her ideological “mind-forged manacles,” to cite William Blake, examine Joy Pullmann’s [“Amid Public Concern About Grooming Kids, American Library Association Picks President Who Pushes ‘Queering’ Libraries.”](#) In that article, Pullmann notes, amongst a number of other interesting points, Drabinski’s [“Queering the Catalogue: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction,”](#) published in *The Library Quarterly*. In essence, Drabinski doesn’t simply wish to include more books regarding homosexuality, but to exclude books in the catalogue that are not favorable of the latter. One might also assume that she will seek to exclude books and other material not favorable of Marxist ideology. Regarding the ALA’s power (Drabinski’s power) or lack thereof, James LaRue, former director of the ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, wrote (see [“Notes on the Office for Intellectual Freedom... Sham”](#)):

For one thing, ALA isn’t in the enforcement business, serving as a judge of libraries about every collection decision. We’re a membership association, mostly focused on the identification of best practices, and their promotion. The ALA has no power to compel local libraries to do anything.

Yet the ALA does possess a certain power to indoctrinate librarians and has not apparently attempted to hold them accountable in its diverse publications (e.g., *American*

Libraries Magazine and *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*) and activities (e.g., Banned Books Week). In any case, a different article grabbed my attention, Ryan Bray's "[Local Libraries Support Diversity Of Offerings](#)," which appeared in the *Cape Cod Chronicle*. It provoked me to come up with the idea of librarian shadow banning of books and periodicals, the very idea that Drabinski evidently would like to eagerly *de facto* promote. Tavi Prugno, director of Snow Library in Orleans on Cape Cod, was cited in Bray's article:

Certainly 26 years ago when I started [working in libraries], there were not a lot of books or materials on that subject [LGBTQ], and now there are. We've tried to keep pace with that topic and other topics.

And so, what about the "topic" of librarians as *de facto* gatekeepers of information? Might that be one of those they've tried to "keep pace" with? Librarian banned-books discussion seems now to center almost entirely around LGBTQ victimhood, yet it should certainly be more inclusive than that. Well, the discussion also provides a platform to portray librarians by librarians as somehow angelically perfect, which of course they are not.



The fundamental problem existing in all professions is quite simple: career vs. truth. In essence, for an assistant librarian or a newspaper reporter to question and challenge his or her boss and/or the reigning ideology can be damaging to one's career. Since the bulk of people on career paths learn to turn a blind eye and conform, intrinsic intellectual

corruption in the diverse professional spheres, including that of librarianship, inevitably results. And thus the reality of professional leadership seems to have become professional *leadershit*.

It is perhaps astonishing today that so many newspaper columnists/reporters seem incapable of questioning anything regarding, for example, woke talking points and librarian propaganda. Prugno states:

We're probably very fortunate here. I think everyone in the community here has a love for all different types of materials and the freedom to be able to find the different types of information you're looking for. To read the materials you want to read.

That statement is an example of self-vaunting propaganda, not reality. The term "everyone" should always be avoided, otherwise it implies inevitable falsehood. In a question and challenge mode, I wrote Nori Morganstein, Brewster Ladies Library (on Cape Cod) youth services librarian, who had formed a Banned Book Club monthly discussion group and asked why she does not seek out local authors and editors, who have had their books or periodicals rejected/shadow banned from Cape Cod libraries? She chose not to respond. In Bray's article, she states:

I'm a firm believer that books unite us and bring us together. That's why I think Banned Books Week is so important and significant. [Books bring] communities together, and banning them is a way to separate people, not bring them together.

Again, it is wise to avoid generalities. How precisely, for example, did *Mein Kampf* or the *The Communist Manifesto* bring everyone together? Well, we'll save that for another time! Bray also cites Ann Carpenter, Brooks Free Library (in Harwich on Cape Cod) youth services librarian:

There's always been threats to ban books publicly throughout the years. Sometimes it just happens a little more quietly. But in some ways with the more vocal ones, everyone's noticing, so we can have a long conversation about it. With the quiet ones, the only people who are noticing are the librarians and the people directly involved.

Does Carpenter mean that the librarians themselves might have shadow banned books? No. Librarians are angelic. Then Bray quotes Tammy DePascualre, assistant director of Eldredge Public Library in Chatham on Cape Cod:

Shelf space at a library is a commodity, so you want to put your best stuff on it. But you have to make space for so many different types of books, movies and games. Everything on our shelves has gone through that process.

With that regard, examine my [dialogue de sourds](#) with the ALA's former director of its Office for Intellectual Freedom, James LaRue, who also evoked the restricted-space issue... as an excuse for shadow banning. The reality is that librarians, acting as gatekeepers of information, subjectively decide what constitutes "best stuff." Would a journal critical of

librarians, for example, fall into their “best stuff” category? Prugno argues,

We care about getting people the information they want and need. And if there are barriers in the way of that, we want to remove those barriers. In reality, the public library is really the public's library, apostrophe S.

Such a statement is clearly idealistic, certainly not realistic. And how might “they” be working to remove barriers? Well, Prugno does not address that. The journalist does not even pose the question. Carpenter then argues:

One of the reasons we have Banned Book[s] Week is because it's good for the wider general public to be aware of how much book banning happens, because it gives the people the opportunity to stand up and say 'We stand with libraries. We stand with books. We stand with letting people make their own choices about what they do and do not want to read.'

Yet how can one stand with a library that permanently bans a patron without warning or due process, which is precisely [what happened to me in 2012](#)? How many others might have been similarly treated around the country? Well, there is simply no way of finding that out because librarians do not make such information public. The ALA refused to publish anything with that regard in its *American Libraries Magazine*. Also, how can one stand for libraries when their directors will not respond to criticism? Over the years, they certainly have not responded to mine (see, for example, “[Librarians Banning Books](#)

[Celebrate Banned Books Week,”](#) [“Open Letter to the Librarians of Cape Cod,”](#) and [“Proposal to Mandate Democratic Procedure and Public Accountability For Any Library Seeking Public Funding in the Town of Barnstable”](#)).

As an example of book/periodical shadow banning, the Brewster Ladies Library rejected *Total Chaos*, which was highly critical of Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School (on Cape Cod and the Islands), whose library also rejected it. The Ladies Library also rejected the literary journal I’ve been publishing on the Cape since 2010, *The American Dissident*. In fact, not one library on the Cape will subscribe to the latter! And several, including Sturgis Library, even refused a free subscription offer. Why have the local journalists not expressed an iota of interest? The journal in question, by the way, publishes highly critical essays and poems regarding poets, editors, artists, curators ... and, of course, local journalists and gatekeeper librarians.

As mentioned, the American Library Association now has a devout Marxist lesbian as its new president-elect, [Emily Drabinski](#). How might that effect library openness to all points of view, in accord with the ALA’s own library bill of rights? Note, in particular:

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

Why does the ALA refuse to publish criticism with its regard and that of libraries in its *American Libraries* magazine? Examine [“Banned Books Week... and Prohibited Thoughts with Its Regard,”](#) as an example of what it rejects. As for the *Cape Cod Times*, reporter Denise Coffey wrote an article on the subject,

“Here’s a way to join Cape Codders reading banned books.” In it, she argues that the ALA’s Banned Books Week “is a clarion call to safeguard the freedom of expression and ideas, even when those ideas are unpopular and controversial.” What to say about that? Why does the *Cape Cod Times* refuse to publish criticism of libraries and the newspaper itself? Is it not also a clarion? Why did it refuse to publish any mention of my being banned by a Cape Cod library in 2012?

In Coffey’s article, DePascualre states that “libraries are about access for all. That is very much part of the DNA of a public library.” Well, it certainly was NOT part of the DNA of Sturgis Library or Watertown Free Public Library (see [“Watertown Free Public Library–The Angry Librarian and the No-Trespass Order”](#)), which both banned me from access. My crime regarding the former was the dissemination of an [Open Letter to Cape library directors](#), decrying their hypocrisy regarding their embrace of the ALA’s library bill of rights. My point of view and the points of view of those I publish are not permitted at Sturgis or any other library on Cape Cod. The hypocrisy is egregious.

Finally, how precisely do we know what books librarians purchase and what books they decide NOT to purchase ... and why? We do NOT know because that subject is simply not discussed. Library directors act as gatekeepers of information. That is a fact! How many books do they ban (behind the scenes!) from their library shelves? Why is that not discussed? The ALA’s library bill of rights is an example of virtue-signaling hypocrisy.

NB: The above essay was sent to those mentioned in it, including Drabinsky, Carpenter, Prugno, Bray, Coffey, and Morganstein, not one of whom deigned to respond. Coffey’s article is now only available to subscribers, so not being a subscriber, I do not have the link. No matter. Bray’s article

is quite similar in its unbridled praise. As a further footnote, Yarmouth Port Library, the library I've been going to since the 2012 banning, is a private library and receives no public funding. I have gotten along quite well with the library director and staff. So, clearly I do not have problems with all librarians. Also, due to its private status I would not expect it to subscribe.

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G. Tod Slone, PhD, lives on Cape Cod, where he was permanently banned in 2012 without warning or due process from Sturgis Library, one of the very oldest in the country. His civil rights are being denied today because he is not permitted to attend any cultural or political events held at his neighborhood library. The only stated reason for the banning was "for the safety of the staff and public." He has no criminal record at all and has never made a threat. His real crime was that he challenged, in writing, the library's "collection development" mission that stated "libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view." His point of view was somehow not part of "all points of view." He is a dissident poet/writer/cartoonist and editor of [The American Dissident](#).

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