

The Challengers of West Bend: An Institutional Approach

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The West Bend Case

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Board Members

West Bend Community Memorial Library

Dear Board Members,

During a recent "Google" search on the internet for the West Bend CML, I was directed to the Young Adult website entitled "Out of the Closet: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Fiction and Non-Fiction." This web page states it is for children in grades 6 through 12. It is located at

<http://www.west-bendlibrary.org/vagibtg.htm>

The website gives a long list of books that are gay/lesbian/bisexual-themed, with such contents stating:

"...about a drag queen who makes a grand entrance into a conservative high school."

"...a gay Jewish man is elected president of the United States." (?)

"...Frannie and her best friend Marcus are both "boyfriend virgins," but Marcus has an excuse – eligible gay boys are hard to come by..."

"Kyle Meeks is getting ready to go to Princeton in the fall and trying to see as much as possible of his boyfriend Jason before they have to separate. When Jason tells him about his speaking invitation, Kyle jumps at the chance to drive across country with him. Yet he can't help worrying: Will their romance survive two weeks crammed together in a car?"

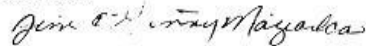
"Steven's a 16-year-old boy with two obsessions: sex and getting his driving license. The problem is, Steven's not thinking girls when he's thinking sex. Could he be – don't say it – gay?"

I could go on and on, but this should be enough information as I have also enclosed a copy of the full website for your review.

As a conservative community, I am sure the taxpayers of West Bend would be as offended as my husband and I were when we reviewed this website that directly links itself to our very own West Bend Community Memorial Library. I phoned your board vice president, Mr. Fink, and he was not aware of such a website. Therefore, I am bringing this to your attention and ask for an explanation as to who is responsible and accountable for its' creation, and asking that it be removed at once.

We look forward to a timely response from one of your board members. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Jim and Ginny Mazlarka

Theoretical Frameworks

- Field of Cultural Production
- Community of Interpreters
- Reading Research
- Print Culture

Research Questions

- R1 – How do the challengers construct the library as an institution within the field of cultural production?
- R2 – How are these constructions informed by the challengers understanding of the practice of reading?

Methodology

YOUR VIEWS

Paid to trash talk city

It is time for the citizens of West Bend to address Mayor Kristine Deiss and ask her why she is allowing our paid community representatives, library director Michael Tyree and young adult librarian Kristin Pekoll as well as her appointed Library Board member Barbara Deters, the president nonetheless, to trash-talk West Bend at the American Librarian Associations upcoming conference.

Taxpayers should be outraged that the librarians are putting together power points and such to show the nation how they stomped on our community standards and shut down the community they promise to serve.

We are tired of being told that the American Library Association can tell West Bend what they can do.

We cannot, and will not, stand for this next round of ammunition being shot at our fine city.

We believe the youth in West Bend are worth every step of this fight, and the ALA, our librarians, and our mayor need to uphold the high standards we demand.

**Ruth Moegenberg
West Bend**

Analysis: Protect Children

*While it is true that no one is forced to read a book just because it is available, **it is also true that there is no way for a parent to properly supervise a child when the child is with friends or visiting the library alone after school.** While it is tough to be a good kid these days, it is even harder to be a good parent.*

*I don't believe we would infringe on our children's First Amendment Rights by restricting access to books whose content may be objectionable, in the opinion of the parent. The parent determines this, not the child, and not the child's friends. **Parents rely on the judgment of library staff.** When these issues arise, we need to resolve them quickly and, more importantly, quietly. (K.S., WBDN, 6/5/09).*

*It's about **protecting the innocent children who go to libraries.** Yes, it's true that parents should be involved as to what their children are reading and be concerned about the content of what's being fed to their developing minds.*

*What about those innocent children who are 11 or 12, who don't have parents involved in their lives because they are overwhelmed by being a single parent, two parents working several jobs or those who have parents or caretakers who just cannot be there because of physical illness, mental illness or death, etc. **and choose the library as a safe place to go?** (J.G., WBND, 7/22/09).*

Analysis: Moving and Labeling Books

*Has common sense been banned from the community along with morality and God's word? The Citizens for Safe Libraries had simply asked that **certain books be moved out of the youth section of the library.** They're not trying to "push their will don't the throats of everyone else," they're simply trying to protect children. **Where is the censorship in moving books?** If you want your kids to read the kind of garbage that's in those books, you can still go and check them out and let your kids read them, or for that matter, they can still check them out themselves. (B.W., WBDN, 5/13/09).*

*Let's at least give the parents and kids the resources needed to make parental decisions and wise choices instead of slipping in some porn when no one is looking. **A fair warning to what they will find within the library materials by labeling them as containing adult material, putting them upstairs where kids won't see them while browsing the YA section** and an Internet porn filter are common sense protections for minors, not attacks on free speech. These types of protections are done in other libraries (D.A.H., WBDN, 4/30/09).*

Analysis: Stumbling in the Library

*As far as I know, the whole library is still accessible to everybody regardless of age. Concerned parents simply wanted the books moved out of an area where children might **stumble across** them. To me, it seems that's just good parenting—not Nazi book burning! (B.W., WBDN, 5/13/09)*

*Alderman Vrana should not have to be subject to an ethics hearing. If you haven't informed yourself on the library issue and the contents of the books, go online and take a look at the books. Do you also know why you've never read anything from the books, in the paper or other media? It's because if they print anything from the books, they'll lose their license. Do you really think it's OK to let some 10- or 12-year-old kid **stumble over the books** in the YA section? I don't! Just move the books to the adult section. (LB, WBDN, 6/4/09).*

Questions?

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