

American Library Association Reports Record Number of Demands to Censor Library Books and Materials in 2022

Book Challenges Nearly Doubled From 2021

By [ALA News](#)

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The American Library Association (ALA) today released new data documenting[1] 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources in 2022, the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago. The unparalleled number of reported book challenges in 2022 nearly doubles the 729 challenges reported in 2021.

A record 2,571 unique titles were targeted for censorship, a 38% increase from the 1,858 unique titles targeted for censorship in 2021. Of those titles, the vast majority were written by or about members of the LGBTQIA+ community and people of color.

Of the reported book challenges, 58% targeted books and materials in school libraries, classroom libraries or school curricula; 41% of book challenges targeted materials in public libraries.

The prevalent use of lists of books compiled by organized censorship groups contributed significantly to the skyrocketing number of challenges and the frequency with which each title was challenged. Of the overall number of books challenged, 90% were part of attempts to censor multiple titles. Of the books challenged, 40% were in cases involving 100 or more books

Prior to 2021, the vast majority of challenges to library resources only sought to remove or restrict access to a single book.

"A book challenge is a demand to remove a book from a library's collection so that no one

else can read it. Overwhelmingly, we're seeing these challenges come from organized censorship groups that target local library board meetings to demand removal of a long list of books they share on social media," said Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom. "Their aim is to suppress the voices of those traditionally excluded from our nation's conversations, such as people in the LGBTQIA+ community or people of color.

"Each attempt to ban a book by one of these groups represents a direct attack on every person's constitutionally protected right to freely choose what books to read and what ideas to explore," said Caldwell-Stone. "The choice of what to read must be left to the reader or, in the case of children, to parents. That choice does not belong to self-appointed book police."

ALA will unveil its highly anticipated list of the top 10 most challenged books in the U.S. on Monday, April 24 during National Library Week, along with its full State of America's Libraries Report. The theme of [National Library Week 2023](#), *There's More to the Story*, focuses on the essential services and programming that libraries offer through and beyond books.

ALA President Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada said, "Every day professional librarians sit down with parents to thoughtfully determine what reading material is best suited for their child's needs. Now, many library workers face threats to their employment, their personal safety, and in some cases, threats of prosecution for providing books to youth they and their parents want to read.

"ALA began documenting the book challenges reported to us over two decades ago because we want to shine a light on the threat of censorship facing readers and entire communities. Book challenges distract from the core mission of libraries: to provide access to information. That includes access to information and services for learners of all ages, homeschooling parents, job seekers, new computer users, budding readers, entrepreneurs, veterans, tax filers and amateur genealogists – just to name a few.

"While a vocal minority stokes the flames of controversy around books, the vast majority of people across the nation are using life-changing services that public and school libraries offer. Our nation cannot afford to lose the library workers who lift up their communities and safeguard our First Amendment freedom to read."

Polling conducted by bipartisan research firms in 2022 showed that voters across the political spectrum oppose efforts to remove books from libraries and have confidence in libraries to make good decisions about their collections. To galvanize support for libraries and respond to the surge in book challenges and other efforts to suppress access to information, in 2022 ALA launched [Unite Against Book Bans](#), a national initiative to empower readers everywhere to stand together in the fight against censorship. **The coalition will mark its first anniversary during National Library Week.**

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Note

[1] ALA compiles data on book challenges from reports filed with its Office for Intellectual Freedom by library professionals in the field and from news stories published throughout the United States. Because many book challenges are not reported to the ALA or covered by the press, the 2022 data compiled by ALA represents only a snapshot of book censorship throughout the year. A challenge to a book may be resolved in favor of retaining the book in the collection, or it can result in a book being restricted or withdrawn from the library.

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