

LET BOOKS BE

*PUBLIC
LIBRARY
CENSORSHIP
OVERVIEW*

2025 CENSORSHIP DATA AND TRENDS ACROSS ALL LIBRARY TYPES¹

In 2025, the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) documented attempts to censor 4,235 unique titles, the second highest total on record. This is 15.5 times higher than the national average from 2001–2020. OIF documented 8,596 distinct challenges to those unique titles.

Even more concerning, book banners were more successful than ever before. Last year had the highest percentage of attempts resulting in censorship ever documented (77%), as well as the highest number of books censored in one year (6,588 books censored, including 5,668 banned). For comparison, from 2001–2020, an average of 70 books were censored per year (less than 20% of those challenged) and 24 books were banned per year. There were 283 times the average number of book bans in 2025, an almost incomprehensible figure.

Nearly 92% of these book censorship attempts came from government decision-makers and pressure groups (7,884 of the total titles challenged). From 2001–2020, these groups challenged an average of only 46 titles per year. This dramatic increase follows a surge in politically orchestrated activism that began in 2020 and started to show up statistically in 2021. Prior to this partisan censorship movement, parents and library users initiated most challenges. In 2025, fewer than 3% of book challenges came from parents, and roughly 1% came from individual library users.

Partisan book rating websites facilitate this movement by fabricating rationales to silence voices and erase history. These sites may appear to provide legitimate book reviews, but they are not intended to help people find books to read. Instead, they exist to promote censorship. Legitimate book reviews are created by professional educators and writers to help people select books based

upon their objective merits and intended audience. Rating sites claim books are inappropriate based on the religious and political beliefs of the sites' creators. The people behind these sites have strong ties to far-right activist organizations such as Moms for Liberty, No Left Turn, the Council for National Policy, the Heritage Foundation, and the Capitol Resource Institute, among others.

These rating sites flag books using labels such as “discriminatory equity ideology” or “gender ideology,” claiming hundreds of titles are inappropriate for young readers. These terms are jargon invented to render censorship more palatable. In practice, they are used to discriminatorily censor books discussing race, racism, feminism, social justice, and reproductive health, as well those with LGBTQIA+ representation.

Of the 100 titles most frequently challenged during 2025, 99 were targeted on partisan book rating sites. The multi-title censorship attempts spurred by these sites and the lists they generate accounted for 94% of book censorship attempts in 2025. Last year, an average of 18 titles were challenged at a time, nearly double the highest level previously recorded. From 2001–2020, the average number of titles challenged in a censorship attempt was one.

Multi-title censorship attempts are not made by people who read the books to which they object. Large-scale book ban pushes are sometimes even organized by religious and political organizations that gather their members to fill out challenge forms en masse. When people challenge dozens of books at once, they abuse the challenge process, impair library operations, and divert resources away from serving the public good.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also accelerating discriminatory censorship

in a variety of ways. For instance, a prompt on a site called the National Book Rating Index directs ChatGPT to use ideologically-driven book rating sites to generate book summaries. Some school and library boards are using AI to identify books to remove from collections. Boards are also using AI to identify “no buy” books, overruling objective collection development processes and the decisions of professionally trained library workers.

When an AI chatbot or agent is asked to evaluate a book, it doesn't do so by checking professional reviews, curated lists, and award selections, nor does it read the book. Instead, the AI's response is shaped by the prompts users provide, which can reflect their biases and desired outcomes, as well as the flood of controversies and false information pro-censorship activists post online.

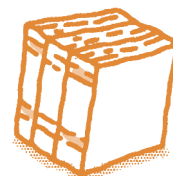
Statewide book bans spread across the nation. Divergent court rulings and local policy changes further fractured access along municipal, county, and state lines, creating confusion for library workers and users alike. The political pressures and confusion chilled purchases of books on particular topics, as well as displays, programs, and events.

No school or public library book was ever determined by a court of law to meet the legal definition of obscenity for minors. However, false claims that books contained illegal obscenity for minors were cited in attempts to censor 5,653 titles in 2025. The next most common censorship rationales from book banners were the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ representation; discussions of race, racism, equity, and social justice; and disfavored political or religious viewpoints. Demands to censor Palestinian representation, immigrant representation, and books by women also increased in 2025.

1. Data compiled from confidential reports made to ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, media accounts, and public records. Most censorship attempts go unreported.

"BELIEVE IN TRUTH. *To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so. If nothing is true, then all is spectacle. The biggest wallet pays for the most blinding lights.*" —TIMOTHY SNYDER, ON TYRANNY

PUBLIC LIBRARY DATA AND TRENDS



Last year, 235 public library systems experienced known threats to intellectual freedom. OIF provided 202 instances of support to public libraries related to 108 separate threats to intellectual freedom in 36 states (Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin).

Beyond book challenges, there were 40 challenges to displays, 27 challenges to programs, 14 hate crimes, and 7 First Amendment audits documented at public libraries in 2025.

Of the threats to intellectual freedom at public libraries, 156 were from governmental decision-makers and pressure groups, including attempts to censor 599 of the total 824 books challenged. Board members and library administrators initiated 71 of these, including challenges to 295 books, nearly all of which were in multi-title censorship efforts.

2025

**ANNUAL AVERAGE
2001–2020**

438 documented threats to intellectual freedom

144 documented threats to intellectual freedom

184 book censorship attempts

97 book censorship attempts

824 total books challenged

102 total books challenged

513 books censored

7 books censored

92 books banned

3 books banned



Report censorship attempts to OIF (oif@ala.org) when they happen at your library, school, or university. You don't have to be a librarian or ALA member to get confidential one-on-one help. Find more ways to reach us at ala.org/oif.

MOST FREQUENTLY TARGETED TITLES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES, 2025

#1 GENDER QUEER by Maia Kobabe
Book Résumé: bit.ly/genderBR

#2 THIS BOOK IS GAY by Juno Dawson
Book Résumé: bit.ly/thisbookBR

#3 SEX IS A FUNNY WORD
by Cory Silverberg and Fiona Smyth

#4 THE RAINBOW PARADE
by Emily Neilson
Book Résumé: bit.ly/paradeBR

#5 (TIE) BEING YOU: A FIRST CONVERSATION ABOUT GENDER
by Megan Madison,, Jessica Ralli, and Anne/Andy Passchier
Book Résumé: bit.ly/beingyouBR

#5 (TIE) IT FEELS GOOD TO BE YOURSELF by Theresa Thorn
Book Résumé: bit.ly/feelsgoodBR

#5 (TIE) IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL
by Robie H. Harris
Book Résumé: bit.ly/normalBR

#5 (TIE) THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER by Stephen Chbosky
Book Résumé: bit.ly/wallflowerBR

#5 (TIE) WHEN AIDAN BECAME A BROTHER by Kyle Lukoff and Kaylani Juanita
Book Résumé: bit.ly/aidanBR

#10 (TIE) ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE
by George M. Johnson
Book Résumé: bit.ly/allboysBR

#10 (TIE) I'M NOT A GIRL by Maddox Lyons, Jessica Verdi, and Dana Simpson
Book Résumé: bit.ly/notagirlBR

#10 (TIE) A KIDS BOOK ABOUT BEING NONBINARY by Hunter Chinn-Raich

#10 (TIE) A KIDS BOOK ABOUT BEING TRANSGENDER by Gia Parr



"Challenges" are not just complaints about books, but willful attempts to remove or restrict access. No one has the right to censor books or abridge the rights of others.

#10 (TIE) OUR SKIN: A FIRST CONVERSATION ABOUT RACE by Megan Madison, Jessica Ralli, and Isabel Roxas
Book Résumé: bit.ly/ourskinBR

#10 (TIE) RAINBOW: A FIRST BOOK OF PRIDE by Michael Genhart

MOST TARGETED YOUNG ADULT / TEEN TITLES (ALL LIBRARY TYPES)²

#1 SOLD by Patricia McCormick
Book Résumé: bit.ly/soldBR

#2 THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER by Stephen Chbosky
Book Résumé: bit.ly/wallflowerBR

#3 GENDER QUEER by Maia Kobabe
Book Résumé: bit.ly/genderBR

#4 EMPIRE OF STORMS
by Sarah J. Maas
Book Résumé: bit.ly/empireofstormsBR

#5 (TIE) LAST NIGHT AT THE TELEGRAPH CLUB by Malinda Lo
Book Résumé: bit.ly/telegraphclubBR

#5 (TIE) TRICKS by Ellen Hopkins
Book Résumé: bit.ly/tricksBR

#7 A COURT OF THORNS AND ROSES
by Sarah J. Maas
Book Résumé: bit.ly/thornsBR

#8 (TIE) IDENTICAL by Ellen Hopkins
Book Résumé: bit.ly/identicalBR

#8 (TIE) LOOKING FOR ALASKA
by John Green
Book Résumé: bit.ly/alaskaBR

#8 (TIE) STORM AND FURY
by Jennifer L. Armentrout
Book Résumé: bit.ly/stormBR

MOST TARGETED YOUNG ADULT / TEEN GRAPHIC NOVELS (ALL LIBRARY TYPES)

#1 GENDER QUEER by Maia Kobabe
Book Résumé: bit.ly/genderBR

#2 FLAMER by Mike Curato
Book Résumé: bit.ly/flamerBR

#3 HEARTSTOPPER VOL. 5
by Alice Oseman

#4 (TIE) ASSASSINATION CLASSROOM (SERIES) by Yusei Matsui

#4 (TIE) CHECK, PLEASE!
by Ngozi Ukazu
Book Résumé: bit.ly/checkBR

#4 (TIE) HEARTSTOPPER VOL. 4
by Alice Oseman
Book Résumé: bit.ly/heartstopper4BR

#7 (TIE) HEARTSTOPPER VOL. 1
by Alice Oseman
Book Résumé: bit.ly/heartstopper1BR

#7 (TIE) HEARTSTOPPER VOL. 3
by Alice Oseman
Book Résumé: bit.ly/heartstopper3BR



2. In 2025, OIF documented 5,127 total challenges to 2,159 unique YA titles. This represents 68% of the total volume of book challenges and 61.5% of the unique titles challenged. From 2001-2020, an average of 93 YA books were challenged each year.

3. In 2025, OIF documented 1,062 total challenges to 724 unique children's titles. This represents 14.1% of total challenge volume and 20.6% of the unique titles challenged. From 2001-2020, an average of 72 children's books were challenged each year.

#7 (TIE) LAURA DEAN KEEPS BREAKING UP WITH ME by Mariko Tamaki and Rosemary Valero-O'Connell
Book Résumé: bit.ly/lauradeanBR

#7 (TIE) PERSEPOLIS by Marjane Satrapi
Book Résumé: bit.ly/persepolisBR

#7 (TIE) SPINNING by Tillie Walden
Book Résumé: bit.ly/spinningBR

MOST TARGETED CHILDREN'S TITLES (ALL LIBRARY TYPES)³

#1 DRAMA by Raina Telgemeier
Book Résumé: bit.ly/dramaBR

#2 (TIE) MELISSA by Alex Gino
Book Résumé: bit.ly/melissaBR

#2 (TIE) THE RAINBOW PARADE
by Emily Neilson
Book Résumé: bit.ly/paradeBR

#4 (TIE) IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL
by Robie H. Harris
Book Résumé: bit.ly/normalBR

#4 (TIE) WHEN AIDAN BECAME A BROTHER by Kyle Lukoff and Kaylani Juanita
Book Résumé: bit.ly/aidanBR

#6 (TIE) THE BLACK FRIEND
by Frederick Joseph
Book Résumé: bit.ly/blackfriendBR

#6 (TIE) RELISH: MY LIFE IN THE KITCHEN by Lucy Knisley
Book Résumé: bit.ly/relishBR

#8 (TIE) ANNE FRANK'S DIARY: THE GRAPHIC ADAPTATION
by Ari Folman and David Polonsky
Book Résumé: bit.ly/annefrankgnBR

#8 (TIE) IT FEELS GOOD TO BE YOURSELF by Theresa Thorn
Book Résumé: bit.ly/yourselfBR

#8 (TIE) LILY AND DUNKIN
by Donna Gephart
Book Résumé: bit.ly/dunkinBR

#8 (TIE) TOO BRIGHT TO SEE
by Kyle Lukoff
Book Résumé: bit.ly/toobrightBR

MOST TARGETED CHILDREN'S GRAPHIC NOVELS (ALL LIBRARY TYPES)

#1 DRAMA by Raina Telgemeier
Book Résumé: bit.ly/dramaBR

#2 SEX IS A FUNNY WORD
by Cory Silverberg and Fiona Smyth

#3 RELISH: MY LIFE IN THE KITCHEN
by Lucy Knisley
Book Résumé: bit.ly/relishBR

#4 ANNE FRANK'S DIARY: THE GRAPHIC ADAPTATION
by Ari Folman and David Polonsky
Book Résumé: bit.ly/annefrankgnBR

#5 (TIE) THE DEEP & DARK BLUE
by Niki Smith
Book Résumé: bit.ly/darkblueBR

#5 (TIE) THE PRINCE AND THE DRESSMAKER by Jen Wang
Book Résumé: bit.ly/dressmakerBR

#7 (TIE) HEY, KIDDO by Jarrett Krosoczka
Book Résumé: bit.ly/kiddoBR

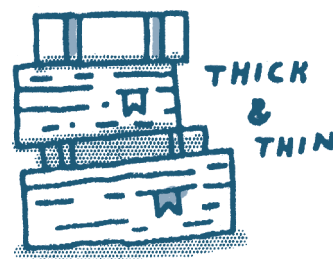
#7 (TIE) THEY CALLED US ENEMY
by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott, and Harmony Becker

Want to know if the freedom to read a book or author you love has ever been jeopardized? You can use our Censorship Search Portal to find out!
ala.org/searchportal



RESOURCES

- » Book Résumés from Unite Against Book Bans supporting access to books targeted for censorship: bit.ly/BookResumes
- » Tested messaging for library advocates: uniteagainstbookbans.org/conversations-that-connect/
- » Lies About Libraries article series: www.oif.ala.org/tag/lies-about-libraries/
- » Comprehensively updated 11th edition of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual*: alastore.ala.org/ifm11



The Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) is charged with implementing ALA policies concerning the concept of intellectual freedom as embodied in the Library Bill of Rights. The goal of the office is to educate librarians and the general public about the nature and importance of intellectual freedom in libraries.

OIF Staff: Sarah Lamdan, Executive Director; Eric Stroshane, Associate Director; Betsy Gomez, Assistant Director; Joyce McIntosh, Assistant Program Director; Karen Gianni, Program Coordinator

Credits: Eric Stroshane, writer and editor; Betsy Gomez, editor and layout; ALA Production Services, design

Illustrations by Mikey Burton.

ALA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law in the year they are given. To support our work, visit ala.org/oifdonate.

© 2026 American Library Association. Book cover images are © and ™ their respective publishers and creators.

TOP 11 MOST CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2025

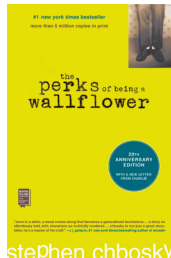
The American Library Association documented **487 attempts to censor** books at libraries, schools, and universities in 2025. The reasons most commonly cited for censorship were false claims of illegal obscenity for minors; inclusion of LGBTQIA+ representation; covering topics of race, racism, social justice, and diversity; and presenting political or religious views with which the challengers disagreed. Of the **4,235 unique titles** that were challenged or banned in 2025, here are the top 11 most frequently targeted.

1



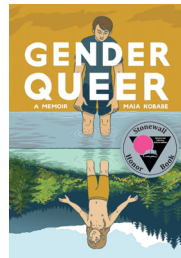
SOLD
by Patricia McCormick
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/soldBR

2



THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER
by Stephen Chbosky
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/wallflowerBR

3



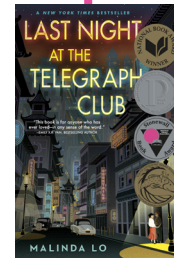
GENDER QUEER: A MEMOIR
by Maia Kobabe
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/genderBR

4

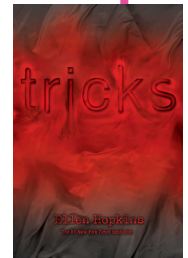


EMPIRE OF STORMS
by Sarah J. Maas
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/empireofstormsBR

5
(TIE)

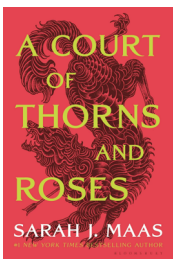


LAST NIGHT AT THE TELEGRAPH CLUB
by Malinda Lo
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/telegraphclubBR



TRICKS
by Ellen Hopkins
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/tricksBR

7

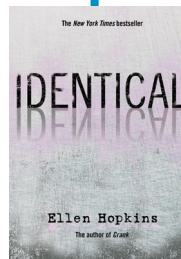


A COURT OF THORNS AND ROSES
by Sarah J. Maas
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/thornsBR

8
(TIE)



A CLOCKWORK ORANGE
by Anthony Burgess
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/clockworkorangeBR



IDENTICAL
by Ellen Hopkins
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/identicalBR



LOOKING FOR ALASKA
by John Green
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/alaskaBR



STORM AND FURY
by Jennifer L. Armentrout
Why this book matters:
bit.ly/stormBR



OFFICE FOR
Intellectual Freedom
American Library Association

ALA.ORG/BBOOKS