Chicago Public Schools nixes *Persepolis* (for some)—FTRF seeks details

In March, the Freedom to Read Foundation submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to learn why it made the determination to remove the acclaimed graphic novel *Persepolis* from classrooms. Documents provided by CPS in May shed some light on the process by which copies of the book were removed, but much about the situation remains unclear.

*Persepolis*, by Marjane Satrapi, tells the story of the author’s childhood before, during, and following the Islamic revolution in Iran. Included in the images are three drawings of torture, including one depicting a soldier urinating on a prisoner and another showing a hot iron put on a prisoner’s back, that CPS administrators have said motivated their ban. It was initially published in France and has been published in two volumes in the US. Many schools include *Persepolis* in their curricula, and this year CPS made it part of its “common core” standards for seventh graders.

According to the documents, on March 11, a directive was given from the CPS administration at a meeting of the 19 Chiefs of Schools (called “mini-superintendents” by some, they oversee the networks of CPS schools) regarding *Persepolis*. The following day, a follow-up email was sent to the chiefs saying: “Please instruct your Network’s Instructional Support Leader(s) to collect the book titled *Persepolis* from your schools’ classrooms and libraries. Send collected books to Department of Literacy Attn: Cynthia Slater-Green.”

On the evening of Wednesday, March 13, an update was emailed to the chiefs from Annette Gurley, CPS’s Chief of Teaching and Learning, which read:

“**Update**: It appears that while we can collect the copies of the book...”

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**Awards & Grants**

**Amanda Meeks named 2013 Gordon Conable Conference Scholar**

FTRF has named Amanda Meeks as the sixth recipient of the Gordon M. Conable Conference Scholarship. The Conable Scholarship will provide for Meeks’ expenses to attend the 2013 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago.

As part of the scholarship, Meeks will attend various FTRF and other intellectual freedom meetings and programs at the conference, consult with a mentor/board member, and present a report about her experiences and thoughts. She will be recognized at the FTRF Annual Member Reception from 5:00–6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 27 (see p. 8).

Meeks received her Master of Library Science from Emporia State University in Portland, Ore. in 2012. She holds a B.S. in Art Education from Illinois State University. She has done extensive volunteer work with organizations such as the Q Center in Portland and, currently,
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BARBARA M. JONES

Looking Forward to the Annual FTRF Meeting

Dear FTRF Community:

Congratulations to the winners of the Trustee election! See p. 3 for results. I look forward to working with you on our initiatives old and new—seeing you right here in Chicago for our annual meeting. Our business meetings are far from boring. We hear the always popular review from Theresa Chmara of current First Amendment-related court cases. And we anticipate issues that could turn into First Amendment challenges to the freedom to read. All this makes for lively discussions of what constitute FTRF’s core values. The annual meeting and some new trustees always gives us a sense of the tradition and renewal of dedication to our cause. And the current upswing in the U.S. economy gives us further cause to celebrate new possibilities as our endowment grows!

We hope those of you in Chicago will join us at the FTRF Member Reception featuring one of our favorite supporters, Sara Paretsky! See details on p. 8.

Since I last wrote my column, the Office for Intellectual Freedom has offered strong support for FTRF’s high priority—to try to counter the wave of Internet filtering that is jeopardizing the freedom to read in our public and school libraries. (I have heard that even a few academic libraries are filtering!) Deborah Caldwell-Stone and I have been writing articles and speaking on the road about filtering. Deborah just finished a highly successful workshop on filtering at the joint Oregon/Washington State Library Conference, and wrote an article for American Libraries: “Filtering and the First Amendment: When is it okay to block speech online?” with an excellent sidebar from our own FTRF.

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CENSORSHIP IN THE NEWS

CPS nixes Persepolis

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from the classrooms, we cannot collect them from the school libraries without going through the process outlined in the policy for “New Collection Development Policy for School Libraries” (604.7). Please accept my apology for the mixed signals, as I know that your plates are full. High School Chiefs, should you get push back from school librarians, please know that they have the rights outlined in the policy. It is advised that you adhere to the policy.

As of the publication of this newsletter, it remains unclear who gave the initial directive to the chiefs or what the precise language of the directive was.

On Thursday, March 14, word about the restriction began spreading, and reports trickled out about orders to remove the book from certain schools. On Friday, March 15, Chicago bloggers began writing about the situation and FTRF and the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) began investigating. That afternoon, ALA staff spoke with Gurley who said CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett made the decision to restrict access to the book after a principal called it to her attention. She said that due to concerns about “graphic illustrations and language” and “student readiness,” CPS wanted to “control how it’s being presented” and that the book was restricted from both curricula and classroom libraries until “teaching guidelines” were developed and training implemented for instructors who wanted to teach the book.

A letter to CPS principals from Byrd-Bennett that afternoon instructed principals to remove the book from seventh grade classrooms and not to remove Persepolis or any other book from central school libraries, “unless you have complied with the [CPS collection development] policy.” She also said, “We have determined Persepolis may be appropriate for junior and senior students and those in Advanced Placement classes” and that the administration was considering its appropriateness for eighth through tenth grades. However, she gave no explicit direction about the disposition of the books for 8th–12th.

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TRUSTEES OF FTRF ELECTION

Winners of FTRF election announced

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2013 FTRF Board of Trustees elections, and congratulations to the six winners: new trustee Eva Poole; re-elected trustees Helen Adams, Chris Finan, and Herb Krug; and returning trustees Bob Doyle and Jim Neal!

These trustees will serve two-year terms beginning at the end of the 2013 FTRF Annual Meeting on June 27 in Chicago. The 2013–2014 board also will include five trustees serving the second year of their terms—Carol Brey-Casiano, Julius C. Jefferson, Jr., Mary Minow, Judith Platt, and Nancy P. Zimmerman—along with four ex-officio trustees: Barbara Stripling, incoming ALA president; Courtney Young, incoming ALA president-elect; Keith Michael Fiels, ALA Executive Director; and J. Douglas Archer, incoming ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee chair.

See below for more information about the election winners.

The FTRF president, vice president, treasurer, and two additional members of the board’s executive committee for 2013–2014 will be selected among the trustees at the FTRF Annual Meeting on June 27.

Helen Adams, Online Instructor, Mansfield University School Library and Information Technologies Department, Mansfield, PA

Robert P. Doyle, Executive Director, Illinois Library Association, Chicago, IL

Chris Finan, President, American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, New York, NY

Herbert Krug, President, CrossRoads Marketing Solutions, Evanston, IL

Jim Neal, Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian, Columbia University, New York, NY

Eva Poole, Chief of Staff, District of Columbia Public Library, Washington, DC

NEWS & NOTES

In memoriam: Jack Gerts

FTRF is sad to report that longtime ALA reprographics director Jack Gerts passed away on May 4. Jack was a dedicated and highly professional colleague, who over four decades printed hundreds of thousands of envelopes, ballots, flyers, and issues of the Freedom to Read Foundation News. Our thoughts are with his family.

Texas buries anti-Ethnic Studies bills

In May, two controversial higher education bills in the Texas legislature failed to get through the committee process, thus effectively killing them. HB1938 and SB1128 would have changed the core requirements for history majors to exclude courses that taught Ethnic Studies or other specialized history. Among the bill’s opponents was Librotraficante, which compared the bill to the Arizona law, HB2281, that led to the dismantling of Tucson’s Mexican American Studies (MAS) program. Librotraficante, the recipient of the 2012 Downs Award from the University of Illinois, worked to raise awareness about the Texas laws.

Tucson MAS program remains in litigation, but resurrected at local college

The fate of the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) MAS program remains uncertain. On March 8, a federal district court held HB2281 to be largely constitutional, while noting concern about discriminatory motives. The plaintiffs—two Tucson High School students—are appealing the decision on First and Fourteenth Amendment grounds. Attorneys from Seattle University School of Law’s Civil Rights Amicus and Advocacy Clinic are assisting the students in their case.

Meanwhile, as reported in the March issue of FTRF News, a federal judge ruled that as part of a desegregation consent decree, TUSD must have “culturally relevant courses” for African American and Mexican American students. The district is in the process of determining what they will teach that will comply both with the consent decree and the dictates of HB2281.

On May 28, the former director of the TUSD MAS program, Curtis Acosta, announced he would be offering courses for high school juniors and seniors at Prescott College, a private liberal arts college in nearby Prescott. The new “CLASS” course (Chicano Literature, Arts and Social Studies) will be offered for college credit. Acosta also announced he is taking a leave of absence from TUSD and bemoaned the fact that seven books that were removed from TUSD classrooms are still banned.
Seven organizations given Krug Fund Banned Books Week grants

On May 21, the Freedom to Read Foundation announced seven $1,000 grants to libraries, schools and community organizations in support of Banned Books Week events. The grants are made possible through FTRF’s Judith F. Krug Memorial Fund. Banned Books Week will take place Sept. 22–30, 2013.

FTRF Executive Director Barbara Jones said, “The quality of this year’s applications was tremendous. We couldn’t be more pleased by the care and thought that was put into the proposals. From a dance performance and an art show to online and offline readings, discussions, and lectures, we’re confident that the chosen projects represent a range of innovative, creative ideas that will result in great events!”

In exchange for the grant, recipients agree to provide FTRF with photos and video of their events. You can see videos and photos from past years’ grantees at www.ftrf.org/?Krug_BBW and www.facebook.com/freedomtoread.

ABOUT THE JUDITH F. KRUG FUND
The Judith F. Krug Memorial Fund was established after Krug’s death in April 2009. Judith Krug was the founding executive director of the Freedom to Read Foundation. She helped found Banned Books Week in 1982 in her capacity as director of the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom. The Freedom to Read Foundation began awarding Banned Books Week grants in 2010 and became an official Banned Books Week sponsor in 2012.

Gadsden (Ala.) Public Library Foundation, for “Banned Books Week Gadsden Reads: Fahrenheit 451.” The library and its partner organizations will focus primarily on Ray Bradbury’s classic novel, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2013. Events include a scholarly lecture, a public book discussion, a Banned Books Art Exhibit, and an informal discussion of the novel with inmates at a local detention center.

Judith’s Reading Room, for “Emotive Powers of Literature: Celebrating Banned Books through Dance.” The Eastern Pennsylvania-based nonprofit will collaborate with Muhlenberg College on a dance performance focused on books banned or challenged in the U.S. in the last 31 years. This is the second consecutive grant for Judith’s Reading Room, which was established in 2010 in memory of Judith F. Krug.

Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library, based in Indianapolis, is sponsoring a wide-ranging series of events, including a film festival, invitational juried art show, and the distribution of a free bookmark featuring controversial phrases from Vonnegut’s frequently challenged novel Slaughterhouse-Five. In addition, for the duration of Banned Books Week, local author Hugh Vandivier will live in the library’s storefront window behind a wall of banned books.

Livingston (La.) Parish Library, for “I Read Banned (Southern) Books Week,” a celebration of southern banned and challenged books. Included in their program will be a performance of a one-act play; a night of music featuring banned country songs; photo booths at all five branches; and giveaways of books, movies, audiobooks and tote bags.

Lockport (La.) Public Library, a branch of the LaFourche Parish Public Library, will organize an art workshop, pirate radio-type broadcasts, podcasts, a short video project (“A World without Books”), mock trials to determine if books will be “jailed,” movie matinees, and many more activities.

The School of Law and Social Justice, part of the Atlanta Public Schools, for “Danger! Black Men Reading,” a series of events highlighting banned books by African-American male authors, including Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Malcolm X. The application noted that boys at the school are 50% less likely to check out titles than girls. The programs will discuss the impact censorship has on the black community and on black men and boys specifically.

Yuma County (Ariz.) Library District will present “Time in the Slammer” in cooperation with The Freedom Library. The project will create “jail cells” in all seven branches, in which people can sit, read, and get their pictures taken to promote the concept that people are willing to sit in jail for their right to read.
Platt and Feingold win 2013 Roll of Honor Awards

Past FTRF president Judith Platt and former Wisconsin senator Russell Feingold are the recipients of the 2013 FTRF Roll of Honor Awards.

Platt is the Director of Free Expression Advocacy for the Association of American Publishers (AAP). In that role, she has led numerous coalitions that work to strengthen free speech and privacy rights, including Banned Books Week, the Campaign for Reader Privacy, and the Media Coalition. First elected to the FTRF Board in 1999, Judy was president from 2007–2009. She was elected to her sixth two-year term in 2012.

Feingold served in the U.S. Senate from 1993–2011. In 2001, he was the only Senator to vote against the USA Patriot Act, based on civil liberties concerns. When the Act came up for reauthorization in 2005 and 2009, he led efforts to correct some of its most controversial elements, including trying to narrow the FBI’s ability to seek library, book store, and business records outside regular court channels. After leaving the Senate in 2011, Feingold formed Progressives United, a public education and advocacy organization.

“Judith Platt’s dedication to the Freedom to Read Foundation and the principles we hold dear is unimpeachable,” said Christine Jenkins, chair of the Roll of Honor Committee. “She is a great leader within the Foundation and has been a tremendous ally via her work at AAP. Her unstinting commitment to bringing together publishers and libraries on common issues is the true hallmark of her illustrious career. We are elated to honor her with this award.”

Jenkins continued, “FTRF honors Russ Feingold’s leadership by example in support of civil liberties by his courageous stance against the Patriot Act in 2001 and his persistent efforts in opposition to the Patriot Act in 2006 and again in 2009.” FTRF has been involved in multiple cases against the Patriot Act, including supporting the “Connecticut Four” librarians who successfully litigated against a National Security Letter and associated gag order several years ago.

The Roll of Honor Awards will be presented at the 2013 ALA Annual Conference during the Opening General Session from 4:00–5:15 p.m. on Friday, June 28, at Chicago’s McCormick Place.

The Roll of Honor was established in 1987 to recognize and honor those individuals who have contributed substantially to FTRF through adherence to its principles and/or substantial monetary support.

Welcome Joyce McIntosh

We are pleased to introduce Joyce McIntosh, who is working to move the Judith Krug Fund intellectual freedom online education project from an idea into a reality! The project is oriented toward Library and Information Science students to strengthen their understanding of the history, theory, and practical applications of intellectual freedom principles in librarianship. Joyce is a librarian, consultant, and writer. For the past eight years Joyce has led training sessions on the topics of intellectual freedom and privacy. Welcome, Joyce!

CPS nixes Persepolis

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That same day, FTRF filed the FOIA request, and OIF sent a letter protesting the decision, which read, “The CPS directive to remove this book from the hands of students represents a heavy-handed denial of students’ rights to access information.” Late that Friday, FTRF and OIF staff attended a student-led rally at Lane Tech High School in opposition to the ban.

FTRF and other organizations that filed FOIA requests, including the ACLU of Illinois and the Kids Right to Read Project, received some documentation last month. This included meeting minutes and email communication that shed some light on the process but did not answer some key questions. CPS has also produced a “teachers’ guide” for teaching Persepolis in grades 8–10, and have indicated that would be the extent of their follow-up on the matter.

The documents have been posted at www.ftrf.org/?Cases. FTRF will continue to monitor this situation—stay connected with our efforts via the FTRF Blog and via our Twitter feed, @FTRF.
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trustee Helen Adams. The text of both are available at www.americanlibrariesmagazine.org (search for “Filtering and the First Amendment”). I recently spoke at the Texas Library Association about filtering and noted that librarians have many unanswered questions about how to actually implement the filter. As Deborah’s article and workshops so ably demonstrate, there are options, and we need to let our colleagues know about them.

And now—Google is sponsoring a conference to observe the 10th anniversary of the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) decision. (See sidebar below.) Please let me know what issues need to be addressed. This is ALA’s and FTRF’s opportunity to identify the legal, philosophical, and day-to-day problems arising from CIPA implementation. I look forward to hearing from you. And stay tuned for further information.

We tend to forget that academia sometimes offers its own kinds of barriers to the freedom to read. Many issues have arisen in recent months—including lawsuits against librarians writing reviews—and I intend to highlight them in subsequent columns. I recently participated in a panel discussion at Notre Dame about academic freedom in religious institutions. One look at the Hesburgh Library’s catalog told me that, for every recent academic controversy, Notre Dame has the title! In fact, the controversy there about staging a performance of The Vagina Monologues has led to several campus initiatives about academic freedom. I am pleased that Doug Archer, the Chair of the Faculty Senate, is the incoming Chair of ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee (and therefore an ex-officio FTRF trustee). Unfortunately, Notre Dame may be the exception and not the rule. I recently was appointed to the American Association of University Professors’ Committee A on Academic Freedom, and hope to work with them to promote the freedom to read in academic libraries.

Finally, I urge you to view Peter Sagal’s 4-part PBS series, “Constitution USA”: www.pbs.org/tpt/constitution-usa-peter-sagal/home/. When in other countries, I am always struck by how easy it is to locate a copy of the national constitution in a bookstore, usually right at the counter. That is how I got the 4th edition of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (a beautifully designed paperback) and that of the Philippines. And the Mexican constitution at the Guadalajara Book Fair!

My office is always monitoring challenges to the freedom to read, and looking for possible ways in which FTRF could make a difference. You will hear about many of these potential cases at our annual meeting, and I look forward to seeing you there.

Best Wishes, Barbara

ALA AND GOOGLE TO COLLABORATE ON CIPA 10TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

This month marks the ten-year anniversary of the US Supreme Court decision upholding the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which forced libraries accepting certain federal technology funds to install internet filtering software. FTRF andALA were plaintiffs in the case challenging the law.

Recently, ALA’s Washington Office and Office for Intellectual Freedom received an invitation from Google to collaborate on projects to observe the anniversary, including:

• ALA is preparing a white paper on CIPA—what was it supposed to achieve? Has it achieved its objectives? What challenges has it presented to the U.S. library community?
• In July, an invitational conference will occur in Washington, DC, for librarians, researchers, and policy makers to investigate the CIPA decision and what the library community needs to move forward. Do we need further research on CIPA’s impact? Do librarians need more on-the-ground, practical information on alternatives to filtering?
• Conference participants will present findings in a free webinar.

AWARDS

Meeks named 2013 Conable Scholar

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with Chicago’s innovative Read/Write Library, where she leads pop-up library initiatives and is launching a bicycle outreach program.

In addition to her Conable Scholarship duties, Amanda will present an “ignite” session at the ALA Annual Conference on librarians who are stepping away from their day jobs in order to fill the role of community partners and allies.

“The committee was impressed with Amanda’s interest in connecting intellectual freedom to cutting-edge areas of library services,” said Conable Scholarship Committee Chair Candace Morgan. “As libraries and librarians take on new challenges and continue to work to serve diverse communities, the Freedom to Read Foundation is excited to connect with motivated professionals like Amanda in ensuring that the values of intellectual freedom and privacy remain front and center.”

The Conable Scholarship was created to advance two principles that Gordon Conable held dear: intellectual freedom and mentorship. Conable was a California librarian who served several terms as FTRF president. To donate to the Conable Fund, please visit http://www.ftrf.org/?Conable_Fund or call (800) 545-2433, ext. 4226.
Same-sex marriage, the Supreme Court, and FTRF

by Jonathan Kelley, adapted from a March 27 FTRF Blog post

In March, during oral arguments in the Supreme Court’s hearing on California’s Proposition 8, Justice Samuel Alito asserted that, “Traditional marriage has been around for thousands of years. Same-sex marriage is very new. I think it was first adopted in the Netherlands in 2000… But you want us to step in and render a decision based on an assessment of the effects of this institution which is newer than cellphones or the Internet?”

His comment brings up an interesting historical fact: one reason institutionalized same-sex marriage is “newer than cellphones” is that his very court in 1972 refused to hear an appeal to a Minnesota Supreme Court decision to deny a same-sex couple a marriage license. That case has a connection to FTRF.

The case began in 1970, when a young librarian named Michael McConnell applied with his lover, Jack Baker, for a marriage license in Hennepin County, Minn. They were denied, and in subsequent litigation a state district court upheld the denial. The Minnesota Supreme Court agreed with the lower court, and McConnell and Baker’s appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court was dismissed “for want of a substantial federal question.”

In planning his move to Minnesota, McConnell applied for and was hired as Head of Cataloging at the U of M Library. However, when the university’s Board of Regents found out about his attempt to marry legally, they made the unprecedented decision to deny his appointment. That led McConnell to file a second suit, this one charging discrimination and a violation of civil rights. He also appealed to ALA for support, and submitted an application to the LeRoy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund, then under FTRF’s auspices, for help in paying his bills.

On October 19, 1971, in one of its first grants, the Merritt Fund trustees approved a grant of $500 for McConnell, the full amount of his request (see sidebar). Like other early Merritt Fund cases, the grant was made public. Today, all Merritt Fund grants are confidential unless the grantee gives explicit approval to make the case public. Visit merrittfund.org for more information.

McConnell’s discrimination suit appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court was aided by the ACLU of Minnesota. Unfortunately, the Court announced on April 3, 1972, its 8-1 decision to deny certiorari (only Justice William O. Douglas dissented). Six months later, the Court issued its ruling in Baker.

There are many more twists and turns to this story, which you can read on the FTRF Blog. One final note: on May 14, Minnesota became the 12th state to legalize same-sex marriage; the state will begin issuing licenses on August 1.
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Join Sara Paretsky at the FTRF Member Reception

Thursday, June 27
5:00–6:30 p.m.
Hilton Chicago, Joliet Room
720 S. Michigan, Chicago, IL

Join famed novelist and popular Chicagoan Sara Paretsky at the 2013 FTRF Annual Member Reception following the FTRF Board of Trustees meeting. This event is open to ALA Annual Conference attendees as well as non-attending FTRF members. For more information, visit www.ftrf.org.

Visit FTRF at our booth!
We’ll be sharing booth 2650 with the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund — come say hi & get some goodies!

IFRT 40th Anniversary Celebration at the Chicago Cultural Center

Friday, June 28,
7:30–10:00 p.m.
Chicago Cultural Center, Preston Bradley Hall
78 E. Washington St. at Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table is celebrating its 40th anniversary with a party! All are invited to this terrific event featuring food, signature cocktails, and live music. IFRT’s Immroth Award and the inaugural Gerald Hodges Award will be presented.

Tickets are $30 for IFRT members, $40 for non-members, and $20 for students. For more information visit www.ala.org/ifrt.