

# **'Do New Zealand public library workers self-censor controversial library materials?**

***- An exploration of their knowledge and views on the promotion of intellectual freedom in the library.'***

by

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Submitted to the school of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Information Studies.

**October 2012**

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*To what extent do library workers in New Zealand  
acknowledge and uphold the principles in LIANZA's  
Statement on Intellectual Freedom?*

4.2	Sub-question 1: .....
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*What is the level of awareness of library workers with regard  
to:*

*(a) LIANZA's Statement on Intellectual freedom; and*

*(b) their own libraries' policies on intellectual freedom and  
censorship?*

4.3 Sub-question 2 and 3: .....

*What types of content cause library workers to practice self-censorship when providing library items to library customers and why?*

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Dan Dorner, for his most generous and patient advice and encouragement. His expert guidance directed my research in new and challenging directions and has been invaluable.

I would also like to thank my husband - Ben and my daughters - Liesl and Tricia for their love, support and seemingly unending patience. Without them I would never have reached completion.

## **Abstract**

The first objective of this study is to investigate how much knowledge public library workers have of the role of libraries in upholding intellectual freedom. Secondly, to establish whether, and for what reasons library workers would opt to self-censor in the face of controversial library materials. Lastly, to determine whether library workers require further information and training in order to achieve the professional anti-censorship standards as promoted by LIANZA.

I used a qualitative methodology to collect data and conducted nine interviews with library workers from public libraries situated in the central North Island. They were asked to share their views on twelve books – selected for their controversial content – to determine which, if any, self-censorship actions they would take in respect of each individual title. They were asked to give reasons for self-censorship actions. They were also asked to share their knowledge of intellectual freedom in libraries.

The key findings for the first objective were that all the participants were familiar with the concept of intellectual freedom in libraries, but none of them were aware of the content of the LIANZA statement or their own library's policy. Almost all the participants relied heavily on their management for information in this regard, even if the information is conveyed informally.

Secondly, the participants often selected self-censorship actions, with the main reasons being a personal distaste of the item or fear of offending library users.

Lastly almost all the participants said that they felt sufficiently informed on intellectual freedom in libraries and required no further training.

**Keywords: censorship, intellectual freedom, self-censorship, public libraries, freedom to read**

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Rationale for the research

It is widely acknowledged that the library and information sector is closely involved with the promotion of intellectual freedom. The Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) - in line with professional library associations worldwide – took a strong anti-censorship stance in 2002, by adopting the Statement on Intellectual Freedom on 21 March. It places an ethical responsibility on its members to:

provide its users with the widest range of information materials possible, which are within the constraints of its budget, relevant to its users' requirements, and which represent the spectrum of points of view on the topic held in the community (LIANZA, 2002).

It further states that librarians have a responsibility to neither promote nor suppress opinions and beliefs expressed in library materials and resist all attempts at censorship, except where that censorship is required by law (LIANZA, 2002). A full copy of the statement is attached as Appendix 1.

Duthie (2010) is of the view that professional ethical codes which deal with the promotion of intellectual freedom in libraries tend to be “sweeping and general” in nature. As such, they fail to offer specific instruction to library staff on how to deal with controversial library material when personal views contradict professional standards (p. 88). This is in line with Hauptman’s research in 1988. He found that a librarian’s dilemma (meaning the conflict between personal beliefs and professional practice) is one not “easily solvable by application to organizational dictates (ALA) or a casuistic code” (as cited in Curry, 1997, p. 233)

Curry, as part of her research on intellectual freedom in libraries, examined the conflict between personal convictions regarding censorship and the professional practice of public library managers. Her research results indicate that this conflict remains a highly controversial topic in library and information services (1997, p. 234). Duthie (2010) agrees with Curry and says that the wide range of literature devoted to the issue of censorship in libraries is a strong indication that this remains a highly controversial subject and gives rise to powerful emotions (p. 86).

The first major research into censorship in public library collections was carried out by Fiske in 1956 and the key finding of her research was anti-censorship attitudes held by librarians are not always indicative of their censorship behaviours (1959, as cited in Moody, 2004b, p.9).

Although research has been done on a variety of aspects of censorship in New Zealand libraries, no study has been done to determine how much knowledge or insight “rank and file” librarians have of the 2002 LIANZA statement, and to examine their attitudes towards the statement (Malpas, p.76, 2009). There is no research available on whether library workers in New Zealand would opt to self-censor when confronted with controversial library materials, which types of self-censorship actions they may select, which types of material may cause this to happen and the reasons why this takes place.

The outcomes of this research will be beneficial to New Zealand library and information studies by adding to the body of research relating to intellectual freedom in libraries. It is also hoped that by creating a greater awareness of practical censorship issues experienced by library workers in their efforts to



adhere to the LIANZA code of Intellectual freedom, it will lead to more training, education and support for library workers.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

1.2.1 investigate how much knowledge public library workers have of the role of libraries in resisting censorship and upholding intellectual freedom in libraries by looking at their level of knowledge of and agreement with the 2002 LIANZA Statement on Intellectual Freedom and also their own libraries' anti-censorship policies;

1.2.2 examine how personal views on censorship held by library workers affect their behaviours or actions when confronted with controversial or potentially controversial material in the library; and

1.2.3 determine whether library workers require training and/or information on how to deal with controversial or potentially controversial library materials in order to achieve the professional anti-censorship standards as promoted by LIANZA.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

This research will aim to answer the following main question and sub-questions (SQ) as set out below:

To what extent do library workers in New Zealand acknowledge and uphold the principles in LIANZA's Statement on Intellectual Freedom?

SQ 1: What is the level of awareness of library workers with regard to LIANZA's Statement on Intellectual freedom and their own libraries' policies on intellectual freedom and censorship?

SQ 2: What types of content cause library workers to practice self-censorship when providing library items to library customers?

SQ 3: What are the reasons for opting to self-censor?

SQ 4: With respect to which aspects of intellectual freedom and censorship do library workers perceive they require training and/or support to uphold ethical standards?

#### **1.4 Definition of terms**

To ensure that readers understand how key terms are used in this research, the following definitions are provided:

1.4.1 "Censorship" (as defined by Reitz (n.d) means the "prohibition of the production, distribution, circulation, or display of a work by a governing authority on grounds that it contains objectionable or dangerous material";

1.4.2 "Library items/materials" refer to print materials present in a library collection and for the purposes of this research excludes audio visual items and information accessible through the Internet;

1.4.3 "Library worker" is either a male or female person, employed in a public library, either full-time or part-time, at any level other than managerial, and who frequently provides library and information services to anyone who visits the library;

1.4.4 “Self-censorship” is a subtle or covert way of restricting free access to library materials and information by library workers because of conflict between personal censorship views and accepted professional library practice;

1.4.5 “Self-censorship behaviours” refers to any action taken by a library worker which results in the censorship of library materials, even if the action is not regarded as censorship by the individual. It may include:

- the deliberate prevention of physical access to library items which should be freely available to library users in terms of library policy;
- the creation of bias against library items by attaching warning labels which are not required by law to the items;
- not marketing or promoting potentially controversial library items by physical display in the library or virtually on the library website, or by excluding items from bibliographies or subject indexes;
- the provision of reader advisory services when deliberately uninformed about the full range of information on potentially controversial topics, thus failing to provide a fair representation of these materials.

## **1.5 Limitations**

This research was limited to library materials or items as defined above, so did not explore self-censorship actions towards other types of library materials or information accessible electronically. The results are limited by size and location. A study of nine participants who all work in the central North Island limits any claims to suggestions only.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The following section reviews a selection of literature pertaining to the subject of free access to information and censorship in modern public libraries. In support of the proposed research topic, it focuses on self-censorship and providing free access to potentially controversial library items. Although primarily concerned with the situation in New Zealand, the review includes research on ethical issues of censorship in America and the UK. Research studies and scholarly articles were sourced from electronic and physical items offered by the Victoria University of Wellington library.

The literature are assessed according to two main themes, the first being the importance of intellectual freedom and an anti-censorship stance in libraries, and secondly the ethical issues impacting on intellectual freedom and readings which inform the research questions.

#### **2.2 Literature Review: Intellectual freedom in libraries**

This section assesses literature which highlights the centrality of intellectual freedom in libraries. It also briefly looks at the situation on book censorship in New Zealand and the concept of library neutrality, before proceeding to the selected specific topics in library censorship.

Libraries have always had a close association with censorship and Moellendick states that librarians and publishers used to be some of the leading promoters of

censorship, which was mainly based on politics, religion and morality (2009, p. 69). The historical role of librarians has shifted from being censors to being “key advocates of freedom of speech, freedom to read...” (2009, p. 73).

Burke (2010, p. 369) agrees with Moellendick and quotes from a work on the freedom of access to library materials written by Robotham and Shields in 1982 to illustrate the contemporary thinking on the role of libraries and librarians:

If there exists a right to express an opinion, then there also exists a right to know about that opinion. Where else but in the library, and especially in the public library can *all* citizens avail themselves of that right?

Byrne (2004) says that although the destruction of libraries during time of war hampers our potential to learn and imagine, other forms of information control seem less dramatic but are nonetheless equally serious in their consequences. These forms are the various forms of censorship and information control (p. 137). Librarians have an obligation to non-judgmentally meet users’ needs by providing what the user demands even if it should be unacceptable to the librarian or the general community (Byrne, 2004, p. 142). Bundy (2004, p. 167) continues along these lines stating that public libraries should not only accept that they will offend someone in the community, but should proudly “capitalise on their unique role and special responsibility for a free and democratic society.”

McMenemy (2009) follows the same line of thinking in the readings above, but adds that the public library has a duty to make sure that the material it collects and provides access to “is appropriate for the community it serves” (p. 85).

Regarding the situation in New Zealand, LIANZA adopted an updated statement on intellectual freedom in libraries in 2002. In 2001, a library user lodged a complaint with the Office of Film and literary Classification about an erotic lesbian novel titled *Quintessence: erotic adventures of fantasy and desire* by Christine Leov Leland and requested a classification. There is no legal requirement for books in New Zealand to be classified before release, but classification can be effected retrospectively, as was the case following the complaint (Dobbie, 2001, p.15). This complaint led to a lively discussion by librarians on the topic of censorship in libraries and it soon became clear that the older and outdated LIANZA statement needed to be redrafted. Librarians were requested to submit their views for the updated version (Redmayne, 2001, p.14).

The readings discussed so far almost seem to promote the view that librarians take a completely neutral stand on intellectual freedom and the most famous proponent of this “neutrality” – Foskett - is discussed in the next paragraph below. According to Good (2007), however, “the proposition that a librarian is responsible for neutrally communicating both sides of an issue, merely for the sake of ensuring that both sides are heard, seems fallacious, at best” (p.143). His view is that the librarian’s place in society is threatened by the practice of neutrality. The professional standards such as those found in the library profession can only be upheld if there is an ethical basis for these standards, as it takes moral conviction to make a professional standard work (p. 144). So in order to for librarians to successfully resist censorship in libraries – this being an example of a professional standard – they cannot be neutral.

McMenemy (2007), similar to Good above, looks at whether librarians are able to be ethically neutral in today’s world in all service encounters with library users. The author came across a well-known treatise on librarianship and ethics by Foskett dating back to 1962. According to Foskett, the creed of a librarian is “no politics, no religion, no morals” (Foskett, 1962, as cited in McMenemy, p.178).

Although this statement may, on the face of it appear to encourage librarians to be passive and neutral, McMenemy explains Foskett's argument for ethical neutrality means that librarians should understand the needs of library users and ensure access to alternatives. Librarians are advocates for certain core beliefs and it is strongly argued that members of the library profession should not be neutral.

The articles by Good and McMenemy enabled me to make more sense of the issue of library neutrality and the link to censorship in libraries. Read with the other research discussed above, it confirmed the centrality of intellectual freedom in libraries.

### **2.3 Literature Review: Social tolerance vs. self-censorship**

This section of the literature review examines the concept of social tolerance in libraries and then self-censorship, how these informed my research topic and contributed to the conceptual framework for my research.

According to McKinnon (2006) toleration is a matter with putting up with that which you oppose. The motto of the tolerant person is "live and let live", even if it shocks, enrages, frightens or disgusts the tolerant person and as such is a controversial value (p.14).

In a comprehensive quantitative study, Burke (2010) examines social tolerance in public libraries towards racist materials. The study took place over a period of 30 years with the goal of determining how tolerant library users are towards racist content in public library collections. The research participants were not exclusively librarians and library workers and the goal of the research was to examine how the public feels towards materials with racist content in public

library collections (p.372). Burke says that library and information literature shows that libraries are strongly supportive of intellectual freedom and the analysis of the data reflected this stance by showing that librarians were overwhelmingly against the removal of racist materials from the library (p.377). This is a strong indication that there is a high level of social tolerance in libraries.

Hannabus and Allard point out that too much control is undesirable but that “...too much tolerance can dwindle into passive and unthinking relativism” (p. 81), which means that libraries take an “anything goes” view to the inclusion of library items and deny that certain library materials may be of more value than others in terms of the library collection policy.

The promotion of intellectual freedom in libraries is supported by professional ethical codes, such as the one drawn up by LIANZA and discussed in 1.1, but Duthie (2010, p. 88) is of the view that many of these professional ethical codes which deal with the promotion of intellectual freedom in libraries are forthright and uncompromising in wording and content. They fail to take into account the diverse forms of pressure experienced by staff in different types of libraries and offer very little specific instruction to library staff finding themselves at odds - due to their personal views on censorship - with the sweeping and general nature of intellectual freedom codes. Duthie (2010) concludes that regardless of the uncompromising commitment to intellectual freedom in libraries by ethical codes, it would seem that librarians still perceive some forms of censorship in libraries as both inescapable and ethically sound.

Hannabus and Allard (2001) agree with Duthie’s stance of the sweeping nature of ethical/professional codes and say that for librarians “personal and professional roles work together and sometimes get confused” (p.81). This so-



called confusion results in self-censorship and has been the topic of research for quite some time. Curry examined the conflict between personal convictions and professional practice of public library managers in her research on censorship and intellectual freedom in public libraries. She found that some managers were puzzled by the juxtaposition of personal and professional beliefs and some became agitated by the nature of the questions posed during the interviews. This led her to believe that this conflict remains a highly controversial topic in library and information services (1997, p. 234).

Blomberg (2011) wrote an insightful exploration about how his personal pro-censorship views impact on his professional position as a librarian. He concludes that librarians need to continue to promote the freedom to read and provide access to a variety of viewpoints and says “it is not my right to seatbelt the exploration of other people’s minds. It is my choice to screen what I do not want, but I should not force that on others by strapping their intelligence with censorship” (p. 40).

Whelan (2009) calls self-censorship “a dirty little secret that no-one in the profession wants to talk about or admit practicing” (p.27). She further states that it is almost impossible to quantify self-censorship, because there it is not monitored in any way. It most often heard of anecdotally or when someone is willing to confess to self-censorship.

Hill (2010) writes that self-censorship is the least understood and most complicated form of censorship (p. 9). It can come in many seemingly innocuous forms like book labeling, parental control requirements and restricted rooms and shelves (p.10). Censorship challenges are emotionally hard for librarians and it is understandable why a librarian would rather avoid certain books than enter into

a fight (p.12). Hill suggests one of the most effective ways to minimize self-censorship is to have a comprehensive selection policy and process (p. 11).

Moody (2005) adopts the stance that censorship in libraries is undesirable. It considers the various points at which covert censorship may occur in the selection, classification and circulation processes of the public library. The author based the article on her research – which is discussed below – with the emphasis of the article on the less overt and sometimes unconscious forms of censorship found in public libraries. Her findings on covert censorship practices in the circulation processes of the library are of particular interest to me, as it helped me to devise a conceptual framework for my research. The participants in the Moody study were presented with a written questionnaire containing hypothetical situations meant to assess their actual professional behaviour/experiences, not just their opinions on censorship in libraries. Moody compiled a list of topics which, if contained in library materials, may be potentially controversial and cause librarians to self-censor. This list (2004a, p.7) was used to select some of the books used during my research interviews.

The two objectives of the research study by Moody (2004a) were to determine whether the anti-censorship attitudes displayed by librarians are in line with actual censorship behaviours and to assess whether censorship challenges are avoided by librarians by employing self-censorship of controversial materials during the acquisitions and circulation processes. This study is central to my research, except that it focusses on self-censorship behaviours during the circulation process and not during selection and acquisition. The findings of the Moody research were that censorship attitudes are not always in line with censorship behaviours and that some librarians do employ self-censorship to avoid censorship challenges. (2004a, p.1)

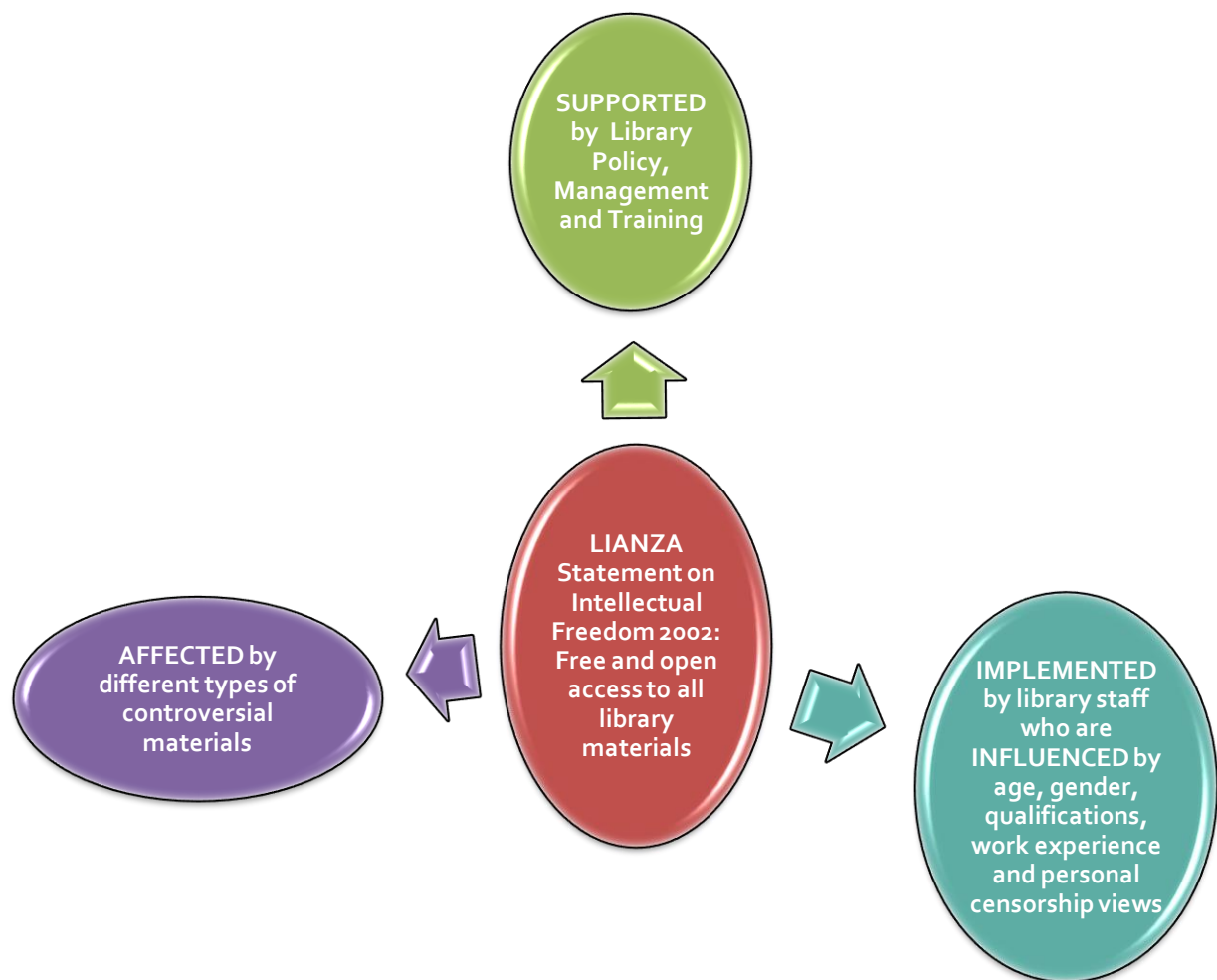
This particular research study has contributed in many ways to the development of my research topic, particularly because it is an Australian study as opposed to American or British, it contains practical hints regarding research design and the bibliography is very comprehensive, containing both historical and newer sources.

Sturges (2008) looks at the issue of self-censorship in the wider community and says that there are four main reasons why people censor themselves (p. 256). Not all of them are applicable to my research objectives, but his view that there is an “insidious impulse to self-censor rooted in the constraints of conformity” (p. 260) explains why people generally have a natural desire not to attract unfavourable comment or criticism. These comments were particularly helpful in the drafting process of the interview questions.

Coley (2002) identifies a number of reasons why self-censoring librarians may reject books and lists them as “lack of demand or interest; literary quality; limited shelf-space; values of the community; the author’s integrity; content; moral values; taste; theft and poor, unfavourable or unenthusiastic reviews”, but he admits that it is difficult to determine whether these standards are being applied appropriately or being used as an excuse for self-censorship. This was an important point to keep in mind when I conducted my own interviews. I also found his selection method for the potentially controversial books in his research very useful, particularly paying attention to the criteria and content types of the books.

## 2.4 Conceptual framework

The articles which I discussed above all informed my research topic and contributed to the conceptual framework for my research in the following manner:



## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research design**

This research has taken an interpretivist approach by examining an accepted professional standard of behaviour and garnering qualitative data from library workers to determine whether this professional standard is reached and adhered to. A semi-structured interview schedule which would further the understanding and meaning of the behaviour of library workers in the context of self-censorship in public libraries, was devised.

#### **3.2 Methodology**

I used a qualitative methodology to collect data and conducted nine interviews with library workers from public libraries situated in the central North Island. The research participants were asked to share their views on twelve books by answering the questions contained in the interview schedule attached as Appendix 3. The questions dealing with the books were drawn up to determine which, if any, self-censorship actions the participants may opt to take in respect of each individual title. I used the other two sections of the interview schedule to collect demographic data on the participants and determine their knowledge of intellectual freedom in libraries, by asking them how much they knew about the LIANZA statement, their own library policies and whether they believed they needed more information and training in this area.

I selected twelve potentially controversial books (a list of which is attached as Appendix 2) to use as examples during the interviews and form the basis of the questions. The criteria for the selection of the books were:

- a) The books are freely available in New Zealand and if there is a legal restriction on any of them, the restriction was explained to the participants; and
- b) the books are accessible through at least one NZ Public library, but not necessarily at the participant's library; and
- c) the books are fiction and non-fiction and cover a wide range of topics.

### **3.3 Method of gathering data**

As the views and emotions of the research participants were of utmost importance, flexible interviewing techniques were employed to allow for issues important to participants to emerge during the interviews and as Bryman (2008) states, “rambling or going off on tangents is often encouraged – it give insight into what the interviewee sees as relevant and important...” (p. 437).

I used semi-structured interviews to allow for follow-up questions and more in-depth discussions of the answers and views given during the interviews. At times the responses given would sound contradictory or incomplete, so I asked participants to clarify or expand on their answers. This was also necessary to ensure that I understood the answers correctly.

### **3.4 Research population**

I used purposive sampling to choose participants in this research. Bryman described the goal of purposive sampling as selecting participants “relevant to the research questions that are being posed”, and because this is a non-probability sampling approach, it does not allow the researcher to generalize to a population (2008, p. 415).

The research participants were selected through my personal and professional networks and were specifically chosen to provide the possibility of comparison of viewpoints and actions. They were from both genders, ranged in age from 23 to 60 and came from different ethnic groups. Their qualifications ranged from no formal library qualifications to one person with a Master’s degree in Library and Information Studies. The participants’ work experience ranged from 18 months to 23 years.

Table 1, which appears in Chapter 4, provides a summary of the demographic information I collected in respect of the interview participants.

### **3.5 Pilot interview**

I conducted a pilot interview with a librarian, who – although she is more senior in terms of qualifications, work position and experience than the stated criteria for the research participants – gave me the benefit of her experience and some good feed-back on the research interview.

My goals for the pilot interview were to:

- a) check for ambiguity in the questions;
- b) check if the questions flowed and if they were in the right order;

- c) check whether the questions elicited answers rich enough in content;
- d) see how long the interview took; and
- e) make sure that my recording equipment functioned well.

The pilot interview resulted in a change in one of the questions. Instead of asking participants what the principle of free access to information meant to them, I amended that to read “free and open access” to information. It was pointed out to me that participants would understand free access to information as free in a monetary sense, which is not applicable to this instance. The pilot interview also highlighted the need to allow participants to look at the books as long as they want to, in order to make a decision and not to interrupt their thought processes by providing extra information or anecdotes about the books. By allowing a period of silence, it encouraged participants to voice their views.

### **3.6 Instrumentation**

Interviews took place face-to-face and were held at times and places convenient to the participants. Some interviews were held at the participants’ homes, but most were held in a private area in a library. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and downloaded to a secure location on my personal computer, as described in 3.7 and 3.8.

Each interview was divided into three parts, with part one being the discussion about the books, part two containing questions about intellectual freedom in libraries and part three containing questions to determine the demographic information of participants.



Each interview followed the same sequence and although the demographic questions were in part three, I opted to start with that and complete that section first. I then returned to part one and presented the books to the participants. A list of the books can be found in Appendix 2. I did not present the list or any information on the books to the participants beforehand, as I wanted to create a situation similar to that in a library where they can come across any potentially controversial book in the course of carrying out their work duties. The books were discussed randomly. I gave participants the opportunity to select a book and then we discussed which action, if any, they would take with regard to providing or withholding access to the book and the reasons for selecting a particular course of action.

After completing part one, I progressed to part two and asked the participants questions on how they viewed intellectual freedom in public libraries. The list of these questions can be found in Appendix 3. I followed the same sequence of questions with all the participants.

### **3.7 Treatment of data**

The recordings of the interviews made with my digital recorder and were downloaded to my personal computer and the files clearly labelled. All the recordings were transcribed and a table to reflect self-censorship actions in respect of each book was drawn up. I compiled a table to compare demographic data. I used the transcriptions to select important or insightful quotes from participants and compiled summaries of their answers in respect of each question, in order to be able to contrast and compare their views. I sent a copy of the transcribed interview to each participant and requested that they confirm via email that I understood their answers accurately and this gave them the opportunity to clarify a remark or viewpoint contained in the transcript.

### **3.8 Ethical consideration**

Research participants were asked to share their views and opinions on intellectual freedom in the library and in particular on the books which were selected by me specifically for their potential for controversy. This called for very specific measures to ensure that the research was being carried out in an ethical manner.

Participants were informed that approval for my project had been given by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of Wellington. As censorship issues often give rise to powerful emotions and strongly held views, I provided research participants with a consent form and participant information sheet. (See appendix 4 and 5) This informed them that data collected during the interviews will be safeguarded in digital format on my personal computer, access to which is password protected. The data will be kept anonymous and confidential, used for my research project only and not be kept for any longer than for purposes of completing and writing up the research project. They were informed that they could withdraw from the research prior to the data being analysed and they were offered an opportunity to read the transcript of the interview and to receive a summary of the report.

### **3.9 Reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity are widely used when talking about the quality of research. According to Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007), validity refers to “the degree to which a method, a test or a research tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure” and tends to be related to the notion of truth (p. 43) In other words, according to Guthrie (2010) validity refers to the correctness of the data collected and whether the data is really measuring what we think it is measuring (p.10).

I collected the data using in-depth interviews to gain a more detailed understanding of the participants' views. A questionnaire would not have been the appropriate method for this research. Respondent validation was used for the research and I provided a copy of the applicable interview transcript to each participant and giving them an opportunity to comment and confirm the factual accuracy of the transcripts. I demonstrated a connection between the data gathered and the conclusions drawn through careful analysis of the data. Validity of the research is further increased by my independent position as a student; the fact that I acted in good faith and as far as possible did not allow my personal views to influence the conduct of the research and the findings arising from it.

According to Guthrie and Gerard, the definition of reliability is “the ability to replicate the same results using the same techniques, that is, to provide results other researchers could repeat” (2010, p. 11). In the case of this research, the data collection methods are fully explained and the questions are clearly stated which means that the study can be replicated. I kept complete records of all the phases of the research and these factors establish that the research is reliable.

A final component when examining the quality of the research is whether the results can be generalised from the sample to the whole population from which it is drawn. The limitations in this regard are set out above in section 1.5.

## Chapter 4

### Data Analysis

The purpose of this section is to present the data relating to the main research question and four sub-questions, which were gathered through parts one and two of the semi-structured interviews. In order to reference quotes from participants, but not identifying them, I randomly allocated each participant a reference number. The questions in part three assisted with the collection of demographic information in respect of the interview participants and is set out in table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Data

Participants	Age group	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Formal Library Qualification	Library Work experience
A	55+	58	F	Fijian Indian	None	9 years
B	35-44	38	M	NZ European	None	4 years
C	45-55	48	F	European	None	4 years
D	45-55	52	F	NZ European	MLIS	9 years
E	55+	60	M	NZ European	Post- graduate diploma	18 years
F	55+	56	F	NZ European	Open Polytechnic level 5	10 years
G	Under 25	23	F	NZ European	Open Polytechnic level 5	18 months
H	Under 25	24	F	NZ European	Post grad university degree	2.5 years

Participants	Age Group	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Formal Library Qualification	Library Work experience
I	45-54	45	F	NZ European	Open Polytechnic level 5	23 years

#### 4.1 Main Research Question:

##### **Library workers and the LIANZA Statement on Intellectual Freedom**

To determine to what extent library workers in New Zealand acknowledge and uphold the principles in LIANZA's Statement of Intellectual Freedom, all the participants were firstly asked to explain their understanding of the phrase "free and open access to information" in the context of public libraries. The responses overlapped to a large extent, but can be placed in three main categories.

Four of the participants understood the phrase to mean access should be free in a monetary sense. They all quite passionately argued that library facilities and services should be free to everyone and that library users should not be hampered by a lack of finance. Although most of the participants in this group added further components to their understanding of the phrase, "free in a monetary sense" was the main thought on the matter. Two of the participants in this group also spared a thought for library finances and said that access to information is limited by financial constraints, this being one aspect which limits free and open access to information.

The second group focussed on what they saw as the service component of the phrase, but also touching on intellectual freedom. Two of the participants said

that libraries should provide the information people want or need and this should be done in a non-judgemental manner, assisting library users to explore library resources, without embarrassment or fear. One participant said “It’s none of our business – we provide the best information we can” (P-3)

In contrast with the view held by the second group there was one participant who emphasised the role of the library being that of a provider of items to increase knowledge or further a positive attitude, but also items for leisure reading.

Lastly, there were two participants who understood the phrase to mean intellectual freedom in libraries and one participant calling the library a navigator to knowledge not a gatekeeper.

Some of the participants in groups one and two referred to intellectual freedom as well, but emphasised that access is provided within a framework or guidelines because libraries have a responsibility to the community they serve - “free access doesn’t mean free to everything” (P-8).

The conclusion here is that “intellectual freedom” was generally not the first thought which came to mind when the participants considered the meaning of the phrase.

Continuing in the same vein, I asked all the participants whether they have ever found their personal beliefs to be at odds with their professional role when dealing with controversial materials.

Six of the participants admitted that they have found this to be the case, and a number of them said that they believed it would be impossible not to be influenced by your own beliefs and values. All of them said that it would not prevent them from dealing with a situation of this nature, as they all believe that professional customer service is paramount. One participant summed it up in simple terms and said her personal beliefs do “not interfere with my job” (P-9)

I asked these participants how they dealt with a situation of this nature and some suggested asking a manager or colleague to help out. The majority felt that they simply had no choice other than to do what they have been employed to do.

Although one participant was quite certain that everybody would find themselves at odds with something at some stage of their library career, there were three participants who said they have not found themselves in that position yet.

#### **4.2 Sub-question 1(a) and (b):**

##### **(a) Level of knowledge of the content of the LIANZA statement**

In response to the question whether they are familiar with the content of the 2002 LIANZA Statement on Intellectual Freedom, all the participants admitted that they had no knowledge of the statement. However, even though none of them were familiar with the content of the statement; all the participants agreed that LIANZA is the correct professional association to provide guidance to library workers on intellectual freedom. This is mainly because LIANZA is a national organisation that can debate and formulate a policy at that level for the use of all libraries in New Zealand.

The participants were then shown a copy (attached as Appendix 1) of the statement, asked to read it and tell me whether or not and to what extent (if applicable) they agree with it. All the participants read through the statement line-by-line and five of them said that they fully agree with it. One of the participants said that she felt it should be up on their staffroom wall to serve as a reminder to all staff.

Two of the participants agreed with the statement, but felt that if a particular book or item was not going to add anything positive to their community, they would not make it available in their library as per the LIANZA guidelines and hoped there was some way they would be able to exercise a discretion to do so.

The rest of the participants elected to agree with parts of it, but were uncertain about other parts, as they felt it could be interpreted that the library cannot exclude anything from their collections for any reason, other than budgetary constraints. One participant, who has over twenty years library experience, felt that in practice library workers are not always able to fully adhere to the guidelines for intellectual freedom and questioned how library workers in practice experienced the pressure to adhere to the LIANZA statement. She said: “Sometimes you wonder... I guess... I mean, we need an official statement, but isn’t the official statement just to cover our butts?” (P-1).

**(b) Level of knowledge of the content of their own library policy on intellectual freedom**

Following the discussion on the LIANZA guidelines, I asked the participants if they were familiar with their own library’s policy on intellectual freedom. Two of the nine participants said that they didn’t know if their library has a policy and therefore have no knowledge of the content, if there is a policy. Seven of the



participants said their libraries do have a policy, but none of them had read through it or regard themselves fully familiar with the content.

One of the seven was certain that their policy was based on the LIANZA guidelines. One of the participants said that he knew that his library management was very much “anti-censorship” but that it would be possible for a library staff member to raise censorship concerns with management, if they felt strongly enough about a particular item. One of the participants gave a specific reason for not being full informed with the content of the library policy as not being involved with book selecting or collection development and therefore having no need for full information on the policy.

#### **4.3 (a) Sub-questions 2 and 3:**

##### **Types of content to cause self-censorship and the reasons for doing so**

To establish what types of content cause library workers to practice self-censorship when providing library items to library customers, we need to look at how each of the books were evaluated and which self-censorship actions (if any) were selected by each of the participants. Participants were also asked to give a reason if they selected a self-censorship action. Section 4.3 (b) contains an in-depth discussion of the participant responses (including reasons to self-censor or not) to each title, followed by a table containing a summary of self-censorship actions selected by the participants and the conclusion in section 4.3 (c).

### 4.3 (b) Participant responses to the books

#### 1. *The Peaceful Pill Handbook* by Philip Nitschke & Fiona Stewart

As this is the most notable recent example of book censorship in New Zealand (Baker, 2010, p.16), I included it for discussion. The book was submitted for classification to the New Zealand Office of Film and Literature Classification by its author in 2007. It is a reference book on various methods of suicide and intended for the seriously ill and the elderly. Although it was found that the style of the book is "sober, informative and instructional", parts of the book go beyond advocacy and advice and ultimately promote or encourage criminal acts (Baker, 2010, p. 16). The author subsequently published a revised edition with the objectionable parts blacked out and this revised edition was classified as R18 (<http://www.censorship.govt.nz/search-for-a-classification.html>). This restriction "reflects the concern of New Zealand society to limit the availability of publications that may significantly increase the risk of children and young persons killing or causing serious harm to themselves, others, or both" (Baker, 2010, p.16).

I explained the classification decision and the legal requirements for making this book available to library users to all the participants before asking them to respond to my questions.

As to be expected due to the content, this book gave rise to a mixed reaction from participants. Four of the participants were of the view that the legal restrictions placed on the book were sufficient to ensure that it reaches the intended audience and said that they would provide free and open access to the book within the legal framework. One of the participants opted to place an additional restriction on the book and would limit the lending period. Two of the participants, after a lengthy debate on the topic, opted to fully restrict access, as

they both felt uncomfortable with the possible consequences of providing access to the book, even within the legal framework. One participant in particular said that although he respected that people would want to make their own choices, but said “I don’t know how much coaching/coaxing people need on doing it” (P-8). He was concerned with potential misuse and felt that a librarian should not have to make the call regarding providing access or not to the book. The remainder of the participants said that although they believed a book of this nature should be in the library they would not promote, nor recommend to anyone as part of reader advisory or referencing services.

## 2. *Go the F\*ck to Sleep* by Adam Mansbach

I selected this book because of the swear word in the title and the use of profane language throughout the book. The book is a humorous look at parenting and the illustration style is that of a typical picture book, although the author makes it very clear on the back that it is not a children’s book. This book was submitted to the New Zealand Office of Film and Literature Classification in 2011, but no restriction was placed on the book (<http://www.censorship.govt.nz/search-for-a-classification.html>).

This book caused a mixed reaction from participants; some found it really humorous, clever and well-written, while others were put off by the language, felt it to be in poor taste. Only two of the participants opted to provide free and open access to this book for adult readers – who are the intended audience of the book. Two participants said that due to the language used in the book, they would prevent access to this book and felt that it is not suitable for a library at all. One of those participants said that of the books we’ve discussed so far (this was the eleventh book), this one annoyed her most. She called it sick and negative. She said reading a book should “make you feel in a certain way – a good way or a positive way- or further your knowledge about something. But that doesn’t tick any of those boxes” (P-2).

One participant opted to attach a warning label to the book to make sure that potential readers knew that the content may offend, but if it were freely available in the library, she would not display or promote the book. The remainder of the participants agreed that they would accept the book as part of a library collection, but due to the language – four of the participants said that they would not place this book on display in the library and three said that they would not promote or recommend this book.

### 3. *Fifty Shades of Grey* by EL James

This adult fiction book was selected because of the explicit erotic content and in particular the reference to alternative sexual practices, as well as the overwhelming popularity of the book, which is the first in a trilogy.

The book is freely available in many New Zealand public libraries and the participants all agreed that they would provide free and open access to the intended audience of book. Many of them said they believe it is not a well-written book, but that readers should make their own decisions regarding their reading material. One participant in particular took a very positive view and said the book is a good entry point for new library users, because it is so well-known and popular and that she hoped that readers would move on to other types of books as they become more comfortable with using the library.

### 4. *Aroused* by Sean Wolfe

I selected this book for discussion because of its content – adult gay erotica – and also because of the explicit cover and title. This book is freely available in New Zealand public libraries and four of the participants said that they would provide

free and open access to this book and did not select any of the self-censorship actions in respect of the book.

One participant was against having the book in the library and selected to prevent free and open access completely. The reason given was that this is “specialist reading” and that readers should source it elsewhere. Another participant felt that there should be restricted access to this book and opted to label the book and keep it off the open shelves. The same applicant also said that it should not be on display or recommended to library users, as a book of this nature should perhaps be purchased, not accessed through the library, because of the content. Four of the participants said that although they would not prevent free and open access to the book, they would not put it on display, mainly because they felt the cover and title would offend library users. There was one other participant who would provide access to the book if asked, but would omit this title when providing reader advisory services.

In contrast with *Fifty Shades of Grey* where all the participants agreed to free and open access, a book containing gay erotica seemed to cause library workers to self-censor, as demonstrated by responses in the interviews.

#### 5. *And Tango makes Three* by Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell

This picture book about two male penguins that raise a penguin chick in a New York zoo was selected because it is frequently challenged in the United States, the reasons given were homosexuality, religious viewpoint, and unsuited to age group. According to Scales, “novels and picture books featuring gays and lesbians are now the biggest targets of censors... *And Tango makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell is the latest book to cause debate on this subject” (2009, p.535).

None of the participants agreed with the American stance and all agreed to provide free and open access to this book to library users. They displayed no self-censorship behaviours in respect of the title. They all agreed that parents should decide whether to read and how to explain the content of this book to their children and perhaps for this reason the book would not be a good choice for a story time activity in the library. In response to being told that this book is on the list of the most frequently challenged books of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and held first place in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2010 (American Library Association (ALA), n.d), one of the participants seemed baffled and stated “Americans are weird” (P-4).

#### 6. *Breaking Silence: The Kahui case* by Ian Wishart

This book, which tells the story of the death of the Kahui twins from their mother’s point of view, was selected due to the outcry from the general public when it was published in 2011. Thousands of people urged a boycott against the book using Facebook, because they feared that the mother of the deceased Kahui twins may profit from the book and also because many believed that she was a poor and negligent mother. She was never formally charged, but her detractors felt she was to blame for the death of the twins. The pressure from the general public led to the book not being stocked by two major New Zealand retailers, leading some to believe that this was a form of censorship (Donnell, 2011). New Zealand public libraries did not follow suit and according to the New Zealand libraries catalogue contained on the National library website, (<http://www.natlib.govt.nz/catalogues/te-puna-search>) the book is available in over 70 libraries in New Zealand.

The participants were all familiar with the book and the controversy surrounding it. Six of them said that they would provide free and open access to the book because they all felt that her side of the story should be told as well and

that people had the right to read what she had to say. Two of the participants said that they would not put this book on display, as they would be concerned at people complaining about the book, given the outcry at the time of publication. Only one participant felt that she would not have the book in the library and prevent free and open access to it, as she felt that the book is a poor example to young parents.

7. *My Princess Boy* by Cheryl Kilodavis

This book was selected because it is a story of a five-year old boy who prefers to dress in girls' clothes and how his family and friends came to accept his preferences. The story is based on the author's son.

Although most of the participants felt that the book is not particularly well-written and almost all of them speculated whether there is some deeper meaning behind the illustration style, because all the characters were drawn without faces, all of them agreed that they would provide free and open access to the book to library users. Some of them were of the view that books of this nature could be helpful in teaching children acceptance of people who are different from the norm.

8. *The Satanic Bible* by Anton LaVey

I selected this book based on content and title; as I wanted to observe participant responses to a book of this nature, especially to participants with have strong religious views.

Three of the participants said that they would provide free and open access to this book and would take no self-censorship actions. In contrast, one of the participants said that he would absolutely prevent free and open access to this

book, as he personally believes that books “about the devil and such-like” (P-4) have no place in society and by extension, the library. This was one example of a book purely being censored due to a library worker’s personal views and feelings on a topic.

Four of the participants said that they would provide access to this book, but would restrict access to library users over 18 due to the offensive content. Two of those participants said the book might be stolen and gave that as additional reason for restricted access. Some of the participants in this group said that they would not display or recommend the book, even if it wasn’t restricted.

The ninth participant said that she would not prevent access or label the book in any way, but would not display it or recommend it.

9. *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* by Christopher Hitchens

This book was selected for inclusion in the interview process because of the content – promoting atheism – and also because of the layout of the front cover. The word “God” is typed in much smaller lower-case letters, as opposed to the rest of title and thus may be offensive to more religious library users.

Seven of the participants had no problem providing free and open access to the book, but two participants said that although they don’t have a problem with the book being part of the library collection, they would not display the book or promote it in any other way, as they both felt that some library users may be offended by it.



10. *This Horrid Practice – the Myth and Reality of Traditional Maori Cannibalism* by Paul Moon

This book is a scholarly work by well-known historian Paul Moon about cannibalism amongst historical Māori and drew substantial criticism. He was criticised by Maori academics for “demonising Maori”, and some argued the book was "a return to Victorian values". Moon accused the critics of the book of attempting to censor him (Moon, 2008).

Seven of the participants had no problem with providing free and open access to this title and all agreed that everyone should have access to research reflecting different aspects of New Zealand history. Those participants were in favour of people reading the book and formulating their own opinions about it.

The remaining two participants said that it is acceptable to have this type of book in the library, but they would prefer not to display or promote it, in case library customers are offended by it. One of the participants added that she would not recommend the book to the library users in her branch library. She found the word horrid in title inflammatory because the author appears to be judging the practice on the front cover of the book:

...he’s (the author) got a slant on it (cannibalism) and it’s not even in quote marks like someone said that. The title is confrontational. The content... I possibly won’t have a problem with the content, but the title is confrontational” (P-5).

11. *Black Hole* by Charles Burns

In an article written for the Comic Book Legal Defence Fund website, Williams (2012) state that “comics and graphic novels are frequently challenged or banned for content that would pass without comment in an all-text novel”. I selected an

adult graphic novel containing full-frontal nudity, sex and disturbing imagery. It depicts a group of mid-1970s high school students and their everyday lives of partying, drugs, and sex. Some of the students contract an apparently incurable sexually transmitted disease which mutates its victims in grotesque ways.

Eight of the participants opted to provide free and open access to adult library users, particularly as this would be placed in the adult fiction section of the library. One participant felt the content was too disturbing and opted to label the book in some way to warn users against it, even though there is no legal requirement for labelling or restricted access. Although the majority of the participants said that they would provide access, two of them said that they would not recommend or promote the book and one said that she would not put the book on display, as she didn't want to offend library users.

## 12. *The Adventures of Tintin: Tintin in the Congo* by Herge

This book, which was written in 1946 and published in English in 1991, was selected because it is seen as racist due to its stereotypical portrayal of the Congolese as infantile and stupid and also its promotion of hunting and slaughter of animals. This title is on restricted access in the Brooklyn Public Library for those reasons (Cowan, 2009) and although the book is not restricted in New Zealand in any way, I selected this for discussion to see what the views of New Zealand library workers are.

All the participants agreed that free and open access should be provided to this book and none of them opted to take any actions which would prevent this. The reason for providing free and open access was mainly that the book is set in colonial times and the attitudes displayed in the book were typical of that time. Participants said they would encourage library users to read and interpret the book in that context.

### 4.3 (c) **Summary: Content types causing self-censorship**

A summary of the number of times and types of self-censorship actions selected by the participants in respect of each book is set out in the table below. It has to be pointed out that some participants opted not to take any self-censorship actions in respect of some of the books, while in other cases; participants opted to take more than one action in respect of a single title, which is why the numbers do not add up to nine exactly for each item.

Key to table 2:

Action 1: The deliberate prevention of physical access to library items which should be freely available to library users in terms of library policy;

Action 2: The creation of bias against library items by attaching warning labels which are not required by law to the items;

Action 3: Not marketing or promoting potentially controversial library items by physical display in the library or virtually on the library website, or by excluding items from bibliographies or subject indexes;

Action 4: The provision of reader advisory services when deliberately uninformed about the full range of information on potentially controversial topics, thus failing to provide a fair representation of these materials;

No Action: Agreed to the provision of free and open access of the item – taking into account any legal restrictions – to library users and displaying none of the self-censorship behaviours described above.

Table 2: Number of times and types of self-censorship behaviours selected by participants

No	Book Title	Topic / Controversy	Year	Action 1	Action 2	Action 3	Action 4	No action
1.	<i>The Peaceful Pill Handbook</i>	Euthanasia	2005	2	1	2	3	4
2.	<i>Go the F*ck to Sleep</i>	Liberal use of swear words	2011	2	1	5	3	2
3.	<i>Fifty Shades of Grey</i>	Explicit erotic fiction	2011					9
4.	<i>Aroused</i>	Explicit gay erotic fiction	2007	1	1	4	2	4
5.	<i>And Tango makes Three</i>	Same sex parenting/families	2007					9
6.	<i>Breaking Silence: The Kahui Case</i>	Controversial child abuse matter	2011	1		2		6
7.	<i>My Princess Boy</i>	Cross-dressing boy	2011					9
8.	<i>The Satanic Bible</i>	Satanism	1992	1	4	2	3	4
9.	<i>God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything</i>	Atheism	2009			2		7
10.	<i>This Horrid Practice – the Myth and Reality of Traditional Maori Cannibalism</i>	Maori cannibalism	2008			2	1	7
11.	<i>Black Hole</i>	Sexually explicit graphic novel	2005		1	1	2	8
12.	<i>The Adventures of Tintin: Tintin in the Congo</i>	Racism and colonialism	1946					9

After a detailed examination of the responses from the participants, the following types of content caused them to deliberately prevent free and open access to library items containing:

- Gay erotica
- Books containing profanity
- Euthanasia/ assisted suicide
- High profile case of child abuse in New Zealand
- Satanism

In contrast to the above, the participants did not display strong personal views about the following types of content and opted for free and open access in those cases:

- Heterosexual erotic fiction
- Same sex parenting and families
- Cross-dressing/transgender boy
- Racism and colonialism

As each of the twelve books represented a controversial topic, it can be seen from the data that there were three types of content which caused the participants to take certain self-censorship actions. Although there was an acceptance by the participants of those types of content being in the library and an acknowledgement by the participants that they would not deliberately prevent free and open access (Action 1), they nonetheless mainly opted not to promote or display certain items (Action 3) and/or would not include the item when providing reader advisory services (Action 4). The types of content are:

- Atheism
- Maori cannibalism
- Sexually explicit adult graphic novels

#### 4.4 Sub-question 4: Training

In response to the question of which aspects of intellectual freedom and censorship library workers perceive they require training and/or support to uphold ethical standards, the participants responded in rather lukewarm fashion.

The expression which was used by almost half of the participants was that information and training on intellectual freedom in libraries “would be useful”. The four participants who used this phrase also suggested different ways of acquiring this knowledge, suggestions ranging from the informal – being told informally by a manager if a controversial item is about to hit the shelves to the more structured – receiving training during staff meetings. They all agreed that it is appropriate to have this knowledge and to understand the underlying issues.

Only one participant admitted that the interview questions I asked indicated to her that she needed more training in this area to improve her understanding of intellectual freedom in libraries, especially the practical aspects of how to deal with censorship complaints in the library. She said it would be “excellent” (P-1) considering that she has no knowledge of the LIANZA statement.

The remaining four participants were of the view that they knew enough about the topic and were not in need of any training and in the case of two of those four – having this knowledge is not a job requirement– but if they were in the position of selecting and buying library material, they would want additional training.

None of the participants, bar one, expressed an urgent desire for more training or information in this field, even though none of them had any knowledge of the

LIANZA Statement on Intellectual Freedom or read their own library's policy on providing free and open access to information. Consequently many of them opted to self-censor certain library items contradictory with the LIANZA statement and possibly their own library's policy. Three of the participants expressed the hope that they would be allowed a certain degree of discretion when it comes to free and open access to information in the library and one said:

...but I think there is an expectation that we would apply common sense and professionalism. Sometimes you would get that right, other times you won't get that right..." (P-2)

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and conclusion

Although qualitative research reports on a lot of descriptive detail to emphasize the contextual understanding, it has to show that the objectives of the study have been achieved.

The first objective of this study was to investigate how much knowledge public library workers have of the role of libraries in resisting censorship and upholding intellectual freedom in libraries. This was done by looking at their level of knowledge of and agreement with the 2002 LIANZA Statement on Intellectual Freedom and also their own libraries' anti-censorship policies. All nine research participants said that they had some knowledge of the concept of intellectual freedom in libraries. However, none of them knew the content of the LIANZA statement and while most of them were aware that their libraries have a policy in this regard, none of them had a good knowledge of the content.

The participants were given a copy of the LIANZA statement to read and were asked whether they agreed with it. All the participants agreed that it was necessary to have a statement of this nature to provide guidance to all libraries. Some were uncertain about parts of the content and whether all of it could be carried out in practice – at the “coal-face” – according to one of the participants. This opinion is in line with the findings by Duthie (2010) that, despite the commitment of libraries to intellectual freedom, some librarians still perceive certain forms of censorship to be necessary and ethically sound.



So one could ask how it came about that the centrality of intellectual freedom in libraries is so entrenched in New Zealand public libraries. The research data show that library management policies, training and instruction to staff played major roles in this regard. Almost all of the participants rely heavily on management for information in this regard, even if the information is conveyed informally.

The second objective was to examine how personal views on censorship held by library workers affect their behaviours or actions when confronted with controversial or potentially controversial material in the library. As most of the participants opted for at least one censorship action in respect of at least one controversial item and in most cases more than one; it supports the findings by Moody (2004a, p.10) that librarians may support intellectual freedom in libraries, but their actions may contradict their public stance. The Moody research shows that certain types of content are more likely to be self-censored and that the personal feelings of participants underlie those reasons. The data gathered for my research also support the view held by Hill (2010) which is that librarians would rather self-censor, than be in conflict with library users (p.12). Sturges' view that people self-censor in the face of conformity (2008, p.260) came to mind when I analysed these choices.

The reasons given by participants for taking any of the self-censorship actions are very much in line with those cited by Coley (2009) and detailed on page 18 above. The participant reasons can be summarised as follows:

- Personal distaste for a book due to the book being in poor taste, moral values, judgemental or inflammatory, religious reasons, sexually too explicit and negative;
- fear of offending the community (community values) and not wanting to antagonise or upset conservative library users;

- sense of responsibility towards the community and wanting to protect library users and not only the vulnerable, against controversial content;
- lack of demand or interest and shelf-space were reasons given by library workers in smaller libraries; and
- theft was given a reason for limiting access to books on Satanism, witchcraft and related subjects. Participants chose that reason said that these types books tend to get stolen from the library quite often and contrary to Coley's (2009) findings, did not regard that as a reason for self-censorship as such, more an effort to hold on to certain types of books in the collection.

None of the participants opted to limit access to library items based on literary quality, author integrity or poor reviews and they all took the stance that people are entitled to read books of poor literary quality if they wish to.

Almost all the participants relied heavily on the cataloguing of library items which dictates exactly where in the library a book should be kept and made available to library users. Keeping a book in its allocated area was an important way not to offend library users and for library workers to avoid pressure to remove an item. An example of this is *My princess Boy*, which is a children's picture book, but the majority of the participants said they expect the book to be kept in adult non-fiction and catalogued as a parenting book, because of the topic. Moody (2005, p. 144) stated that cataloguing bias can lead to censorship of library items, but as none of my research participants are cataloguers, their reliance on cataloguing is not necessarily censorship, but could be for the appropriate reasons.

The final objective was to determine whether library workers require training and/or information on how to deal with controversial or potentially controversial library materials in order to achieve the professional anti-censorship standards as promoted by LIANZA. Almost all the participants said that they felt sufficiently informed on intellectual freedom in libraries and required no training, but the number of times they opted to select self-censorship actions in respect of controversial library items, can be interpreted that training and further education are essential. It is suggested that all library workers should be made aware of the full content of the LIANZA Statement, the practical meaning of it, how it is applied in their own libraries' policy and how to access their library policy if they wish to do so. Library workers should be kept up to date with controversial books entering the catalogue (and library) and also when challenges are lodged against any library item. Information and training can be provided during staff meetings or when any regular professional training sessions take place.

The conceptual framework as set out on page 19 was an effective manner to approach my research topic and functioned well. The data and research findings support the framework, which clearly shows the centrality of intellectual freedom in libraries, how this is supported and implemented, but also which factors affect the implementation of the central idea being freedom to access of information.

For future research, there are a number of interesting and very useful options to look into, one being the study of the responses of library users towards controversial items. This could include determining what type of content would prompt them to complain and request removal from the library and the reasons why they would want to do so.

Another option for further research in this area is to study if the age, gender, library qualifications and work experience of librarians has an influence on the

choice to self-censor controversial library items. Although this study did not set out to take those factors into account, it is worth noting that the participants with the highest library qualifications opted for the lowest number of self-censorship actions.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **LIANZA Statement on Intellectual Freedom, 2002**

#### **Statement on Intellectual Freedom**

Statement adopted by the Council of the Library and Information Association New Zealand Aotearoa, 21 March 2002 (replaces the LIANZA Statement on Censorship).

1. Society creates libraries as institutions to store and make available knowledge, information, and opinions and to facilitate the enjoyment of learning and creativity in every field. Every library has a responsibility to provide its users with the widest range of information materials possible, which are within the constraints of its budget, relevant to its users' requirements, and which represent the spectrum of points of view on the topic held in the community.
2. Librarians have a responsibility to ensure that the selection and availability of information materials is governed solely by professional considerations. In so doing, they should neither promote nor suppress opinions and beliefs expressed in the materials with which they deal. These professional considerations include the use of knowledge, skills, collection management experience, and collection development policies to make decisions on what is selected for the library collection.
3. No information resources should be excluded from libraries because of the opinions they express; nor because of who the author is; nor on the grounds of the political, social, moral or other views of their author.

4. No library materials should be censored, restricted, removed from libraries, or have access denied to them because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval or pressure. This includes access to web-based information resources.

5. Librarians should resist all attempts at censorship, except where that censorship is required by law. Librarians are free to request, and to lobby for, the repeal of laws, which compromise the principles set out in this statement.

## Appendix 2

### List of book titles and descriptions

No	Title and author	Year of Publication	Type of book
1.	The Peaceful Pill by Philip Nitschke & Fiona Stewart	2005	Adult, non-Fiction, closed access – legal provisions
2.	Go the f*ck to sleep by Adam Mansbach	2011	Adult, non-fiction (humour/parenting) open access
3.	Fifty shades of grey by EL James	2011	Adult, erotic, fiction, open access
4.	Aroused by Sean Wolfe	2007	Adult, gay erotic fiction, open access
5.	And Tango makes three by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell	2007	Children's picture book, open access
6.	Breaking the silence: the Kahui case by Ian Wishart	2011	Adult non-fiction, open access
7.	My princess Boy by Cheryl Kilodavis	2011	Children's picture book, open access
8.	The Satanic Bible by Anton LaVey	1992	Adult non-fiction, open access
9.	God is not great: How religion poisons everything by Christopher Hitchens	2009	Adult non-fiction, open access
10.	This horrid practice – the Myth and Reality of Traditional Maori Cannibalism by Paul Moon	2008	Adult non-fiction, open access
11.	Black Hole by Charles Burns	2005	Adult, graphic novel, open access
12.	Tintin in the Congo by Herge	1946	Children's graphic novel, open access

## Appendix 4

### Interview Questions

#### Questionnaire/Interview Schedule

#### **Part 1: The books**

1.1 I have twelve books with me and although they have been selected specifically for this research, each of them can be found in at least one public library in New Zealand and most are available in several libraries. I would like you to briefly examine each of them and tell me, in respect of each of them, whether you would (and if you are not in the position to take this action, please indicate if you would request your supervisor to take this action):

- a) Prevent free and open access for library users to the book using any method you feel is appropriate?
- b) Attach any type of label – where such label is not a legal requirement - to warn users against the content of the book?
- c) Exclude the book deliberately from promotional displays in the library or virtual displays on the library website or blog?
- d) Exclude the book deliberately when providing reference or reader advisory services?

1.2 If you answered yes to any of the above, please provide a reason for your decision.

## **Part 2: Intellectual Freedom in libraries**

2.1 What does the principle of free and open access to information mean to you as it relates to public libraries?

2.2 Have you ever found your personal beliefs to be at odds with your professional role when dealing with controversial or potentially controversial materials?

2.3 How familiar are you with the content of LIANZA 2002 Statement on Intellectual Freedom?

2.4 To what extent do you agree with the LIANZA Statement on Intellectual Freedom? (If the answer to the previous question was no, a copy of the LIANZA Statement will be provided)

2.5 Is it appropriate for professional associations (such as LIANZA) to provide guidance to library workers in intellectual freedom issues?

2.6 Does the library you work at have a formal policy which dictates the free and open access to information for library users?

2.7 To what extent are you familiar with your library's Intellectual Freedom Policy?



2.8 Do you require further information or training regarding any aspect of your library's Intellectual Freedom policy? If yes, what aspect/s in particular?

### **Part 3: Demographics**

3.1 Please indicate your age group:

☐ Under 25

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ Over 55

3.2 Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

3.3 Please indicate the highest level of formal library training you have attained:

☐ No formal training

☐ Open Polytechnic Certificate

☐ Open Polytechnic Diploma

☐ Bachelor degree

☐ Postgraduate Diploma

☐ Masters

☐ PhD

☐ Other

3.4 Please indicate approximately how long you've worked in the library sector

☐ Less than 2 years

☐ 2-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 10 years and more

## Appendix 4

### Participant Information sheet



#### **Participant Information Sheet for an explorative study of the knowledge of New Zealand public library workers of intellectual freedom and the practice of self- censorship.**

**Researcher:** Juanita Nieuwoudt: School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington.

I am a Masters student in Information Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am undertaking a research project which examines self-censorship by library workers in public libraries in New Zealand. Because my research involves human participants I am required by Victoria University Wellington to obtain ethics approval. Ethics approval has been granted for this project.

I am inviting public library workers to participate in this study. If you agree to participate in this study, I shall ask you in a recorded interview to examine a selection of twelve books and tell me in respect of each of them, whether you would (and if you are not in the position to take this action, please indicate if you would request your supervisor to take this action):

a) Provide free and open access for all library users to the book using any method you feel is appropriate or would there be situations when you would not? Please explain your reasons.

b) Attach any type of label – where such label is not a legal requirement - to warn users against the content of the book? If so, please describe when you would attach a label and your reasons for doing so.

c) Include the book in promotional displays in the library or virtual displays on the library website or blog? Or would there be situations when you would not? Please explain your reasons.

d) Include the book when providing reference or reader advisory services? Or if not, when would you deliberately exclude it? Please explain your reasons.

Secondly you will be asked to provide information about your library and its policy regarding the promotion of intellectual freedom, your background and your beliefs about intellectual freedom in libraries.

If you feel the need to withdraw from the project, you may do so at any time before the data analysis commences on 10 August 2012 and all the data collected from you will be destroyed.

The data collected from these interviews will be analysed and will form part of my research report.

All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Dan Dorner will see the report. The research report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals or presented at relevant conferences.

In the submitted report and any subsequent journal articles or conference presentations, all responses will be anonymised and it will not be possible for you to be identified personally.

Recorded interviews and notes will be destroyed two years after the end of the project.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please email at [nieuwojuan@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:nieuwojuan@myvuw.ac.nz). If you wish to contact my supervisor, Dr Dan Dorner, you may do so by emailing [Dan.Dorner@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Dan.Dorner@vuw.ac.nz).

Juanita Nieuwoudt

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5

### Participant Consent form



#### Consent to Participation in Research

**Title of project: An explorative study of the knowledge of New Zealand public library workers of intellectual freedom and the practice of self-censorship.**

I have been given an explanation and understand the nature and purpose of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I have been satisfied with the answers given.

I understand that I may withdraw myself and my information from this project at any time before the data analysis commences on 10 August 2012.

I understand that I will not be identified in any written report, scholarly article or conference presentation whatsoever and any information and opinions I provide will remain confidential to the researcher and her supervisor.

I understand that the recorded interviews and notes will be safely kept for a maximum period of two years after completion of the research project to enable the researcher to publish the findings of the research in a scholarly publication.

**SCHOOL OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT  
FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

I will be given a copy of the interview transcript and a summary of the final research report if I wish.

I agree to take part in this research.

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant:\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Email address:\_\_\_\_\_

I wish to obtain a summary of this report: ☐ yes ☐ no