

Prepared Libraries, Empowered Teams

A Workbook for Navigating Intellectual
Freedom Challenges Together

Becky Calzada,
Val Edwards, and
Maegan Coffin Heindel

Foreword by Steven D. Yates

FOR REVIEW ONLY

ALA
Editions
CHICAGO | 2024

available at alastore.ala.org

FOR REVIEW ONLY

© 2024 by Becky Calzada, Val Edwards, and Maegan Coffin Heindel

Extensive effort has gone into ensuring the reliability of the information in this book; however, the publisher makes no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein.

ISBN: 979-8-8925-5564-7 (paper)

Cove design by Kimberly Hudgins. Composition by Alejandra Diaz in the Proforma and Fira Sans typefaces.

Ⓢ This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

Printed in the United States of America

28 27 26 25 24 5 4 3 2 1

available at alastore.ala.org



*For the inspiring authors who write diverse books,
the voracious library users who check them out to read,
and the courageous librarians who defend and advocate
for access to those books in libraries.*

#FReadom

—B. C.

*For all our colleagues who strive every day to listen to the voices
in their communities and provide the content and access that they need and deserve.*

—V. E.

*For Silas, my heart:
so you always have windows, mirrors, and sliding doors in your reading life.*

—M. C. H.

CONTENTS

Foreword, by Steven D. Yates IX
Preface XI
Acknowledgments XIII
Introduction: Navigating Preparedness Planning XV

PART I Words to Live By: Initializing the Challenge Readiness Plan

CHAPTER 1 Surveying the Current Landscape..... 3
CHAPTER 2 Identifying Existing Structures and Resources for Success 9
CHAPTER 3 Evaluating and Strengthening Your Policy Foundation 17

PART II Words into Action: Operationalizing the Challenge Response Action Plan

CHAPTER 4 Readyng Your Team for Cohesive Action..... 27
CHAPTER 5 Designing and Launching an Action Plan..... 33
CHAPTER 6 Establishing and Training for a Response Mindset 41

PART III Words Take Flight: Systematizing the Challenge Readiness Plan

CHAPTER 7 Systems for Ongoing Readiness and Capacity-Building 57
CHAPTER 8 Planning for Clear Communication with All Stakeholders..... 63
CHAPTER 9 Applying Your Plan to Various Scenarios 71

Conclusion: Prepared and Empowered to Defend 77
Appendix: Team-Building Resources 79
About the Authors 81
Index 83

FOREWORD

Congratulations on one of the soundest decisions you have made this year! Picking up *Prepared Libraries, Empowered Teams: A Workbook for Navigating Intellectual Freedom Challenges Together* means that you have found a transformational tool in your community's conversation on intellectual freedom. Becky Calzada, Val Edwards, and Maegan Coffin Heindel have provided school and public library workers with an evergreen resource to guide work team empowerment far beyond our current cultural moment. This powerhouse trio of library leaders has graciously chosen to share their time, talents, and treasure trove of leadership and consulting experience with us in this highly accessible volume, and our profession is the better for it.

As Calzada, Edwards, and Coffin Heindel remind readers time and again, the path to being prepared always begins today. The moment you begin thinking about the health of intellectual freedom in your community is the moment to get started in parts I, II, or III of the following pages. Part I gives you the opportunity to understand what is currently happening in your community, what tools are currently available for you to use, and how those tools can be honed to provide the best support for intellectual freedom. While I agree with the talented trio that you need to start there, I see the true beauty and awesomeness of this text coming in parts II and III.

Parts II and III are the reminder that all readers need when thinking about intellectual freedom discussions. You cannot forget your own oxygen mask as you work to provide oxygen to your library team and their continued work for intellectual freedom in your community. The skills we all need to do intellectual freedom work to the best of our abilities take time, practice, and care. Calzada, Edwards, and Coffin Heindel generously guide readers through ways to respond to intellectual freedom challenges with equal doses of patience, poise, and preparedness—otherwise known

as the three Ps—that we all need to maintain intellectual freedom in our communities. These three Ps are what make this workbook a unique contribution to your community's toolbox for intellectual freedom.

The three Ps are an incredible asset to any library worker as they work with patrons. The usefulness of this text goes far beyond intellectual freedom discussions. I especially appreciated the straightforward reminder that we prepare ourselves through practice to respond in any possibly tense moment with poise, especially when we remember to be patient with ourselves. *Prepared Libraries, Empowered Teams* weaves aspects of library and information science with public relations, conflict resolution, public speaking, and more. Countless school districts and library systems have paid consultants or developed their own team empowerment resources in house. That was before this incredibly useful tool was created.

As a former school and public librarian turned library educator, I am always looking for the best resources to help prepare my graduate students to be the resources their communities need for equity and access. This book is an immediate addition to my list of resources for both solo library workers and those who work in large systems and districts. Regardless of your work situation, this text provides a deliberate, thoughtful approach that will help you think about how to approach intellectual freedom questions (or any questions, really) in a measured way. But wait, there's more (said in my TV announcer voice)! It also reminds you repeatedly that any progress on the planning front is lost if you don't couple that planning with a commitment to onboarding all new team members, involve those outside of the library in your plans, and make practice a part of your team's schedule throughout each year. This work is not accomplished all at once, and this trio of professionals gives our profession just the guidance we need to make this work happen in the most productive and positive ways.

Foreword

Thank you, Becky, Val, and Maegan. Our profession is better prepared for thoughtful action because of your work in the following pages and your recommendations for additional resources on team-building. Thank you also for the reminder that our teams extend far beyond any library walls, and

so many folks stand ready to assist us as we support intellectual freedom in our communities. Let's get to work!

STEVEN D. YATES

Member, ALA Executive Board, 2023–2026

Chair, ALA Committee on Library Advocacy, 2021–2023

President, American Association of School Librarians, 2017–2018

FOR REVIEW ONLY

PREFACE

Difficulties often bring people together. This is certainly true regarding the origins of this book. It began in 2022 when Val considered the recent increase in book challenges through a conflict resolution lens. Having worked as a consultant with many teams in conflict, she understood that team preparation would help libraries take a more unified, supported approach to managing challenges to intellectual freedom. She wanted to present on this timely topic at the ALA Annual Conference, and she wanted to collaborate with library leaders approaching this work in real time.

Fortunately for Val, Maegan had just received a position as a district library services coordinator. Val and Maegan had known each other for many years through their professional involvement in ALA and AASL and the Wisconsin AASL chapter called WEMTA. They were also library colleagues in the Madison area when Maegan was an elementary school librarian and Val was a high school librarian, as well as the district's lead librarian. Val reached out to Maegan about the possibility of presenting together, to which Maegan said yes immediately. Maegan also shared that she needed a library teacher-leader and thought Val would be a wonderful partner. Val said yes immediately. They began working together shortly after and immediately got started on assessing their district's challenge readiness.

Val also reached out to Becky Calzada, the library coordinator in Leander, Texas, to join in the session proposal as a co-presenter. Becky and Val had met in 2017 when Val worked for TeachingBooks.net and supported the setup and implementation of Texas's statewide license for those resources. Although their connection was limited, Becky was memorable in her dedication to providing high-quality resources for Leander students and supporting learning for the librarians on her team. These impressions have been strongly reinforced as Becky expanded her supportive efforts to colleagues facing challenges around the country, served as a founding member of the FReadom Fighters, and became president-elect of the AASL.

And so, the team was assembled, and the ALA session was submitted and accepted. Preparations for the presentation and our own district challenge preparations continued simultaneously. Becky was facing formal challenges, while Maegan and Val were navigating informal questions with their team, though not requests for reconsideration. When the time came to present, the response was overwhelmingly positive and the need for more resources on this topic was evident. We shifted our attention to expanding our ALA session into a book that could serve as an immediate resource for our library colleagues. We hope you find it useful on your journey, whatever your starting point.

INTRODUCTION

Navigating Preparedness Planning

This is a difficult time in the field. As library professionals are navigating increasingly intense intellectual freedom challenges, the fear of personal attacks and loss of employment is palpable; their determination to protect users' rights books—books with complex and rich worldviews as well as books with diverse characters and cultures—is courageous in these unprecedented times. Their energies deserve to be sustained by deliberate actions taken by skillful and compassionate library leaders. We strive to be these leaders and hope to enable you to meet this need as well.

Over the course of our careers, we have managed questions and challenges about our library materials at different levels. At one end of the spectrum, we have fielded parental questions about the content of books in our collections, which were resolved through conversation and co-planning with families to help their readers select books to meet their reading needs and preferences. At the other end of the spectrum, our libraries have received inquiries from community members who demanded the immediate removal of books, sometimes bringing a list of multiple items. The latter have become more and more common, with a new level of intensity and publicity presenting new complications and calling for new approaches. At times, challenges like these can result in greater understanding and appreciation between professional and patron, but they can also surface anxieties and tensions between an organization and the community members it serves or within the organization itself.

Throughout every intellectual freedom challenge, our team's preparedness—or lack thereof—has been a key component in the relative success of both the resolution of challenges and the maintenance of team morale. We are continuously reflecting on and adjusting our organization's readiness to respond to challenges. Building a challenge-ready team is a never-ending process in which progress is achievable, but

perfection is not. It is precisely because we are imperfect leaders that we feel compelled to share what we've learned in relatable ways that meet you where you are.

Whether a book challenge is upon you, on the horizon, in your rearview mirror, or not yet in sight, now is the time to start envisioning what a challenge-ready team would look like in your organization. The need for responsive plans, well-considered strategies, and coordinated teamwork is shared by all types of libraries. This book is intended for all library leaders in all kinds of libraries with teams of any size. Solo librarians too will find resources for coalition-building in the absence of library colleagues directly within their institution. By the end of this book, you will be equipped with tools and resources to tailor a challenge preparedness action plan to the needs of your library and community.

Expanding Your Viewpoint as You Plan

This book is organized in an inside-out manner. It starts from the foundational, inner organizational workings that leaders must attend to before planning, and then we move to the action planning stage where the library team will be heavily involved. Finally, we widen the focus to include stakeholders within and outside the institution who need to know and live the plan (see figure 0.1). However, because team-building is a major focus of this work, you will find recommendations for gathering team input and building team capacity throughout. You do not have to take your team through this process in a linear fashion. The unique needs and structures of your organization may dictate the order in which you tackle the tasks in this book. We have organized the book in an order that is logical to us in hindsight, but in reality, we each moved around the steps of challenge readiness in response to team needs as they arose.

FIGURE 0.1**Challenge readiness concepts and audiences from the inside out****Your Challenge Readiness Road Map**

Part I lays the foundation for your team approach by guiding a review of current circumstances and structures. We begin in chapter 1 with a survey of the national landscape. Then in chapter 2 we zoom

in on your community climate, organizational status, and team members' strengths. In chapter 3 we provide considerations for developing strong policies and procedures on which your action plan rests. These policies and procedures, embodied in words on paper, create a living document to guide all that follows.

In part II, you will encounter practical suggestions for training your team for both the technical and relational aspects of action planning, and transforming the words of your policy and procedures into a functional blueprint for challenge readiness. Chapter 4 helps identify methods for developing deep knowledge of your organization's selection policy in your team members. At the same time, we address how to approach conflict and concerns within your team. Chapter 5 contains planning templates, strategies, checklists, and suggested scripts to assist in co-constructing a unified approach with your team. Chapter 6 focuses on preparing your team to implement the plan you create through professional learning and practice so that each member of your organization knows their role should a challenge arise.

Part III takes the action plan throughout your organization and beyond, providing best practices for communication and capacity-building in the

A FEW DEFINITIONS

When we talk about "teams" throughout this book, we refer to the group of people who operate your library or libraries and would potentially receive an intellectual freedom question from a library user. In public libraries, this is likely your entire staff, from library page to director. In a school district, the library team consists of school librarians, library assistants, and any library leaders and support people at the district office. We make it clear when it would be beneficial to focus on a smaller section of your team for expanded responsibilities specific to responding to a challenge.

We often use the word "challenges" as shorthand throughout the text, by which we mean intellectual freedom challenges. For our purposes, the term "challenges" encompasses both informal questions and formal requests for reconsideration from any source, particularly before they become official book bans. When we are referring to a specific type of challenge, we will call that out.

We use the term "inquirer" to refer to anyone who has raised a question or challenge regarding library materials. Sometimes the words "questioner," "complainant," or "challenger" are also used. We intentionally selected the word "inquirer" to represent that the question could be either formal or informal. More importantly, the term "inquirer" highlights that in essence an intellectual freedom challenge is a question, and so that word respects our library users' right to engage in dialogue with us about our library collections.

Finally, the terms "user" or "patron" are intentionally used when speaking generally about those whom we serve in all types of libraries. You can read these terms through the lens of your library type. A library user could be a child, teen, adult, learner, family member, college student, or any reader. A challenge could come from any of these individuals, and it is for them that we work to protect intellectual freedom.

face of all manner of challenges. Chapter 7 helps you systematize and maintain your action plan, while chapter 8 helps you be clear and intentional as you decide which stakeholders need what information and when. Finally, in chapter 9 you will find examples of various kinds of book challenges and how our approach to team preparedness might be applied.

In the conclusion, we reassert the strength of a cohesive team approach and reaffirm your power to influence and bolster your team through book challenges and, in turn, preserve the precious right to read.

Tools are embedded throughout the book, along with templates accessible via QR code, allowing them to be absorbed in conjunction with their related concepts. You will also find reflective prompts and note-taking space to capture insights and ideas for implementation and activation as they are generated. In the appendix, recommended resource lists and potential partner and resource organizations are found.

As you read this book, we hope you absorb and embrace an overarching message: you do not have to go it alone.

FOR REVIEW ONLY

APPENDIX

Team-Building Resources

Trainings

Crisis Prevention Institute (crisisprevention.com) offers multiple trainings on how to identify and interpret crisis behaviors and de-escalate heightened situations. Organizations can pay for training or have their individuals become trainers.

Mediate University (mediateuniversity.com) offers training in conflict mediation. The basic forty-hour mediation training is a worthwhile investment when training managers and response team members.

National Association for Community Mediation (nafcm.org) offers training and toolkits for “Cultivating Allies,” “Navigating Cultural Differences,” and “Legislative Toolkit.” A membership fee is required to access the toolkit content.

Thinking Collaborative’s (thinkingcollaborative.com) Adaptive Schools training provides meeting facilitation skills and protocols for a fee. Many of their protocols are available for free on their website.

Publications

Conflict Management for Managers: Resolving Workplace, Client, and Policy Disputes, by Susan S. Raines.
Beginning with conflict styles, this resource explores all aspects of workplace conflict in depth. The level of detail provides a depth of coverage that allows readers to recognize similar circumstances and situations in their own organization.

The Conflict Pivot: Turning Conflict into Peace of Mind, by Tammy Lenski.
Presenting three concrete strategies for reframing and resetting contentious situations, this book provides a lens into the behaviors that contribute to conflict and how they can be addressed.

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High, by Kerry Patterson et al.
Addressing conflict takes courage. One of the most daunting aspects of taking action is knowing what to say while fearing to make the conflict worse. *Crucial Conversations* provides guidance for broaching tense topics and repairing the damage caused by conversational errors.

Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace, by Christine Porath.
All workplace challenges are more difficult if there is a culture of incivility. Organizations benefit in productivity and output when their employees have respectful relationships. This resource aids in identifying and addressing incivility among coworkers and beyond.

Radical Candor: Be a Kick-ass Boss without Losing Your Humanity, by Kim Scott.
This book is the business industry standard for communicating clearly and directly, and addressing internal problems while maintaining respectful and supportive relationships.

Turn Enemies into Allies: The Art of Peace in the Workplace, by Judy Ringer.
This is an excellent resource for resetting relationships through perspective-taking and acknowledging the role that individuals play in contributing to ongoing disputes.

ALA Resources

ALA Ecosystem Initiative – One Voice Toolkit (www.ala.org/advocacy/ala-ecosystem-initiative). The One Voice toolkit helps library organizations assess and extend the strength of their ecosystems, and identify and pursue priorities for advocacy and legislation. While written for ecosystems at the state level, the framework can be applied to the

library ecosystem at any level and can include a wide range of library organizations such as Friends groups and trustees, vendors, literacy groups, and all types of libraries and library organizations.

FOR REVIEW ONLY

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

BECKY CALZADA is the district library coordinator of the Leander (TX) Independent School District. She is also a cofounding member of Texas #FReadom Fighters and is the president-elect of the AASL for 2024–25. She was selected for ALA’s fourth Policy Corps cohort, works as a member of the Policy Corps’ cadre for Proactive Advocacy on Book Banning, and is a member of ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee. Becky is the recipient of several intellectual freedom awards and was honored by *People* magazine in their 2023 Women Changing the World portfolio.

VAL EDWARDS is the library team leader in the Madison (WI) Metropolitan School District. She has experience working in a variety of library settings. Val has trained as a conflict mediator and published articles in both library/education and business

publications. She has served on several ALA/AASL/ Core committees, was the AASL division councilor, and a past chair of the Core Library Consulting Interest Group, and currently serves on the AASL’s Bylaws & Organization Committee.

MAEGAN COFFIN HEINDEL is the library services coordinator for the Madison (WI) Metropolitan School District. Her background includes both school librarianship and classroom teaching. She is an alum of ALA’s Emerging Leader program and served as the AASL’s Learning4Life coordinator for Wisconsin. A frequent conference presenter, Maegan has held multiple positions in the Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association and the CCBC’s Friends Board. Maegan is currently a member of the CCBC’s Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee.