

Re: [Midwiscfedlib-share] film/game ratings and library bill of rights?

Subject: Re: [Midwiscfedlib-share] film/game ratings and library bill of rights?

From: Dwight Foster Public Library <alutzke@fortlibrary.org>

Date: Thu, 30 Jul 2009 11:01:01 -0500

To: Steev baker <bakers@mwfls.org>

Excellent questions. Doesn't the omission of information about a particular item in the library's holdings constitute censorship or, at the very least, crappy cataloging? Why would a library want to censor the ratings listed on their visual materials? Wouldn't identifying an audiobook as "abridged" be a violation of the ALA's Bill of Rights? After all, some of us have very strong feelings about abridgement!

Amy

At 10:32 AM 7/30/2009, you wrote:

"The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by a library violates the Library Bill of Rights."

and

"In addition, the inclusion of ratings on bibliographic records in library catalogs is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights."

The above quotes are from a recently released ALA "interpretation" of the Library Bill of Rights. How seriously do we, as institutions, take this "Library Bill of Rights?" During the famous West Bend Fiasco of '09, local media and bloggers made much of the power of the ALA and its Library Bill of Rights. The Fiasco was framed as a fight between community standards and the standards of a national, liberal-biased group; David vs. Goliath (in more ways than one). With these new interpretations by the ALA about game and film ratings, it appears that the bloggers weren't far off. Who is the ALA to tell us how our local policies should address media content ratings? What is the power of this "Library Bill of Rights" that it can control even our bibliographic records? What does it mean to "violate" this bill of rights and who enforces it?

Those are just some thoughts I had this morning as I read through the day's library blogs. It serves to remind me that we need to do a better job of patron education when it comes to content ratings. As more and more of us shift from emphasis on research and information to emphasis on entertainment, we should be aware of the trends of content in publishing and media and how our policies, procedures and even the layout of our buildings might change in relation to those trends.

Here's the ALA link for those of you who want read and be amazed:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/statementsif/interpretations/labelingrating.cfm>

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