

Freedom to Read: GVPL Display

By Avi Silberstein.

In order to celebrate Freedom to Read Week, we decided to have an eye-catching and thought-provoking display at our Central Library: books in cages.



We asked a local pet store to loan us some small cages. We then filled these cages with books that have been challenged, censored, or banned. We placed these cages in the heart of the library with signage explaining about Freedom to Read Week and encouraging patrons to open a cage and check out a book—to free it! We also distributed pamphlets on banned books, as well as a handout that explained why many of the books were challenged.



The response to our display was overwhelmingly positive. Many patrons commented on it, noting the importance of intellectual freedom and commending the library for refusing to take those books off our shelves. Numerous books were checked out.

One of the most unexpected outcomes of this display was that it seemed to attract many of the more marginalized members of the community that frequent our library. I found that a high percentage of the patrons that stopped to examine the display were homeless youth. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that they themselves feel "censored or banned" by society, or they may be able to relate to the feeling of being placed in a cage (literally).

Speculations aside, the display provided a wonderful opportunity to have important dialogues with community members that we do not always connect with.



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