



Utah Libraries: Keystone of Healthy Democracy, Student Success, and Prosperous Communities

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Passed by Congress September 25, 1789. Ratified December 15, 1791

**PUBLISHED BY UTAH LIBRARY ADVOCATES
DECEMBER 2021**



Table of Contents

Page 3

[Statement on Book Challenges in Utah](#)

Page 4

[The Library Bill of Rights: A Commitment to Protecting Our First Amendment Freedoms](#)

Page 5

[Libraries Support Our Freedom to Read](#)

Page 7

[Parents Guide to Talking About Kids About Difficult Topics](#)

Page 9

[Frequently Asked Questions About Book Challenges in Libraries](#)

Page 11

[The Different Types of Libraries and Their Roles](#)

Page 13

[The Role and Value of School Libraries](#)

Page 15

[The Role and Value of Public Libraries](#)

Page 16

[Actions You Can Take](#)

Page 18

[To Learn More](#)

Page 19

[Publication Information](#)



STATEMENT ON BOOK CHALLENGES IN UTAH

We, UEA (Utah Education Association), UELMA (Utah Educational Library Media Association), ULA (Utah Library Association), ULMS (Utah Library Media Supervisors) express our strong beliefs in the First Amendment's provision of free speech, which also includes the freedom to read and listen to other people's perspectives. We are committed to challenging censorship in any form as protected by these rights.

Adopted in 1939 by the American Library Association, the Library Bill of Rights emphasizes equal and equitable access for all individuals, including minors, to a diverse collection by and about various people and cultures that "should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves." Our library collection must be inclusive of and relevant to all members of each school community.

As trained and experienced school librarians and educators, we observe policies and procedures to select resources for the library. Statewide our school districts have reconsideration processes in place in the event that resources may be challenged. These processes for challenged materials are a well-established framework that not only provide legal protection for our school district, but also protect each individual child and their access to books they may want to read.

When a book is challenged, it is entitled to due process for review, by an objective body that assesses its merits in their entirety. By evaluating or revisiting any of these works prior to a formal challenge, we jeopardize our intellectual freedom and the procedure for protecting it, as well as subjecting ourselves to legal challenges.

The executive boards of UEA, UELMA, ULA, ULMS have voted to support this position statement.



“The American Library Association (ALA) reported that in 2020, 273 book titles were challenged or banned, with increasing demands to remove books that address racism and racial justice or those that shared the stories of Black, Indigenous, or people of color. As with previous years, LGBTQ+ content also dominated the list of challenged or banned books.”

THE LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS: A COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING OUR FIRST AMENDMENT FREEDOMS

Adopted by the American Library Association (ALA) in June of 1939 in the months following a rally of over 20,000 people at Madison Square Garden that openly supported nazism and fascism in America, the Library Bill of Rights is an unambiguous statement of librarians' professional commitment to the core principles of freedom and equality enshrined in our Constitution.

While the ALA has no governing authority over libraries, they do provide professional and ethical guidance to librarians in promoting free access to, and exchange of, information and ideas, which is the bedrock of our democracy.

“Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.”

The Bill Reads:

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

LIBRARIES SUPPORT OUR FREEDOM TO READ

The freedom to read is essential to the health of our democracy. Like all of the freedoms assured to us in our First Amendment, including our freedom to practice the religion of our choice, the freedom to assemble, and the freedom of the press, our freedom to read must be protected when private groups or government overreach seek to deny Americans their rights. Sadly, there has been an upsurge of activity among those seeking to limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to prohibit the teaching of history, and to purge libraries of diverse voices, perspectives, and viewpoints. As librarians we are devoted to protecting first amendment rights for all Americans, and will always stand up and fight for Americans' right to access and read a wide variety of ideas.

“Having the freedom to read and the freedom to choose is one of the best gifts my parents ever gave me.” — Judy Blume

What is Censorship?

Censorship is the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons — individuals, groups or government officials — find objectionable or dangerous. It is no more complicated than someone saying, “Don’t let anyone read this book, or buy that magazine, or view that film, because I object to it!” Censors try to use the power of the state to impose their view of what is truthful and appropriate, or offensive and objectionable, on everyone else. Censors pressure public institutions, like libraries, to suppress and remove from public access information they judge inappropriate or dangerous so that no one else has the chance to read or view the material and make up their own minds about it. The censor wants to prejudge materials for everyone, and substitute their personal beliefs or views on others.

How Does Censorship Happen?

Censorship occurs when expressive materials, such as books, magazines, films, videos, or works of art, are removed or kept from public access. Individuals and pressure groups identify materials to which they object. Sometimes they succeed in pressuring schools not to use them, libraries not to shelve them, book and video stores not to carry them, publishers not to publish them, or art galleries not to display them. Censorship may also occur when materials that are protected by the First Amendment are restricted to particular audiences, based on their age or other characteristics.

We believe that free expression is essential to the preservation of a free society and a vibrant, innovative, and creative culture. We believe that attempts at censorship are dangerous because they limit the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend.

Our courts have consistently and continually recognized that the freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

Who Attempts Censorship?

In most instances, a censor is a sincerely concerned individual who believes that censorship can improve society, protect children, and restore what the censor sees as lost moral values. But under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, each of us has the right to read, view, listen to, and disseminate constitutionally protected ideas, even if a censor finds those ideas offensive.

What Is The Relationship Between Censorship And Intellectual Freedom?

In expressing their opinions and concerns, would-be censors are exercising the same rights librarians seek to protect when they confront censorship. In making their criticisms known, people who object to certain ideas are exercising the same rights as those who created and disseminated the material to which they object. Their rights to voice opinions and try to persuade others to adopt those opinions is protected to the same extent as the free speech rights as those that they oppose. The rights of both sides must be protected, and librarians will always advocate for the free speech of all Americans.

How Do Censors Justify Their Demands That Information Be Suppressed?

Censors might sincerely believe that certain materials are so offensive, or present ideas that are so hateful and destructive to society, that they simply must not see the light of day. Others are worried that younger or weaker people will be negatively influenced or harmed by bad ideas. Still others believe that there is a very clear distinction between ideas that are right and morally uplifting, and ideas that are wrong and morally corrupting, and wish to ensure that society has the benefit of their perception. They believe that certain individuals, certain institutions, even society itself, will be endangered if particular ideas are disseminated without restriction. What censors often don't consider is that if they succeed in suppressing the ideas they don't like today, others may use that precedent to suppress the ideas they do like tomorrow.



PARENTS GUIDE TO TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT DIFFICULT TOPICS

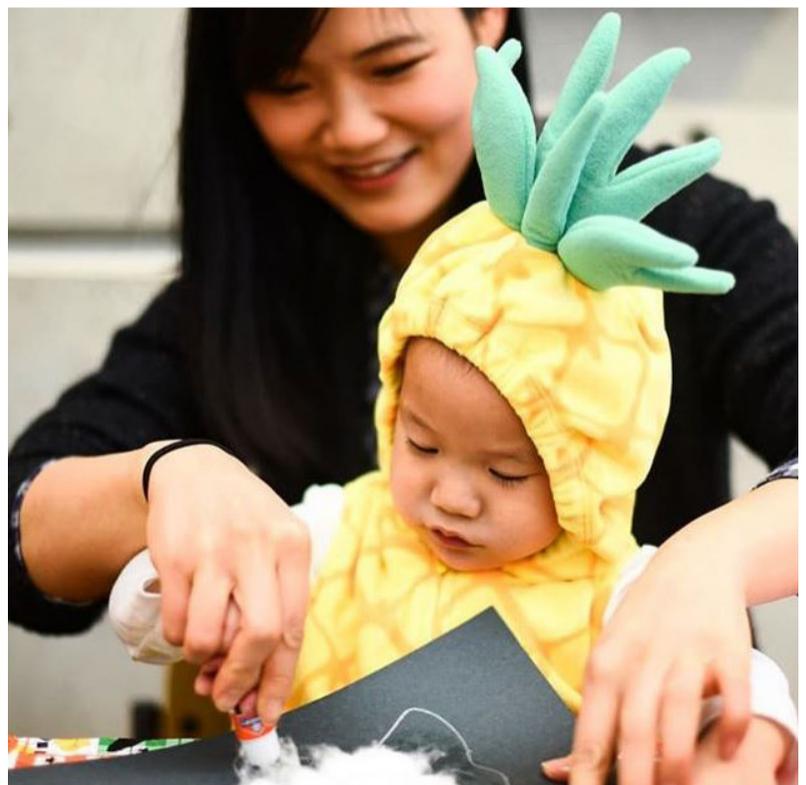
Talking to your kids about difficult subjects can be scary and challenging. Whether it's a conversation about something as simple as the loss of a favorite stuffed animal, or as complex as why some children are bullies, many parents avoid conversations that may raise strong emotions. It's understandable then, that it can feel downright overwhelming to parents when it comes to talking about weightier issues such as racism, violence, relationships and sexuality, drugs, or physical and sexual abuse. But even parents who struggle with these conversations know that their kids are being exposed to a variety of images, stories, and cultural and political messages through their phones, social media, streaming videos, and the ubiquity of 24-hour news coverage.

Initiating conversations with your kids about what they are reading, viewing, thinking and feeling -- especially when they are engaging with content that is confusing or upsetting to them -- is a golden opportunity to connect, and to help your child process unfamiliar or new ideas, and develop understanding within the context of your family's beliefs and values. When you as a parent initiate these conversations, or make it clear that

“Talking to your child about what they are reading or seeing is a golden opportunity to help them process unfamiliar or new ideas, perspectives, and human experiences, and help them understand those ideas, perspectives, and experiences within the context of your family’s beliefs and values.”

you are interested in having them, it builds trust with your child, helps them feel safe, strengthens your parental bond, and provides them with a values framework that will help them understand the world.

When you have these deeper conversations with your children, as challenging as they may be, you help them understand how to interpret information and ideas, how to reflect and ask good questions about what they are reading and viewing, and how to be less passive and think more critically about the messages and perspectives that they are encountering, whether through popular media or books they have chosen read. It's always sad to confront the issues the world hasn't been able to solve. The reward is that you will strengthen the trust and bond between you and your kids, while providing them with the tools they will need to successfully navigate the world.



Discussing Books With Your Children: Suggested Conversation Starters

- What was interesting to you about this book?
- Was there anything about the book that you didn't understand or found confusing?
- What character did you like the most? Which did you like the least and why?
- Did a character that you liked do something you didn't like? What did you want them to do instead, and why?
- Was there anything about the story that surprised you? Why was it surprising?
- Was there anything in the story that made you sad or angry? What was it, and why do you think you responded with sadness or anger?
- Was there anything in this story that reminded you of something that happened in your life? If so, what was similar or different to your experience in real life?
- Did the story end the way you thought it would? The way you wanted it to? How was the story ending similar or different to how you thought it would end or wanted it to end?
- If you could rewrite any scene in the book, or the way the book ended, how would you change it?
- What do you think the author hoped you would think or feel when you read the book?
- What other thoughts or feelings did this book bring up for you?

Remember, when kids are able to choose their own reading material, and when they know they can talk to their parents about what they are reading, they are more likely to initiate conversations with you. And when they are able to choose from a well-curated collection of age-appropriate materials that reflect the diversity of human thoughts and experiences, they will be better prepared for success in an increasingly complex, diverse, global economy.

To Learn More

- [*Age-By-Age Guide to Getting Your Kid to Talk to You*](#), Today's Parent.
- [*How to Talk About Difficult Topics With Your Children: An Age-By-Age Guide*](#), Motherly.
- [*How to Talk to Kids About Difficult Subjects*](#), Common Sense Media.
- [*How to Talk With Your Children About Difficult Topics*](#), Imperfect Families.
- [*Talking About Difficult Topics*](#), National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.
- [*Tips for Talking About Books With Your Child*](#), Scholastic.
- [*Why the Way You Talk to Your Child Matters*](#), VeryWell Family.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BOOK CHALLENGES IN LIBRARIES

Why Can't Libraries Just Remove Books if There are Complaints?

Courts have consistently ruled the First Amendment offers very strong protections to materials in libraries and schools. As a “designated public forum” public libraries are constitutionally prohibited from removing materials based on viewpoint. Likewise, materials have substantial constitutional protections. Materials may be moved or removed from a school library only if they are found to be “educationally unsuitable” or “pervasively vulgar”. It is important for school board members and administrators to know that any failure to follow existing policies or procedures are likely to be cited by courts as evidence of unconstitutional motivation.

Do Children Have First Amendment Rights?

Yes, courts have ruled that children's rights are protected by the First Amendment. In the landmark decision *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the Supreme Court ruled that children do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” In subsequent decisions such as the *Island Trees School District v. In The Pico* case, the Court has made clear that children also have a right to receive information.

Shouldn't Parents Have a Chance for Input on What's in the School Library?

Absolutely! Parents have an opportunity to provide feedback on school district policies by providing feedback to school board members. They also have an opportunity, after reading a book, to make formal “requests for reconsideration” or “materials challenges” that will trigger an official review by a panel which will look at the library's selection policy and determine whether the item needs to be removed, relocated to a more age-appropriate location, or left in place. Those reviews need to follow District policies to ensure due process and adherence to the law, and to protect the constitutional freedoms of all students and parents.

What Happens When Libraries Don't Follow Their Own Materials Challenge Policies?

Because courts are likely to view any failure to follow policy as evidence of unconstitutional motivation, it is important for school officials to understand that not following their own policy puts them, and the taxpayers to whom they have a fiduciary responsibility, in a position that invites costly litigation with little chance of prevailing, and a high likelihood that they will be held responsible for plaintiff's legal fees as well as their own.

Isn't There a Difference Between Public and School Libraries?

Yes. Public libraries have a broad mission to serve everyone in the community, while school libraries have a narrower mission of supporting student learning and success. While school and public libraries have different missions, The Supreme Court, in the Pico decision determined that the First Amendment applies to students and their right to read books of their choosing, and the court referred to school libraries as protected places for “voluntary inquiry”.

So is There a Difference Between Books in a School Library and Books Assigned as Part of the Curriculum?

Yes, schools have much wider latitude in determining what books are part of the curriculum. Schools are continually making decisions about which materials to include or not include in a curriculum, and they are largely free to eliminate books from student reading lists.

What Speech is Protected or Not Protected?

Courts generally start with the assumption that speech is protected with some exceptions including false advertising, defamation, child pornography, or obscenity. While states can choose to protect more speech than the Constitution requires, they may not choose to protect less speech. Free speech protections only apply to public entities.

“It is important for school officials to understand that not following their own policy puts them, and the taxpayers to whom they have a fiduciary responsibility, in a position that invites costly litigation with little chance of prevailing.”

Who Determines Whether Speech is Unprotected? What Standard is Used to Make the Determination?

A judge or jury, acting as factfinder, will apply a three part test to determine whether speech is not protected. This three part test is from the Supreme Court’s ruling in Miller v. California: “Whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest; whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.” Because any work must be “taken as a whole”, passages taken out of context do not provide evidence that the larger work should be stripped of its constitutional protection.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF LIBRARIES AND THEIR ROLES

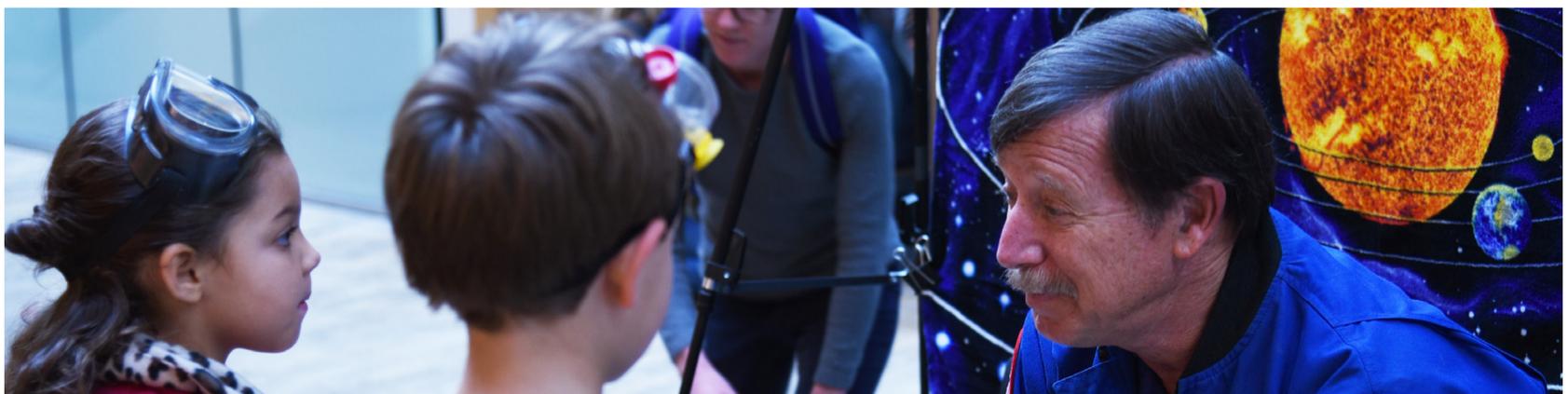
“Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve, and contribute to improving our quality of life.”
— *Sidney Sheldon*

Academic Libraries serve colleges and universities, their students, staff and faculty. Larger institutions may have several libraries on their campuses dedicated to serving particular schools such as law and science libraries. Many academic librarians become specialists in an area of knowledge and can have faculty status.

Public Libraries serve communities of all sizes and types. Wherever you live, there's bound to be a local public library nearby! As the name implies, public libraries serve the general public, “from cradle to grave” as more than one public librarian has been heard to say. Public libraries often have departments that focus on areas of service, such as youth, teens, and adults, as well as business, technology, and programming.

School Libraries are usually part of a school system, and serve students between Kindergarten and grade 12. Many are called media centers, and librarians are often required to have a second degree in education or a certificate in school media.

Special Libraries offer unique opportunities to work in a specialized environment of interest, such as corporations, hospitals, the military, museums, private businesses, and the government. Special libraries can serve particular populations, such as the blind and physically handicapped, while others are dedicated to special collections, such as the Library of Congress or a presidential library.



Why Are Libraries Important?

Despite the rumors that you may hear about the death of print books and the lack of interest in libraries, there are actually more public libraries in the U.S. than there are Starbucks. Libraries are more than bricks and mortar or just storage spaces for books; libraries are [important community hubs](#). They serve as centers of learning, student success, professional development, entrepreneurial activities, and healthcare. Libraries provide collections, services, programs, and expert one-on-one assistance in both physical and virtual spaces.

Libraries support women, immigrants, people of color, the LGBTQ community, and those facing religious persecution. They are free public spaces that allow everyone to feel safe and to find opportunity. Libraries offer information sources that relate to our diverse populations and assist many in bolstering their information literacy skills, weeding out the “fake news”, misleading advertisement websites and misinformation perpetuated in the overflowing streams of information on the Internet.

Libraries in the United States provide a crucial service for poor and homeless people across the country. Not only do they offer a safe and free refuge for those who need shelter, but they offer support and referrals to those in need. For the homeless or the very poor, libraries provide them with access to the internet for job searches, books for education and job training, and essential programs designed to bring them up from poverty. Libraries are also well partnered throughout the community and are well-positioned to connect residents in need with the assistance, programs, and services of support organizations and agencies.

According to the American Library Association (ALA), librarians in public and academic libraries across the country answer nearly 6.6 million questions every week. Librarians help their patrons not only find their next reading selection, but they also answer questions about computer and internet training, job applications and resume writing, and filling out complex and confusing government forms, including tax and health insurance paperwork, all of it for free.

Because libraries are free, not many people consider the role they play in the economy. Libraries play a key role in financially strengthening their local community. They provide a work space for telecommuters and small business people, supply free internet access for people looking for employment opportunities, and offer job and interview training for those in need.

According to the ALA, 73% of public libraries assist their patrons with job applications and interviewing skills, and 48% provide access and assistance to entrepreneurs looking to start a business of their own. In many cases, local governments work together with libraries to help small business owners by providing them with online and in-person resources, including financial guidance, contract opportunities, market information, business plans, and much more.

By helping individual community members financially succeed in their lives and small businesses, libraries help entire communities succeed at boosting their economy and growing their local wealth.

THE ROLE AND VALUE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The Evolution of the School Library

Before school libraries would begin to morph into multimedia digital information centers, they supported student literacy by providing access to their on-site book collections. From the first plans for a school library in the United States drafted in 1743 by Benjamin Franklin, school district libraries would continue to sprout across the nation during the next two centuries. Since the 1950s schools have included school libraries staffed by librarians, who are often certified teachers as well. In their role as school librarians, they work with both students and instructors to support student literacy and success.

The face of public education has fundamentally changed in the last half century, through the nationwide integration of schools, the rapid progress of education technology, academic opportunities offered to students, and the diverse and complex populations to name a few. Because of these dramatic changes to the world of education, the expectations and responsibilities of school libraries and their library faculty have understandably seen a dramatic shift as well.

Today, school librarians are not merely responsible for curating and administering their collections. In addition to those traditional duties, librarians promote creativity and discovery in student learning by functioning as digital media centers, and safe spaces

for students to explore their own ideas and concerns as well as those of the changing world around them. Developing information literacy skills in growing student minds includes not only instruction and support in technology and the internet, but also requires a focus on helping kids develop their social and critical thinking skills as well.

School libraries and librarians have shown to be invaluable in the educational ecosystem. Their unique skills and adaptability make them an important key to the success of teachers, administrators, and students. When it comes to a student's reading, there is no question that school libraries and their librarians play a crucial role in helping them succeed. Studies have long shown that strong school library programs and varied library collections are particularly beneficial for vulnerable students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

“A revolutionary new study shows that when it comes to a student’s reading, there is no question that school libraries — and their librarians — play the most critical role in helping them succeed.” - School Libraries are the Only Thing That Matters

The Goal of All School Libraries is to Develop Information Literate Students Who:

- are responsible and ethical participants in society;
- competent self-directed learners, who are aware of their information needs and actively engage in the world of ideas;
- display confidence in their ability to solve problems and know how to locate relevant and reliable information;
- are able to manage technology tools to access information and to communicate what they have learned;
- are able to operate comfortably in situations where there are multiple answers or no answers;
- hold high standards for their work and create quality products;
- are flexible, able to adapt to change and able to function both individually and in groups.

School Libraries Support Student Success by Being:

- a dedicated physical and digital space in a school that is open and accessible to all;
- an information space providing equitable and open access to quality information sources across all media, including print, multimedia and curated digital collections;
- a safe space where individual curiosity, creativity and an orientation toward learning are encouraged and supported and where students can explore diverse topics, even controversial topics, in privacy and safety;
- an instructional space where students learn the capabilities and dispositions for engaging with information and for creating knowledge;
- a technological space providing a diverse range of technology tools, software and expertise for the creation, representation and sharing of knowledge;
- a literacy center where the school community nurtures reading and literacy development in all its forms;
- a center for digital citizenship where the learning community learns to use digital too
- an information environment for all in the community through equitable access to resources, technology, and information skills development that are not always available in homes;
- a space open for cultural, economic, professional and educational events (e.g. events, meetings, exhibits, resources) for the general community

“Since 1992, a growing body of research known as the school library impact studies has consistently shown positive correlations between high-quality library programs and collections, and student achievement (Grete, 2013; Scholastic, 2016). Data from more than 34 statewide studies suggest that students tend to earn better standardized test scores in schools that have strong library programs and diverse collections. Further, when administrators, teachers, and librarians themselves rated the importance and frequency of various library practices associated with student learning, their ratings correlated with student test scores, further substantiating claims of libraries’ benefits. In addition, newer studies, conducted over the last several years, show that strong school libraries are also linked to other important indicators of student success, including graduation rates and mastery of academic standards.” [Why School Librarians Matter: What Years of Research Tell Us](#)

THE ROLE AND VALUE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

“Americans visited their public libraries more than 1.2 billion times in 2019. That’s more Americans visiting their public libraries than attending movies and live sporting events combined!”

Over the past several decades, public libraries have transformed themselves from mere collections of books to indispensable community spaces, and key drivers of opportunity, prosperity, student success, and social cohesion. In short, public libraries have quietly evolved into one of the most used and highly valued resources in our communities. Data gathered by researchers consistently shows that the majority of the Americans have library cards and visit the library to check out items (2.2 billion in 2019) and attend programs (124.7 million attendees in 2019.) In fact, in 2019, public libraries in the United States saw over 1.2 billion visits. That’s more Americans visiting their public libraries than attending movies and live sporting events combined!

The American people are clearly voting with their feet when it comes to their support of public libraries, and it makes financial sense, too. Studies demonstrate that public libraries return between five and nine dollars for every dollar spent on them -- a very solid return on the community’s investment.

For Parents and Caregivers: Raising Empowered Readers

The value of the public library is perhaps no more apparent than in the positive impact public libraries have in the lives of children. Libraries are welcoming places for kids, from infants to teens, as well as a place for parents to connect with each other for information, support, and friendship. Children’s librarians, who have expertise in child-development, also work with parents to help them find age-appropriate books, and provide guidance on how to use songs, fingerplays, music, narration, movement and a variety of other activities that parents can do to promote the acquisition of vocabulary and early literacy skills in their children. Research has shown that the more vocabulary words kids acquire early, the more likely that they will be successful in school over the long term.

“Children’s librarians, who have expertise in child-development, work with parents to help them find age-appropriate books, and provide guidance on how to use songs, fingerplays, music, narration, movement and a variety of other activities that parents can do to promote the acquisition of vocabulary and early literacy skills in their children.”

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

“Libraries allow children to ask questions about the world and find the answers. And the wonderful thing is that once a child learns to use a library, the doors to learning are always open.”
– Laura Bush

Join other Utahns in expressing your support for our First Amendment Rights and our Freedom to Read. Share your support by using [#FReadomUT](#) on social media.

For Parents and Caregivers: Raising Empowered Readers

Create an environment where your child feels comfortable coming to you with questions about books they read.

Practice active listening when your child comes to you with reading questions.

Engage with your child by asking them open ended questions about the characters, storylines, and themes in the books they are reading.

Encourage your child to ask their librarian for book recommendations and enjoy the library together.

Supporting the Freedom to Read and Opposing Censorship: Addressing Book Challenges and Bans in Your Schools and Libraries

- **Express your support for the Freedom to Read to Your Family, Friends, and Neighbors**
- **Let your state representatives and school board members know that you support the Freedom to Read.**
 - Your representatives work for YOU! Encourage them to uphold your First Amendment rights by supporting libraries.
 - Take action when others try to make reading decisions for you and your family by contacting your local legislators and school board members.
 - Find your local representatives with [OpenStates.org](https://openstates.org).
 - Write a letter expressing your concerns. Here is a [sample letter from the National Coalition Against Censorship](#).

Dear _____ ,

I am writing to express concern about efforts to remove [book title] from the school library at [school name]. I understand that the book has been challenged because of objections to _____.

I strongly urge you to keep this book in the library at [school name] and to uphold the freedom to read for all students in our community. The views of those seeking removal of the book are not shared by all. The challengers have no right to impose their views on others or demand that the educational program reflect their personal preferences.

If parents do not want their children to read a particular book, then they are free to request an alternative assignment. But they may not infringe upon the rights of others to read the book or to tell other parents what their children may read in school.

Furthermore, removing the book will only teach children to remain silent instead of asking questions for fear of addressing “offensive” or “inappropriate” topics. They will learn that the way to deal with difficult speech is to avoid it, and that fear and ignorance supersede the quest for knowledge. Reading is the safest way for kids to learn about the world in which they are growing up, and doing so in a classroom setting, with guided discussion, will only help them anticipate real-life problems.

I therefore urge you to ensure that [district name] policies are followed and that [book title] [remains in/is restored to] the [school name] [course name and/or grade level] curriculum.

[your name]

How have libraries made a difference in your life? Share your story on social media with #FReadomUT

*“Freedom is found through the portals of our nation’s libraries.”
-David McCullough*

Resources

[American Booksellers for Free Expression \(ABFE\)](#)

[Banned Books Week](#)

[First Amendment and Censorship \(ALA\)](#)

[Freedom to Read Foundation \(FTRF\)](#)

[National Coalition Against Censorship \(NCAC\)](#)

[National Council of Teachers of English \(NCTE\)](#)

[Office for Intellectual Freedom \(OIF\)](#)

[PEN America](#)

[Utah Educational Library Media Association \(UELMA\)](#)

[Utah Library Association \(ULA\)](#)



PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Utah Libraries: Keystone of healthy democracy, student success, and prosperous communities. December 2021. Utah Library Advocates (UTLA).

This publication is available online at ula.org/guide and uelma.org/guides.

Licensing: CC BY-SA

Photographs copyright Salt Lake City Public Library. Used with permission.

Utah Library Advocates (UTLA) is a federation of organizations and individuals who advocate for the protection of our fundamental American values of freedom of expression and freedom of thought as guaranteed in our First Amendment.



UTLA Coalition Founding Members Include



UEA: The Utah Education Association is the largest public education employee association in Utah, representing about 18,000 active classroom teachers, retired educators, administrators, licensed educational support personnel and campus student organizations.



UELMA: The Utah Educational Library Media Association provides professional support, leadership, and enrichment for school library media personnel and those who support library programs.



**Utah Library
Association**

ULA: Founded in 1912, The Utah Library Association has been advocating for and supporting library services for all Utahns for over 100 years. The Association represents over 1000 members including librarians, library workers, directors, board members, and Friends. ULA provides training and leadership development for members, and promotes excellence in all types of libraries across the state of Utah.



ULMS: The Utah Library Media Supervisors is committed to developing and supporting strong library programs in all Utah schools. Membership is made up of representatives from school districts, charters schools, universities, state and county libraries, and advocacy groups from around the state of Utah. Among these library leaders are Certified Teacher Librarians, University Librarians, Public Librarians, School District Technology Specialists, and School District Administrators

UTLA would like to extend a special thanks to the Salt Lake City Public Library for providing photographs for this publication.