

2020 CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Survey Report

This report is the first from the revised Challenges Survey. It contains considerable information but the restrictions on movement and gatherings that were put in place early in the year and continued in various forms throughout it have made some of the resulting observations less useful than would have been the case if, instead of twenty-one responses, the Survey had received the 65-75 it has often had in the past.

For instance, of the twenty-one responses filed, fourteen contained both the date of the incident and the date of the resolution. The averaged elapsed time was forty calendar days, and the median figure was sixteen. The discrepancy was caused by two incidents that each took six months to resolve. This is an area that will be watched in coming years, but the conclusion that can be drawn from the 2020 data is that most incidents were resolved in a month (31 days) or less.

British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario routinely report the largest number of incidents, so it is not surprising that they combined to report twenty of the twenty-one incidents. Quebec contributed one.

Books account for the bulk of the complaints (13/21) with movies coming in second (6/21), while library services and programs accounted for the remainder (2/21).

Issues around gender surfaced in several incidents. There was a request to cancel the Reading with Royalty Storytime (two in 2019) and two requests to remove Shrier's *Irreversible Damage*. A single request to remove all of J. K. Rowling's books from the library was based on the complainant's sense of the author's take on certain transgender issues, not on works themselves.

Distinct from issues of gender, seven complaints were based on their portrayal of apparently heterosexual sex. Four dealt with adult themes and three dealt with works in the children's or young adult sections. (The Bare Naked Book, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Puella Magi Kazumi Magica: The Innocent Malice*) The graphic novel was subsequently moved to the adult collection.

The incidents tagged with "Racism" present a smorgasbord of concerns. The children's book *Turtle Island* is so classified because it uses the motif of a giant turtle constituting an island in a story that deals with cooperation and sharing. *Tintin in the Congo* is cited again this year, as it has been in the past, either for the cartoon depiction of Africans, or, for the more critically minded, for the embodiment of a "white savior narrative." The popular history of the Klondike gold rush, *Gold Diggers*, is also labelled racist, although the grounds are not stated. Finally, there is the Mel Brooks comedy film, *Blazing Saddles*. In this work, Brooks is an equal opportunity offender, making the charge of racism sensible without specifying a target; there are too many of them.

Of the twenty-one incidents, four were registered as adults on behalf of children, the remainder were adults on their own behalf.

In fifteen cases the status of the challenged work or program was not changed, in two cases the proposal of the complainant was implemented, in two cases an alternative solution was found and in two cases there was no formal resolution.

There are more details in the 2020 Data file¹ and in the 2020 Title, Services and Programs file.²

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¹ Link to the data file here.

² Link to the Title file here.