# More gay books banned from US libraries despite all that talk of free speech...



The American Library Association (ALA) has released its latest report, highlighting a troubling trend concerning the censorship of literary works. The findings, detailed in the ALA's State of American Libraries Report published on Monday, indicate that a staggering 70% of book bans can be attributed to organised groups and elected officials, rather than individual concerns raised by parents. Only 16% of challenges originated from parental objections, suggesting that a concerted effort is underway to restrict access to certain books.

Key titles frequently mentioned in these challenges include Maia Kobabe's Gender Queer and the late Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye. Many of these contested works are documented on platforms like www.ratedbooks.org, along with lists produced by organisations such as Moms for Liberty, which has emerged as a prominent player in advocating for the prohibition of specific books.

Deborah Caldwell-Stone, who leads the ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, explained the situation further. “We can trace many of the challenges to lists of books that have been distributed by Moms for Liberty and other groups,” she stated, highlighting the organised nature of this censorship movement.

The report also presented the ten most challenged books of 2024, a list including titles that address LGBTQ+ themes and other contentious subjects. The leading title on the list is George M. Johnson's All Boys Aren't Blue, followed by other significant works such as Gender Queer, The Bluest Eye, Stephen Chbosky's The Perks of Being a Wallflower, and John Green's Looking for Alaska. Other challenged titles include Crank by Ellen Hopkins, notable for its portrayal of drug addiction, and Patricia McCormick's Sold, which delves into issues of slavery and sexual abuse.

According to the ALA, a challenge is defined as a formal, written complaint that requests the removal of materials due to perceived inappropriateness or contentious content. The ALA has historically suspected that the actual number of censorship attempts is underreported, and recent discussions indicate that the climate for libraries remains precarious.

The timing of the report is especially critical, as libraries are confronting increased financial constraints due to cuts at the Institute of Museum and Library Services, an agency that traditionally supports state libraries. As state legislatures in areas such as Texas, Florida, Iowa, and Utah pass laws aimed at restricting the types of materials accessible in school libraries, the broader context reveals a disconcerting rise in attempts to limit access to diverse perspectives in literature.

Interestingly, while the ALA reported a decrease in challenges in 2024—down to 821 from 1,247 the previous year—the figure still surpasses pre-2021 levels. Caldwell-Stone expressed concern that the decline in reported challenges does not necessarily signal a reduction in censorship. “Librarians are now more likely to avoid stocking books that are controversial, or may be prohibited by law,” she remarked. She recounted a conversation with a Texas librarian who was uncertain about including a politically charged book in their collection, illustrating the chilling effect that the current climate has on library operations. “Librarians don't want to get prosecuted or otherwise face legal trouble. A lot of librarians are operating under these kinds of threats,” Caldwell-Stone concluded.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.ala.org/news/state-americas-libraries-report-2023> - This URL provides information on the State of America's Libraries Report, including the tracking of book challenges and bans by the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom. The report highlights the rise in book challenges, particularly those involving LGBTQ+ themes.
* <https://www.infodocket.com/2023/04/24/ala-releases-state-of-americas-libraries-2023-report/> - This article discusses the release of the State of America's Libraries Report 2023, which documents a surge in book bans and challenges, often targeting works with LGBTQ+ themes.
* <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/IACIO/bulletins/36fa537> - This source mentions the ALA's report on book challenges, emphasizing the continued threat to intellectual freedom in libraries due to increasing censorship efforts.
* <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/frequentlychallengedbooks/top-10-challenged-books> - This webpage lists the Top Ten Most Challenged Books annually, often featuring titles such as 'Gender Queer' and 'The Bluest Eye', which are frequently targeted in censorship challenges.
* <https://www.ratedbooks.org/> - RatedBooks.org is a platform that documents and tracks challenged books, including titles mentioned in the article like 'Gender Queer' and 'The Bluest Eye'.