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## **CELEBRATE YOUR FREEDOM TO READ BECAUSE...**

### **BOOKS UNITE US AND CENSORSHIP DIVIDES US**

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(BUFFALO, NY September 26, 2023) Outside of the downtown Central Library in Lafayette Square, large posters featuring the covers of books that have been banned over time, (but are available in local libraries), hang along the walls facing the street. This was the backdrop used this morning to launch a community-wide information campaign around *National Banned Books Week*, October 1 – 7.

"Today, books are under profound attack in the U.S.," said Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Director John Spears. "Book banning is a form of censorship. It occurs when private individuals, government officials, or organizations remove books from public libraries, school reading lists, or bookstore shelves because they object to their content, ideas, or themes."

"Throughout the country, calls for book bans, the adoption of unconstitutional legislation, and campaigns to criminalize the work of librarians, teachers, authors, and booksellers for distributing materials protected by the First Amendment threaten our fundamental liberties," stated Spears.

To help spread the word about the increasing number of book challenges, the 37 Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries are offering special edition *freedom to read* library cards for those who live, work or attend school in Erie County. Related programs, speakers and displays are planned to inform the community about the harms of censorship in public libraries and schools. See programs here. <http://tinyurl.com/BannedBook2023>

A Banned Books section of the Library System's website has also been created with information about the 'who, what, when, where, how, and why' to book censorship. <https://www.buffalolib.org/banned-books> .

"We, here at the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, following guidance from the American Library Association (ALA) and *United Against Book Bans* promote your freedom to choose what to read and your freedom to express opinions, even if that opinion might be considered unorthodox or unpopular. We stress the importance of ensuring the availability of materials covering all viewpoints for those who wish to read them in our libraries," stated Spears.

Book banning is the most widespread form of censorship in the United States with children's literature being the primary target. Supporters in favor of banning certain books fear that children may be swayed by its contents, which they regard as potentially dangerous and inappropriate including books on diversity of race, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Book challenges aren't anything new; historically, when some groups think society has progressed too much, they push back (classic books like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Color Purple* and *A Separate Peace* have all been subject to bans). Last year, the ALA documented 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources - the highest number of attempted book bans since the ALA began compiling data more than 20 years ago. The record number of reported book bans in 2022 nearly doubles the 729 book challenges reported in 2021.

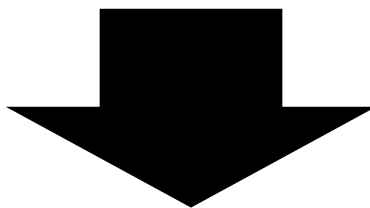
Spears concluded, "To serve the entire community, our role is not to remove what some may find objectionable, but to ensure that we offer what they want included."

Visit the Library System website for more information:

<https://www.buffalolib.org/banned-books> and learn more from *Unite Against Book Bans* - a national initiative to empower readers everywhere to stand together in the fight against censorship: <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/> .

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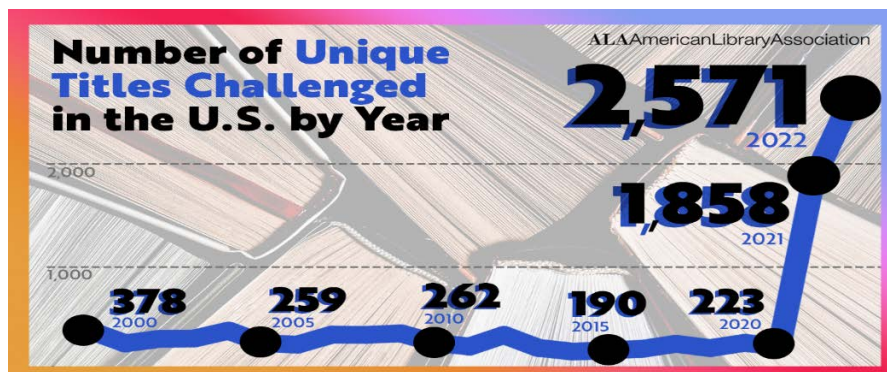
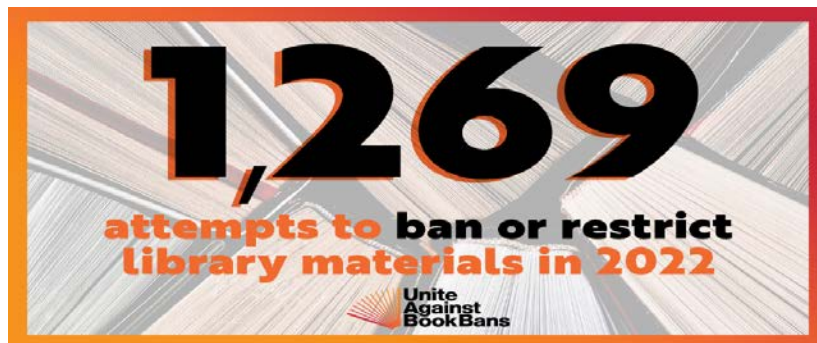
**MORE**



## Details & Statistics from the American Library Association (ALA)

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/book-ban-data>

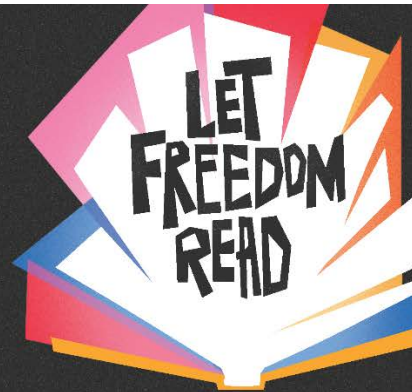
- In 2022, there were 1,269 attempts to ban or restrict library materials in the U.S.
- Between January 1 and August 31, 2023 – there were 695 attempts to censor library materials to 1,915 unique titles.
- The number of unique titles challenged has increased by 20% from the same reporting period in 2022, a year that shattered censorship records.
- Most of the challenges were to books written by or about a person of color or a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Notable was the increase in challenges to books in **public libraries**, which accounted for 49% of documented challenges, compared to 16% during the same reporting period in 2022.



# TDP 13

## MOST CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2022

The American Library Association tracked **1,269 challenges** to library, school, and university materials and services in 2022. Of the **2,571 unique titles** that were challenged or banned in 2022, here are the top 13 most challenged.



1



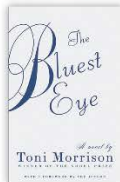
**GENDER QUEER**  
by Maia Kobabe  
**REASONS:** LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit

2



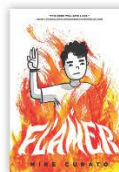
**ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE**  
by George M. Johnson  
**REASONS:** LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit

3



**THE BLUEST EYE**  
by Toni Morrison  
**REASONS:** rape, incest, claimed to be sexually explicit, EDI content

4

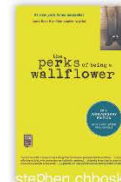


**FLAMER**  
by Mike Curato  
**REASONS:** LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit

5

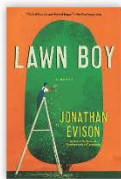


**LOOKING FOR ALASKA**  
by John Green  
**REASONS:** claimed to be sexually explicit, LGBTQIA+ content



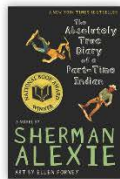
**THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER**  
by Stephen Chbosky  
**REASONS:** claimed to be sexually explicit, LGBTQIA+ content, rape, drugs, profanity

7



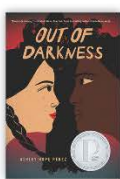
**LAWN BOY**  
by Jonathan Evison  
**REASONS:** LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit

8



**THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN**  
by Sherman Alexie  
**REASONS:** claimed to be sexually explicit, profanity

9

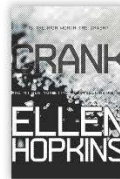


**OUT OF DARKNESS**  
by Ashley Hope Perez  
**REASON:** claimed to be sexually explicit

10



**A COURT OF MIST AND FURY**  
by Sarah J. Maas  
**REASON:** claimed to be sexually explicit



**CRANK**  
by Ellen Hopkins  
**REASONS:** claimed to be sexually explicit, drugs



**ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL**  
by Jesse Andrews  
**REASONS:** claimed to be sexually explicit, profanity



**THIS BOOK IS GAY**  
by Juno Dawson  
**REASONS:** LGBTQIA+ content, sex education, claimed to be sexually explicit

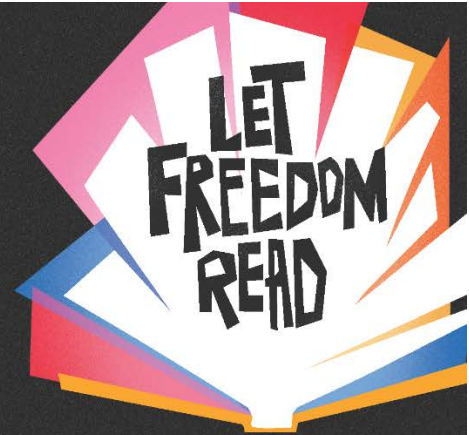
 **OFFICE FOR**  
**Intellectual Freedom**  
American Library Association



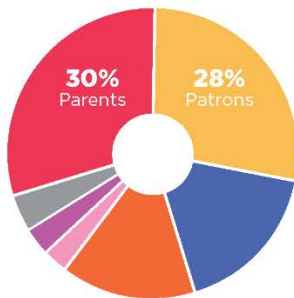
# CENSORSHIP

## BY THE NUMBERS

In 2022, the American Library Association tracked the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago; 2,571 unique titles were challenged last year, up from 1,858 in 2021. [Learn more at ala.org/bbooks](https://ala.org/bbooks)

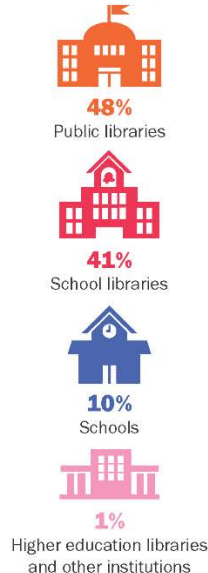


### WHO INITIATES CHALLENGES?



Statistics based on 1,207 cases with known initiators.

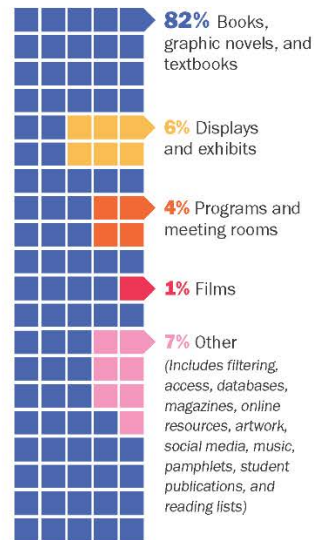
### WHERE DO CHALLENGES TAKE PLACE?



Statistics based on 1,264 cases with known locations.

### BOOKS AND BEYOND

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked **1,269 challenges** in 2022. Here's the breakdown:



### CENSORSHIP ON THE RISE

The unparalleled number of reported book challenges in 2022 nearly doubled the number reported in 2021. The number of unique titles targeted marked a 38% increase over 2021.

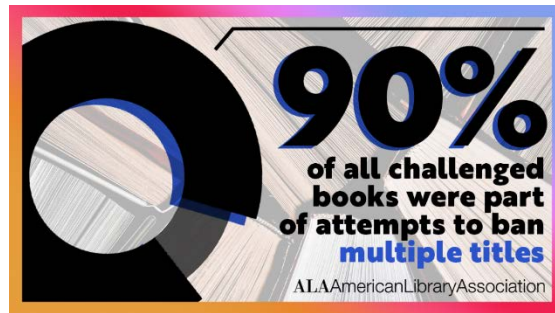
CENSORSHIP  
STATISTICS  
COMPILED BY:



OFFICE FOR  
Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association

### NUMBER OF UNIQUE TITLES CHALLENGED BY YEAR

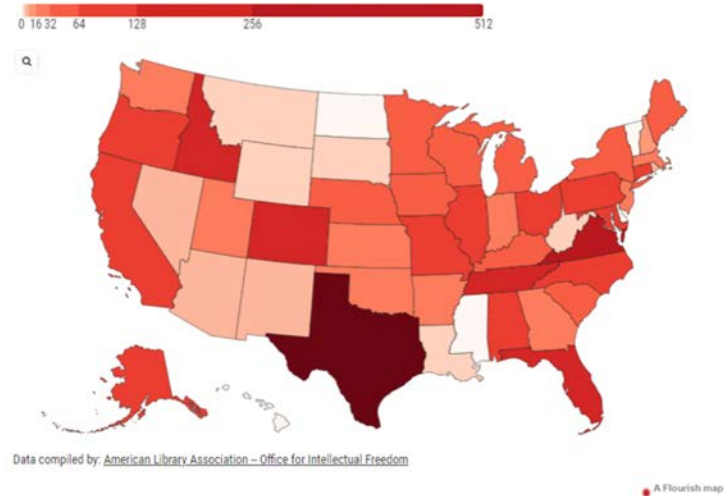




### Titles Challenged Between January 1 and August 31, 2023 (preliminary data)

Attempts to censor books during this period: 531. Total titles challenged in those attempts: 3923.

A challenge may result in access being retained, restricted, or revoked at a school or public library.



Challenges to books in public libraries accounted for 49% of those OIF documented, compared to 16% during the same reporting period in 2022.

The largest contributor to the rise in both the number of censorship attempts and the increase in titles challenged continues to be simultaneous challenges to multiple titles. Of the overall number of books challenged, 92% were part of attempts to censor multiple titles, compared to 90 percent in the first eight months of 2022. Cases involving 100 or more books were reported in 11 states, compared with six during the same reporting period in 2022 and zero in 2021. In the past, most challenges to library resources only sought to remove or restrict a single book.