

“The Librarians Documentary Urged Everyone to be Proactive”

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The Librarians Documentary Urged Citizens To Be Proactive

The Documentary Showing of *The Librarians* Puts the Recent Trend of Book-Banning into a Comprehensive Whole

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The documentary, *The Librarians*, opened at the beginning of the book-banning trend, when, in 2021, Texas State Representative Matt Krause first put forward an 850-book-long list to investigate for what “might make students feel discomfort...because of their race or sex.” The documentary, which was released in 2025, then followed the effects of that list, how US librarians reacted, and how community members spoke out to committees and fought to maintain the unbanned status of certain books. Following the showing of *The Librarian* in the Denno Museum on Feb. 4, local librarians spoke in the Milliken Auditorium on their experiences with book censorship challenges in recent years.

The books targeted by these bans are books such as *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson, which is a book about Johnson's experience as a queer, black individual, and *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry, which is a kids' book about a black father and daughter bonding over caring for the daughter's hair.

Those who call for these books to be banned say that they are either pornographic or made to make white children feel ashamed about being born white, otherwise known as “white guilt.” Some claim that books discussing or involving LGBTQ+ themes are pornographic for depicting queer relationships in vivid light, or that those books are trying to brainwash children into being transgender or gay.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines pornography as “printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings.” Many children's books banned for pornography in this way don't fit this categorization.

The documentary illuminated how librarians were taken aback by the conflict they faced, as parents they knew decried them. It shifts between testimonies from affected librarians, spoken protests at public committees, clips of historical book burnings, the views of a diverse set of library patrons, and ultimately, why and how the conflict over book banning persists.

Two major organizations responsible for the uptick in book banning are Moms for Liberty and Patriot Mobile Action, according to *The Librarians*. The Moms for Liberty Grand Traverse County chapter webpage lists a series of reasons that they believe their chapter is needed, such as “TCAPS 2024-25 calendar neglects traditional holidays” and “TCAPS implements Social Emotional Learning (SEL).” The civil rights watchdog organization Southern Poverty Law Center labeled Moms for Liberty as an extremist group in 2023.

The Grand Traverse County chapter chair, Amy Collins, did not respond to a request

for an interview on these topics.

Patriot Mobile Action, a political action committee funded by mobile virtual network operator company Patriot Mobile, is revealed in the documentary to have bankrolled their favored local Texan committee members' election campaigns.

After the documentary showing, Northwestern Michigan librarians spoke about their experiences with book banning. One spoke in regards to a question about parental concerns for what kids might read, “Kids will seek out what they need before they articulate what they need,” and went on to say that these “books save kids.”

Throughout the documentary and the after-show discussion, librarians iterated and reiterated that it was important for children to be able to find people alike and different in books. Another librarian quoted Rudine Sims Bishop from her essay, “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors.”

“Books may be one of the few places where children who are socially isolated...may meet people unlike themselves. If they see only reflections of themselves, they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world—a dangerous ethnocentrism.”

Bishop is a professor emerita at Ohio State University, which called her “the mother of multiculturalism.”

Librarian attendees of the Denno generally viewed the documentary favorably. A page for Traverse Area District Library, Rayna Archibald, said, “It was balanced and reasonable.” She explained their relationship with libraries, and called them “the perfect nexus of information and community connection.”

NMC librarian Nicco Pandolfi was one of the attendees of the showing and was interviewed by the *White Pine Press* afterward about his experience at NMC and his experience with book challenges.

Pandolfi has worked at the NMC library since 2019, and says he has not experienced any book challenges during that time. When asked why he thought that was, he said, “The main reason is that people expect there to be a wide range of material and perspective taught in a college curriculum.”

He added, “While there are well-organized and well-funded groups trying to change what is available... the majority is against that kind of censorship...Censorship is basically like a narrowing of the world.”

When asked about what he thought of the documentary, Pandolfi said, “I'm glad the film gave a national perspective.”

Photos by Minnie Bardenhagen
The NMC Library



Judge's comments: “Good summary of the documentary and excellent variety of responses from the audience. Extra points for trying to reach the local chapter of the Moms for Liberty. Pandolfi's comments put the subject in perspective for a college audience. Good to include that view too.”

“Students call for more transparency at the Woodrick Centers’ ‘Conversations with Executive Leaders Event’ as some leave in tears and frustration”

By: Mackenzie Davis, Grand Rapids Community College

<https://thecollegiatelive.com/2025/04/students-call-for-more-transparency-at-the-woodrick-centers-conversations-with-executive-leaders-event-as-some-leave-in-tears-and-frustration/>

Judge’s comments: “Plenty of interesting quotes which show that the meeting was emotional and disappointing. The lead needs to state the conflict right away, saying the students and staff were expecting news/transparency about the future of the program while the administrators said they only were looking for input from the students. The headline states this but the story takes a few sentences to make that point.

Not sure who Hardley is at the end of the story. But the quote assures action that could be inserted early in the story to show that Hardley, for one, is committed to keeping the center open.”