Christian Librarians and the Ethics of the Library Bill of Rights

by Scott Kaihoi

Abstract

Using an online survey, this study sought opinions on the ALA's ethical standards as embodied in the Library Bill of Rights (LBR) from librarians working in a variety of contexts who self-identified as Christian. While the majority of respondents (72 percent) indicated overall support for the LBR, a substantial minority (over 40 percent) had areas in which they differed with its ethics, usually in the form of feeling that certain types of content (e.g., pornography, harmful materials, etc.) could or should be limited. This would seem to suggest that many Christian librarians do sometimes perceive a need to place the value of defending what they perceive to be true and right above the call to remain professionally impartial about certain kinds of content. This study is the follow up to a pilot study entitled "Christian Librarians and the Library Bill of Rights: a survey of opinions and professional practice" published in the spring, 2014 issue of *The Christian Librarian*.

Research Objectives

The American Library Association (ALA) is widely recognized as an organization that advocates for free speech, free access to information, and resistance to censorship in and out of libraries. In doing so, it often places at the very top of its set of ethical priorities the values of tolerance and the freedom to offer or consume information from all points of view without restriction. Documents produced by the American Library Association like the Library Bill of Rights (LBR) and the Code of Ethics, along with their supporting interpretive documentation, demonstrate these priorities and show clearly that regardless of how individual libraries and librarians perceive them, the ALA views the documents as a set of "unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries."[1] This implies that insofar as professional decision making is concerned, these documents represent the standard to which the ALA feels all librarians should strive to adhere.

Individual librarians, however, sometimes hold to worldviews with ethics that might come into conflict with those of the ALA. For example, the Christian worldview adheres, in one form or another, to belief in a God who has revealed objective truth which can be known by human beings. For Christians, then, there is a God-given standard by which things like good and evil or valuable and worthless can be judged. Christian librarians who believe strongly in the universal applicability of such a standard might feel that the importance of protecting patrons from materials that are demonstrably harmful outweighs the value of providing access to all points of view in some situations. Such a difference in ethical priorities would not necessarily imply that those librarians reject values championed by the ALA like tolerance of all viewpoints or the right to freedom of speech; rather, it would simply be a matter of differences in underlying assumptions causing other values to trump them in certain situations.

Though Christian librarians undoubtedly have very diverse interpretations of when and if this difference between some of the underlying assumptions of Christianity and the ALA actually leads to practical difficulties in their professional

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[1] ALA Council, "Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations .

work, the potential for conflict led to this author's desire to study 1) the extent to which Christian librarians agree either in whole or in part with the ethics of the ALA as embodied in the LBR, 2) whether agreement or disagreement with the ALA's ethics has any bearing on the professional decisions they make in their work, and 3) whether they feel that Christians working in public libraries ought to follow the ethics of their faith or of the LBR when they perceive a conflict between the two. The last of these was included to function as a sort of control. Many Christian librarians seem to work in private libraries serving Christian communities where personal ethics and the ethics of the community are likely to overlap significantly. Because of this, gathering opinions from Christian librarians who work in a public library context (to which the ALA's ethics are thought to apply most strongly) is a way to understand how Christian librarians feel about professional vs. personal ethics in a context with a very diverse constituency not necessarily governed by Christian norms.

Literature Review

The Christian worldview is by no means the only worldview with which the ethics embodied in the LBR might be in conflict. There are plenty of ethical critiques of the LBR from other standpoints, such as social contract theory[2] or utilitarianism.[3] Even more common are general critiques of the LBR on the basis of its ambiguous language and lack of legal grounding for some of the things it asserts as rights.[4, 5]

While Christians echo many of these general observations about the LBR's shortcomings, this study is chiefly concerned with critiques of the LBR from a distinctly Christian standpoint. There is a small body of literature dealing indirectly with this subject, and at least one essay that addresses it directly. Oftentimes where disagreement between the LBR's ethics and Christian ethics exists, the focus is on which of two values should be emphasized when conflict between them forces a choice. J. Ray Doerksen's critique exemplifies this as he calls Christians to reject the hierarchy of values promoted by the LBR — namely, the LBR's assertion that freedom and personal autonomy are the most important rights librarians are in charge of protecting. He states that "the assumptions beneath the Library Bill of Rights have no validity beyond the opinions or biases of the people advocating those rights," and the ALA's placement of "personal autonomy" at the top of the librarian's ethical hierarchy is something a Christian librarian ought not to accept.[6] Rather, he asserts that a commitment to truth and using free will to do right ought to be more important than freedom itself, and that Christians may have to sacrifice freedom in situations where defending truth and doing right necessitate it.

Doerksen's comments raise the question of whether Christians generally agree with such a critique. Other than the pilot for this study,[7] the only research on Christian librarians' opinions on the ethics of the LBR that the author is aware of was done by Craighton Hippenhammer in 1993 and published in two parts.[8] His survey of Christian librarians working at Christian colleges and universities deals with questions related to censorship in their libraries, and he included a number of questions related to librarians' agreement with the LBR. He found that 45 percent supported the LBR fully, with another 46 percent who partly supported it.[9] Only 8 percent said they definitely did not support it.[10] Those who opposed it listed such objections as its inapplicability to private libraries, its strong stance on opposing censorship

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[2] Martin Fricke, Kay Mathiesen, and Don Fallis, "The Ethical Presuppositions Behind the Library Bill of Rights," *Library Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (2000): 468-491.

[3] Tony Doyle, "A Critical Discussion of The Ethical Presuppositions Behind the Library Bill of Rights," *Library Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2002): 275-293.

[4] Gordon B. Baldwin, "The Library Bill of Rights – a critique," *Library Trends* 45, no. 1 (1996): 7, 18-27.

[5] Shirley A. Wiegand, "Reality Bites: the Collision of Rhetoric, Rights and Reality," *Library Trends* 45, no. 1 (1996): 75.

[6] J. Ray Doerksen, "The Y Factor," *The Christian Librarian* 42 (1999): 15.

[7] Scott Kaihoi, "Christian Librarians and the Library Bill of Rights: A Survey of Opinions and Professional Practice," *The Christian Librarian* 57, no. 1 (2014).

[8] Craighton Hippenhammer, "Patron Objections to Library Materials: A Survey of Christian College Libraries Part I," *The Christian Librarian* 37, no. 1 (1993): 12-17; Hippenhammer, "Patron Objections to Library Materials: A Survey of Christian College Libraries Part II," *The Christian Librarian* 37, no. 2 (1994): 40-47.

[9] Hippenhammer, "Patron Objections to Library Materials: A Survey of Christian College Libraries Part I," 13.

[10] Ibid.

(specifically the requirement to work with all groups that oppose it), and its requirement to include material in library collections that patrons at a Christian institution might find morally objectionable or of little value.[11]

In addition to the discussion of what has been published on the Christian librarian viewpoint, is also important to highlight the ALA's extensive body of interpretive literature regarding the LBR. These documents address many of the potential objections to the LBR based on its lack of applicability outside of a public library context, or from librarians serving populations with distinct preferences and information needs (e.g., religious institutions, private colleges and universities, K-12 schools, etc.). They also indicate the positions taken by the ALA on ethical issues where ethical or doctrinal differences specific to a community or individual librarian might conflict with the principles in the LBR.

In these documents, while acknowledging that practices of individual libraries will necessarily vary depending on the needs of their constituency (e.g., there is no expectation that a private university library make its meeting rooms available to everyone, only that it ought to make them available to the members of the community they serve on an equitable basis[12]), the ALA is very clear in its position that the spirit of the LBR ought to be applied to *all* libraries in their specific contexts, and that such principles ought to trump personal or doctrinal differences. Among the specific examples given for this are things like an insistence that minors should not have abridged access to any materials provided by the library, whether print or electronic[13, 14] (including school libraries),[15] offensiveness to a community or objection by a community to a viewpoint should not be the basis for omission from a collection or restriction of access,[16, 17] and that the Internet should not be filtered whenever possible (and filtered in the least restrictive manner when filtering is required by government regulations).[18, 19] The ALA documents specifically state numerous times that personal preferences or ethics ought not to affect librarian decisions, and that one of a librarian's most important goals should be "to facilitate access to all points of view on current and historical issues."[20] This refrain can also be seen in the ALA's Code of Ethics, a document that is arguably seen as more widely applicable than the LBR, Article VII of which states: "We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources."[21] All of this together shows that while the ALA does not necessarily disagree that some material may be harmful, offensive, or otherwise undesirable to librarians and patrons, it places free speech and the ability to access all legal information above the concern about the potential harm such materials might cause.

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[11] Ibid., 14.

[12] ALA Council, "Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/intellectual.

[13] ALA Council, "Free Access to Libraries for Minors: an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/freeaccesslibraries.

[14] ALA Council, "Access for Children and Young Adults to Nonprint Materials: an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/accesschildren.

[15] ALA Council, "Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/accessresources.

[16] ALA Council, "Diversity in Collection Development: an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/diversitycollection.

[17] ALA Council, "Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries." See principles three and four.

[18] ALA Council, "Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries." See principle number six.

[19] ALA Council, "Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks: an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/accessdigital.

[20] ALA Council, "Restricted Access to Library Materials: an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/restrictedaccess.

[21] ALA Council, "Code of Ethics of the American Library Association," http://www.ala.org/advocacy/proethics/codeofethics/codeethics.

Method

Sampling Method

This study works with a broad definition of "Christian" that would include any individual who self-identifies as Christian. With that definition, Christian librarians working in a higher education context are relatively easy to identify and reach due to their organizational affiliations, but Christian librarians working in school and public libraries are much harder to identify. In order to try to reach Christian librarians in all of these contexts, a combination of systematic and snowball[22] sampling methods was used for choosing participants.

To reach Christian librarians in an academic context, a base sample of librarians was chosen from schools belonging to the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) using a systematic sampling method. Three librarians were randomly chosen from each of forty randomly selected CCCU schools, with the exception of two schools that had less than three librarians, making this portion of the sample 117 librarians from twenty-two states. The librarians from this sample were entirely different from the sample used in the earlier pilot study. E-mail addresses for the individual librarians were then retrieved from each library's website, and a cover letter with a link to the survey was e-mailed to them that included an invitation to pass the survey on to other Christian librarians they might know, noting that there was a particular interest in reaching school and public librarians.

In addition to the above, the cover letter and survey link (along with the same invitation to pass the survey along) were posted to three listservs serving Christian librarians: the Association of Christian Librarians' listserv, the Fellowship of Christian Librarians and Information Specialists' listserv, and each of the sections of the Catholic Library Association's listserv. The latter two include a large percentage of school and public librarians. The hope was that by reaching some Christian librarians working in school and public libraries with an invitation to pass the survey along to their colleagues, the survey would reach a larger number of these librarians who are otherwise very difficult to identify.

This methodology makes estimating sample size and response rate difficult, but the author estimates that there were roughly 500 librarians initially contacted between the listservs and direct e-mails, and the snowball sample may have brought that total closer to 650. Assuming those estimates are reasonably accurate, the response rate would have been approximately 20 percent.

Survey Design

The 1ibrarians were all e-mailed a link to a fifteen-question survey (including some multi-part questions) prepared and delivered using Qualtrics, and they were asked to respond to it online. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C below.

In response to feedback given on the survey used for the initial pilot study,[23] several changes were incorporated into the survey instrument for this study. A number of respondents to the pilot study indicated that they did not feel that the LBR (or at least certain parts of it) is applicable in their libraries, so a question was added regarding the LBR's applicability to non-public libraries. An option for "not applicable" was also added to the multi-part questions asking about agreement and adherence to the LBR. Several questions from the pilot survey were also eliminated, and others were reworded for clarity.

Respondent Profile

In total, 127 librarians participated in this study. Four librarians' answers were discarded either because the respondent failed to complete the survey or indicated that he or she was not of the Christian faith, leaving the final number for the respondent pool at 123.

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[22] In this case, the "snowball," or chain-referral method of sampling (further explained below) involved asking a few members of the Christian school and public library communities that were identifiable through their organizational affiliations to both participate in the study and then recruit other, less-identifiable members of those communities to participate.

[23] Kaihoi, "Christian Librarians and the Library Bill of Rights."

The respondents were 72 percent female and 28 percent male, and all but eight respondents had at least a master's degree. The denominational breakdown of the respondents can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 – Denominational breakdown of respondents

Answer	%
Protestant	48%
Catholic	35%
Orthodox	0%
Non-denominational	9%
Other (please specify)	8%
Total	100%

Of the ten indicating "other," seven listed Protestant denominations (e.g., Assemblies of God, Southern Baptist, etc.), making the actual number of Protestant respondents slightly higher at around 54 percent. The remaining three listed "Messianic Jewish Congregation," "Mennonite," and "Christian Churches and Churches of Christ," respectively.

The majority of the respondents work in Christian college or university libraries, though a significant minority work in other kinds of libraries (see Table 2). Interestingly, nearly half of all respondents have worked in libraries for twenty years or more, while only 11 percent have worked in a library for less than five years (see Table 3).

Table 2 – Type of library in which respondents work

Answer	%
Christian college or university library	62%
Public library	6%
Public school library	1%
Secular college or university library	6%
Private school library	14%
Other (Please specify)	10%
Private library or archive (e.g., museum, business, etc.)	1%
Total	100%

Table 3 – Respondents' years of experience as librarians

Answer	%
Less than 5 years	11%
5-10 years	20%
11-15 years	11%
16-20 years	11%
20+ years	47%
Total	100%

Results

Following the demographic section of the survey, the first question dealt with respondents' opinions on the applicability of the LBR to non-public libraries. Respondents were asked to indicate which of the given options was closest to their view. The range of options given was taken from the views expressed both in the pilot study and the previous literature consulted, and was admittedly rather narrow based on the fact that most librarians seem to view the LBR as being primarily for public libraries. The results of the question (shown in Table 4) indicated that a majority of respondents view the LBR as primarily applicable to public libraries, but at least some of the content is applicable to other types of libraries. Very few felt that it was only applicable to public libraries.

Table 4 – Opinion on applicability of LBR to different kinds of libraries

Answer	%
The Library Bill of Rights is equally applicable to all libraries.	23%
The Library Bill of Rights is most applicable to public libraries, but the majority of its content is applicable to other types of libraries as well.	40%
The Library Bill of Rights is most applicable to public libraries, but some of its content can be applicable to other types of libraries as well.	33%
The Library Bill of Rights is only applicable to public libraries; it is not applicable to other types of libraries.	4%
Total	100%

Respondents were then shown the text of the LBR followed by a question asking about their personal support of each article (see Appendix C, Question 7 on p. 58 below). The results are recorded in Table 5, and show that while an overwhelming majority support or strongly support all six articles of the LBR, only for Article V (dealing with abridgment of access on the basis of origin, age, background, or views) did a majority of respondents indicate strong support for the LBR. Articles III, IV, and VI showed a significant minority of respondents indicating neutrality or objections, and 16% of respondents felt that Article VI was not applicable in the libraries in which they worked.

Table 5 – Personal support of the LBR

LBR Article	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Object	Strongly object	Not applicable in my library
Article I	48%	34%	5%	8%	3%	2%
Article II	40%	35%	5%	15%	2%	2%
Article III	38%	38%	11%	8%	3%	2%
Article IV	27%	25%	21%	20%	2%	4%
Article V	62%	26%	3%	5%	2%	2%
Article VI	34%	26%	12%	9%	3%	16%

Respondents were then asked to indicate the level to which they adhered to the LBR's articles regardless of how they personally felt about them. Similar to the previous question, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they adhered to the LBR, though for each article with the exception of Article V more than half of the respondents indicated that they adhered with at least some exceptions (see Table 6). Interestingly, for all six articles there were more respondents who indicated they always adhered to the LBR than there were respondents who indicated strong support for it, and far more respondents indicated that the articles of the LBR were not applicable in their libraries. Nearly a third of respondents felt that Article VI was not applicable in their library.

Table 6 – Adherence to LBR regardless of personal support of it

LBR Article	Always adhere	Adhere with some exceptions	Sometimes adhere	Occasionally adhere	Rarely or never adhere	Not applicable in my library
Article I	46%	40%	4%	0%	2%	7%
Article II	42%	39%	7%	5%	3%	5%
Article III	43%	29%	9%	3%	6%	10%
Article IV	30%	31%	12%	7%	4%	15%
Article V	64%	31%	0%	0%	2%	3%
Article VI	34%	26%	5%	3%	2%	31%

Respondents who marked anything other than "always adhere" were presented with a follow-up question asking them to give brief examples of situations in which they did not adhere to the LBR. There were 89 respondents who provided specific examples, and their answers were coded and organized into Appendix A below. Answers that were similar were grouped together, and the phrasing provided by respondents was included whenever possible. Many respondents gave examples for more than one article, so the total number of responses recorded in Appendix A exceeds the number of respondents who actually answered the question.

The survey's final questions dealt with respondents' opinions about Christians working in public libraries. The first of these asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, "A Christian librarian working in a public library setting should always abide by the professional and ethical standards outlined in the Library Bill of Rights even if he or she perceives conflict between it and his or her personal moral convictions." Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they agreed with the statement, while only 26 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with it (see Table 7).

Table 7 – Agreement with statement regarding conflict between LBR and personal convictions

Answer	%
Strongly Agree	31%
Agree	31%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	11%
Disagree	18%
Strongly Disagree	8%
Total	100%

This was followed up by a question asking respondents whether they thought public libraries should ever limit access to, filter, or refuse to acquire any materials (print or electronic) based on the content or viewpoint of the materials. Two-thirds of all respondents (exactly 66 percent) answered this question, "yes," and those who did were presented with a follow-up question asking them to indicate what sorts of materials ought to be limited in this way. Of those, 78 gave responses, and many respondents listed more than one kind of content. The responses were grouped together and are listed in Appendix B below.

Finally, the very last question in the survey was an open-ended question asking respondents if they had any other comments on the topic of library ethics and the Christian faith. Sixty-three respondents made comments, and while the responses were too diverse to include everything expressed in its entirety, a few consistent sentiments worth highlighting came through. Nine respondents used the space to emphasize that they felt all or many points of view ought to be represented in any library collection, while six used the space to reiterate their opinion that personal or Christian values ought to trump any other conflicting values. Five felt that Christians unwilling or unable to adhere to the principles

of the LBR ought to leave the library profession, and, five others expressed their feeling that these sorts of ethical issues are difficult to navigate. Four thought that the ALA was too selective in the application of its values, and four thought that individual libraries need to adapt the LBR to fit their contexts. Four others thought that the document is too inadequate as it is written to be applied to most libraries. The rest were miscellaneous comments about things like the survey instrument itself, references to previous answers, or other similar content.

Discussion

Overall, the survey indicates general support for the LBR, though that support comes with caveats for most of the respondents. As was seen above, only for Article V did a majority indicate adherence without any exception, and a large majority of respondents (72 percent) indicated there were instances in which they would not fully adhere to at least one of the LBR's articles. Most of these objections were not necessarily flat rejection of LBR principles; rather, respondents indicated qualified support by giving examples of situations in which the LBR might need to give way to a higher or more pressing principle, or by declaring that the document's deficiencies do not allow for complete adherence.

A number of the objections consistently raised, particularly to Articles I, II, and IV, stem from the overly inclusive language of the LBR and are not distinctly Christian. This is not surprising given the general deficiencies in the LBR's language already noted, and these objections (things like meeting rooms and displays being closed to public access or acquisitions policies that omit things not relevant to a school's curriculum) are addressed in the ALA's interpretive documentation. While worth mentioning since they were so often brought up by respondents and indicate that the interpretive documentation is not read widely enough to clarify the issues raised by the deficiencies in the LBR, these sorts of objections are not of primary concern here.

Much more relevant to answering the research question were the responses in which respondents indicated a lack of full agreement with the LBR based on issues of ethical differences. The chief objection of this sort came from librarians who perceived conflict between the values of their constituents or governing institutions and the ALA's values of 1) representing all points of view and 2) not limiting materials based on content. The respondents who answered that they adhered to the LBR with at least some exceptions mentioned forty times omitting or restricting materials containing viewpoints that conflict with the values of the community their particular library serves (see Appendix B below). Things like pornographic material, material opposing Christian teaching, material from cults, and gratuitous, inappropriate language were all mentioned more than once within those forty responses. In addition, there were fourteen more general responses not associated with any particular LBR article in which respondents indicated that either their Christian community standards or personal Christian ethics trumped the ethics put forward in the LBR wherever there might be conflict between the two. Even added together these objections do not show a majority of respondents taking exception to the LBR on ethical grounds, but the 44 percent minority who raise these sorts of exceptions is noteworthy.

Given that only a minority of respondents indicated that their personal views and professional decisions conflicted with the principles found in the LBR, it is extremely interesting to note that the majority of respondents indicated they felt that even public libraries should abridge access or omit at least some materials based on content. The two thirds of respondents who felt this way mentioned things like pornography, Internet filtering, and material inappropriate for children among the things that even public libraries should limit (see Appendix B). This is in direct contradiction to the LBR's ethical stances on these issues in which public libraries ought to represent all views and not restrict access based on age, and in this case it was a majority that differed from the ALA's stances.

Other objections on ethical grounds mentioned by a much smaller minority of respondents were the lack of a felt obligation to resist censorship and/or work with groups who do, and the acceptability of content or viewpoint-based omissions from a collection for things like materials that teach patrons how to cause harm to self or others, materials that promote racism, materials that promote illegal activity, materials deemed to be of low quality, or materials containing fringe viewpoints. That librarians would want to limit material of this type is not surprising since limiting those sorts of materials seems in line with ethical norms in most of America, but, strictly speaking, such content-based omissions

would go against the spirit of the LBR. However, as documents like "Restricted Access to Library Materials"[24] and "Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks"[25] show, the ALA acknowledges that such omissions are often practiced out of obligation to meet government requirements or community preferences.

Given the degree of concern over sexually explicit content and the age-appropriateness of materials expressed in the survey, it is somewhat surprising that more librarians did not raise objections to Article V of the LBR in which denial of access based on age is prohibited. This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents work in academic libraries where children are not often patrons, or perhaps agreement with the rest of the article is so strong that the age provision is either overlooked or considered a matter of interpretation. Still, age-based restrictions generally go hand in hand with concerns over pornography and other materials perceived to be harmful to minors, and one might expect support for Article V to have suffered as a result.

Comparing the results of this survey to Hippenhammer's research from twenty years ago, the results show that the number of librarians expressing support for part or all of the LBR is very similar; however, there were some interesting differences regarding those expressing opposition to various articles. There were noticeable increases in opposition to Articles I and II, while opposition actually seemed to decrease for Articles III and VI. For Article VI, at least, the decrease may be because in the current study an option for indicating "not applicable to my library" was offered to separate objections based on applicability in certain library contexts from ones that might be more ethically based, where these sorts of objections were included in Hippenhammer's tally.

Table 8 – Librarian objections to the LBR in Hippenhammer's study vs. current study

LBR Article	Hippenhammer study objectors (1994)	This study's objectors (2014)
Article I	7%	11%
Article II	11%	17%
Article III	13%	11%
Article IV	22%	22%
Article V	5%	7%
Article VI	20%	12%

Looked at another way, in Hippenhammer's study, only around 40 percent of respondents listed any objection to the LBR,[26] while in the current study 72 percent listed at least some specific way in which they less than fully adhered to the LBR. This comparison may not be entirely fair since the questions are slightly different — one might qualify his or her adherence to the LBR while indicating a more formal "objection" to it — but they are similar enough that the difference is at least worth mentioning.

One of the striking differences between Hippenhammer's study and this study is the greater frequency with which pornography is mentioned by respondents in the latter. It seems reasonable to speculate that the addition of high-speed Internet connections to public spaces in libraries may have something to do with this. Prior to the ubiquity of the Internet, libraries would have had to collect pornography in order for it to be a major issue (which they largely did not do), whereas in the current information environment merely supplying unfiltered Internet access on library computers seems to result inevitably in at least some consumption of pornography in library spaces.

One of the goals of this study was to collect enough responses from librarians working in different professional contexts to see if there was any significant difference in opinion between librarians working in different types of libraries. The opinions of public librarians were especially sought since the LBR would presumably have greater influence in a public

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[24] ALA Council, "Restricted Access to Library Materials."

[25] ALA Council, "Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks."

[26] Ibid.

library than in a private Christian one. Unfortunately, there were not enough answers collected from Christians working in public libraries to generalize about their responses for comparison. However, it is interesting to note that five of the eight respondents indicating they worked in public libraries adhered less than fully to the LBR, and one even indicated in one of the open ended questions that where Christian ethics and the LBR differ the respondent supports "the Scriptures over and above the Library BoR." Also of interest is that four of the public librarians who responded indicated that in public libraries there are at least some types of materials that ought to be limited or not collected based on viewpoint, with three of them giving pornography among the types of materials they would omit or limit.

As for school librarians, there were enough responses collected that a comparison could be made, but the number and types of objections to the LBR were extremely similar to those of the respondents generally. There was nothing noteworthy to highlight apart from what has been discussed already.

Limitations & Further Research

It is difficult to construct a questionnaire that reflects the nuances inherent in the issues of ethics and the influence of personal beliefs on professional practice. As one respondent noted regarding the survey question asking about personal support for the various articles of the LBR, "…some librarians may select 'support' because they generally support the article. Other librarians may select 'do not support' or 'object' because they object to that one small part." This is true, and there are likely some responses in both this and other questions with a limited range of options in which respondents would have answered differently if the question had been more open ended or a wider range of answer options had been given. Nonetheless, the questions do still measure the general perception of the LBR among Christian librarians, which was the goal of this study, and hopefully some of the nuances come through responses to the open-ended questions in the survey.

Because listservs were a major vehicle for the distribution of this survey, those with membership in a professional association of Christian librarians make up a large portion of the respondents. The size and makeup of the overall Christian librarian population is not known, so it is difficult to tell whether this would have a significant effect on the study's results.

In retrospect, the question asking about participants' denominational affiliations was poorly constructed, and a clearer, more comprehensive list of denominations would have produced results more useful for comparison.

Despite the attempt to include a wider number of non-academic librarians in this study, the majority of respondents still worked in Christian college and university libraries. Without a clear picture of how the Christian librarian population is distributed among the various types of libraries it is difficult to know the extent to which this influences the data, but it seems safe to say that there is a larger percentage of Christian librarians working in public libraries than this sample reflects.

Conducting a survey with similar questions that included librarians of other faiths would be very interesting. Given the answers collected here, it seems likely that librarians of faiths with similar moral positions on content like pornography and depictions of violence would respond similarly to the way the Christian librarians in this survey did. Comparing such a study to this one, and even possibly to a study conducted of librarians generally, would be instructive for determining the extent to which objections like the ones raised by respondents in this study were tied to a particular faith.

Given the strong concern shown in the survey with pornography and other sexually explicit content in libraries, it also would be useful to do a study focused on determining how Christian librarians generally define pornography and how they would devise library policies to handle it. This was a suggestion made by Hippenhammer in his study, where he insightfully mentions that the word "pornography" is a "slippery term," the definition of which can vary widely from person to person.[27] As he suggests, it would be very useful to know how Christian librarians in particular define it and think of it professionally since a significant number of them indicated that it is an ethical issue in which they would place personal views above those of the LBR.

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[27] Hippenhammer, 17.

Conclusion

In seeking to discover the extent to which Christian librarians perceive conflict between the ethics of their Christian worldview and the ethics that underlie the LBR, it is clear from the results of this study that while Christian librarians do largely support the LBR, most have at least one area in which they do not adhere to the ideals embodied in it. While many of these objections stemmed from flaws in the language of the LBR that makes fully adhering to it impossible, a substantial minority of respondents (over 40 percent) gave objections that indicated the ethics with which they made professional decisions differ from those of the LBR, and the objections listed tended to have a distinctly Christian flavor in that they often dealt with the limitation of material to which conservative Christian morals would object. Pornography and other sexually explicit material were of particular concern. Some respondents even specifically stated that where the LBR and their personal Christian ethics differed, it was the Christian ethics that trumped the LBR's. However, in noting this it should be emphasized again that even among those with such objections, their objections for the most part were less a matter of complete disagreement with the LBR's ethics and more a matter of whether the value of unlimited access to all kinds of materials ought to trump concerns for the harm certain kinds of materials might cause. The responses in this survey would seem to support the notion that, like Doerksen, many Christian librarians do sometimes perceive a need to place the value of defending what they perceive to be true and right above the call to remain professionally impartial about certain kinds of content.

Appendix A: Exceptions to Full Adherence to the LBR

Areas of Less than Full Adherence (by article)	Number of people listing this objection	Percentage of overall respondents listing this objection
Article I		
Authors/materials with viewpoints that conflict strongly with the values of the community a library is serving can or should be omitted (specific examples mentioned in conjunction with this given below):	18	14.6%
Pornographic or sexually explicit content	7	5.7%
Oppose Christian teaching or disparage the person/ministry of Jesus	4	3.2%
Gratuitous inappropriate language	2	1.6%
Racist	1	0.8%
Promote gay lifestyle	1	0.8%
Occult/Satanic worship	1	0.8%
Budget and space constraints force libraries to prioritize acquisitions, and for libraries serving specific populations [e.g., religious institutions, schools, etc.] some collection development practices may look like censorship	16	13.0%
Would not collect materials that advocate harm to others	1	0.8%
Article II		
Materials not supportive of curriculum are omitted	9	7.3%
"All" views cannot possibly be represented	8	6.5%
Materials that are offensive to community can be excluded	7	5.7%
Pornographic material is excluded	5	4.1%
Donations from sects or cults promoting their religious views are not added to the collection	2	1.6%
Materials deemed potentially harmful or offensive to the community are available by request only	2	1.6%
Factually inaccurate/fringe viewpoints will be excluded	2	1.6%

Areas of Less than Full Adherence (by article)	Number of people listing this objection	Percentage of overall respondents listing this objection
Materials promoting illegal activity are excluded	1	0.8%
Materials that willfully misrepresent others' viewpoints can be excluded	1	0.8%
Article III		
Private libraries serving religious communities may censor certain materials based on community convictions or institutional standards	6	4.9%
Fighting censorship is difficult at a library with community standards that do not allow for certain viewpoints	3	2.4%
I do not actively challenge censorship	2	1.6%
Fighting censorship can be difficult at a school library where minors are being protected by adults	1	0.8%
The senior librarians make decisions about fighting censorship — I support what they decide	1	0.8%
Article IV		
Other groups have never approached us	5	4.1%
Will not cooperate with groups that only oppose the censorship of a narrow set of specific materials [but wish to censor other views]	4	3.2%
Groups whose values conflict with values of library's community/parent institution need not be worked with	4	3.2%
Free expression that is disruptive, harmful, or discourage others from using library is not acceptable	3	2.4%
Libraries need not actively seek to cooperate with such groups	2	1.6%
Cannot possibly seek to work with "all" groups	2	1.6%
We do not have the time to engage other groups like this	2	1.6%
Article V		
Abridged service based on age is acceptable	4	3.2%

Areas of Less than Full Adherence (by article)	Number of people listing this objection	Percentage of overall respondents listing this objection
Article VI		
Our library is private--meeting rooms/displays are not made available to the public outside of our community	17	13.8%
We do not get requests from the public to use our space	3	2.4%
At a Christian college library, library space and displays are not available to groups that oppose the Christian faith	3	2.4%
In academic setting, sometimes priority is given to a certain population (e.g., students) over others (e.g., staff or guests)	3	2.4%
Displays that promote violence or radical/extreme viewpoints are not allowed	2	1.6%
Does not apply to my library	1	0.8%
General Objections		
The standards of the LBR do not apply to private libraries like they do to public ones—the community standards of our Christian institution govern our library's operations	7	5.7%
Where LBR conflicts with Christian ethics, Christian ethics take precedence	7	5.7%
The language of the LBR is too extreme	3	2.4%

Appendix B: Content Respondents Felt Should Be Limited, Abridged, or Omitted From Public Libraries

Content or viewpoint	Number of times mentioned	Percentage of overall respondents mentioning this
Pornography / sexually explicit content	46	37.4%
Promotes racism, hatred, or abuse	16	13.0%
"How to" material for engaging in harmful or illegal activity (e.g., bomb making, suicide, overthrowing government, etc.)	14	11.4%
Material of low quality, extreme fringe viewpoints, or with obvious factual inaccuracies (incl. Holocaust denial)	10	8.1%
Internet filtering (including abridged access for children)	9	7.3%
Limited access for materials inappropriate for children	8	6.5%
Material in which community has no interest	7	5.7%
Depicts or promotes gratuitous violence	6	4.9%
Obscene or illegal materials (e.g., child pornography)	6	4.9%
Content conflicting with local community's values	4	3.2%
"Immoral" materials	1	0.8%
Homosexuality	1	0.8%
Animal cruelty	1	0.8%
Material that does not build character in citizens	1	0.8%
Satanism, occult worship, etc.	1	0.8%

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

Intro

Please answer all of the questions, and note that there are multiple pages of the survey. Data from surveys that are left unfinished will not be recorded. Please take this survey only once.

Please indicate the age range into which you fall.

- o 18-30
- o 30-45
- o 45-60
- o 60+

Please indicate your gender.

- o Male
- o Female

Please indicate your highest level of education:

- o Certificate or Associate's degree
- o Bachelor's degree
- o MLS or MLIS
- o Second master's (or other advanced degree)
- o Doctorate
- o Master's degree (other than MLS or MLIS)

Please indicate how long you have been a librarian

- o Less than 5 years
- o 5-10 years
- o 11-15 years
- o 16-20 years
- o 20+ years

Please indicate the type of library in which you are employed:

- o Christian college or university library
- o Public library
- o Public school library
- o Secular college or university library
- o Private school library
- o Other (Please specify) _____
- o Private library or archive (e.g., museum, business, etc.)

Do you consider yourself a member of the Christian faith?

    o Yes

    o No

If "Yes" is Selected

What is your denominational affiliation?

    o Protestant

    o Catholic

    o Orthodox

    o Non-denominational

    o Other (please specify) _____

LBR

The following is the text of the ALA's Library Bill of Rights. Please refer to it as needed in answering the remaining questions in this survey.

"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 that 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.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996."

Which of the following statements best aligns with your feelings about the Library Bill of Rights' applicability to libraries?

    o The Library Bill of Rights is equally applicable to all libraries.

    o The Library Bill of Rights is most applicable to public libraries, but the majority of its content is applicable to other types of libraries as well.

    o The Library Bill of Rights is most applicable to public libraries, but some of its content can be applicable to other types of libraries as well.

    o The Library Bill of Rights is only applicable to public libraries; it is not applicable to other types of libraries.

Looking at the text of the ALA Library Bill of Rights above, please indicate whether you personally support or object to the following portions of the document (i.e., indicate whether your own ethical or spiritual convictions are consistent with the statements made in the Library Bill of Rights):

	Strongly Support	Support	Neutral	Object	Strongly Object	Not Applicable in my library
Library Bill of Rights Article I	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article II	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article III	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article IV	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article V	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article VI	○	○	○	○	○	○

Whether you personally support or object to the Library Bill of Rights, please indicate the degree to which you adhere to the standards outlined in each of its articles in your professional practice of librarianship.

	Always adhere	Adhere with some exceptions	Sometimes adhere	Occasionally adhere	Rarely or never adhere	Not applicable in my library
Library Bill of Rights Article I	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article II	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article III	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article IV	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article V	○	○	○	○	○	○
Library Bill of Rights Article VI	○	○	○	○	○	○

If you chose anything other than "Always adhere" for any of the options in the above question, please provide a brief explanation or examples of situations in which you do not adhere to the standards of the Library Bill of Rights. (Please try to limit responses to one or two sentences.)

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "A Christian librarian working in a public library setting should always abide by the professional and ethical standards outlined in the Library Bill of Rights even if he or she perceives conflict between it and his or her personal moral convictions."

- o Strongly Agree

- o Agree

- o Neither Agree nor Disagree

- o Disagree

- o Strongly Disagree

Should official policies of public libraries ever limit access to, filter, or refuse to acquire any materials (print or electronic) based on the content or viewpoint of the materials?

- o Yes

- o No

If "Yes" is Selected

What sorts of content or viewpoints would warrant the filtering, refusal to acquire, or limitation of access to materials in a public library? (Please try to limit responses to single words and short phrases.)

Are there any other comments you would like to make on the topic of Christian librarianship and the ethics of the ALA as embodied in the Library Bill of Rights?