



**LILLIAN DESMARIAS
YOUTH LIBRARY**

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Library Director's Formal Response to Request for Review of Library Materials

Dated 9-7-2023

Directed to:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

& Livingston County Library Board of Trustees

Preliminary Details:

In the initial conversation held on August 2, 2023, with Jodi Moore, Youth Services Coordinator of the Lillian DesMarias Youth Library, and myself, as Livingston County Library Director, [REDACTED] talked extensively about material found in the Fiction and Non-Fiction books in the Children's Picture Book collection and the Young Adult (YA) collection of the Lillian DesMarias Youth Library. [REDACTED] submitted Review of Material request forms, eight (8) in total, and talked about [REDACTED] reasons why [REDACTED] thought these materials should be shelved in Parenting Section of the Youth Library or moved to the Main Library where adult reading materials are housed. Those books and authors are:

1. *My Shadow is Pink* by Scott Stuart, published 2020
2. *My Shadow is Purple* by Scott Stuart, published 2022
3. *Ana on the Edge* by A. J. Sass, published 2020
4. *Wait, What?* By Heather Corinna and Isabella Rotman, published 2019
5. *Queer, There and Everywhere* by Sarah Prager, published 2017
6. *In Case You're Curious, Questions about sex from young people with answers from the experts with illustrations* by Meghan Hilton. published 2019
7. *She He They Them Understanding Gender Identity* by Rebecca Stanborough, published 2020
8. *Sex Plus learning, loving, and enjoying your body* by Laci Green, published 2018

[REDACTED] read the first three selections (#1-3) in their entirety while noting that [REDACTED] read most chapters, but not all of one selection (#4), and only specific chapters of the rest of the selections (#5-8).

According to [REDACTED] Review of Materials forms, all were objectional due to "transgender propoganda". For the last three selections [REDACTED] also stated objections to "encouraging social and medical transitions".

Our discussions centered around [REDACTED] objections, recommendations about replacements and/or other resources with different or varying viewpoints to be added to the library's collections. [REDACTED] noted *Johnny the Walrus* by Matt Walsh as a picture book to be included as a replacement for the children's picture books [REDACTED] was requesting for review. For the other titles, there were either no suggestions for replacements or recommendation to add educational material that does not "push transgender propaganda". Additionally, [REDACTED] is not aware of reviews or evaluations of any of the materials [REDACTED] is challenging.

[REDACTED] felt the result of reading these materials would cause sexual confusion, suicidal thoughts, and/or irreversible hormone treatment/surgery. When [REDACTED] was questioned if suicide was mentioned in any of the selections, [REDACTED] agreed that there was no mention albeit [REDACTED] maintained that suicide is prevalent amongst teens in these groups considering gender identity.

[REDACTED] questioned the collection development policies the library has in place and if there are separate collection development policies specific to the Youth Library. I, as Library Director, stated I would research specific policies for youth libraries and see what they stated.

[REDACTED] agreed that [REDACTED] is aware that there is a facet of the community wanting these books, however, [REDACTED] states they should be housed in the Adult Library as [REDACTED] recommends the age group to be "over 18" for all selections and not available for youth to check out.

As I continue with my review of each individual book, I will give Missouri Evergreen ILS data and statistics, book synopsis, editorial reviews, book awards, and my response to each request.

1. *My Shadow is Pink* by Scott Stuart, published 2020, Children's picture book added to Youth Library's collection 4/17/2023. Circulated 38 times as of 9/5/2023. One of six holdings in Missouri Evergreen OPAC (ME) all shelved in Juvenile/Easy/ Children Fiction.

Book Synopsis from Larrikin House, publisher: *My Shadow is Pink* is a beautifully written rhyming story that touches on the subjects of gender identity, self-acceptance, equality and diversity. Inspired by the author's own little boy, 'Shadow's' main character likes princesses, fairies and things 'not for boys'... he soon learns (through the support of his dad) that everyone has a shadow that they sometimes feel they need to hide. This is an important book for a new generation of children (and adults alike) which exemplifies the concepts of unconditional love, respect and positive parenting. Creates opportunity for open discussion and learning. Highlights current themes of gender identity.

Editorial Reviews: Amazon.com; GoodReads.com; Noveleffect.com; and weareteachers.com

Book Awards: Nominations for Children's Book of the Year & Picture Book of the Year – 2020

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with “transgender propaganda” that I will address along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book centered on a parent’s love and feeling of inclusiveness for the child on the first day of school. As the story progresses, the main character and the parent, along with their shadows, dress up and explains that shadows in this book aren’t gender specific, rather different.

Moving this title from the Youth Library’s Children Picture Book collection would do a disservice to the parents/caregivers/library patrons who value inclusion and diversity. The reading level is ages 3-7 years interest level and kindergarten through grade 2 per the publisher’s product details.

There are no substantial grounds of this title to be relocated to the Main Library as the author has written the book for children as a picture book at their reading level. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other’s rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The library will purchase the recommended title, *Johnny the Walrus* by Matt Walsh and determine if it meets Youth Library’s collection development criteria and/or shelving location after researching reviews and/or reading.

2. ***My Shadow is Purple* by Scott Stuart**, published 2022, Children’s picture book added to Youth Library’s collection 4/17/2023. Circulated 13 times as of 9/5/2023. One of four holdings in ME all shelved in Juvenile/Easy/Children Fiction.

Book Synopsis from Larrikin House, publisher: My Dad has a shadow that’s blue as a berry, and my Mum's is as pink as a blossoming cherry. There’s only those choices, a 2 or a 1. But mine is quite different, it’s both and it’s none. A heartwarming and inspiring book about being true to yourself, by best-selling children's book creator Scott Stuart. This story considers gender beyond binary in a vibrant spectrum of colour. This is book two of the series *My Shadow* by the same author/illustrator.

Editorial Reviews: Amazon.com; GoodReads.com; and Scholastic.com

Book Awards: ABIA (Australian Book Industry Award) Nominee for Small Publishers’ Children’s Book 2023

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with “transgender propaganda” that I will address along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book centered on a school child facing traditional gender stereotypes and feeling unwelcome at the school dance until schoolmates shout their shadow colors ranging from red, silver, green, orange, etc. The main concepts of this book are self-acceptance, diversity and inclusion. Moving this title from the Youth Library’s Children Picture Book collection would do a disservice to the parents/caregivers/library patrons who value a child’s self-acceptance, diversity and inclusion. The reading level from the publisher’s product detail is 4-8 years inclusive of grades preschool to kindergarten.

There are no substantial grounds of this title to be relocated to the Main Library as the author has written the book for children as a picture book at their reading level. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The library will purchase the recommended title, *Johnny the Walrus* by Matt Walsh and determine if it meets Youth Library's collection development criteria and/or shelving location after researching reviews and/or reading.

3. **Ana on the Edge** by **A. J. Sass**, published 2020, Middle Reader, Fiction book, added to Youth Library collection 08/29/2022. Circulated 13 times as of 9/5/2023. One of ten holdings in ME, eight shelved in Juvenile; one in Middle Fiction, and one in Upper Elementary Fiction.

Book Synopsis from Little Brown Books for Young Readers, publisher: Perfect for fans of *George* and *Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World*: a heartfelt coming of age story about a nonbinary character navigating a binary world.

Twelve-year-old Ana-Marie Jin, the reigning US Juvenile figure skating champion, is *not* a frilly dress kind of kid. So, when Ana learns that next season's program will be princess themed, doubt forms fast. Still, Ana tries to focus on training and putting together a stellar routine worthy of national success.

Once Ana meets Hayden, a transgender boy new to the rink, thoughts about the princess program and gender identity begin to take center stage. And when Hayden mistakes Ana for a boy, Ana doesn't correct him and finds comfort in this boyish identity when he's around. As their friendship develops, Ana realizes that it's tricky juggling two different identities on one slippery sheet of ice. And with a major competition approaching, Ana must decide whether telling everyone the truth is worth risking years of hard work and sacrifice.

Editorial Reviews: Booklist – starred review; Publishers Weekly; The Horn Book; Kirkus Reviews

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with “transgender propaganda” that I will address along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book to be a story of a main character's self-discovery internally while going against society's definition of external factors. The main character realizes that love and understanding comes from family and friends as s/he tries to define who s/he is internally once s/he speaks honestly. The undercurrent of the book is placing value on honest communication with those most trusted. Hard lessons are learned through Ana's deceit of the supporting characters. Those lessons prevail to find forgiveness, self-acceptance, support, and love.

The author's note at the end of the book that discusses dysphoria, both social and body, explains the differences and offers more reputable information from online resources.

Moving this title from the Youth Library's Mid-Section collection would do a disservice to the parents/caregivers/library patrons who value self-discovery, self-acceptance, and

inclusion. Library patrons' personal opinions cannot supersede the library's mission to serve all members and facets of the communities the library serves.

There are no substantial grounds of this title to be relocated to the Main Library as the author has written the book for young readers ages 8-12 in grades 3-7 for this reading level. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

██████████ did not recommend a title or other material in its place on ██████ review form.

4. ***Wait, What?* By Heather Corinna and Isabella Rotman**, published 2019, Young Adult Non-Fiction book added to Youth Library collection 12/22/2021. Circulated 18 times as of 9/5/2023. One of nine holdings in ME, seven shelved in Teen/YA Non-Fiction, one in Juvenile Non-Fiction, and one in Non-Fiction.

Book Synopsis from Simon Schuster (distributor) Limerence Press (publisher): Join friends Malia, Rico, Max, Sam and Alexis as they talk about all the weird and exciting parts of growing up! This supportive group of friends are guides for some tricky subjects. Using comics, activities and examples, they give encouragement and context for new and confusing feelings and experiences.

Inclusive of different kinds of genders, sexualities, and other identities, they talk about important topics like:

- Bodies, including puberty, body parts and body image
- Sexual and gender identity
- Gender roles and stereotypes
- Crushes, relationships, and sexual feelings
- Boundaries and consent
- The media and cultural messages, specifically around bodies and sex
- How to be sensitive, kind, accepting, and mature
- Where to look for more information, support and help

Editorial Reviews: School Library Journal-starred review; Kirkus Reviews-starred review; Common Sense Media

Book Awards: 2019 Chicago Public Library Best of Best; Best LGBTQ Graphic Novels of 2019 by the Advocate and Notable Children's Book by the Association of Library Service to Children, a division of ALA.

Library Director's Response: ██████████ raises concerns with "transgender propaganda" that I will address along with the generalities that ██████ has stated as he read most chapters. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book depicts factual information regarding puberty, maturity, relationships, gender, sexual orientation and sexual identity in a graphic novel format. I don't agree with ██████████ that reading this title will cause suicidal thoughts when teens are encouraged to "assemble your superteam" who includes parents and mentors. This chapter encourages teen to talk it out with trusted adults who gives honest, supportive feedback.

Moving this title from the Youth Library's Young Adult (YA) Non-Fiction collection would do a disservice to the teens with involved parents/caregivers needing factual information as their child/teen advances through puberty. More so, those teens who do not have involved parents/caregivers need access to such information. The book's authors noted the reading age of 9-14 years with grade levels of 4-8 for their target audience. Therefore, no substantial grounds exist to relocate this title to the Main Library. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

██████████ did not recommend a title or other material in its place on ██████ review form.

5. ***Queer, There and Everywhere* by Sarah Prager**, published 2017, Young Adult Non-Fiction book added to Youth Library collection 08/26/2017. Circulated 58 times as of 9/5/2023. One of 9 holdings in ME, two shelved in Juvenile Non-Fiction, six in Teen/Young Adult Non-Fiction, and one by Dewey number.

Book Synopsis from Harper Collins, publisher: World history has been made by countless lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals—and you've never heard of many of them.

Queer author and activist Sarah Prager delve deep into the lives of 23 people who fought, created, and loved on their own terms. From high-profile figures like Abraham Lincoln and Eleanor Roosevelt to the trailblazing gender-ambiguous Queen of Sweden and a bisexual blues singer who didn't make it into your history books, these astonishing true stories uncover a rich queer heritage that encompasses every culture, in every era.

By turns hilarious and inspiring, the beautifully illustrated *Queer, There, and Everywhere* is for anyone who wants the real story of the queer rights movement.

Editorial Reviews: Kirkus Reviews-starred review; Publishers Weekly-starred review; Booklist

Book Awards: New York Public Library Best Book of 2017; Chicago Public Library Best of the Best for Teens 2017

Library Director's Response: ██████████ raises concerns with "transgender propaganda" and "encouraging social and medical transition" that I will address along with the generalities that ██████ has stated as ██████ read most chapters. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book depicts information about the unknown or unspoken history of 23 people who lived diversely and challenged society's norms. Of note, the author released her 2nd edition including four additional people in June 2023. I don't agree with ██████████ that reading this title will cause suicidal thoughts for the reader as the author includes factual information. The author includes numerous bibliography sources and notes for each individual she has depicted in her Non-Fiction book.

Moving this title from the Youth Library's Young Adult (YA) Non-Fiction collection would do a disservice to the teens researching diversity in different cultures and countries

along with individuals since the year 203 to present day. The reading age of 13-17 years with grade levels of 8-9 is the target audience for the Young Adult collection. Therefore, no substantial grounds exist to relocate this title to the Main Library. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

██████████ did not recommend a title or other material in its place on ██████ review form.

- 6. In Case You're Curious, Questions about sex from young people with answers from the experts with illustrations by Meghan Hilton by Planned Parenthood** with note on front cover: When purchasing this book, the reader should be aware that topics of sex and sexuality are discussed, published 2019, Young Adult Non-Fiction book added to Youth Library collection 2/9/2022. Circulated 8 times as of 9/5/2023. One of four holdings in ME, all shelved in Teen/Young Adult Non-Fiction.

Book Synopsis: Did you ever walk out of class having even more questions than when you walked in? You may feel that way about History or Math, but what about your Sexual Health class (if you even had one)? If you're anything like most of the youth in America today, your head is probably spinning with a swirling, high-speed hurricane of questions. It is totally normal to be curious and to have questions about relationships, bodies, consent . . . you name it!

But where can your average teen go to get all the reliable and accurate answers they need? In Case You're Curious (ICYC), a text-and-answer program conceived by Planned Parenthood, has been providing this educational service for teens for years. And now In Case You're Curious: Questions about Sex from Young People with Answers from the Experts is a big book of answers with funny and educational illustrations, to the most popular and most interesting questions young people have about birth control, development, sexually transmitted diseases, and so much more.

Within these pages you will find non-judgmental (and fun!) answers meant to educate teens without the uncomfortable silence or weird eye contact often associated with "The Talk." With questions like "Does masturbating give you a disease?" and "Is the pineapple thing true?" In Case You're Curious isn't afraid to tackle the nitty-gritty questions you may think twice about raising your hand to ask in your Sexual Health class or at home.

Editorial Reviews: Kirkus Reviews

Library Director's Response: ██████████ raises concerns with "transgender propaganda" that I will address along with the generalities that ██████ has stated as ██████ read Chapter 4. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book depicts factual information regarding sex, anatomy, puberty, sexual attraction, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, birth control, relationships, and consent. The preface and introduction encourage teens to have conversations with trusted adults, do research, and gather factual information from sources like the authors, trained educators. The reading level is ages 12-17, meeting the

criteria to be housed at the Youth Library in the Young Adult Non-Fiction collection. Moving this title from the Youth Library's collection would do a disservice to the teens and/or parents/caregivers needing this information to navigate the teenage years and sensitive topics. This title includes a diverse range of voices and views, all from teens and their questions. Therefore, no substantial grounds exist to relocate this title to the Main Library. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

██████████ did recommend any title that teaches sexual anatomy without mention of transgender topics. The Library will look for such materials to review for consideration of adding to the Young Adult Non-Fiction collection.

7. **She He They Them Understanding Gender Identity by Rebecca Stanborough**, published 2020, Young Adult Non-Fiction book added to Youth Library collection 2/9/2022. Circulated 12 times as of 9/5/2023. One of five holdings in ME, one shelved in Juvenile Non-Fiction, three shelved in Teen/Young Adult Non-Fiction, and one shelved in Stacks.

Book Synopsis from Compass Point Books, publisher: She/he/they/them. Why do we use gender pronouns? And why do some people wish to be referred to as "they"? What is gender identity all about? Students will learn to understand these terms and the reasons behind them. They will also learn how to deal with questions they may have about gender identity.

Editorial Reviews: School Library Journal

Library Director's Response: ██████████ raises concerns with "transgender propaganda" and "socially or surgically transition" that I will address along with the generalities that ██████ has stated as ██████ read most chapters. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this Non-Fiction book explains gender identity, gender binary, gender expression, gender role and norms, and gender equity. The book does address suicide that is prevalent amongst transgender individuals by stating relevant statistics. However, the book goes one step further as found on page 54, "Checking in" asking the reader to take a break from reading if feelings are too strong while reading its contents. This title's reading age is from 10 – 14 years, with grade levels from 5th-9th grade. Moving this title from the Youth Library's Young Adult (YA) Non-Fiction collection would do a disservice to the teens researching diversity and inclusion by reading facts of gender identity. Therefore, no substantial grounds exist to relocate this title to the Main Library. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

██████████ did not recommend a title or other material in its place on ██████ review form.

8. **Sex Plus learning, loving, and enjoying your body by Laci Green**, published 2018, Young Adult Non-Fiction Book added to Youth Library collection 2/23/2022. Circulated

30 times as of 9/5/2023. One of six holdings in ME, five shelved in Teen/Young Adult Non-Fiction, one shelved in Non-Fiction.

Book Synopsis: This groundbreaking book from sex educator and YouTube phenomenon Laci Green has everything you've ever wanted to know about sex, sexuality, pleasure, and your body.

Let's be honest: most of us think about sex A LOT, and we have plenty of unanswered questions: What's the best way to talk to my partner about what I want? How do I figure out my sexuality? How do I have sex safely? What does an orgasm actually feel like? Laci Green—a sex educator and YouTuber who's been hailed by Time magazine as the millennial Dr. Ruth—has built a platform of millions of followers by answering sex-related questions frankly, nonjudgmentally, and hilariously.

Now Laci brings her signature style and voice to a comprehensive book about the multitude of issues and concerns that go along with sexuality: anatomy, consent, LGBTQ issues, STI and pregnancy prevention, sexual empowerment, healthy relationships, myth-busting, and more.

Sex Plus is the first book of its kind: empowering, sex-positive, and cool. Comprehensive, honest, and vetted by a range of medical experts, this book will help you take control of your sex life.

Editorial Reviews: Kirkus Reviews; Publishers Weekly; Horn Book

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with “transgender propaganda” that I will address along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated as [REDACTED] read Chapter 4 and 5. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book depicts factual information regarding sex, anatomy, sexual identity, gender identity, body image, safe sex, birth control, consent and communication, relationships, and dating violence. The prologue depicts the author's story and how she felt the need to encourage sex positivity to build healthier relationships and healthier sexual culture. The author did research and fact checked her work with doctors and human sexuality experts. The reading level is ages 16-17, noted for grades 11-12, meeting the criteria to be housed at the Youth Library in the Young Adult Non-Fiction collection. Moving this title from the Youth Library's collection would do a disservice to the teens and/or parents/caregivers needing this information to navigate the teenage years and sensitive topics. Therefore, no substantial grounds exist to relocate this title to the Main Library. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

[REDACTED] did recommend any title that teaches sexual anatomy without mention of transgender topics. The Library will look for such materials to review for consideration of adding to the Young Adult Non-Fiction collection.

Library Director's Determinations:

I welcome the opportunities to have discussions with [REDACTED] about his concerns. The Lillian DesMarias Youth Library is an inclusive, welcoming, public space to engage young readers and parents/caregivers to become life-long readers and learners.

The Lillian DesMarias Youth Library is unique in its setup as a separate branch of the Livingston County Library only serving the county's youth. I have not found a similar setup throughout the State. In answer to [REDACTED] questions concerning separate policies for a Youth Library, I can answer no, there are not any separate collection development policies. In my research of the collection development policies of other public libraries within the State of Missouri, I found that most have the same definition of collections regarding early literacy ages, juvenile or elementary, young adult or teen, and adult. Some are age specific, others have grade level delineations. I also found that all outlined the same principles for resource selections that include diversity and inclusion in their collections as Livingston County Library.

The Livingston County Library serves all members of the community, regardless of socio-economic status, religious beliefs, age, gender, race, etc. Library patrons' personal opinions cannot supersede the library's mission to serve all members and facets of the communities the library serves. The mission of the Livingston County Library is to provide quality materials and services which fulfill educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the entire community in an atmosphere that is welcoming, respectful, and comfortable. Appendix H of the Livingston County Library's policies contains the American Library Association Statements including the Freedom to Read and the Library Bill of Rights as supporting documents to ensure intellectual freedoms. As Library Director, I reaffirm my duty to protect each individual's choice and their freedoms secured by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The Library will research and purchase [REDACTED] recommended titles to review. I do encourage [REDACTED] to recommend more titles which the Youth Library would consider to have a well-rounded collection for the communities we serve. The Library values its patrons book requests to maintain relevant collections. In fact, two of the titles [REDACTED] asked to be reviewed were adding to the Youth Library's collection because of patron requests.

Pursuant to Secretary of State's Rule 15 CSR 30-200.15 Library Certification Requirement for the Protection of Minors (F) the result of Review of Materials Request "shall be disclosed to the public and published on the library's website". Any personal identifiable information will be redacted on the library's website which is www.livingstoncountylibrary.org.

Recourses:

[REDACTED] can appeal to the Livingston County Library Board of Trustees by asking the Library Director to secure a place on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.

Respectfully,

Sue Lightfoot-Horine, Library Director
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