

The Challengers of West Bend

The Library as a Community Institution

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We do not agree with their disturbing standard of “all materials available to all ages.” With this said, let it be known that we vehemently reject their standards, we resent their presence, and we are repulsed by their insistence on holding the door open to sexually explicit, profane, and crude materials to the children in our community. We reject their standards and their principles.

. . . This is a propaganda battle to insure children retain access to inappropriate material despite the law, common sense, and community standards. If you choose to reject your community’s request via petition . . . the loss . . . will be to the children you claim to serve and you will no longer be considered a safe library and we will strongly promote it as such.

Ginny Maziarka, Town of West Bend, Public Hearing Testimony, June 2, 2009

On February 3, 2009, four months prior to giving her public testimony, Ginny Maziarka and her husband Jim sent a letter to the director of the West Bend (Wisconsin) Community Memorial Library. The letter, which was placed the overnight book drop, requested that the

library remove a link on its website that recommended gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender books for young adults. Two months later, as a direct result of the Maziarkas' complaint, West Bend city aldermen refused to reappoint four members of the library board.

Challenges to materials in libraries are quite common, and the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF)—which monitors challenge cases throughout the country—logged 348 challenges in 2010. The West Bend case received a large amount of press coverage, included high involvement of the local community, and was politicized, as demonstrated by the city alderman case. These characteristics make the events in West Bend an ideal case study for examining challengers and the discourse of censorship in the United States. This study focuses on how challengers construct the library as an institution in society through their arguments regarding controversial materials. Challengers constitute a segment of the reading public that seeks to regulate and control what others read. Though not “readers” as commonly defined, they employ their own interpretive strategies when encountering “inappropriate” materials in libraries.

The Escalation of a Challenge

The saga in West Bend began on February 3, 2009, when the director received a letter of complaint from Jim and Ginny Maziarka, expressing their concern about the library's online young adult booklist. It should be noted that the booklist had been added to the site five years earlier.¹ The library board was scheduled to meet that evening, and the Maziarkas wished to be

¹ Kristin Pekoll, “Stand up! Defending Teen's Right to Read at West Bend Community Library,” *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)*, 32 (2009): 284–87.

included on the agenda. Due to Wisconsin law, the agenda could not be changed, and the letter-writers' concerns could not be heard until the next monthly meeting.

On February 13, the library received another letter from the Maziarkas—addressed to the West Bend mayor, the library director, and the library board—requesting the addition of several “ex-gay” books to the collection. Along with the letter, the Maziarkas included a copy of the West Bend library’s Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials form and a challenge list of thirty-seven books.

According to the library’s policy, the first step of the reconsideration process called for a meeting between the complainant and the library director. The Maziarkas, the library’s young adult librarian, and the assistant director met on February 23. The meeting ended without a resolution, as did a meeting with the Maziarkas and the library’s director and assistant director on February 25.

On March 3, the library board met to discuss the challenge. However, the discussion had to be tabled and the meeting rescheduled for March 25, due to high interest from the local community. The Maziarkas informed the assistant director they would be out of town that day, and the meeting was again rescheduled for March 26.

In the meantime, on March 13 the Maziarkas sent an e-mail to the library challenging additional materials and suggesting more titles that should be added to the collection. On March 19, the library administration and the West Bend city attorney sent the Maziarkas an e-mail concerning the original challenge list that the library received on February 13. The letter stated that after discussion with the Maziarkas, the city attorney understood that they no longer wanted to have the books removed; rather they should be relocated and labeled as sexually explicit. Since the nature of the request had changed, the original complaint filed on February 13 was

considered withdrawn, and, as a result, the March 26 meeting of the library board was cancelled. If the Maziarkas wanted materials to be reclassified, they would have to submit an individual form for each title.

The Maziarkas then decided to form the West Bend Citizens for Safe Libraries and held their own meeting on March 26. Since they would be presenting what they believed to be sexually explicit material, minors were asked to leave the meeting. The Maziarkas read passages from several books, including the frequently challenged *Rainbow Boys* by Alex Sanchez and *Baby Be-Bop* by Francesca Lia Block and presented a slide show. They also passed around a petition, which was never formally addressed by the board, that called for library policy changes, including reclassifying “pornographic” youth-oriented books and the visual identification of materials deemed “explicit.”²

In late April at the annual city council organization meeting, the West Bend city aldermen voted to commission the library board. Of the nine board members, four were up for three-year term reappointments. The council voted down all four. According to a newspaper account of the meeting, one of the aldermen stated that the appointees were not serving the interest of the community and that he “wanted people on the Library Board who think and use a little common sense. I’m concerned about the morality of this city.”³ Finally, on June 2, the library board held a two-and-one-half-hour meeting, during which almost sixty people spoke both for and against the Maziarkas’ petition. The library board, which included the four members

² West Bend Citizens for Safe Libraries, <https://sites.google.com/site/wbcitizenssafelibraries/>.

³ Dave Rank, “Four Tossed off Library Board,” *West Bend Daily News*, April 22, 2009.

whom the city aldermen had removed but were still serving out their terms, voted to keep the existing policies regarding challenged materials in place.

Reading, Libraries, and the Field of Cultural Production

This study focuses on the challengers in the West Bend case and their understanding of the status of the library in society and how this understanding is shaped by their view of reading practices. Reading is a social practice that has changed over time and encompasses different physical modalities (such as reading silently or aloud) and interpretive strategies. Interpretive strategies can be understood as a set of decisions regarding what one will do with the text.⁴ Reading is as a powerful, empathetic activity, and individuals often speak of books “changing their lives.” I contend that it is fear of this power of texts that informs challengers’ behavior concerning materials they consider problematic.

Libraries, in light of their relationship to books, are seen as spaces that must be controlled, since they contain texts that can change one’s moral character. The presence of a book in a library collection means that the library and, by extension, the community itself approves of the words written inside it.⁵ As Thomas Augst notes “one of the primary social

⁴ Stanley Eugene Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁵ The idea of the library as symbol can be explained using Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of symbolic capital and power. Symbolic capital is an asset that operates as an altered and corporeal type of economic capital; its effects come from its suppression of its original source of power. For Bourdieu, symbolic capital is important because it is often misrecognized as something

functions of the library remains symbolic: the staging of freedom in the local, often mundane struggle of individuals to craft a meaningful identity for themselves amidst routine paths and standard choices for society.”⁶ Although this view might seem somewhat exaggerated, it is clear from her testimony that Ginny Maziarka and possibly other challengers believe that no less than the soul of the community is at stake.

Libraries are integral institutions in what Pierre Bourdieu calls the field of cultural production. Fields—economic, political, and academic—are generally defined as hierarchically demarcated social spaces. The field of cultural production is unique because it reverses the arrangement of the economic field. Instead of maximizing economic power, people within the field of cultural production often maximize symbolic power by minimizing economic power.

entirely different—common sense, for example. Challenges to materials in libraries can be understood to be part of a struggle between competing symbolic systems. Challengers and librarians operate within different symbolic systems, and each group works to enforce its own ideas of how the library should operate and what materials it should have in its collections. Individuals do not see the world as totally structured—they have “space“ in which to operate and interact. As Bourdieu states, ”this objective of uncertainty...provides a basis for the plurality of visions of the world ...At the same time, it provides a base for symbolic struggles over the power to produce and impose the legitimate visions of the world.”

Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power” *Sociological Theory*, 4 (1989): 14-25.

⁶ Thomas Augst, “Faith in Reading: Public Libraries, Liberalism, and the Civil Religion,” in *Institutions of Reading: The Social Life of Libraries in the United States*, ed. Thomas Augst and Kenneth E. Carpenter (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 183.

Two important principles operate within this conceptualization of cultural production. First, in the field of large-scale production, those whose work is more subject to the norms of society as a whole generally enjoy more economic success but less symbolic success. Second, in the field of restricted production, those who operate outside middle-of-the-road norms often have less economic success but more symbolic success. The field of cultural production creates a social space in which the (economic) loser wins.⁷

There are distinct homologies between the producers and consumers of these fields. People who produce and consume goods from the field of restricted production will tend to have similar education and cultural backgrounds, as will those who produce and consume within the field of large-scale productions. One example of these homologous tendencies can be found in modern art. Contemporary modern art is usually created within the field of restricted production, and for a contemporary art gallery visitor to understand the art that is displayed, he or she must be aware of the long history of that which has come before it. This knowledge is only available to those who possess a certain type of cultural capital.

Libraries, however—especially public libraries—are a radically different type of institution within the field of cultural production. The symbolic goods (e.g., books and other materials) accumulated within their collections are not segregated according to the fields of restricted and large-scale cultural production. Libraries' use of space and classification schemes present works that call on different symbolic universes (that is, they appeal to different social groups) in an entirely haphazard manner.

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

In library and information science there are few studies that examine why people engage in challenge behavior. It is hoped that this one will help libraries provide more effective responses to the entire reading public, including those who challenge library materials. It will attempt to demonstrate through analysis of challengers' arguments that they are engaging in rational, systematic behavior and their actions are closely tied to both the library as a site of symbolic power and their understanding of the practice of reading. This study is driven by the following research questions: First, how do the challengers construct the library as an institution within the field of cultural production? Second, how do the challengers' understandings of the practice of reading inform these constructions?

For clarity, it is necessary to define some of these terms. A "challenge" occurs when an individual or group asks library administrators to remove, restrict, or relocate materials within the library. Challenges do not always lead to banning, that is, the removal of materials from the library's collections. Nor do they always lead to a change in the materials' status (such as restriction or relocations with the library). Individuals who bring challenges, either written or oral, against library material, are engaging in "challenge behavior." Since labeling people as "censors" is controversial, they are collectively called "challengers."

Two types of documents posted to the West Bend Community Memorial Library website were used for this study. The first consisted of letters to the editor, transcripts of voicemail messages, and opinion columns in the *West Bend Daily News* a local newspaper. The second consisted of transcripts of individual testimonies from the videotaped hearing held on June 2,

2009, before the West Bend library board.⁸ This study is part of a larger research project that examines the ideological, rhetorical, and argumentative frameworks in the discourse of censorship and the nature of censorship practices.

The Library: A Contested Institution

The challengers articulated many themes and concepts; however, this chapter focuses on three themes that relate to their view of the library as an institution in society. First, they were concerned that the library be a “safe space” that protects children. Second, they advanced reclassifying and labeling controversial materials within the library in order for the institution to maintain its status as a safe space. Finally, many of the challengers believed that if the library did not move and/or label these materials accordingly, children would be in danger of “stumbling upon” them when they were unsupervised. For each theme, I first present the position of the library profession as codified in the ALA Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights, followed by the position of challengers in the West Bend case.⁹

⁸ Even though the authors and testifiers are easily traceable, I use initials for attribution, to provide some anonymity for those not party to the original written complaint. I coded the documents for common themes using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software. Codes originated from previous research and emerged through the study’s research process.

⁹ The ALA Code of Ethics and the Library Bill of Rights are both available on the ALA website, at <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/proethics/codeofethics/codeethics.cfm> and <http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/index.cfm>.

When it comes to the idea that the library should not only protect children and but also be a “safe space” for them, there is a stark contradiction between how librarians and challengers in the West Bend case view the role of the library. As noted in the Library Bill of Rights, all library patrons—including children—should have access to all library materials. Libraries, including public libraries, do not operate in loco parentis. That is, they do not have a legal responsibility to protect children from materials that parents might view as harmful. In practice, this means that most libraries do not place age restrictions on borrowing materials. Even though the collection may be physically separated into different categories such as “Young Adult” or “Adult Non-Fiction,” anyone with a valid library card may check out any circulating item. Challengers, however, view the library as an institution that has a moral responsibility to protect children from reading materials the challengers believe will be harmful to their development. For them, the local library is similar to a public school or a religious institution, and it should provide both a physical safe haven for children and help parents in the difficult job of parenting.

The challengers in the West Bend case express in four different ways the theme that the library is an institution that should protect children. Three are constructed as active roles the library should assume to ensure children’s safety, while one is constructed negatively.

First, as mentioned, some of the challengers see the library as an organization intended to help parents raise their children. Parenting is difficult, and parents should be able to depend on the staff at the library help them decide which books are best for their children. One challenger states in a letter to the editor:

While it is true that no one is forced to read a book just because it is available, it is also true that there is no way for a parent to properly supervise a child when the child is visiting the library alone after school. While it is tough to be a good kid these days, it is

even harder to be a good parent. I don't believe we would infringe on our children's First Amendment Rights by restricting access to books whose content may be objectionable, in the opinion of the parent. The parent determines this, not the child, and not the child's friends. Parents rely on the judgment of library staff.¹⁰

Exemplifying the second positive theme, another letter-writer notes that the library has a duty to maintain decency in its collections.

Since our library does not hold every book ever printed the board presumably has to set parameters for what materials to acquire and hold. These parameters should reflect the character of our community—what is considered acceptable in New York or San Francisco does not necessarily belong here. . . . While parents should monitor their children's reading, it is not unreasonable to expect the library to uphold a basic level of propriety as well.¹¹

It should be noted that these letter-writers use different standards for what might be considered “good” materials. The writer of in the first quote believes that *parents* make this determination, and the writer of the second quote believes that the *community* does. Both writers, however, suggest that the library should conform to these standards to protect children.

Third, there is distinct fear that some parents are not adequately involved in their children's lives; in such cases, the library should be willing to protect the neglected:

I've read a few of the books cover to cover, not just excerpts. These books have very graphic and detailed sexual behavior not suitable for children in grades six through

¹⁰ K.S., *West Bend Daily News*, June 5, 2009.

¹¹ R.M., *West Bend Daily News*, May 15, 2009.

eight. . . . The books in question are directed to both the gay and the straight, but either way the content is too graphic for minors. . . . Should parents be more involved in what their children are reading? Yes, yet many fall through the cracks and those are the children who need protection.¹²

It's about protecting the innocent children who go to libraries. Yes, it's true that parents should be involved as to what their children are reading and be concerned about the content of what's being fed to their developing minds. What about those innocent children who are 11 or 12, who don't have parents involved in their lives because they are overwhelmed by being a single parent, two parents working several jobs, or those who have parents or caretakers who just cannot be there because of physical illness, mental illness or death, etc. and choose the library as a safe place to go?¹³

Finally, many of the challengers see the library as an institution that currently fulfills its role as a protector of children. However, it will renege on its duty if it fails to remove materials that might be harmful. This view is expressed in many of the letters, columns, and testimonies.

I've been pondering the issue of the obscene books in the youth section of our library. Should parents have to protect their children from the youth section of the library in the same way they have to protect their children from the Internet? That seems to be the case and it is very sad.¹⁴

¹² K.B., *West Bend Daily News*, April 4, 2009.

¹³ J.G., *West Bend Daily News*, July 22, 2009.

¹⁴ M.W., *West Bend Daily News*, April 9, 2009.

*Please West Bend aldermen, mayor and library board: Once and for all, do something. Join other safe libraries around the country that have learned from the list of crimes within libraries and be proactive in protecting our youth. Take the action needed so that our beautiful award-winning library will come out of this controversy unscathed and highly respected as a safe community-first library.*¹⁵

*Our library policy states that it shall endeavor to acquire materials which are of current and permanent value; that meet the high standards of quality and represent the best available to meet the community's needs and interests. This is a propaganda battle to insure children retain access to inappropriate material despite the law, common sense, and community standards. If you choose to reject your community's request via the petition; the loss will not be to me, it will not be to my husband, West Bend Citizens for Safe Libraries it will be to the children you claim to serve and you will no longer be considered a safe library and we will strongly promote it as such.*¹⁶

As demonstrated by the above statements, challengers think the library has a very particular role to play in the community. Like a public school, it must be a safe place for children. Parents must be able to trust that their children will not be in moral or physical danger when visiting the library alone. Some believe, contrary to what is written in the Library Bill of Rights or the ALA Code of Ethics, the library should help parents in the difficult task of raising

¹⁵ D.A.H., *West Bend Daily News*, April 30, 2009.

¹⁶ G.M., public hearing testimony, June 2, 2009.

children by both providing materials that are virtuous and labeling those that might prove harmful to children's moral development. Many of the challengers think this task should be accomplished through careful segregation of the library's collection. That is, the library can be made into a safe space and protect children through proper classification.

The second major theme that appears in this discourse is that of the library as structured space. For example, classification is an area where challengers and librarians differ. Librarians and other information professionals view classification of library materials as a method of providing access. Cataloging and classification of items is approached from a positive point of view—what placement will make it easier for the patrons to find this material? The library's classification system, particularly of fiction, is often physically represented in the layout of public libraries. Regardless of size, public libraries tend to have separate sections for children's, youth, young adult, and adult books.¹⁷ Challengers (and possibly other patrons) view these segregated sections as mental barriers; their presence dissuades people from going to “inappropriate” areas of the library.

Challengers tend to view classification as both prescriptive and performative. That is, if a particular book is located in the young adult section of the library, it is both positive for youth development and a young adult book. There is little acknowledgment that classification is

¹⁷ These terms are themselves constructions. How does one demarcate “children's” or “young adult” books? The challengers use many different terms—including minors, young people, teenagers, and children—to describe the people who will be reading the challenged books. All of these classifications have different socially constructed interpretations, which the challengers call on to make their arguments.

subjective. The a priori segregation of the public library space through the classification described above allows challengers to argue that reclassification of controversial materials is not a form of censorship. Many of the challengers state that there would be no controversy over the books if they were moved within the library.

The challengers in the West Bend case have different opinions regarding where the materials should be located. However, many agree that as long as the books remain in the young adult section they are misclassified. One writes that the library should move the materials “behind the desk”:

I would like to express my deep disappointment in our library’s stand on the YA Zone content made available to our youth. I understand there are children who desire to read such materials. There are also children who do not want to read these types of materials or need to know they are available. To have them in plain view for everyone is very inappropriate. No one is saying you can’t offer these materials, but those people should have to ask for them.¹⁸

The use of the expression “in plain view” is thought-provoking and gives some insight into how the writer constructs the controversial materials. One does not have to read the books—simply viewing them might prove harmful. The books should be located not just “behind the desk” but presumably “under the desk,” where someone who walks up to ask a question would not be able to see them.

A more common request is for the books to be reclassified into the adult section of the library:

¹⁸ J.C., *West Bend Daily News*, March 6, 2009.

*Please do not allow the Library Board to represent the people of West Bend regarding the inappropriate material in the children's section. It is not anyone's intention to have it removed from the system, but have it moved to the adult section. It is and should be the choice of all parents to decide when their child is ready to view such material.*¹⁹

*The Library certainly has the right to have these books there, but I couldn't imagine my grandchild coming across one of these books. Why is it so difficult to just move them to the adult section and then have other books promoting our family values?*²⁰

*Let's at least give the parents and kids the resources needed to make parental decisions and wise choices instead of slipping in some porn when no one is looking. A fair warning to what they will find within the library materials by labeling them as containing adult material, putting them upstairs where kids won't see them while browsing the YA section.*²¹

Note that the last letter-writer explicitly refers to the physical layout of the West Bend library. The adult section is upstairs, and the young adult section is, presumably, downstairs. Therefore, with reclassification the young adults will not see adult materials.

Another classification issue challengers often address is labeling. For libraries, labeling for content is often quite controversial. For example, during the 1950s librarians struggled over

¹⁹ A.B., *West Bend Daily News*, July 15, 2009.

²⁰ Anonymous, *West Bend Daily News*, May 5, 2009.

²¹ D.A.H., *West Bend Daily News*, April 30, 2009.

whether or not communist propaganda should be labeled as such.²² Officially, the ALA does not support labeling of any kind, but libraries often do not follow this guideline.²³

As with reclassifying books, many of the challengers view labeling books as “explicit materials” as a simple way to diffuse any controversy. As shown here, some of the challengers ask for both reclassification and labeling:

*Just because Planned Parenthood and the ALA deems [sic] these books appropriate, doesn't mean this community has to also. All that is being sought is a simple reclassification and an added “visual identification” for these books. Are hundreds of citizens really just asking too much?*²⁴

*Two of [these] requests were very responsible—move the objectionable books to a more adult area or label them for a certain age. . . . I would like to see those mature board members acknowledge young children are not ready for pornography-type material and still be willing to move or label questionable material.*²⁵

Labeling is presented as a common-sense approach to ensuring that parents know what their children are reading. Books are viewed as similar to other types of media, such as movies or

²² Louise S. Robbins, “Segregating Propaganda in American Libraries: Ralph Ulveling Confronts the Intellectual Freedom Committee,” *Library Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (April 1993): 143–65.

²³ American Library Association, *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, 8th ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 2010).

²⁴ L.E. *West Bend Daily News*, April 22, 2009.

²⁵ P.P. *West Bend Daily News*, June 6, 2009.

television. Some of the challengers argue that if these media have warning labels, then so should books.

*Any other form of media—movies, TV shows, magazines—they all have warning labels on them if they have sexually explicit content. Books should be no different.*²⁶

*These folks have asked you a request. It is perfectly reasonable. We do it with cigarettes, we do it with pornography. . . . If it was my choice, I would have asked you to get rid of the books completely. But these folks have asked you something completely reasonable.*²⁷

None of the challengers discuss how labeling might be carried out in the future; many of them viewed labeling as a solution of least effort for handling the books causing a problem in the community at the moment. More than anything else, labeling books as explicit would provide a visual cue for parents to quickly identify the nature of the books their children are reading. Both reclassification and labeling are directly related to another primary argument for the challengers: many of them are concerned their children will blindly encounter materials that they believe is unsuitable for children. They believe the nature of the library space and its classification will enable people to “stumble” into explicit material.

The challengers’ final argument combines both the space of the library and the fear of encountering what they believe to be dangerous information. Many of the challengers refer to a fear that children will “stumble upon” the controversial books if they are not reclassified or clearly labeled as being explicit.

²⁶ Anonymous, *West Bend Daily News*, April 28, 2009.

²⁷ T.F., public hearing testimony, June 2, 2009.

*As far as I know, the whole library is still accessible to everybody regardless of age. Concerned parents simply wanted the books moved out of an area where children might stumble across them. To me, it seems that's just good parenting—not Nazi book burning!*²⁸

*If you haven't informed yourself on the library issue and the contents of the books, go online and take a look at the books. Do you also know why you've never read anything from the books, in the paper or other media? It's because if they print anything from the books, they'll lose their license. Do you really think it's OK to let some 10- or 12-year-old kid stumble over the books in the YA section? I don't! Just move the books to the adult section.*²⁹

The theme of a sudden encounter is paramount in these arguments. Note that there is an underlying assumption in the challengers' arguments that if children see the material, they will be enticed to read it and then harmed in some fashion. The use of “stumble upon” and “coming across” implies a loss of control over the library environment. This and the presence of stealth controversial materials lead to the feeling that the library is not a safe place. Similar to reclassification and labeling, “stumbling upon” pertains to the actual space of the library. The shelves hold materials that children would not “normally” pick up. But, in trying to locate suitable, non-explicit material, they will see these books and be inevitably drawn to them.

²⁸ B.W. *West Bend Daily News*, May 13, 2009.

²⁹ L.B. *West Bend Daily News*, June 4, 2009

There are, thus, three major themes in the challengers' statements that relate to the library as an institution in the field of cultural production. First, the library should protect children from materials that might harm them. Second, the library should appropriately classify and segregate these materials. Finally, if the library fails to treat these materials as suggested, children are in danger of stumbling upon them. All of these themes relate to the idea of the library as a place and space of safety.

A Collision of Fields

As noted, there are two overarching principles in Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production. The first concerns the field of restricted production, which produces symbolic goods for producers. The second incorporates the field of large-scale production, which produces symbolic goods for the masses. Many institutions within the field of cultural production, such as museums and theaters, strictly segregate these two types of symbolic goods. The library does not. The public library, in particular, uses a classification system based on subject matter and a secondary one based on the relative reading difficulty of a particular item.

What makes the library potentially dangerous? It arbitrarily collocates differently constructed symbolic goods—from the field of large-scale production and from the field of restricted production—on its shelves. Even though the homology between producers and consumers still exists when one considers the interpretation of a given item, the library as an institution operates as if it does not. It becomes a dangerous place in which the innocent can “stumble upon” materials for which they do not possess the cognitive structures to interpret “correctly.”

This is particularly noticeable if one considers the manner in which fiction is arranged in most public libraries. After sorting according to broad genre (mysteries, science fiction, romance, et cetera), books are placed on the shelf according to the last name of the work's author. In any given library, depending on the size of the collection, Jean Auel might be collocated with Jane Austen and Paul Auster. Following Bourdieu's theory, these authors' books operate as different symbolic goods within dissimilar symbolic universes. Auster, for example, is a postmodernist author who operates within the field of restricted production, while Auel writes epic prehistoric romances within the field of large-scale production. People who hold different symbolic, cultural, and social capital will construct and interpret these works differently.

The study demonstrates that the West Bend case is a disagreement over two issues: space and interpretation. The challengers want to remove the danger they perceive in the library space by reclassifying and labeling items they believe will cause harm to children. This fear of harm to children's moral character drives the challengers, who see direct correlations among reading, beliefs, and moral development. If a child reads a book that states that homosexuality is acceptable, then the child will believe that homosexuality is acceptable.

Challengers constitute a particular kind of reading public for libraries—one that not only declares but also tries to implement its own understanding of role of the library within a community. The arguments made by the challengers as described here present themes that help explain their understanding of the status of the library as an institution in society. The library has a duty to protect children and prevent them from coming across explicit material by labeling and classifying it appropriately. If the library fails to do this, it is no longer considered a safe space and is directly implicated in hindering children's moral development.