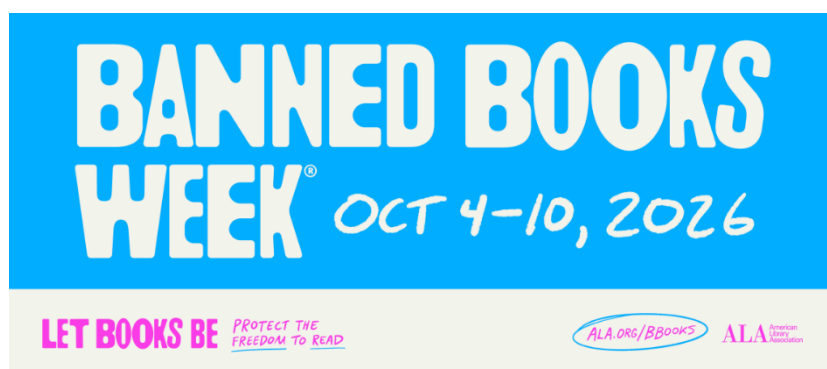




Here's what's happening with our right to read:

Chapter 28 October 6, 2026

[Join the Coalition Today!](#)



The American Library Association (ALA) released its highly anticipated [Top 11 Most Challenged Books List of 2025](#) as part of the 2026 State

of America's Libraries Report, offering a window into the ongoing challenges libraries continue to face head-on.

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) tracked 4,235 unique titles challenged in 2025, the second highest ever documented by ALA. Of the unique titles challenged, 40 percent represent the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ people and people of color.

Ninety-two percent of all book challenges were initiated by pressure groups, government officials and decision makers, up from 72 percent in 2024. Less than 3 percent of challenges originated from individual parents.

According to Sarah Lamdan, Executive Director of ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, book bans "were part of a **well-**

funded, politically-driven campaign to suppress the stories and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC individuals and communities.”

Mizzou Professor Speaks on Book Bans in America

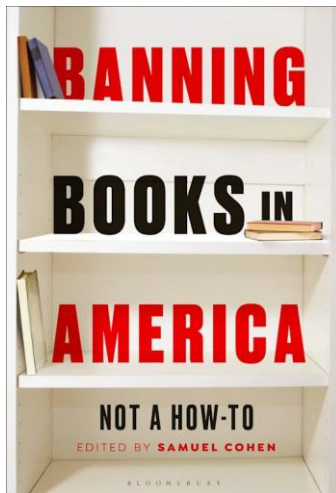


MISSOURI'S OWN PANEL

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6 AT 1 P.M.

Professor Samuel Cohen's *Banning Books in America* speaks to anyone trying to understand censorship, education, and intellectual freedom in today's divided public square.

Hear Professor Cohen at the St. Louis Jewish Book Festival, 2 Millstone Campus Drive in Creve Coeur. [More information.](#)



Professor Cohen, a Mizzou faculty member, recently published a collection of writings on banning books and how to fight back against those who threaten our freedom to read. “The book includes different perspectives on the issues raised by book challenges and offers new ways to think about where they come from and how to address them. **The book never strays from the conviction that we need the freedom promised by the First Amendment to function as a democracy** and the

understanding that the fight for the freedom to read, teach, and lend is a fight for the future of the nation.

MO Supreme Court to Rule on Book Ban Law

A Missouri law that led to the removal of hundreds of books from school libraries is now in the hands of the Missouri Supreme Court. Former state representative Deb Lavender and Right to Read coalition member, provides this background:

The Missouri Supreme Court on Sept. 23 heard arguments in a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of a 2022 state law that sought to make it **a criminal offense for a school employee to provide sexually explicit material to a student**. The law has been blocked since November after a Jackson County Court ruled the broadly worded law violates both the due process and free-speech provisions of the Missouri Constitution.

Missouri lawmakers created the new crime as part of Senate Bill 775. Two advocacy groups for librarians sued over a provision making it a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$2,000 fine for anyone affiliated with a school to provide students with “sexually explicit material.” They alleged the definition of what constitutes such material is so vague and overly broad that it **puts school librarians at risk of prosecution for legitimate content choices in violation of their constitutional rights**.

Judge J. Dale Youngs agreed and permanently blocked enforcement of that provision. In its appeal to the Supreme Court, **Attorney General Catherine Hanaway’s office contends the state has a compelling interest in regulating minors’ access to pornographic material**. The court is expected to issue a ruling in the case at a later date.

Librarians Tell It Like It Is!

New York Times reporters attended the 2026 American Library Association conference and spoke with nearly 50 librarians from across the country. Here’s a sample of what they heard.

I find it frustrating that the pendulum seems to be swinging back toward book banning and book challenges. That's something I do keep in the back of my mind while I'm ordering. I have students I'll go to bat for because every child deserves to see themselves in books.

Gina Batie, Muskogee, Okla.

Cherokee Elementary School

Librarians are defenders of democracy. We're defenders of the freedom to read. We're protectors of patron privacy. Libraries are one of the few places in this surveillance economy that are not trying to collect and sell your data to come and use our facilities. And I find, increasingly, that librarians have to be advocates for our communities.

Ed Garcia, Cranston, R.I.

Cranston Public Library

We serve everybody. Policymakers can afford to skip the library, and that means that they don't think very much about what other people are doing inside: getting respite from the heat or cold, using the restroom, occupying their kid for half an hour, applying for a job, resting. It's world-making work and the people that we make those worlds for matter.

Emily Drabinski, New York, N.Y.

Queens College, City University of New York

Transforming Book Deserts into Rich Landscapes of Literacy

While new enrollments in Dolly Parton's statewide Missouri book program are on hold, Linda Mitchell is working to put free books in more Metro East homes and finding new ways to sustain the Metro East Literacy Project. Her work is profiled in [St. Louis Magazine](#)



As founder and executive director of MELP, Linda's vision is called Erudite Nation "a movement to transform book deserts into rich landscapes of literacy. We envision communities where books are treasured, reading is celebrated, learning is woven into everyday life, and every

family has the opportunity to thrive. Together, **we are changing the narrative of our communities by equipping families with books, knowledge, encouragement, and hope—one generation at a time.** Learn more about the [Metro East Literacy Project](#).

Judy Blume: "Let Children Read!"



Let children read whatever they want and then talk about it with them. If parents and kids can talk together, we won't have as much censorship because we won't have as much fear.

-Judy Blume

[FreedomToReadProject.org](#)

