Censorship in Israeli High School Libraries: Analysis of Complaints and Librarians' Reactions

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The study sought to determine the extent of censorship in high school libraries in Israel, using a questionnaire mailed to 442 schools and yielding 187 usable replies. Significant differences were found regarding both complaints about book content and librarians' response, between the religious sectors and the non-religious one, indicating a much lower rate in the latter. More complaints were received from teachers than principals, but the latter elicited a higher compliance, probably due to their special status in school. Very little parental involvement was reported, receiving the lowest compliance. Topics of the complaints ranked as follows: pornography, degrading the Jewish religion, hard violence, sexual permissiveness, missionizing, racism, drug use, holocaust denial and bizarre sects. Pornography and violence ranked high in all sectors, but sexual permissiveness and degrading Judaism ranked high among the two religious sectors but much lower in the non-religious one. Few complaints about certain genres may result from preliminary censorship during book selection process, but in most cases it indicates less sensitivity in that sector concerning that genre.

Introduction

The school librarian is actually a mediator between students and the world of knowledge contained in the library. Strict supervision and censorship of a collection's contents may block students' access to important and needed information, while absence of censorship can expose students to contents objectionable to their parents and teachers. The literature reports numerous cases of attempted internal and external censorship of a library's collection content and their handling by librarians. No comprehensive study has addressed the prevalence, origins and targets of censorship attempts in school libraries in Israel and librarians' reaction to them. Such a study may contribute to the formation of a general policy concerning censorship, a matter of double importance since the advent of the Internet age.

Research Objectives

The objective of the study was to examine the prevalence, sources and objects of attempted censorship of library collections in Israeli high schools, the actual attitudes (i.e. extent of compliance) of librarians towards such attempts and the relations between these variables and the school's sectorial affiliation.   It was hypothesized that the extent of censorship requests and compliance to them is related to the school's

sectorial affiliation and that the degree of compliance to requests is related to the identity of the complaining person.

Literature Review

The problem of censoring the contents of school and public library collections has long concerned researchers and practitioners. Professional literature abounds with hundreds of articles and books on the various aspects of library censorship, examining the prevalence and reasons of this problem and its implications on library and librarian functioning. In view of the numerous publications, the following review focuses on a selection related only to the specific topic of the present study.

The Burgeoning Problem and Its Causes

The Library Bill of Rights composed by the ALA (1989) states that library books and material should meet the information needs of all members of the community and no material should excluded due to the origin, background or stances of its author. A library must provide information that reflects and represents the maximum perspectives on past and present events.

Previous research has indicated a gradual rise in the extent of censorship attempts in school libraries. A single-year (1985-86) report reveals a 35% increase in school censorship related incidents, corroborating a survey published by the American Civil Liberties Union for other years (Hanson, 1987; Martorelli, 1982). In the eighties, the proportion of parental complaints grew while, compared to the sixties, the number of complaints from the school staff dropped (Burress, 1989).

Pope (1974) investigated the attitudes of librarians in school, public and academic libraries regarding the acquisition of books dealing with sex and sexuality and found that the proportion of "banning" among school librarians was highest (ca. 82%), compared to only 48% among public librarians and 31% among academic librarians. The common explanation is that the school library is an integral part of the school and used by youngsters, a fact that determines its conception and goals. Consequently, the content of school library collections is much more supervised and restricted (Fiske, 1959). A study by Bump (1980) of over 600 high school libraries in five US states found that when acquiring new books, the librarian's decision is more influenced by the book's suitability to the collection and less by its possibly objectionable contents. However, a concurrent and more comprehensive study by Wood & Salvatore (1981) of over 700 high school libraries revealed that many librarians indeed exercised self-censorship by refraining from acquiring controversial titles, and denied access to many such titles to avoid complaints. A recent study by Ken (2002) of 100 high school libraries in Texas also found that 82% applied self-censorship, by not purchasing at least half of listed controversial titles. Summarizing the accumulated findings, Schrader (1996) states that school librarians, particularly in elementary schools, are undoubtedly under greater public pressure to censor material as compared to their counterparts in public libraries.

According to Burress (1989), this rise in the prevalence of censorship results from the growing number of books and students and from the perceived entitlement of parents to interfere in school matters due to the taxes the pay. The expansion of

education for democratic values has facilitated the emergence of supposedly disadvantaged groups that seek redress both from the government and from the educational system, which is often considered a scapegoat and blamed for all the ills of modern society. The blame is partially cast on the collections of school libraries, due to their supposedly "non-educational" content.

Causes of Complaints: Controversial Topics

Most requests for removing books from the library involved moral degradation and educational values, mainly in sexually related topics (pornography, homosexuality, nudism, sex education and birth control, obscenities and foul language), violence, drugs and alcohol. Additional complaints cited sacrilege or defamation of faith (e.g. Darvin's evolution theory), of religious convictions or rights of religious minorities and stories of magic and witchcraft. Other complaints concerned political issues (e.g. anti-Vietnam war) and sexist or racial discrimination, although sometimes the moral, social or political grounds were not easily distinguishable (Woods & Salvatore, 1981, Woods, 1979; Serebnick, 1982; Hansen, 1987; Maley, 1990).

An exhaustive review of three surveys conducted by Burress (1989) in US schools throughout a 16-year period (1966, 1973 and 1982) showed that the most frequent reason was profane language and obscenities, followed by sexual topics, which together accounted for 75% of banned titles. Additional reasons, much less common, were religion degradation, racism or explicit violence. Fewer books were banned on ideological grounds, due to greater tolerance or perhaps to disguised ideological opposition. Occasionally, moral, social or religious objections merged or were influenced by prejudice molded by political ideology (Reichman, 1988).

Jones (1983) as well as Reichman (1988) in his comprehensive book on censorship and selection of books for acquisition, classified the reasons for demanding removal of books from the library into four major categories: undermining of family values, threat to traditional family structure (mainly in sexual context), political views, religious faith and social issues, e.g. deprivation of minority rights. The most frequent complaint, which account for about half of the cases, concerned books containing "inappropriate", "offensive", "pornographic" language and "obscenities". Another frequent and often concurrent complaint involved sex and sexuality, a prominent theme in American culture, related to ethical and traditional values. The straightforward and open treatment of sexual topics, including sex education, in many adolescent books, often elicited complaints from parents who considered it a violation of traditional family and moral values.

Other grounds for banning were "secular humanism" contents, seemingly too "liberal" or opposing religion and morality according to conservative circles. Rather than target a specific book, they deplored the general trend of public education system promoting "secular humanism" which they believe led to the destruction of family values, increased crime and drug use and dissipated "pure American power". Parents demanded the inclusion of Creationist literature alongside books on evolution (Manual, 1989).

Likewise, complaints were directed at books on magic and witchcraft, usually on religious grounds and at books containing sexist and racist stereotypes or prejudice against certain minority groups (Reichman, 1988). The second type has increased in recent decades as awareness of minority and women's rights has grown. On

the other hand, conservative women's organizations and others reject books depicting women as career-oriented or experts in various scientific fields, asserting that this demeans the role of housewives engaged in traditional chores.

A similar conclusion was reached by Foerstel in his guidebook *Banned in the USA* (1994), on banning books by school and public libraries, in which he summarizes the main reasons for book censorship: pornographic descriptions, obscenities and denigration of religious values. Canadian school libraries also received complaints regarding the nationalist issue, a recurrent problem due to the tension between English and French speakers (Dick, 1982)

Comparing later surveys (1982-1984 and 1991-1993), Schrader (1996) points out the changes in the frequency of complaints against book contents. Witchcraft, which previously ranked fourth, rose higher and violence, which ranked fifth, rose to second place, while obscenities and explicit sexual descriptions, previously in the top place, now dropped to fifth place. Additionally, new books were published, dealing with hitherto untreated topics, such as: single-parent families, abusive parents, changed family roles, sadism, homosexuality, adolescent sex, drugs, alcohol, AIDS, etc., which also aroused controversy and drew harsh criticism by various citizen groups.

The Source of Complaints

Long-term experience in the US and Canada shows that the source of complaints and pressure are the parents, interest groups, school board, principal, teachers and librarians. In the eighties, a campaign waged by parents to purge libraries of material they considered anti-family, anti-American and atheist aroused scathing counter-reactions by parents, teachers and principals. The complaints received broad media coverage and books became an object of public criticism and pressure (Dick, 1982; McCoy, 1984; Burress, 1989). Liberal circles generally opposed parental intervention, labeling it censorship. Others argued that school must impart skills, information, values and attitudes underlying the community and that parents are legitimately entitled to choose the educational material conveyed to their children, prevent their exposure to adversely influences and the school staff must comply.

Constitutionally, the school board is the determining body on school matters, but teachers and librarians claim that their training and experience merits academic freedom and autonomy in professional decisions (Jones, 1983; Reichman, 1988). The dilemma placed the rights of teachers, parents and students at odds. Both parties felt impinged and the issue reached the courts, which usually ruled that the school board was constitutionally the supreme authority in managing the school, library included. Eventually though, some school boards complied with parental demands and removed the offensive books (Jones, 1983).

Hansen (1987) found that 40% of complaints about material in the school library came from parents, while over 50% came from teachers, principals and library staff. Burress (1989) notes that while in the sixties 48% of complaints in the US came from parents and only 42% from the school staff, the eighties have brought a significant rise in parental complaints (78%) and a drastic reduction in those from the school staff, probably as a result of ALA's campaign for intellectual freedom. More schools have also adopted an explicit policy regarding book selection, so that despite the greater number of complaints, less books are ultimately removed. ALA surveys, too, show that

less than 30% of complaints come from the principal and teachers and the large majority- over 70%- from parents and other interest groups (Simmons, 2001).

Interest groups have become a dominant factor in the US and Canada from the eighties onward. They are formally organized, share similar views, appear in the media and disseminate excerpts from controversial books. Groups of parents organize to purge the school library of "uneducational" material. Sometimes they accomplish their goal and other times encounter resistance from other community members and even spur the formation of counter interest groups devoted to protecting intellectual freedom and demanding the return of removed books (McCoy, 1984; Martorelli, 1982).

Professionals believe that a lucid and balanced book selection policy and formulation of standing procedures for positive handling of complaints from interest groups, combined with a broad perspective, sensitivity and discretion may help librarians solve the problem. The line between meeting the challenge positively and submitting to censorship is very thin. The school staff should initiate meetings with parents to discuss the school's objectives and methods (Dick, 1982; Schrader, 1996).

Self-Censorship by Principals, Teachers and Librarians

Demands to remove material from the school library may also originate from within, from the school staff itself, e.g. principals (Hopkins, 1995), librarians (Serebnik, 1982), educational technology experts (Woods & Salvatore, 1981) and other school employees (Burress, 1989) honestly concerned about the corrupting impact of certain books on the tender souls of students (Reichman, 1988).

One of the first important studies on censorship in school and public libraries was conducted in California by Fiske (1959). Her interviews with librarians suggested widespread self-censorship among school and public librarians: 67% of them reported having refrained from purchasing controversial books and 82% reported having imposed physical and technical restrictions on access to such books. A 1979 study by Woods & Salvatore (1981) on high-school libraries also affirmed that self-censorship was surprisingly commonplace and that many librarians were reluctant to face the dilemma of controversial titles. Some such titles were indeed purchased and placed under "limited access", attesting to a certain openness of the librarians, but failure to acquire other titles indicated self-censorship, often in disregard of written school policies, for fear of public outcry. The researchers concluded that in the long run a library's collection depends to a great extent on the librarian's character and professionalism (Woods, 1981; Hansen, 1987). It should be noted that library collections were checked against a predetermined list of titles, a fact that may compromise the validity of findings. This and other methodological flaws led Serebnick (1982) to question the reliability and validity of the above findings regarding self-censorship and to recall that several previous studies, such as those of Bristol (1949), Moon (1962) and Broderick (1962) reached different conclusions indicating librarians' struggle against censorship.

Response to Complaints: Librarian vs. Principal and Teachers

Libraries with a lucid policy tended to retain books, but not all fully adhered to it. The responsiveness to complaints was found to depend on the identity of the complainer: when parents complained, offensive material was removed in less than half the cases, however, if the principal, library staff or a student complained, the material

was removed 80% of the time. Studies show that demands for removing material were more influential coming from the principal and teachers than coming from parents. The principal has an important role with regard to the school library, as supervisor of the librarian and go-between between the teachers and this affects collection content. External pressure to remove material may place the librarian in conflict between his professional ethical code on one hand and his subordination to the principal on the other. Principals often seek to remove controversial material, in which case the librarian may prefer to avoid a head-on struggle for intellectual freedom and seek consensus or compromise, e.g. retaining the material but restricting access and use. Teachers usually back the librarian but refrain from active intervention so that final outcome greatly depends on the librarian's perseverance, self-confidence, freedom of action and ability to cope with the principal's views and opinions (Downs & McCoy, 1984; Hopkins, 1993, 1995).

In Israel this topic was first addressed in the late nineties, in an exploratory study encompassing 25 schools (Yitzhaki, 1998) which eventually expanded into a larger study of 98 schools (Yitzhaki, 2001). The expanded study found that most libraries actually exercise some form of internal "censorship" not originating outside the school. Most libraries did not have any written protocol or even a standing unwritten policy of specific guidelines for applying censorship. School libraries in the public-religious sector, unlike those in the public non-religious sector, generally have smaller collections containing less fiction titles on topics such as violence, horror, eroticism, etc. and more non-fiction titles on Jewish topics. Compared to the public sector, school libraries in the public-religious one carried a smaller proportion of titles from both the list of "right-wing" oriented titles and the "left-wing" ones. However, they carried more titles from the "right-wing" list than from the "left-wing" one, while libraries in the public sector had more from the "left-wing" list.

The ethical code of Israeli librarians (1996) contains a clause entitled "Avoiding Censorship" which states that "the librarian chooses and employs literature without censoring material with respect to outlook, religion or political view… The librarian does not exclude material merely because it is controversial or may offend some of the library using population. The librarian must ascertain that the library provides material reflecting the range of opinions…never removing material due to pressure from interest groups or specific minority group (Basifriot, 11, February 1996).

Methods

The research population was defined as the population of librarians working in high-schools belonging to the Jewish public and public-religious sectors in Israel. The study did not include junior high-schools or schools belonging to the Arab sector or to the Jewish ultra-orthodox sector since their unique characteristics warrant separate study. The sample was chosen by strata sampling from the national list of Israeli high schools according to Ministry of Education records for 2001. To increase the probability of obtaining a representative sample, a random sample of two-thirds of the schools in each of the seven districts was chosen so that each district was represented

proportionately to its size. The Ministry of Education list contained 636 schools, yielding a random sample of 424. The initial questionnaire was tested on November 2001 by personal interviews in 18 libraries in the Tel-Aviv and Center districts. By late December 2001 a revised version was mailed to all 424 selected schools, with a cover-letter and a pre-stamped self-addressed envelope. Telephone follow-up and repeated mailing of questionnaires in May 2001 raised the total number of returned questionnaires (including 18 pretest questionnaires) to 199 and the response rate to 45%. Elimination of non-usable questionnaires left 187 questionnaires, a usable reply rate of 42.3%. This is a relative high rate for social science research based on mail surveys (Hornik and Meyer, 1989). Besides the fact that the librarian population is generally sympathetic towards studies and surveys and tends to cooperate with researcher, apparently the aforementioned steps taken to increase responsiveness substantially raised the reply rate to above 40%. The final sample encompassed almost 30% of the 636 high-schools in the Jewish public and public-religious (including "Yeshiva" high-schools for boys or girls) educational system in Israel: 187 high schools in all seven districts possessing a library in the study period.

The **research tool** consisted of a detailed questionnaire containing questions on demographic background and on the librarian's theoretical and practical stance regarding censorship of library collections. The questionnaire was based on questionnaires used in previous studies in the US (Busha, 1972; Porter, 1997; White, 1988), adjusted and modified according to local circumstances. Questions referred to the respondent's demographic profile, her/his theoretical stance on censorship and **actual** reaction to attempts of   censorship. Due to the wide scope of findings, the present paper focuses mainly on the latter topic.

Findings and Discussion

A. Demographic Profile of the Sample:

The final sample consisted of 187 high-schools, 127 belonging to the public-secular sector (~68%), which will be named simply 'public' sector from now on, 27 from the public-religious sector (14.4%) and 33 from the "Torani-Leumi" (=national-orthodox) sector (17.6%) consisting of Yeshiva high-schools for boys or girls, which officially belong to the public-religious sector but possess a unique atmosphere and a stronger emphasis on Jewish studies. These differences warranted separate analysis and were reflected in the findings. The distribution of respondents very closely reflects the distribution of the whole population of high-schools, two-thirds of which belonged to the public-secular sector (Ministry of Education Records, 2001).

Gender: The sample was predominantly female (~95%) with men comprising only 5.3%, although the various sectors differed significantly. Women comprised 97.6% in the public sector and men 2.4%, while in the two religious sectors the proportion of men was almost five times higher: 11.1% in the public-religious and 12.1% in the national-orthodox.

Age: Age distribution was asymmetrical: a slight minority (2.7%) of respondents were under 25 years of age, 13% were 26 to 35, 15% were 45 to 36 and the large majority, almost 70% were 46 or older. This is also reflected in the mean age (48.5), the even higher median age (49.7) and the mode category, 46 and older. These findings corroborate a previous 1998 study (Yitzhaki, 2003) of school librarians which

found that the two largest groups were 41 to 50 and 51 to 60 years old, which together comprised close of 74% of the sample. Adding the 61 and older group (12.3%), the above 41 year olds comprised 86% (!) of all respondents in that study.

Seniority in School Library: Table 1 shows that over 13% of the librarians in the public sector had brief seniority of 5 years or less, compared with 22% in the public-religious and almost 40% in the national-orthodox. Accordingly, almost half of public-sector librarians (47%) had 16 years seniority or longer, compared to one-third of librarians in the public-religious and one-fifth in the national-orthodox. Mean seniority was 15.4 years in the public sector and 13.9 and 11.3 years in the two religious sectors, the medians being 14.8, 11.8 and 9.2 years respectively.

Table 1: School library work experience of respondents (Seniority at work)

Years	Public Sector	Public-Religious Sector	National-Orthodox Sector	Total Sample
Up to 5	13.4	22.2	37.5	18.8
6-10	22.0	22.2	15.6	21.0
11-15	17.3	22.2	25.0	19.4
16-25	33.1	14.8	9.4	26.3
26 or more	14.2	18.5	12.5	14.5
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
N	**127**	**27**	**32**	**186**
No response	0	0	1	1
Mean	**15.4**	**13.9**	**11.3**	**14.5**
Median	**14.8**	**11.8**	**9.2**	**13.2**
Mode Category	16-25	Up to 15	Up to 5	16-25
SD	8.6	9.6	9.1	8.9

Number of Students: The sectors differed significantly in the number of students in each school. Small schools with under 500 students dominated both the public-religious sector (59%) and the national-orthodox one (78%) but comprised only a minority of 28% of the public sector. Large schools (over 1000 students) constituted 44% of the public sector but only 7.4% (!) in the public-religious and none in the national-orthodox.

B. Censorship Requests or Complaints:

Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of all cases in which librarians of the three sectors faced censorship requests during their capacity as school librarians.

Table 2: Censorship requests faced by school librarians (in %)

No. of requests reported	Public Sector	Public-Religious Sector	National-Orthodox Sector	Total Sample
0	52.0	11.1	15.2	39.6
1-5	32.3	55.6	45.5	38.0
6-10	8.7	14.8	21.2	11.8

11-15	3.1	7.4	0	3.2
16-20	0	3.7	6.1	1.6
21 or more	3.9	7.4	12.1	5.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100%
N (no. of schools)	127	27	33	187
Total no. of requests	378	167	229	773
Mean	2.98	6.19	6.94	4.13
Median	0	4.57	4.81	2.33
Mode category	0	5 – 1	5 - 1	0
SD	5.09	6.43	7.41	5.97

A significant statistical difference emerges between the public sector and the two religious ones: while over half of public sector schools reported no requests, only 11-15% of religious schools did so. Librarians in 41% of public schools reported 1 to 10 requests, compared to about 70% in the religious sectors. These differences also clearly appear in the central tendency measures: an mean of almost 3 in the public sector, double that in the public-religious (6.19) and even higher in the national-orthodox (6.94). The public sector median was 0, compared with 4.6 and 4.8 in the other two. The religious schools numbered less than half of the public schools (60 vs. 127), but had a higher total number of requests.

It should be noted that the data in Tables 2 and onward cover the respondents' entire tenure at the school library and hence viewed accordingly. As noted (Table 1), public sector librarians had significantly higher mean and median seniority than their counterparts in the public-religious, and obviously in the national-orthodox sectors. This data further intensifies the differences between the sectors, indicating a higher rate of requests and compliance in the religious sectors, as described later.

The next three tables (3, 4, and 5) present the distribution of requests addressed at the librarian and his/her compliance to them according to school affiliation and identity of requester. Noteworthy, the first category (0 cases) also includes cases of no requests to the librarian, obviously precluding compliance.

Table 3, which presents the distribution of requests coming from the school principal and librarian's compliance to them, reveals substantial differences between the sectors. The proportion of schools which received **no** requests was highest in the public sector (80%), significantly lower in the public-religious (only 44%) and much lower in the national-orthodox one (27%). Central tendency measures too indicate significant differences between the sectors: the mean and particularly the median number of requests grow the more religious the sector. Findings suggest a relatively low degree of intervention by principals in the public sector regarding the content of library collections, compared to greater intervention in the two religious sectors, especially the national-orthodox one.

*Table 3: Librarians' compliance to censorship requests of **school principal***
(in % of schools)
(Figures in parenthesis refer to censorship requests)

No. of cases	Public	Public-Religious	National-	Total

reported	Sector	Sector	Orthodox Sector	Sample
0	(78.0) 83.5	(44.4) 63.0	(27.3) 33.3	(64.2) 71.7
1-5	(18.1) 13.4	(55.6) 33.3	(54.5) 42.4	(29.9) 21.4
6-10	(2.4) 1.6	(0) 0	(12.1) 9.1	(3.7) 2.7
11-15	0	(0) 0	(3.0) 6.1	(0.5) 1.1
16-20	0	(0) 0	(0) 3.0	(0) 0.5
21 or more	(1.6) 1.6	(0) 3.7	(3.0) 6.1	(1.6) 2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100%
N (no. of schools)	127	27	33	187
Mean	(1.09) 0.88	(1.66) 1.85	(3.69) 4.72	(1.63) 1.49
Median	(0) 0	(1.66) 0	(2.66) 2.64	(0) 0
Mode category	(0) 0	(1-5) 0	(1-5) 1-5	(0) 0
SD	(3.21) 3.13	(1.51) 4.46	(4.55) 6.37	(3.44) 2.80

The disparity between the public and religious sectors is prominent also in the proportion of librarians' compliance to principals' request to remove a problematic item. Compliance was found to be highest in the national-orthodox sector, lower in the public-religious and much lower in the public sector. It occurred in only 16.5% of public schools, but in 37% of the public religious sector and 67% in the national-orthodox one, and the differences are, of course, reflected in the mean and median values.

Table 4, depicting the distribution of requests from **teachers** and compliance to them, again reveals a statistically significant disparity between the public and two religious sectors and slight differences between the latter. The proportion of schools receiving no requests from teachers was highest in the public sector (65%), significantly lower in the public-religious (only 22%) and much lower in the national-orthodox (24%).

*Table 4: Librarians' compliance to censorship requests of **teachers***
(in % of schools)
(Figures in parenthesis refer to censorship requests)

No. of cases reported	Public Sector	Public-Religious Sector	National-Orthodox Sector	Total Sample
0	(64.6) 77.0	(22.2) 48.1	(24.2) 30.3	(51.3) 64.5
1-5	(31.5) 20.6	(59.3) 40.7	(60.6) 54.5	(40.6) 29.6
6-10	(2.4) 0.8	(14.8) 11.1	(9.1) 12.1	(5.3) 4.3
11-15	(0.8) 0.8	(0) 0	(3.0) 3.0	(1.1) 1.1
16-20	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0
21 or more	(0.8) 0.8	(3.7) 0	(3.0) 0	(1.6) 0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100%
N (no. of schools)	127	27	33	187
Mean	(1.41) 0.96	(3.81) 2.11	(3.63) 3.00	(2.15) 1.49
Median	(0) 0	(2.86) 1.75	(2.67 2.46	(0) 0
Mode category	(0) 0	(1-5) 0	(1-5) 1-5	(0) 0
SD	(2.80) 2.65	(4.54) 2.56	(4.44) 3.01	(3.57) 2.80

Compared to Table 3 (principal requests) there were apparently more requests from teachers in the public and public-religious sectors. Both means and medians confirm the disparity between the public and two religious sectors: more than 2.5 times as high. Together, the findings suggest relatively little teacher interference in the contents of library collections in the public sector compared to the religious ones. Here, unlike Table 3, the number of requests for censorship is smaller in the public-religious rather than the national-orthodox, as indicated in the comparison of means and medians. Possibly, this is a result of preliminary filtering by the librarian (or purchaser) that prevented the acquisition of problematic titles in the first place. Looser supervision of principals in the public-religious sector may have enabled the acquisition of such books, thus passing initial filtering, being intercepted only later by teachers.

Analysis of the compliance to requests underscores the significant difference between the public sector and the other two: the proportion of schools reporting zero compliance was higher in the public sector (77%) and much lower in the others: 48% in the public-religious and 30% in the national-orthodox, and again the differences are reflected in the means and medians.

Thus, a pattern similar to that observed for the principals emerges, with minor exceptions. Compliance to teacher complaints in the public and public-religious is greater than that reported for principals' complaints while in the national-orthodox it is actually lower, perhaps due to principal's greater involvement in library content in that sector.

*Table 5: Librarians' compliance to censorship requests of **parents***
(in % of schools)
(Figures in parenthesis refer to censorship requests)

No. of cases reported	Public Sector	Public-Religious Sector	National-Orthodox Sector	Total Sample
0	(87.4) 95.2	(77.8) 48.1	(63.6) 72.7	(81.8) 91.4
1-5	(12.6) 4.8	(18.5) 40.7	(30.3) 27.3	(16.6) 8.6
6-10	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0
11-15	(0) 0	(0) 0	(6.1) 3.0	(1.1) 0
16-20	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0
21 or more	(0) 0	(3.7) 0	(0) 0	(0.5) 0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100%
N (no. of schools)	127	27	33	187
Mean	(0.37) 0.14	(1.40) 0.11	(1.69) 0.81	(0.75) 0.25
Median	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0
Mode category	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0	(0) 0
SD	(0.99) 0.64	(4.47) 0.57	(3.22) 1.35	(2.36) 0.84

Table 5 presents the distribution of parental complaints and compliance to them, again underscoring the sectorial differences, although much smaller in this case. In very many of all the schools no parental complaints were reported, the rates being 87% in the public sector, 78% in the public-religious and 64% in the national-orthodox. Surprisingly, even in the two religious sectors few schools reported more than five such complaints. Means reflect the sectorial differences, but to a lesser extent as suggested by the identical medians: zero in all three sectors. Findings indicate little parental interference in the contents of library collections, the overwhelming majority of schools reporting zero parental complaints and intervention rising in direct relation to a sector's "religiousness".

In contrast, studies in the United States report a much greater extent of intervention by parents and interest groups (Hansen, 1987; Burress, 1989; Simmons, 2001). Further research is needed to determine whether the low involvement of parents in Israel stems from their belief that school libraries couldn't possibly carry "non-educational" books, is a symptom of the value confusion and educational uncertainty of many or simply reflects parents' overall indifference towards the system supposed to educate their children.

Analysis of librarians' responses to parental complaints shows that, unlike Tables 3 and 4, the public-religious sector resembles the public sector, with an even lower number of reported compliance. In both sectors, over 95% of the librarians reported zero cases and only a marginal number (4-5%) reported 1 to 5 cases of positive compliance. The national-orthodox sector differs significantly from the two former ones, with 27% of its librarians reporting 1 to 5 such cases, but even there the large majority (73%) reported zero cases, again in stark contrast to Tables 3 and 4 (principal and teachers) where only a minority reported zero cases. Findings indicate relatively greater positive compliance to parental complaints in the national-orthodox compared to lower compliance in the public and public-religious sectors. In all sectors, the frequency of compliance to parental complaints was considerably lower than that reported for

principal and teachers' complaints, partially because the number of parental complaints was substantially lower than that of the principal and teachers. Apparently the explanation lies in lower involvement of parents in the library and its contents, particularly in the public and public-religious sectors and less in the national-orthodox which displayed a much higher rate of parental complaints. Seemingly, librarians employed in national-orthodox schools are more likely to comply with parents' requests to remove items from the library than librarians of the two other sectors.

Summarizing the three previous tables, and adding new data, Table 6 offers the following conclusions concerning the **complaints**:

Table 6: Censorship requests of principal, teachers and parents and librarians compliance to them (Means per school; Medians given in parenthesis)

Sector	Principal requests	Teachers requests	Parents requests	No. of schools	Total requests	Mean per school
Public	1.09 (0)	1.41 (0)	0.37 (0)	127	367	2.89
Public-Religious	1.66 (1.66)	3.81 (2.86)	1.40 (0)	27	186	6.89
National-Orthodox	3.69 (2.66)	3.63 (2.67)	1.69 (0)	33	298	9.03
Total sample	1.64 (0)	2.15 (0)	0.75 (0)	187	851	4.55
Total requests	306	403	142	/	851	/
%	36.0	47.3	16.7	/	100%	/
	Compliance to principal	Compliance to teachers	Compliance to parents	No. of schools	Total Compliances	Mean per school
Public	0.88 (0)	0.96 (0)	0.14 (0)	127	253	1.99
Public-Religious	1.85 (0)	2.11 (1.75)	0.11 (0)	27	110	4.07
National-Orthodox	4.72 (2.64)	3.00 (2.46)	0.81 (0)	33	282	8.54
Total sample	1.70 (0)	1.49 (0)	0.25 (0)	187	645	3.45
Total compliances	319	278	48	/	645	/
%	49.4	43.1	7.4	/	100%	/

- Excluding one instance, the three sectors always differed significantly in the mean number of complaints from all three sources. The public sector averaged lowest while the national-orthodox ranked highest with one exception. In fact, the difference between the public sector and two religious ones is actually greater if considering the

greater librarians' seniority in the former and its much higher number of teachers and students.

- Except for the national-orthodox sector (with its greater degree of principals' involvement in the library) teachers top the list of complainants in the other two sectors, followed by principal and parents. Almost half (47%) of all complaints to the librarian came from teachers (403 of 851), slightly over one-third came from principals and only 17% came from parents. Seemingly, teachers interfere in the content of library collections much more than principals, and of course, parents, whose intervention was minimal. One reason for this may be teachers' more intensive use of the library and closer, more frequent ties with its staff. Likewise, every school has one principal and vice-principal but many teachers, naturally increasing the probability of teacher complaints.

- Comparison of the total number of complaints in all sectors in table 6 (based on our summary of previous tables) with those of table 2 reveals discrepancies, probably resulting from variations in the wording of questions, since table 2 is based on summary by the respondents. Experience in field research shows that responses based on respondents' summary tend to be less accurate than answers to specific questions. At any rate, the differences are not great (excluding the national-orthodox sector) and cross-checking the answers generally confirms the findings.

- Surveys conducted in Canada found that 40% of complaints came from parents (Hansen, 1987) and in the US Burress (1989) found that parental complaints rose from 48% in the sixties to 78% in the eighties. ALA surveys too showed that while 30% of complaints to US school libraries originated in principals and teachers, over 70% came from external bodies, e.g. parents and interest groups (Simmons, 2001). In contrast, the present study reveals a much higher rate, over 80% of complaints, coming from principals and teachers and a low number of parental complaints. This salient discrepancy may be explained by the greater involvement of parents and interest groups in school affairs in the US. Possibly, too, Israeli parents tend to contact the principal rather than librarians so that some of the principal's complaints are actually those of parents to him. This question eludes a clear cut explanation and warrants further study.

Regarding **compliance**, Table 6 indicates the following:

- In the public-religious and national-orthodox sectors the mean number of compliances to principals' requests was slightly higher than the mean number of their requests, leading to a higher total of compliances compared to requests. It may have resulted from the questionnaire's broad categories (1-5, 6-10, etc.) and from calculating means and totals using midpoints. Possibly, too, responses were inconsistent, based as they were on memory of long-ago events.

- Apart from one case, there was always a significant difference between the sectors: the mean of cases of positive compliance was lowest in public schools and highest in national-religious ones.

- In eliciting positive compliance the school's teachers ranked first, followed by the principal and finally parents, except for the national-orthodox sector where compliance to principal's requests outnumbered compliance to teachers' requests, reinforcing the above conclusion of a relatively greater and more effective involvement of the principal in library affairs.

- Evidently, requests by the principal elicited a higher degree of positive compliance than those from teachers, although the latter requested more often. Almost

half (49.4%) the cases of compliance were to principals' requests (319 of 645), 43% were to teachers' requests and only 7.4% to parents' requests. Thus, the degree of compliance varies depending on the requester and his/ her status in the school. The principal's views have considerable influence on a librarian's reaction to the demand to remove a book, particularly if the requester is the principal himself. Presumably, most librarians would not risk their jobs to uphold freedom of expression by opposing the principal's opinion in case of disagreement over removal of library material. In a clash between professional principles and commitment to family and career, the librarian usually favors the latter (Malley, 1990; Hopkins, 1993, 1995, 1998a; Saykanic, 2000)

- As noted, the very low average of compliance to parental requests reflects a low degree of "successful" intervention of parents in the contents of library collections. Even in the national-orthodox sector, whose mean was several times higher than that of the two other sectors, it was still lower than one case per school (0.81) and 0.25 for the entire sample. This is noteworthy, since studies in the US indicate a much larger extent of parental intervention (Hansen, 1987; Burress, 1989; Simmons, 2001).

C. Ratio of Positive Compliance to Requests

Table 7 presents the percentage ratios of positive compliance to requests, defining "positive compliance (or simply "compliance") as applying censorship, that is, removing the said item or at least restricting access to it. Compliance ratios were calculated by dividing the mean of compliance cases by the mean number of requests per school (Table 6).

Table 7: Ratios of compliance to censorship requests coming from principal, teachers and parents

Requester Sector	principal	teachers	parents	No. of schools	Total requests	Total compliances	Ratio of compliance
Public	80.7%	68.1%	37.8%	127	367	253	68.9%
Public-Religious	111.4%	55.4%	7.9%	27	186	110	59.1%
National-Orthodox	127.9%	82.6%	47.9%	33	298	282	94.6%
Total no. of compliances	319	278	48	\	\	645	\
Total no. of requests	306	403	142	\	851	\	\
Ratio for total sample	103.7%	69.3%	33.8%	187	\	\	75.8%

- In all sectors very large and statistically significant (p<0.001) differences were found between the ratios of compliance to various requesters. Ratios of compliance to the principal were highest, exceeding 100% (!) in the religious sectors and almost 81% even in the public sector. Figures higher than 100% result from underestimation of the number of requests or overestimation of the number of compliances. Ratios of compliance to teachers' requests were lower and ranged from 55% to 83% while those to parents' request were lowest and ranged from 8% in the public-religious sector to

48% in the national-orthodox one. Apparently librarians feel greater obligation to comply to requests from teachers and of course, from the principal, their superior and much less obligation towards requests from parents, whose involvement, authority and influence in school affairs is quite low in Israel. Hansen, (1987) too, found lower compliance to parental requests.

- Ratios of compliance in the national-orthodox sector were highest for the three types of requesters. Surprisingly, ratios of compliance to teachers' and parents' requests were substantially higher in the public sector than those in the public-religious sector, though significantly lower than that in the national-orthodox sector. Figures for the entire sample (95% in the national-orthodox vs. 70% and 60% in the two others) can be interpreted positively or negatively, depending on one's perspective. It can be viewed as excessive capitulation of librarians to pressures within and outside school or, as already noted in the literature reviewed above, as an indication of cooperation between the librarians and other educators, based on constructive criticism.

- Noteworthy, the highest ratio of "resistant librarians" (the difference between "zero requests" and "zero compliance" –see tables 3, 4 and 5) was actually found in the public-religious schools (18.6%, 25.9% and 18.5% for principal, teachers and parents, respectively) as compared to only 6% to 12% in the public and national-orthodox sectors. Compliance ratios in the public-religious are indeed lower than in the other two sectors.

D. Type of Books Challenged

Respondents were given a list of 14 literary genres and were requested to mark the types of books being challenged. The genres were not defined, both due to the extreme difficulty of finding an accepted definition for all and for the sake of brevity. For example, what is the exact definition of pornography and how is it distinguished from erotica, a legitimate genre in many circles?! Apparently, each respondent interpreted the genres as s/he saw fit and therefore a book considered 'soft' pornography by a public sector school librarian may be considered 'hard' pornography by one from the national-orthodox one. This reservation should be borne in mind when examining Table 8 and its analysis:

- Considerable differences existed between the sectors regarding most types of books and in most cases, national-orthodox schools had the highest proportion of complaints, followed by public-religious and public schools. There were, however, some exceptions: the rate of complaints reported by public-religious librarians regarding books featuring hard and soft pornography was equal to that of the national-orthodox sector and even higher for hard pornography (48% vs. 42.2%). Likewise, the number of complaints about literature advocating drug use and holocaust denial in the public sector exceeded the corresponding rate in the public-religious sector.

Table 8: Content of books challenged by principals, teachers or parents *

	Public Sector	Public-Religious Sector	National-Orthodox Sector	Total Sample	Total Sample
Content of books challenged	%	%	%	No.	%
'Soft' pornography	11.0	59.3	60.6	50	26.7
'Hard' pornography	16.5	48.1	42.4	48	25.7
Defamation of Jewish religion	7.9	33.3	57.6	38	20.3
'Hard' violence	11.8	25.9	39.4	35	18.7
Sexual permissiveness	5.5	37.0	48.5	33	17.6
Missionizing	11.0	18.5	36.4	31	16.6
Racism	11.8	18.5	24.2	28	15.0
Drug use	10.2	7.4	30.3	25	13.4
Holocaust denial	9.4	3.7	15.2	18	9.6
Bizarre sects	6.3	7.4	12.1	14	7.5
Pro-Arab propaganda	6.3	0	18.2	14	7.5
Repentance	3.1	0	3.0	5	2.7
'Settlement' movement	0.8	0	0	1	0.5
N (no. of schools)	127	27	33	187	100%

* Percentages exceed 100% since more than one type could be marked by respondents. Table is arranged according to descending frequency of the total sample.

- In the entire sample most complaints involved books containing hard (26%) or soft (27%) pornography, defamation of the Jewish faith (20%), extreme violence (19%), sexual permissiveness (18%), Christian missionary (17%), racism (15%), drug advocacy (13%), holocaust denial (10%), bizarre sects (7.5%) and pro-Arab propaganda (7.5%).
- The first five genres on the list are shared by both religious sectors, with minor variations. Pornography and violence ranked among the first five in the public sector too, but sexual permissiveness and defamation of Judaism ranked lower.
- Low rates reported by librarians for a certain genre do not necessary imply a lenient attitude in that sector, but only a paucity of requests to remove that genre from the library. At least for some categories, we may assume that the absence of complaints results from the application of preliminary censorship by the librarian (or purchaser) which prevented acquisition to begin with. This explains the seemingly odd finding that national-orthodox schools had a relatively lower rate of complaints involving hard pornography (42%) than public-religious ones (48%). Evidently, the looser supervision in the public-religious permitted acquisition of such books and they passed initial filtering, eliciting complaints only later. The same explanation applies to disparities between the public and public-religious sectors, in categories with lower rate for the

public-religious sector, e.g. drug advocacy (7.4% vs. 10% in the public sector) and holocaust denial (4% vs. 9%).

- However, this explanation is improbable for categories such as 'defamation of Judaism', violence, sexual permissiveness, for which the paucity of complaints in the public sector does not probably derive from preliminary screening by the librarian. It is unlikely that the public sector 'excluded' these types of books, while the two religious sectors did not. Previous studies found greater openness in the public sector regarding these types of books (Yitzhaki, 1998; 2001). Hence, for these types, the finding can be taken literally, as an indicator of the degree of sensitivity in each of the sectors towards them.

- Understandably, no complaints were lodged in the religious sectors against books sympathizing the Settlement Movement, but interestingly, this was also true for the public sector, which despite its greater openness, received too complaints about certain types of books.

Summary and Conclusions

- Substantial differences were found between the three sectors, both in the extent of complaints from all three sources (principal, teachers and parents) and in compliance to them. Means were lowest in the public sector, higher in the public-religious sector and highest in the national-orthodox one. The source of half of the complaints in all sectors were the teachers, followed by the principal (over one-third) and finally parents. Possible explanations: teachers' intensive use of the library, their frequent and direct ties with library staff, and their larger number, thus increasing the probability of a complaint coming from them. Only the national-orthodox sector displayed a similar rate of complaints from teachers and principal and a much higher rate of compliance to the principal's requests, attesting to his greater involvement in library matters.

- The distribution of fulfilled complaints shows that principals received greater compliance than teachers, probably a result of the principals' elevated status in school. Most librarians would not risk their job by opposing the principal's opinion in the event of disagreement over library contents.

- In all sectors rates of compliance to parental requests were lowest compared to that of principal and teachers. Apparently, librarians feel more obligated to respond to complaints from the principal and teaching staff than to parents, whose involvement, power and influence on school life in Israel, are much lower than in the US, for example.

- Most complaints involved books containing hard or soft pornography, defamation of Judaism or Jewish values, severe violence, sexual permissiveness, missionizing, racism, advocacy of drug use, Holocaust denial, bizarre sects and pro-Arab propaganda.

- Pornography and violence topped the rankings in all sectors, but sexual permissiveness and defamation of Judaism ranked higher in the two religious sectors and much lower in the public sector. Presumably, for some book categories (e.g. hard pornography in the national-orthodox sector) the low rate of complaints results from 'preemptive' censorship, thus preventing their introduction into the library in the first place. However, for other book categories (e.g. defamation of Judaism, severe violence, and sexual permissiveness) which elicited relatively very low rates of

complaints in the public sector the findings should be taken literally, as indicators of significantly different sensitivity in the various sectors. This corroborates the liberal attitude and greater openness found by former studies in the public sector.

- In summation, the extent of complaints to school librarians from various sources regarding was not particularly large, even in the religious sectors and the overall rate of compliance was about 75%. The absence of censorship reports and public discussions in the media and among librarians' organizations indicates that most problems are probably resolved within the school without media fanfare. Apparently, this policy is accepted by most librarians, even in the public sector, who support the exercise of censorship in certain cases, as suggested by the second part of the present study, still in press.
- A corresponding study is recommended regarding the theoretical and practical attitude of librarians to the dilemma of Internet censorship in school libraries.

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