Banning the Bildungsroman:
A Digital Exhibit Visualizing Censorship and Cultural Trends in Young Adult Literature

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Halie Kerns
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Date

Dr. Kathryn Stam

Thesis Advisor

Date

Dr. Ana Jofre

Second Reader
Abstract

Censorship of young adult books has an history as that predates the genre itself. This paper aims to contextualize this history through specific challenged books and an evaluation of government instances of book censorship of young adult titles. This information has then been displayed through a digital library exhibit for college students using information design principles and data visualization.

Keywords: book ban, censorship, digital exhibit, data visualization, libraries
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For Banned Book Week in September 2022, the American Library Association (ALA) released the following statistics:

Between January 1 and August 31, 2022, ALA documented 681 attempts to ban or restrict library resources, and 1,651 unique titles were targeted. In 2021, ALA reported 729 attempts to censor library resources, targeting 1,597 books, which represented the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling these lists more than 20 years ago (American Library Association, 2022).

For anyone following library news, this will not come as a surprise. Libraries, schools, and school board meetings have increasingly made the headlines as cultural battlegrounds for the “moral souls” of children (aka the conservative agenda). Librarians and teachers have been questioned, harassed, and attacked for creating access to books. One example in August 2022 includes Josh Kimbrell, a senator from South Carolina, calling the press outside a local public library to call for defunding of the library unless they removed certain books that he deemed “an indoctrination campaign against kids” (Mechling 2022).

While book bans had existed long before the ALA started tracking the numbers in 1990 and continue to exist, the once small individual protests have taken on new power. In an article published during Banned Book Week in 2022, Mechling summarizes the path of the trends. The origins are traced back to those parents that opposed masking in schools who then, “pivot[ed] to the fight against “critical race theory”, …[and] begun to focus on scrutinizing books, often by and about queer and Black people” (2022). These parents have then been joined by politicians
solidifying their efforts with legislation. Together, the dialog between conservative activists and politicians has grown into a movement set out to rid shelves of anything they see as unfit.

The focus of this project is to create a digital exhibit that contextualizes the current conservative movement with the legacy of book banning in the United States for college students. The holistic goal of the project is two-pronged. The first focuses on ten titles representing historical and current banning trends. Choosing at least one book from the 1950s to 2010s, I compared the titles to understand better the themes that run through the targeted books. The other part of the approach was to highlight eighteen different legal cases and laws involving the censorship of books. Visualizing the effects of these governmental instances helped to represent how structural censorship has evolved. Together, these two topics are portrayed in an online interactive exhibit with pictures, information, and data visualizations that incorporate important IDT program design principles to engage participants.

This project focuses primarily on young adult books, as they have been consistently caught in the culture wars since their formation as a genre in the 1960s. The goal was to recognize how those themes change or remain consistent, especially concerning shifting cultural attitudes. The literature review presented here will cover the theory, legality, history, and current events concerning the banning of young adult titles. The main goal of the following literature review is to provide background information on why this project is both timely and vital. The literature review comprises of scholarly sources from library science, literary theory, law, and history, but also includes a selection of recent news stories to illustrate the very recent actions of conservative politicians and activists. The methodology goes into detail about how I collected and interpreted data and how I chose to display it in a digital exhibit for college students. The results are an analysis of the data I collected for the exhibit and how I chose to display it. Finally,
my conclusion looks towards the future to see how the history and ideas presented here will need to be taken into consideration when planning for more censorship in the future. While book banning is not a new concept, the challenges now appear unique. Only by understanding how they have been organized and carried out over the last several decades, can we begin to understand how to fight back for free speech. This exhibit aims to carry this message in an engaging and interactive format that allows for reflection and action.

**Literature Review**

**Banning Books**

Books are practical objects that contain knowledge, but they are also symbols. What they represent is up to subjective interpretation that is often tied to the interpreter’s understanding of the world in which they inhabit. Although many more avenues for young adults to get information exists with internet access, the book remains a lightning rod of controversy. Knox (2015) contends that books have power, and those censoring do so with reverence for that power. Knox explains that book challengers argue that, “people who create books…should themselves be aware of the power of books and not allow inappropriate concepts…[and] “bad” ideas from receiving the legitimacy afforded by the book. Once a text is published, it is too late for the ideas to be withdrawn from the marketplace” (Know, 2015, p. 135). Thus, when attempts to censor and ban books occur, it is often an attempt to extinguish ideas and symbols for cultural change for an entire community.

In their recent report, *Banned in the USA: The Growing Movement to Censor Books in Schools*, PEN America concludes, “the vast majority of the books targeted by these groups for removal feature LGBTQ+ characters or characters of color, and/or cover race and racism in
American history, LGBTQ+ identities, or sex education” (2022). As we will see in the history of book banning, adults have been trying to keep teens from exploring these topics through books for many decades. The literature reviewed here ranges from the last fifty years of scholarship on young adult book bannings, with its recognition as a pattern mostly beginning in the 1980s.

The classification of the field “young adult fiction” is mainly attributed to the publication of S.E. Hinton’s The Outsiders in 1967. The in-between of child and adult reading universes expanded with the controversy of the publication, although several books published prior can be included in the “canon”. Two years later, librarian Margaret A. Edwards outlined the distinctive reading needs of this audience in The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts: The Library and the Young Adult. She writes, “Many adolescents who are worried about matters they hesitate to discuss, find what they are looking for in teenage stories. Most of these are adequately written; they are neither pornographic nor Communistic, they hurt no one, and they afford a great deal of pleasure to a lot of people” (1969, p. 62). Teens needed a shelf of their own.

It makes sense that the 1960s, a time of significant social change across the board, would lead to a change in literary thought for young adults. Gaffney’s Young Adult Literature, Libraries, and Conservative Activism outlines the timeline of this growth (2017). By the time the 1970s came around, a market for teenage, often harsh, realism was pumping out titles at full speed. Books by Judy Blume and Paul Zindel began to explore the adolescent experience, while other titles like Go Ask Alice (Sparks, 1971) set out to preach the dangers of making bad decisions. The 1980s took a short break with the proliferation of mass-market teen series taking over, such as Sweet Valley Twins (Pascal, 1986) and The Babysitters Club (Martin, 1986) series. This coincided with the rising tide of conservative politics of the time, with exceptions such as the included Alice series. By the 1990s teen market began to find its way back to realism,
including characters with more diverse backgrounds. It is impossible to discuss young adult books in the 2000s without mentioning the ultimate crossover age group *Harry Potter* (Rowling, 1997), followed by other cultural teen juggernauts like *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). Today's market is often driven by the success of these titles, especially as adaptations to other media projects.

As long as these titles have been around, people have had something to say about them. Despite the timeline presented focusing on young adult literature coming to age in the late 1960s, banning books for young adults can be traced back to J.D. Salinger’s proto-young adult novel *Catcher in the Rye*. Published in 1951, it provides a starting point for understanding how our attitudes about censored items can shift over time. In Gaffney’s timeline, Holden Caulfield’s timelessness is described as, “not simply a teenage protagonist firmly grounded in the throes of adolescence but also a teenage protagonist who deliberately brandishes youth in order to communicate his profound ambivalence about adulthood” (p. 9). The book was contested as soon as it was published for its sexual content and language.

This legacy was reviewed as early as 1983, with Edwards explaining thirty-some years after its original publication that, “Catcher has become a symbol for critics of what they perceive to be a vile, ungodly plot on the part of schools to undermine the morals of American school children” (p.39). Curiously by 1997, while trying to get a hold of the number of highly reported bans, Donelson's assumption that the book is no longer “hip” enough to be banned is incorrect. While citing eighteen banning incidents from 1986 through 1995, Donelson surmises, “I would have guessed that the book was less and less widely read by kids, but as I checked on the dates of the objections, they're all over the place. I thought that the only thing that kept this charming but dated book alive is the censor” (p. 24). In fact, at the time, the only book they could find with
more bans was Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1997). This begs the question, what makes a book a target—either of fleeting tensions or impressive longevity?

Knox (2015) defines censorship as, “control over the production and distribution of texts and other cultural goods” (p.11), recognizing, “the modern sense of the word relating to the general circulation of information in society dates to the early 19th century…to a time of proliferation of texts, broad circulation of knowledge, and rise in literacy rates across the Western world” (p.12). As more people read, more people protested what people ought to be reading, especially young minds. For the purpose of this research, bans, challenges, and censorship of young adult materials will be discussed interchangeably, noting that while the efforts may be different, they all aim to keep content from the intended audience.

Prior to the internet, banning was, for the most part, the effort of individual efforts. A single person or group at a single school or library would protest for the removal of books by making complaints, submitting testimony, or even checking books with no intention of returning them to ensure that no one else could read them. The bans we know about from this time (especially before 1990 when the ALA began tracking the number of censorship attempts) were the ones that were contentious or plentiful enough to be news. One of the earliest texts that tried to study this phenomenon comprehensively is Burress’ *Battle Of The Books: Literary Censorship In The Public Schools, 1950-1985* (1989), which included a fifty-page chart of challenges by date and reason. However, there is no way to know how many were missed. When speaking about books that are banned under the radar, even in today’s climate, Goodwin explains, “82 to 97 percent of book challenges go unreported on”, stating that while controversy does help some books reach notoriety, more often than not, means that book will just never be read (2022).
Legal and Legislative Action

The legal protection against the removal of books, especially concerning school libraries, lands precariously on two Supreme Court Cases. This first is 1969’s *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, a 1969 decision stating, “First Amendment rights, applied in light of the special characteristics of the school environment, are available to teachers and students. It can hardly be argued that neither students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate” (*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 1969). Free speech, as promised by the First Amendment, includes students and teachers in schools. The second relevant case is *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico*, which in 1982, pitted parents and the school board wanting to remove books from school libraries against students who wished them to remain. The court decided that the school board’s power is, “secondary to the transcendent imperatives of the First Amendment…as centers for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas, school libraries enjoy a special affinity with the rights of free speech and press” (*Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico by Pico.*, n.d.). Just because the board disagreed with the content, it did not allow them to remove them.

While Pico sounds like a win against censorship, it also created a framework for censors to manipulate. According to Schroeder’s 2021 legal exploration “How to Ban a Book and Get Away With It”, “the Court maintained that a book could properly be removed based on its “educational suitability,” a vague term that has not been consistently applied (p. 363). In fact, according to Schroeder, “educational suitability” has been weaponized by the politically motivated to remove books that they disagree with no guidance in the original case on how to analyze motivations. Schroeder summarizes this results stating, “the courts since Pico have
incentivized school boards to create pretextual justifications for their removal decisions…school boards are free to remove books, even if the removals are politically motivated. All school boards must do is say the magic words: “educational suitability” (p. 389).

Pico is the main Supreme Court case deciding censorship in schools and libraries, before and after 1982, however, there are several local and state cases that this virtual exhibit will explore. These cases will be visualized alongside recent legislative efforts to cement library and school censorship into law. The most famous of these cases include two Florida Laws, passed in tandem this year: CS/CS/HB 1557: Parental Rights in Education (Florida Senate, 2022a) and CS/HB 1467: K-12 Education (Florida Senate, 2022b). Together, they make up the famous Don't Say Gay legislation that instated censorship of LGBTQ topics in schools across the board, not just in reading materials. As of October 2022, this framework has also been used to propose a similar law on a federal level in the House of Representatives by Republicans (Wamsley, 2022). Called the "Stop the Sexualization of Children Act," the bill proposes to "prohibit the use of Federal funds to develop, implement, facilitate, or fund any sexually-oriented program, event, or literature for children under the age of 10, and for other purposes" (Wamsley, 2022). Although unlikely to pass in its current form and with the current Congress, it represents the change from local challenges to a push for national blanket censorship. Several institutions track these cases and legislation with commentary, including the University of Connecticut Libraries (Rajotte, 2022) and Book Riot (Jensen, K. 2022).

Motivations

Educational suitability and “protection of children” may be the words behind the calls for book removals, but ultimately, what are the goals of these censorship campaigns? Teen readers, “seek understanding about themselves and others in order to place themselves within a larger
social context”, with reading “creating a private “space” for them to retreat from obligations, setting in motion an imaginary landscape not accessible to those around the reader” (Gaffney, 92). The assumption, then, is that the book’s content helps readers understand themselves and the choices they have. Whose job is it to monitor that content?

The answer to that question for the majority of the bans, especially the ones we have seen recently, have been “pro-family” conservative Christians, “an incarnation of the New Christian Right, a social movement aimed at mobilizing evangelical Christians into conservative political action. (Gaffney, 2017, p. 97). Since many of the discussions in the books, including sex, gender, and race, were once not on the shelves, their existence now exemplifies what they consider a moral degradation of the culture. Knox explains that the presence of the books signifies an attack on past “standards”, stating, “challengers are concerned with the values and morals that are condoned by society and argue that without a strong backbone, society will collapse. If poor values are acceptable in the larger society, then the world as it is known today is doomed” (2015, p. 73). These books represent change, but not a change that censors what to see. Knox continues that it is not necessarily coming from feelings of nostalgia. Rather it is a reactionary argument to social and demographic societal shift, with the challengers not, “necessarily want[ing] to fully return to the past (although it is possible that some do) but instead, they are more [being] concerned with what WILL happen if society continues on its current trajectory” (2015, p. 73). The teens are impressionable, the books will lead them astray from what the censors “know” to be “good”. Thus, according to the arguments, the books must go in order for society to survive.

Finally, the fact that the books exist is terrible to these censorship actors. However, the worst part is their availability in libraries and schools, thus making those two institutions the targets of conservative activists' rage. Not only may their children access them, but also other
children. These attacks were not always historically the case. Gaffney writes, “although libraries could be (and were) sites of community conflict throughout the twentieth century, they still managed to maintain an authority that insulated them” (2017, p. 100). This changed when evangelical activists turned their fury towards the institutions themselves, “believing that schools and libraries abused their professional trust by attacking religion, promoting causes such as gay rights, and ultimately denying conservative parents their right to inculcate their religious and political beliefs in their offspring” (Gaffney, 2017, p. 100). The availability of books to children within these institutions represents, to conservative activists, “the decline of society, the role of public institutions, the perceived lack of parental involvement in their children’s lives, and the preservation of children’s innocence” (Knox, 2015, p. 70). The democratic backbone of these institutions allows for a myriad of perspectives, experiences, and ideas, which is unacceptable in their opinion. These proponents of censorship staunchly believe that these institutions have historically and should continue to only reflect their own values.

**Conclusion**

This literature review outlined the history, theory, government action, and current events concerning banning young adult book titles. The sources highlighted here are meant to introduce and contextualize the topic to ground further discussions and visual representation of this movement as part of this capstone project to create a digital exhibit. The information will hopefully help create a richer understanding of the exhibit that connects and contrasts themes in the history of young adult book banning.
Methods

Individual Books

To create my digital exhibit, I collected book censorship data from two different avenues. Within the context of the IDT program, I often found myself analyzing data. This project allowed me the experience of also thinking about how to collect it. The first format was to examine ten different popularly banned titles published from 1951 to 2021. I chose my titles from a variety of sources. I consulted articles, books, and lists published between the 1960s and 2020s that discussed popular banned books. I focused on young adult titles with an intended audience of 12-18 with characters the same age as the audience. I chose at least one book from each decade, with a couple of decades having multiple titles due to the relevance of censorship during that time (this was especially true of the 1970s). I also tried to include titles with varying banning histories, whether they have continuously been banned or are now considered okay. The proposed method has a vital pathos component of invoking nostalgia and familiarity within the view to recognize the titles as part of their personal literary past to connect to the exhibit.

To analyze the titles, I created a spreadsheet and labeled columns initially to include the title, author, publishing date, and reason for the ban (Appendix A). I wanted to standardize the primarily qualitative data so that I could draw data-based comparisons in the visualization. While I had drafted the project with these methods in mind, I was able to draw even more inspiration for information extraction from a foundation text for this project, Burress’ *Battle of the Books: Literary Censorship in the Public Schools, 1950-1985*. Released in 1989, this book was a seminal text for collecting banned book data. The American Library Association (ALA), which now tracks book bans as a central advocate, did not begin doing so until 1990. Burress not only presents a relatively extensive picture of book bans within the timeframe, but they also explore
the methods that other researchers had employed up to that point to collect the data. These methods included searching across news sources, interviews with librarians, and surveys. Even now, with a centralized tracking body and the internet, the ALA suggest is still suggested that only a small percentage, 3-18%, of book challenges are recorded (American Library Association, 2013). When the book was written, the information was even more scattered. However, Burress aimed to remedy that with an extensive table of all the collected bans over seventy pages. This table, especially the headings, guided my own spreadsheet. As I researched each book, I coded the data consistently to understand how the information from Burress’ table and ALA’s tracking intersected to understand book challenges within the combined time frame.

**Government Instances**

As I was doing this, I kept returning to my initial research question: what kind of cultural attitudes run alongside book banning and why? To answer this, I began to look at the court cases and laws that ran alongside these challenges, which I had already collected about specific titles. This data helped to give context on who they were controversial to and why. I focused on the legal and legislative battles around book censorship in schools since there were about a dozen cases related to this on several different power levels.

Once I made this decision to include these data, my methodology had to be changed slightly to help draw more specific data. In the end, I ended up with the following categories on my spreadsheet to compare:

- Case/Law Name
- Level
- Location
- Year
- Books involved
- Place
The current events that guided this project were the recent introduction of laws in several states meant to codify the banning of books and the punishment of educators and librarians for making them available. I also collected information about these laws. Whether successful or not, these laws point to a new chapter in normalizing censorship. Ultimately, I wanted to compare this level of codification to past instances. While going through my collected data, I realized with a dual focus on legal and legislative instances of book censorship in schools and libraries, I would be able to ground the stakes of each of the highlighted challenged books more thoroughly.

Using these points of reference, I was then able to find cases and laws to analyze. I ended up choosing 18 governmental censorship instances that involved the contentment of books in school and public libraries and classrooms. The information about the instances came from various legal and legislative websites, including OpenJurist, CaseText, and various state bill overviews.

Since I only looked at select titles and instances over such a broad period, the goal of this project was never to be completely comprehensive. There are holes in my data where no data for specific titles are available, or the available data is incomplete. However, the focus here is on data analysis and presentation, rather than on comprehensive collection. I wished to cast a lens on the broader cultural themes that emerge when looking at the available data and representing it in a digestible way. After collating the two, I decided to create a digital exhibit that combined
both streams of research. The ten books would represent most of the exhibit, and the legal and legislative data results would support the conclusions about the future.

Creating an Exhibit

The act of banning young adult titles is critical to highlight for many reasons, one of which is the large group of readers it affects. Many of these readers, ranging from pre-teens to adults, are entering adulthood and finding their place in the world. As an academic or college librarian, I see the effect of these books on readers in my library. Thus, with this research, I created a virtual exhibit for an audience of college students. The aim is to reflect on their relationship with the titles and understand current and historical political censorship regarding these books. The main components of the exhibit are information about each of the ten titles, two data visualizations about the court cases, and accompanying text to connect the information.

Note: Mobile Browsing
BANNING THE BILDUNGSROMAN

Note: Screenshot of web browsing

To plan and create this exhibit, I relied on the application of several IDT frameworks. The main being design theory, which refers to graphic design elements such as color, typography, grid, and hierarchy. This was applied to the building of the exhibit, drawing on my experience in IDT 534 Information Design. The primary text for this design was Lidwell, Holden, and Butler’s *Universal Principles Of Design* (2010). This book outlines nearly 250 of the most important considerations when designing information.

Of those 250, I focused on the following design for this exhibit: grid, hierarchy, typography, and color theory. The entire website designed to a grid, using responsive website, meaning it is meant to look good on the screen (W3Schools, n.d). This meant the grid allowed me to plot the items to line up in a format that corresponded with the device: web, tablet, mobile. They changed places depending on the device but remained organized in the grid to present them in an organized manner.
Another component of the design was the consideration of hierarchy. Each page has the same heading menu introducing the project at the top.

Users can navigate from the menu options to the three pages. However, the header and menu are purposefully small compared to the title on each page. It is meant to be used but not meant to be the focus of the page. The title of each page, is largest, followed by any subheadings, and then finally the body text. The titles are very large to draw readers in and everything else is
diminutive that initial introduction. On the opening page that contains the ten book titles, I also had to consider the hierarchy within each of the boxes that represented a book. I led with the initial year of publication since they are organized chronologically. I then have the title, which is underlined, as it doubles as a hyperlink to access the title through the library. The rest of the text is in the normal body size font since it makes up the majority.

In terms of typography, I kept my font choices simple according to Lidwell et al.’s (2010) suggestion, as well as the guidance I received in IDT 535 Typographic Design. I chose to work with Syne, as directed within Wix, the website builder I used. This is a more decorative text, so it was used for all text that was not body text such as headers, titles, and the menu. The body text is Questrial. Both texts ended up being sans-serif which would not necessarily be what I chose given more options. However, since Syne had interesting shapes, especially within the descent part of the letters, I thought they were different enough to work well together.

Banning the Bildungsroman

From 2021-2022 there was a dramatic increase in censorship aimed at bookshelves. This trend represents both a continuing legacy of the banning of young adult books in the US, and also a departure from community-based conversations to large-scale removal campaigns.

Bildungsroman, as a genre, represents stories for and about young adults’ moral, psychological, and
Government Instances of Censorship

The arena of book banning has moved from community-based or individual opinions to a concerted wide-scale

The Future

Censorship of young adult titles is a multifaceted issue representing two static forces, flourishing change and those who oppose the new generation being exposed to that change. It is both a recent (within the history of

Note: Page titles with the body text that follows to demonstrate hierarchy

Finally, I used color theory to guide my palette choices for the site. I was once again limited by the offerings of Wix, however, I was able to pick colors to work with and play with shade and opacity. For the main colors, I went with black and white to make it easy to read. This also included a light shade of gray to break up the different book titles into boxes. I did have accent colors on each page. I chose these colors specifically because they were spilt complementary according to Adobe Color’s Color Wheel (n.d.). It ended up being a light orange, a bluish purple, and a green. Subtlety was a struggle for me, as I tend to follow a “more is more” philosophy when choosing colors. However, I think the restraint turned out well as the colors do not distract from the content. This decision helped the book covers stand out on the first page because of how much color they add. On the second page, although the colors of the data visualizations clash with my website choices, since they are so subtle, it does distract.
In terms of creating data visualizations for the exhibit, I drew on two sources of information. The first is Cairo’s *The Functional Art: An Introduction To Information Graphics And Visualization* (2012). The book, which I used in IDT 548 Contemporary Trends in Data Visualization, provides a holistic design framework for approaching data visualizations. It helped guide my decisions when creating and adding visualizations for the exhibit. Although my visualizations turned out simpler than many of the visualizations in the book, it still was an important reference in the process.
Note: Data Visualization 1

The first visualization I chose to do is a Choropleth map of the United States. Throughout my data collection, I had copious amounts of research extracted. However, most of it was qualitative and narrowing it down to categories that could be expressed in a visualization was harder than I expected. When I started to play around with the data, the easiest way to represent it in Tableau was through location-based visualization. Since the number of examples, I had was under twenty, I just designated by state. I separated the court case and laws by color. I also made them selectable on the interactive legend so you could look at just one or the other. When selected, a state lists the information about the instance including name, original intent, object and other actions.

Note: Data Visualization 2

For the second visualization, I want to present the ideology behind the instances, to evaluate whether there had a been a change or not. This visualization was much simpler. I had tried to represent it different charts, but I found the stacked timeline worked the best. Each instance is represented by a color that states whether the ruling could be deemed pro- censorship, pro- free speech, or a compromise. I also included information about the ruling. Although these are the same instances represented in the map, they include different information. I chose this as
to not overload the information on the map, spread out the reading, and allow the viewer to make connections between the two.

While the exhibit could have just included the book titles, the data visualizations added more layers to understanding and engaging with the topic for people participating in the digital exhibit. In terms of creating data visualizations as part of a project for an academic library, I also defer to Miller’s “Data Visualization as Participatory Research: A Model for Digital Collections to Inspire User-Driven Research” (2019). Through the 2019 peer-reviewed article, Miller discusses the results of creating data visualizations to accompany the digital collection of historical documents, art, and other cultural objects related to the Civil War in Tennessee. Different applications that were used and tracked included Google Analytics, CONTENTdm, ArcGIS Online, and Tableau. In short, the paper aims to understand how people interact with data visualizations that appear alongside existing digital collections. The idea being, that data visualization alongside the digital artifacts creates an interactive learning experience instead of just a traditional viewing. Unlike in person exhibits were people physically move through the space, digital exhibits run the risk of just being a series of empty clicks without engagement. With data visualizations next to each item, viewers are not just skimming, they are able to see measurable outcomes of the artifact that helps them contextualize them with the overall exhibit and historical context.

Similarly, my project aims to show off artifacts (the books) and visualizations. Although I did not employ the 1-1 connection that the paper talks about, I chose to connect my artifacts and visualizations through the same topic. I also was able to make the library presence more apparent with the links to the catalog and the examples of articles from different databases. Miller (2019)
article helped me understand the power of presenting data visualization alongside library materials to create an interactive digital experience with the materials. Together, important information design principles, and data visualization techniques, coupled with my library experiences, guided my process for building the digital exhibit.

Results

Banning the Bildungsroman

Combining the legal and legislative findings with ten popularly challenged titles helped me weave a rich tapestry of the history of book banning in the United States. This information was then presented in a digital exhibit format, aimed at college students. The exhibit presents a combination of the entrance point of book titles that everyone is familiar with and legal and legislative examples that explore the cultural understanding of book-banning support the initial research helped to form a picture of the factors that go into this censorship and the way it has evolved.

Below is a list of the books I focused on with the information on what they have been challenged, which is pulled directly from the ALA’s Top 10 Most Challenged Books Lists (2022):

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year Published</th>
<th>Objection per the American Library Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catcher in the Rye</td>
<td>J. D. Salinger</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>sexual content, offensive language, unsuited to age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Darling, My Hamburger</td>
<td>Paul Zindel</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>sexual content, depiction of abortion, offensive language *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Reasons for Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go Ask Alice</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>drugs, offensive language, sexually explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chocolate War</td>
<td>Robert Cormier</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>sexual content, offensive language, unsuited to age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forever</td>
<td>Judy Blume</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>offensive language, sexual content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Series</td>
<td>Phyllis Reynolds Naylor</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Nudity, offensive language, religious viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak</td>
<td>Laurie Halse Anderson</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Contains a political viewpoint and it was claimed to be biased against male students, and for the novel’s inclusion of rape and profanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</td>
<td>Sherman Alexie</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Banned and challenged for profanity, sexual references and use of a derogatory term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hate U Give</td>
<td>Angie Thomas</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>profanity, violence, and because it was thought to promote an anti-police message and indoctrination of a social agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Queer</td>
<td>Maia Kobabe</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>LGBTQIA+ content, and because it was considered to have sexually explicit images</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No data available through ALA and is instead pulled from (Burress, 1989, p. 303-304).

I chose a wide range of titles, with one from every decade. All were single-volume books except the Alice Series, which follows the titular character over a lifetime and is one of the most challenged series of all time after Harry Potter. I chose not to include the Harry Potter books since they are considered children’s literature more than young adult and have been widely reported on when it comes to book and author challenges. All books I chose have either been challenged over several decades and not as a one-time censorship attempt or have been recently fiercely debated.
When you look at the chart, it is easy to see that almost all the books were challenged were so because of themes related to sexual content. The content ranges a wide spectrum to include nudity, sexual assault, abortion, LGBTQ sexuality, and just general discussion of sex between characters. This is very much in line with Gaffney (2017) and Knox’s (2015) discussions on the so-called “moral degradation” of culture through the eyes of conservative Christians who see any discussion of these topics as a threat. To discuss something that was experienced by teens but was once taboo to talk about points to what they see as a decline rather than openness. The only book out of the ten that does not have any mention of sexuality in the challenges is 2017’s *The Hate U Give*, which was challenged for the social messaging about race and anti-police. The targeting of books with similar topics, has also grown with the growing discussion of these issues in young adult literature, alongside social movements and upheaval concerning race and policing in the last decade.

In a Small Town, a Battle Over a Book

LEAD: If a group of local parents had let her speak to them before "The Catcher in the Rye" was banned from her high school, Shelley Keller-Gage says she would have told them she believes it is a highly moral book that deals with the kinds of difficulties their own children are facing.

If a group of local parents had let her speak to them before "The Catcher in the Rye" was banned from her high school, Shelley Keller-Gage says she would have told them she believes it is a highly moral book that deals with the kinds of difficulties their own children are facing.

But Mrs. Keller-Gage, an English teacher, was asked not to speak, and a small group of people led by a woman who says she has not read – and never would read - such a book, persuaded the school board to ban it this month from the Boro High School supplementary reading list.

"Unfortunately, what happened is not at all unusual," said Anne Levinson, assistant director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom in Chicago. "Censorship is still very much with us. As a matter of fact, I think "The Catcher in the Rye" is a perennial No. 1 on the censorship hit list."

Ms. Levinson said J.D. Salinger’s 1951 novel about a troubled teenage named Holden Caulfield seems to have a narrow lead over John Steinbeck’s "Of Mice and Men" and "Grapes of Wrath" in arousing the objections of communities or special-interest groups that are increasingly moving to ban books. "Undercurrent of Fear"

On Wednesday, People for the American Way, a group that opposes censorship, issued a report listing 172 incidents in 42 states of attempted or successful censorship in schools in the last year, illustrating what the group’s president, Arthur Knopp, called "an unreasonable undercurrent of fear about the so-called ‘dangers’ of public school instruction."

The report, the group’s seventh annual censorship roundup, said efforts to restrict books and curriculums from classrooms and school libraries were on the rise nationwide, with nearly half of them succeeding.
Note: Example Article from Mydans, S. (1989, September 3). In a Small Town, a Battle Over a Book.

In addition to information about the titles, I also linked at least one news article for each, that discussed challenges made to that title. I included this for three reasons. The first was that I felt that this was able to communicate the wide range of circumstances around different challenges and give people an idea of such. Second, it helped show that many of these books continue to be challenged over time. The third was that it incorporated the use of library resources—news articles which were found in the library’s databases. The downside of this inclusion was that they might not be accessible to non-SUNY Canton students. For this reason, I included some articles that are not behind a login. I will also note that our news databases do not expand much further than the 1980s, so all the articles that were from databases were from this time on. One of my goals as a librarian is to represent a strong foundation for information literacy learning for our students, so including these articles helps them continue to use those skills.
Another late addition to the main page of book titles, was a link to each of the books within the SUNY Canton online catalog. Not only does it help promote the titles when SUNY Canton students participate, it also brings these ideas close to home. Since it is a digital exhibit, when an eBook was available, that was the permalink prioritized. In theory, students can read the overview and then go read or request the book right after.

**Government Instances of Censorship**

The arena of book banning has moved from community-based or individual opinions to a concerted wide-scale effort by leading politicians supported by large, organized groups of people. For the purpose of this exhibit, Government Instances of Censorship highlights instances of both legal cases surrounding censorship and related censorship laws. As you will see below, all legal cases from 1972-2006 were intra-community opponents; whether it be students versus school board or parents versus school, the pro-censorship and Free Speech advocates both were arguing for their immediate constituency. Although the nature of legal battles is to set precedents for other decisions, none of them lead to blanket changes to other unrelated schools or libraries, let alone to state or federal laws.
On the second page of the exhibit “Government Instances”, I was able to visualize the data I collected through two Tableau data visualizations with commentary. Out of the eleven legal cases I looked at involving book banning, the date ranges broke down as follows: three cases in the 1970s, four cases in the 1980s, one case in the 1990s, and three cases in the 2000s. The most famous of the cases, and the only one to make it to the Supreme Court, being the Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico in 1982, which led to an ambiguous precedent for other cases. All seven bills and laws I collected data on were proposed or passed in the last two years. All of the information about these cases were represented on the map that I made. Each dot is clickable for more information, and you can also filter the instances by court case or law.

Below that, I did a time chart of all the cases, organized by the outcome, whether if was pro-censorship, pro-Free Speech, or a compromise. One of the most significant indicators of change in these trends, was the change in the scale of censorship over the years in terms of who was represented in the cases and laws. All of the court cases involved students, parents, teachers, and, at most, school districts. The examples of challenges for each book were almost always based on a personal insult rather than a societal one. The one exception was Sund v. City of Wichita Falls in 2000, which involved an entire community trying to get two LGBTQ+ picture
books removed from their libraries. The ruling stated that the community was not allowed to resort to mob rule in the form of gathering signatures to remove the books (Sund v. City of Wichita Falls, Tex., 2000). This contrasted greatly with the proposed and passed laws in 2021-2022.

Whether passed or not, the recent laws were all pushed at a state or federal level. The political power of these laws and their purpose to make sweeping censorship decisions marks a fundamental cultural shift in a free speech concerning young adult books. With this timeline, I was able to use my data to display the rulings and changes over time. Although the nature of legal battles is to set precedents for other decisions, none of the cases from 1982 to 2009, lead to blanket changes to other unrelated schools or libraries, let alone to state or federal laws. Whereas six of the proposed and passed laws from 2021-2022 were to be put into effect for an entire state, with the seventh, being proposed last week, to be instituted federally. I wanted to show this stark difference.

The other conclusion I reached is the growing importance of books as symbols rather than for their content. All ten books I looked at have been challenged for their content, whether it be sexuality, LGBTQ themes, or language. However, access is less of an issue in 2022 than before the 1990s. Books are no longer the most popular way to access information when the

The Future

Censorship of young adult titles is a multifaceted issue representing two static forces, flourishing change and those who oppose the new generation being exposed to that change. It is both a recent (within the history of literature) and an old-standing tradition (in the young adult literature genre's life). Following its history, what we are experiencing now, in some ways, is a continuation of a legacy of censorship of teen material. In other ways, the size, force, and ferocity of the current trend in the 2020s is an entirely new beast, with tangible targets: libraries, both school and public, and those who run them.

As we can glean from looking at examples of challenged books and government instances of those challenges, the ideas about censorship are almost always bigger than the books themselves. Books stand for knowledge and change, and young adults represent the future. When the two collide, the reactions pose an existential threat to communities that wish to remain static in their understanding of the world around them. Seventy years of book bans have not been able to stop that change from occurring. However, it does produce disruption. This disruption was almost always on a small scale historically, whether it be a single library or school district. That precedent has
internet is integrated into almost every access of our lives. The themes and contents of books are more symbolic when that same topical information is infinitely available through a phone or computer. Thus, when proposed laws ban books with LGBTQ+-related content or discussions about race, it is less about a reader ever finding that information and more about what the book stands for in an increasingly pluralistic society. For example, Maia Kobabe’s *Gender Queer*, a gender exploration published in 2019, has increasingly come to the forefront of book-banning conversations as conservative lawmakers have grown increasingly transphobic in their rhetoric. Realistically a teenager could search for information about gender exploration at any time. However, having the book available in libraries and bookstores symbolizes the changing times. Its popularity threatens a transphobic minority that wants to control the normalization that comes with its visibility.

*Note:* Screenshot of an “The Future” page of exhibit

On my final page, “The Future”, I challenged the participant to think about their feelings on symbology and how it affects their own life. To do so, I created a form that allowed for feedback and discussion to be submitted. I felt that this was a way to engage people who participated in the exhibit and to collect data on what people thought about it. I also included a link to the ALA Advocacy page where they can learn more about fighting censorship in their community if they are interested. It was important to me to include actionable options to coincide with the sometimes-pessimistic findings.

Over this semester, my project pivoted several times. The final product reflects my goals of creating a digital exhibit that includes examples of ten different often banned titles and data visualizations to support them. However, there are plenty of places where I could improve or expand the project. The first is the interactivity of the site. There is some, especially with the data
visualizations, but I do think there could be more to engage the participant. The site works on mobile, but the embedded visualizations from Tableau do make it a little wonky, so that could be improved. The exhibit is also fairly short overall, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but it could be expanded upon given more time.

The history of book banning in the United States is not a linear one. However, looking at ten challenged titles and several governmental instances of book censorship, we can see trends and recognize how to plan for the future. It is not simply enough to learn about history. Being able to analyze and respond to it is equally as important. My exhibit was created in mind to be a jumping-off point for these conversations.

Conclusion and Future Outlook

Censorship of young adult titles is a multifaceted issue representing two static forces, flourishing change and those who oppose the new generation being exposed to that change. It is both a recent (within the history of literature) and an old-standing tradition (in the genre's life). Following its history, what we are experiencing now, in some ways, is a continuation of a legacy of censorship of teen material. In other ways, the size, force, and ferocity of the current trend in the 2020s is an entirely new beast, with tangible targets: libraries, both school and public, and those who run them. Gaffney stated even back in 2017 that “Libraries increasingly [have drawn] the scrutiny of profamily activists, who [see] them not simply as fair game for politics but also as places no longer safe for families, run by professionals no longer in touch with communities” (p. 100). That being said, the current landscape and momentum of this movement in 2022,
especially in terms of conservative political legislation, would be shocking to Gaffney five years ago.

As we can glean from looking at examples of challenged books and government instances of those challenges, the ideas about censorship are almost always bigger than the books themselves. Books stand for knowledge and change, and young adults represent the future. When the two collide, the reactions pose an existential threat to communities that wish to remain static in their understanding of the world around them. Seventy years of book bans have not been able to stop that change from occurring. However, it does produce disruption. This disruption was almost always on a small scale historically, whether it be a single library or school district. That precedent has begun to change as a more unified front of activists has streamlined the process to create blanket state and possibly national bans in the name of “parental rights”. This marks a departure from community-based censorship discussions targeting specific titles, to large-scale banning of materials that touch on a wide range of topics that those in power disapprove of.

It is vital to recognize this pattern. When I began this project, I thought that looking at titles and comparing data on the bans would help create a project that people would connect with on a personal level. However, the more I analyzed the history of government censorship instances, the more I could recognize that organized institutional censorship must be met by an equally organized force of free speech advocates. My exhibit is for college students, who I believe can be an important part of this charge. My hope is that I can successfully communicate the importance and urgency of the situation through my design, using the information design skills I learned while in the IDT program, to inform and inspire a new generation of free speech advocates for young adult books.
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Appendix A

Example of Spreadsheet to Collect Book Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Published</th>
<th>Objection</th>
<th>Example 1</th>
<th>Date 1</th>
<th>Example 2</th>
<th>Date 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catcher in the Rye</td>
<td>J.D. Salinger</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>sexual content, offensive language, unsuited to age group</td>
<td><a href="https://link.gale.com">https://link.gale.com</a></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chocolate War</td>
<td>Robert Cormier</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>sexual content, offensive language, unsuited to age group</td>
<td><a href="https://link.gale.com">https://link.gale.com</a></td>
<td>1974</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forever</td>
<td>Judy Blume</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>offensive language, sexual content</td>
<td><a href="https://link.gale.com">https://link.gale.com</a></td>
<td>1975</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak</td>
<td>Laura Halse Anderson</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>contains a political viewpoint and it was claimed to be biased against</td>
<td><a href="https://www.theg">https://www.theg</a></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hate U Give</td>
<td>Angie Thomas</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>LGBTTQA+ content, and because it was thought to promote an anti-police massacre and indoctrination of a social agenda</td>
<td><a href="https://www.saga">https://www.saga</a></td>
<td>2017</td>
<td><a href="https://www.vult">https://www.vult</a></td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B

Example of Spreadsheet to Collect Government Instance Information