

## ILS 561 Final Exam

*I. You have been the Library Director of the medium-sized public library for the town of Abington for 5 years. Your Library Board of Trustees is a governing one. They have adopted all of the ALA Intellectual Freedom documents, including the Code of Ethics, the Library Bill of Rights. Beth, your Community Service Librarian, has started a film series open to all—this is the 6<sup>th</sup> such series since you arrived in Abington. It is on Thursday nights at 7 pm, beginning next week, with most showings over fairly early. Experience has proven this series to be popular, mainly because the films are shown on a large screen, so the experience is similar to going to a movie theatre. And the library furnishes popcorn, too! After the films are shown, experts from the local colleges (there are two nearby) will comment on the film’s content, meaning, symbolism, etc., and they will answer questions from the audience.*

*The films were chosen via a survey of library patrons. The titles of the films were listed in the local paper over a week ago. For the first time ever, two people have protested the only “R” film on the list, “Little Miss Sunshine.” They object to the language and also to some of the insensitivity in the film. As it happens, it is the film that got the most votes in the survey—the one most people wanted to be part of the series. As you may know, it’s become something of a classic.*

*George Foster, the Chairman of the Board, called you yesterday and said that he spoke with several Board members, and he wants the Community Service Librarian to check the age of anyone she thinks may not be 17, and to not allow those under 17, including groups of high school youngsters, to attend the film showing.*

*Yesterday, when you spoke to Beth\*, she objected strongly to the request from the Board Chairman. Today she came into your office and told you that she refuses to act as the movie police, and she reminded you that the library has always opened up its programs to everyone.*

*Of course, the local newspaper has gotten wind of the controversy, and a reporter has been calling your office and leaving voicemails requesting to speak to you.*

*\*Beth does an outstanding job and the whole town loves her.*

***What will you do now? Tell me what your action(s) will be? What will you do and say? To whom will you speak? In what order? Be thorough and make sure to justify everything.***

As a note, this process would take place over many days. First, I would let Beth know that her objections are valid and are being taken into consideration. As the director, I will be looking into this matter and reviewing the policies further. I would ask her to keep this in mind, should she be contacted by the press.

I would contact the chairman of the board and inform him that the board's decision is in conflict with the ALA Bill of Rights and Code of Ethics which the Board adopted. The ALA Code of Ethics states: "We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests (ALA, 2008a)." Restricting patrons' access to library programs based on age would violate the Code of Ethics. The ALA Bill of Rights states: "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views (ALA, 1996)." The ALA has been clear that this right fully encompasses minors and that to limit their access to the library in any way is a violation of the Bill of Rights (ALA, 2008b). I would inform him that the decision has upset the staff and led to a labor dispute. I would inform him that the library has been contacted by the press seeking comment. I would recommend he review this decision with legal counsel prior to any implementation. He should find out more information regarding the library's obligation to check the age of attendees for movie showings and any potential legal issues that could occur because of checking or not checking the age of attendees. I would inform George that I will be doing research into this situation over the next few days and I will keep him informed regarding relevant information I obtain.

I would notify all library staff through our communication system (email, internal blog, wiki, etc) that the press may be contacting the library and to direct all communication to me. I would inform the press that the situation is currently under review and we will notify them once a decision has been reached.

I would research the issue through numerous venues. I would review the ALA website and peruse their various toolkits for advice, such as the Intellectual Freedom Toolkit. I would contact the ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom, the State Library, and the State's intellectual freedom committee seeking advice around our situation. I would also reach out to other library directors I knew and see if they had any tips or suggestions. If I was part of a list serve, I would also reach out to peers.

I would touch base with Human Resources to inform them of the labor dispute and discuss a potential outcome where an employee refuses to perform their duties. I would want to be sure that I'm following all proper employment laws, procedures, and grievance policies.

I would also contact the library's legal counsel to consult with them regarding checking patrons' ages at a library-run movie as well as a potential labor dispute.

After reviewing numerous sources, I would forward information to George regarding the ALA's position on using rating systems to restrict access: "None of these organizations are government agencies and as such their rating systems cannot be mandated or enforced by any government or agency of government, including a publicly funded library. A library can, however, make information concerning these rating systems available to library users (ALA, 2010)." I would also inform George of the recommended written complaint process provided by the ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom (ALA, 2013a). If we do not already have such a process and policy in place, we should seek to implement one in the immediate future. In addition, we should be sure the library has a service policy that addresses access to programming. If those who are concerned about this event are patrons, they should be instructed to file a formal written complaint. If these are completed, I would seek to meet with the individuals face to face so we can discuss their concerns and how that relates to the library's policies.

I would meet with George to discuss my research and to find out what the legal counsel had said to him regarding our situation. I would also reiterate to him that in my opinion, restricting access to the events based on age would violate the ALA's Code of Ethics, Bill of Rights, and numerous other guidelines to which the board subscribes. We as librarians are obligated to provide equal access to all individuals, regardless of age (ALA, 2008a). If individual guardians do not feel the movie is appropriate for their child, it is within their right to restrict their child's access. I would request that the board reconsider their decision and instead apply the

ALA's guidelines to the situation. Depending on the timing of the next board meeting, the board may need to meet for an executive session to discuss the legal counsel's findings and resolve this issue as succinctly as possible. Quickly moving to diffuse this situation is important, especially in regards to the press.

When the board meets to discuss the legal counsel's findings, there should also be time set aside to allow patrons to discuss their concerns as outlined in the ALA's Conducting a Challenge Hearing (2013b). As the director, I would have two drafts of media responses prepared ahead of time for the board's review; one for each possible outcome.

After the board meeting, I would inform library staff of the board's decision as well as provide them with notification that the board approved a press release and they will be see it in local news in the next few days. I would meet with Beth individually first before telling other staff members to inform her of the board's decision and thank her for being open regarding her concerns. If the board decides the library must check all patrons' ages for the movie, I would remind Beth that since the board of trustees is a governing one, they have the power to establish their own limits regarding intellectual freedom and as the director, I must follow their policies. In that timeline, I would need to meet with Human Resources to further discuss the situation regarding personnel. I would also need to assign someone else to run the film series; this could be me or another library employee who is willing to check IDs. If the board decided to withdraw their requirement, Beth could run the event but I would still attend the event to field questions and concerns.

I would provide the local press with the news release approved by the board. I would also practice my verbal responses to commonly asked questions by concerned patrons and the press as recommended by the ALA (2013a).

## *2. Go to LIS Jobs.com at*

*(<http://www.lisjobs.com/jobs/results.asp?search=public+library&submit2=Search&anyallexact=all>) and type in "public library" in the search box. Select any professional job that you'd like to apply for in any state (Don't forget to tell me which state and job you picked, so I can look at the listing.). Because [www.lisjobs.com](http://www.lisjobs.com) hasn't added content to the website since March 2013, I utilized the [INALJ.com](http://www.inalj.com) website as recommended on the [lisjobs.com](http://www.lisjobs.com) website. I picked the job opening for a Young Adult/Assistant Reference Librarian at Medford Public Library in*

Massachusetts and followed the INALJ's link to the library's job posting ([http://mbhc.state.ma.us/jobs/find\\_jobs/rss.php?job\\_id=8361](http://mbhc.state.ma.us/jobs/find_jobs/rss.php?job_id=8361)).

*a. For this exercise, select a job that you really would like to get and that you have a somewhat realistic chance at, but don't worry about location at all--assume you can go wherever it is and that all interview expenses will be paid for by the hiring library*

*b. Once you've selected the job you want, write a cover letter that will accompany your resume (no need to include that here).*

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November 29, 2013

Mr. Brian G. Boutilier  
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111 High Street  
Medford, MA 02155

Dear Mr. Boutilier,

I am contacting you due to my interest in your library's opening for a Young Adult/Assistant Reference Librarian. The opening was brought to my attention through a posting on [www.INALJ.com](http://www.INALJ.com). I am very interested in a position working with your library's young people. I am very passionate about YA literature and services.

I have over six years of experience working with young adults in a variety of settings, including one year as a YA assistant coordinator in a public library. I have a Masters in Social Work, with

a focus on children and young adults. During my second year MSW internship, I created a bibliotherapy curriculum for young adults based on Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli. I have enjoyed working with young adults in less formal settings as well; I have taught circus skills to at-risk urban youth and mentored DCF-involved teens. I am also studying for a Masters in Library Science, with a focus on public libraries. While I do not yet have my degree, there are only three classes remaining before I complete my MLS. I do have some experience working reference due to my semester long internship at the University of Connecticut Health Center's Stowe Library. During the internship, I also gained experience creating LibGuides.

I greatly value YA literature; the majority of my reading is within the YA or fantasy genres. I recently finished reading John Green's published work and was very impressed. I've enjoyed reading Laurie Halse Anderson, Gordon Korman, Nancy Werlin, Eoin Colfer, Suzanne Collins, Tamora Pierce, Anne McCaffery, Robin McKinley, and many others. I have experience working with tablets, printers, e-readers, various web browsers, Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Outlook, OneNote, & Visio), and Adobe Acrobat.

I would be pleased to have an opportunity to discuss this job opening with you further. I have attached my resume for your perusal. I will contact you in the next two weeks to see if you require any additional information regarding my qualifications. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aubri Drake

Attached: resume

*c. Assume you get an interview:*

*What steps you will take in preparation for the interview?*

I would review recently published YA books and see what some of the YA fads are; for example, I would think that the Hunger Games books are circulating quite a bit right now. I would review YALSA's website, including their book awards and booklists. I would look through the International Reading Association, Cybils, Printz, and Edwards YA book awards lists. I might watch a couple of YALSA Academy videos that address practical teen services issues. I would read through a number of YALSA toolkits, including Social Networking and Advocacy toolkits. I would also review YALSA's mission and vision statements so that I could confidently refer to them. I would look over the library's website and social media presence. I would read all library policies I could locate. I would review local news online to see if they have had any large changes or shifts in the past year or so.

*What 3 questions you will ask at the interview?*

- Would you describe the library as more team-driven or individual-driven?
- What are the library's policies around young adults? Library cards for young adult minors, restrictions on lending, disruptive behavior, banning, YA space rules, etc.
- What are some of the first tasks or projects you would like to see the person in this position complete?

*How you will follow up afterward? Be thorough.*

I would email the library director and thank him for meeting with me to discuss the position further. I would tell him about the things I was most excited to learn regarding the position. I would reiterate my belief that my experience and education would make me a good fit for the job. I would let him know I am available, should he need any additional information. I would also tell him I'm looking forward to hearing from him soon.

**3.** *Your library, in the center of a small Connecticut municipality with a population of around 49,000, is having a lot of trouble with disruptive and unruly patrons—in a range of age and gender categories. There was one incident where rival gangs claimed the library as their territory, but the police were called and no further incident of that kind has occurred for over a year.*

*Your Director has decided that it's time to employ security personnel during all of library's open hours. She has contacted some agencies that provide such services and has found several that have experience working in libraries. She is in the process of asking for cost estimates from three such agencies. She is planning to bring this matter to the Library Board at its June meeting.*

*The one question that she has not been able to answer to her own satisfaction is this one: **Should the security guards carry guns or not?** She is requesting cost estimates based on both possibilities—with guns and without guns. However, she will have to make a recommendation to the Board on that issue. In anticipation of that recommendation, she has convened a meeting of all staff tomorrow at 2 pm. All staff will be able to express their views—and you know already that there are some people who hold strong opinions pro and con. You know your Director well enough to know that she will want not just people's gut feelings about this, but she will want facts in support of the divergent points of view.*

*You know that you're going to express your opinion about this issue at the meeting. **What will you recommend and what rationale will you provide? [If you can find articles, statistics, etc., on this kind of situation, your Director would be very grateful.]***

First, I would thank the director for arranging a meeting specifically for the staff to express their thoughts on this matter. I would explain that I had done some research on the topic that others might find relevant. I found information pertaining to Uniform Crime Reporting. The UCR is a service provided by the FBI where they collect and analyze data voluntarily provided by cities, counties, colleges, universities, states, tribal territories, and federal agencies. Connecticut has been participating since 1977 (State of Connecticut, 2013). According to the UCR, in the state of Connecticut the total crime rate is the lowest it has been in 40 years at a rate of 2,433 per 100,000 inhabitants (State of Connecticut, 2008; 2013). In Middletown, which has a similar population (45,508), the total crime rate is lower than the state average at 2,136 per 100,000 inhabitants (State of Connecticut, 2013). The director should consider meeting with the local police chief to discuss the statistical likelihood that a serious incident might occur in the library and the capacity of law enforcement to support the library. This would assist the director in evaluating the need for private security in a data driven way. If it is concluded that there is a

possibility of an incident that cannot be handled by library staff and local law enforcement, then private security should be procured (LLAMA, 2010).

In regards to unarmed versus armed security personnel, it is very difficult to obtain specific statistics related to the differences between the two. Many sources point out that armed security is more likely to rely on weapons when presented with a conflict, rather than focus on negotiating or defusing the situation (Guard Now, 2012; Philly Happening, 2013; Zalud, 2007.). They also raise the issue that in an enclosed space such as an office or library, the risk of injury or death to bystanders is very high in the event of a weapon being discharged. Armed security who can employ deadly force can also convey to the public that the library is not a safe place. It can disrupt feelings of comfort and security with unease and fear of personal injury. In most cases, unarmed security provides the needed benefit of a visible authority figure who is trained in defusing conflict while also not substantially increasing the library's liability (Philly Happening, 2013). The library should check with our insurance company to determine if we would need to increase our liability insurance if we have unarmed or armed security personnel and what the difference in cost would be. Armed security is also more expensive per hour than unarmed security. The degree of difference between unarmed and armed security can be minimized by providing unarmed security with methods of direct communication with the local police department (Zalud, 2007). Generally speaking, armed security should only be used in very specific situations such as government facilities with highly sensitive materials or in locations where robbery is a serious concern (i.e. bank, jewelry store) (Guard Now, 2012; Philly Happening, 2013; Turner, 2002; Zalud, 2007).

In the state of Connecticut, there are very specific requirements for licensure for both armed and unarmed security personnel, as well as security companies (DESPP, 2012). We should be sure the security company we choose to work with has valid licensure. Quality security companies will conduct their own assessment of the location's needs and levels of risk and will provide a recommendation regarding armed versus unarmed guards; their recommendation can illuminate their expertise and priorities (Zalud, 2007). We should also be sure to have a designated security manager who is appointed to be responsible for library security issues (LLAMA, 2010).

Since it seems the library is struggling with disruptive and unruly patrons, we should reexamine our library behavior policy. The town of East Hartford (population 52,265) has an

excellent example of a behavior policy for patrons we could use as a template (Town of East Hartford, 2013). We should also consider implementing an incident report so we can appropriately track incidents if we do not currently have one in place. This would allow us to track changes over time and the impact our interventions might have on occurrence of incidents in the future.

I would recommend that we first meet with the chief of the local police department to determine the likelihood of an incident requiring intervention; we should also review the library's policies related to security. The library should have an up-to-date policy and procedure manual available to all staff members and there should be periodic refresher trainings (LLAMA, 2010). The manual should also outline the boundaries of the relationship between the library and security firm, as well as a formal incident report template for all staff to use. The benefits and drawbacks of armed security should be carefully weighed against the library's needs. In either case, a security manager should be appointed to maintain the relationship between the library and the security firm. If the decision is made to hire unarmed security, we should seek a collaborative relationship with the local police department and perhaps formalize an agreement where the security personnel have a way to quickly and directly contact with the police.

*4. You are the Head of the Children's Department in a small public library. There are 5 full-time (2 with an MLS—the Director and you) and 3 part-time employees, plus 2 volunteers. The library is open 37 hours a week—Mon and Tues from 1-9 pm, Wed, Thurs and Fri from 10 am-5 pm. As with most small libraries, it's considered by the patrons to be a very friendly place. Most of the patrons are familiar to the staff, with friendly exchanges taking place as a matter of course.*

*However, the newest full-time employee, a circulation desk worker who has been there about 7 months, is icily efficient. She is often the only person at the adult services desk. She does exceptional work in terms of checking things out quickly, putting information into the computer, locating materials for interlibrary loan, generating statistics, etc. However, she does not engage in conversations with patrons, never makes suggestions about books or videos or audios to the patrons, never initiates an interlibrary loan, and doesn't even look people in the eye. She has her back to the patrons more often than not.*

*You, as Children's Department Head, have begun to get people coming to your area and saying, "I came to see you because I wanted to see a friendly face." They make it clear that there was no friendly face at the adult desk, and you know full well what they mean. However, you haven't said anything to the Director (She spends most of her time preparing materials for the shelves and in dealing with budget and board issues, so she is rarely at the desk.) because you feel uncomfortable doing that. This is a library where the employees get along and don't criticize each other. You've encouraged the patrons to say something to the Director, but they are reluctant to do that.*

*You don't want to be the library tattletale but you also don't want the library's image to suffer further damage. You have spent a lot of time thinking about this lately and you've come to a decision. What will you do and why?*

Discussions around staffing and evaluation of performance can be stressful in the best of situations. As part of a small library, I would posit it can be more stressful than in a larger library setting because of the small number of employees in a smaller physical space. However, performance evaluations can be very helpful and effective in assisting employees hone their skills and reach their career goals.

As a librarian, I should first follow the ALA's Code of Ethics which states: "we treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions (ALA, 2008a)." Based on this, my obligation is to assume good faith; part of this involves completing a full review of the situation. Second, I should determine what my supervisory capacity is in relation to this employee. For example, in Enfield (population ~44,400 [US Census Bureau, 2012]), the Head Children's Librarian reports directly to the Director and can be responsible for supervising circulation workers (Town of Enfield, 2013). It would be necessary to determine if the circulation desk worker reports directly to the Director, the Children's Head, or both. In any case, it would be necessary to schedule a time to meet with the Director and discuss the employee's progress. We should review the job description of the circulation worker to determine if the employee is fulfilling it. We should examine her file to see what kind of training

she has received in the past 7 months. We could also see what kind of coverage there is during her shift; we should see if we can spend more time working alongside her so as to better observe and see firsthand how she interacts with patrons.

Part of the evaluation process should include identifying the specific, measurable behaviors the employee engages in and potential solutions to those behaviors. Does she not suggest movies or books because she's unsure of whether others will enjoy what she is recommending or does she lack a base knowledge of popular materials? There are many resources that could expand her knowledge of reader advisory and these could be recommended to her. Observing her work firsthand and getting to know her better will allow a more thorough evaluation with more personalized action steps. This could also include on-the-job training and redirecting around target behaviors.

Now would also be a good time for a six-month review; it would be a good opportunity to sit down with the staff member and discuss their perceptions of their progress thus far. At the six-month review, the Director should address any gaps in meeting the job description and any items of note found during the observations. The meeting should end with a mutually agreed upon plan with goals to improve performance. This plan may include regularly scheduled meetings until the goals are complete. The meetings should be clearly documented.

A large part of this situation is being sure to keep an open mind and not jump to conclusions. She seems to be a good employee in regards to the physical details but may need some support and guidance regarding patron interaction. Documenting all evaluations and interventions is imperative; if the employee is not a good fit, the library will need excellent documentation of the process they followed to fairly take action.

This is also a good opportunity for the Director and the Children's Department Head to be sure that the library has solid policies in place that are being utilized regarding employee evaluation (DelPo, 2013). Regularly scheduled evaluations can be a very useful tool if properly customized to the given circumstances. Evaluations can be used to acknowledge employees' efforts and contributions as well as guide employees towards their career goals; they can also be very useful in the case of a lawsuit.

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