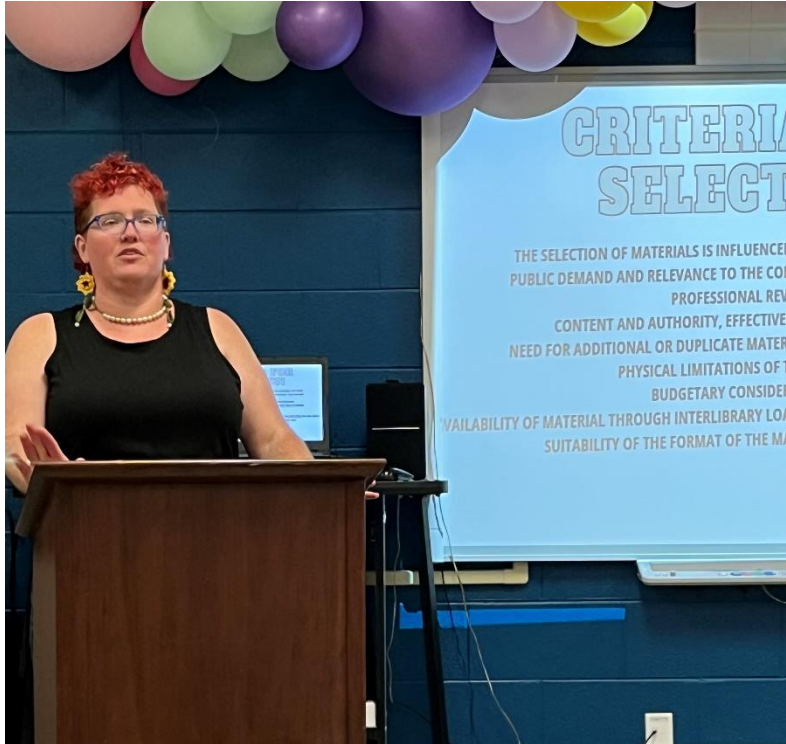


Anderson County Libraries With Miria Webb

Monday, August 26th 2024 – Clinton Public Library

Miria Webb, Director of the Clinton Public Library, gave the Club excellent first-hand information about the libraries and how the current enthusiasm for challenging books has affected the libraries. We also got to flip through the challenged books as Miria was discussing the content and the reason for the challenges.



The initial 3 books, all pertaining to gay families and gender identity, were challenged in October 2022. After multiple reviews the books were retained. In February 2023, “It’s Perfectly Normal” was challenged, and then rechallenged in June 2023. There were also challenges to 14 other titles housed in the adult, young adult, and children’s sections. In total, 3 of the books were relocated to the next maturity, and 2 books in the adult section were restricted. The challenges came from a very small number of people.

As a result of the repeated challenges to “It’s Perfectly Normal,” the rules for challenging books in Anderson County were updated. In December 2023 new rules went into effect that stipulate:

- Orders for new books first go to the board.
- Books can only be challenged once every 3 years (or sooner if a new edition is published).
- Only Anderson County residents can challenge materials.
- The maximum challenges per person is 4 per year.
- Challenges now go to a subcommittee consisting of 2 library board members and a library director from a different AC library.
- If the challenger appeals the subcommittee’s decision, the person must appear at the full library board meeting when it’s discussed.
- Libraries have the option of putting a placeholder on the shelf, and the patron can exchange the placeholder for the book at the circulation desk.

None of the books challenged between April of 2022 and August 2024 had a wide circulation. Five of the books actually had zero checkouts prior to the challenge, two books had one checkout, 1 had 2 checkouts, and 4 had 3 checkouts. One book, S.E.X. had a whopping 8 checkouts with an additional 12 after the challenge. One positive from the challenges was that the books saw a lot more patron checkouts after they were challenged.

Unfortunately, challenges are not just limited to the books on the shelves. The Clinton Public Library has an annual art show. Someone found a child's painting, essentially described as a blue dress mannequin with glitter, objectionable and not had the painting removed, but also doxed the child on social media.

Miria Webb was born and raised in East Tennessee. She earned her Master's degree in Information Science from the University of Tennessee. She started her library career as the head youth services librarian in Wilkes County, NC and was also the head of teen services in Winston-Salem and the assistant director in Morristown, TN before accepting the directorship at CPL in 2013. She loves running a small-town library, getting to know her patrons, and creating connections and programs to better her community. It brings her joy even on the hard days. She was the 2024 recipient of the TNLA Honor Award for her significant contribution to the furtherance of librarianship in Tennessee.

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