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ABSTRACT

The wars of the twentieth century have clarified American librarians' evolving attitudes toward censorship, while at the same time providing impetus for changes in those attitudes. This study uses content analysis to examine librarians' attitudes toward censorship during three periods: the First World War, the Second World War, and the Vietnam War. Articles from "Library Journal," "American Libraries," and "Wilson Library Bulletin" were coded for: references to war, social issues, and intellectual freedom concepts; the writer's attitude toward censorship; approved and disapproved motives for censorship; and language used to refer to targeted items. Two major trends were identified through this analysis: a steady though non-uniform shift from a pro- to an anti-censorship position, and a shift of focus within the censorship debate from political-military censorship to moral-social censorship. Possible causes for these shifts include changing concepts of the library's mission--from moral guide and teacher to guardian of the public's right to know; the evolution of the library profession; the differences among the three wars themselves; radical changes in the country's social atmosphere; and the tendency within any forum to focus debate on topics in the mid-range of opinion, between unanimity and taboo. A coding sheet and supplementary tables are appended. (Contains 27 references.) (Author/SWC)

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

LIBRARIANS AND CENSORSHIP DURING THREE MODERN WARS

MASTER'S RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO

THE SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

BY

KATHERINE B. MURPHY

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Abstract

The wars of the twentieth century have clarified American librarians' evolving attitudes toward censorship, while at the same time providing impetus for changes in those attitudes. This study uses content analysis to examine librarians' attitudes toward censorship during three periods: the First World War, the Second World War, and the Vietnam War. Articles from Library Journal, American Libraries, and Wilson Library Bulletin are coded for references to war, social issues, and intellectual freedom concepts; the writer's attitude toward censorship; approved and disapproved motives for censorship; and language used to refer to targeted items. Two major trends are identified through this analysis: a steady though non-uniform shift from a pro- to an anti-censorship position, and a shift of focus within the censorship debate from political-military censorship to moral-social censorship. Possible causes for these shifts include the differences among the three wars themselves; radical changes in the country's social atmosphere; and the tendency within any forum to focus debate on topics in the mid-range of opinion, between unanimity and taboo.

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I. INTRODUCTION

> Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues... Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.[1]

The climate of our times is generally unfavorable toward censorship. Even when the case for free expression is not stated so strongly and idealistically as in the Library Bill of Rights, it is usually accepted that freedom of speech and expression are a fundamental part of our country's foundation, rooted in the Constitution and in our culture. In fact, "censorship" has become a dirty word; no one wants to lay claim to it. Even those who advocate the action of censorship vigorously deny the label.[2]

This has not always been the case, even within the library profession. In 1908, Arthur Bostwick, president of ALA, titled his presidential address "The Librarian as Censor." Censorship was considered a proper and respectable activity for librarians to engage in; it was expected of them by society. The censoring of improper books fitted in with the library's mission to educate and cultivate the masses, as well as with the agendas of contemporary groups such as the Society for the Suppression of Vice.[3] How did American libraries effect the 180-degree turn from this pro-censorship stance to the current ALA policy stating that "access to all materials legally obtainable should be assured to the user"?[4]

Part of the reason for the apparent about-face has to do with the change in the meanings

of words over time, a phenomenon familiar to anyone who has read Shakespeare. It has even been suggested that librarians more or less intentionally disassociated themselves from the unpopular word "censorship," while continuing to practice its reality under the guise of "selection."[5]

However, changes in meaning cannot entirely explain the shifts in attitude and policy that have occurred in librarianship over the past eighty years. These shifts are connected with many factors both inside and outside the field: the development of librarianship as a profession; librarians' evolving concept of the library's mission; and radical changes in attitude and orientation within American society as a whole. It is with this last factor -- with the relation between world events and librarians' attitudes toward censorship -- that the present study is most concerned.

National crises such as wars force people to clarify their positions on such topics as intellectual freedom. In wartime, one is often forced to choose between conflicting loyalties -- for example, between the ideal of scientific internationalism and the need to support one's country.[6] The atmosphere of war also tends to bring the issue of censorship to national awareness, as political factions attempt to silence their critics and decisions must be made regarding the treatment of propaganda.[7] The literature of librarianship suggests that the wars of the twentieth century have clarified American librarians' evolving attitudes toward censorship, while at the same time providing impetus for changes in those attitudes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine American librarians' attitudes toward

censorship during three periods in history: the First World War, the Second World War, and the Vietnam War. Attitudes of librarians during these periods are interpreted in the context both of the events of the day and of the gradual evolution within the library field from a pro-censorship to an anti-censorship position.

Definition of Terms

As already pointed out, the semantic tangle surrounding the censorship issue is formidable. At the heart of the confusion is the distinction -- if there is one -- between censorship and selection. John Swan has argued that the two concepts are, in fact, impossible to disentangle, and that the library profession needs to admit this and concentrate on censoring wisely and responsibly.[8]

Swan's arguments have merit, but his is not the majority opinion. Most librarians today believe that there is a difference between censoring and selecting, and that the former is bad and the latter good. Lester Asheim explained this position in a paper titled "Not Censorship but Selection." Asheim concluded that the difference lies in attitude and approach: "Selection, then, begins with a presumption in favor of liberty of thought; censorship, with a presumption in favor of thought control."[9] Selection seeks value, censorship seeks faults; selection is democratic, while censorship is authoritarian.

This definition reflects the late-twentieth-century conviction that censorship is wholly undesirable. For the purpose of this study, it was necessary to formulate a definition which would apply equally to both the historical and modern understandings of censorship. Here, censorship is understood to refer to a decision to exclude a certain item, or class of items, from a

library collection, or to limit access to an item once it has been acquired. Censorship is thus a negative decision and is usually practiced on an item-by-item basis. In contrast, selection is a positive decision and is practiced on a group basis: choosing which of a group of potential library materials to include in the collection.

Limitations of the Study

This study is an examination of writings in American journals of librarianship; thus, the findings do not necessarily apply to the attitudes of American society as a whole or of librarians outside the United States. It should also be kept in mind that professional journals, while presumably reflecting the attitudes and beliefs within the profession, tend to display a narrower range of opinion than exists in the profession as a whole. Because of this, the findings of such a study may not be generalizable to the attitudes of practicing librarians of the time.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Past research on the subject of librarians' attitudes toward censorship has tended to fall into one of two categories: surveys or interviews of practicing librarians, or historical studies based on professional journals, ALA records, and other documents. Examples of the former category include Marjorie Fiske's pioneering study of book selection in California libraries, and a more recent survey of intellectual freedom attitudes conducted by Mary Lee Bundy and Teresa Stakem.[10]

A 1970 survey by Charles Busha is more relevant to the present study, since it falls within one of the time periods to be examined. Busha surveyed public librarians from five Midwestern states in an attempt to measure attitudes toward censorship and intellectual freedom, and to correlate these attitudes with the librarians' tendency toward authoritarianism. Results showed a strong overall agreement with the principles of the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement; there was, however, a marked disparity between approval of intellectual freedom as a concept, and willingness to engage in the activity of censorship.[11]

This disparity between ideal and practice has been explained by Michael Harris as the result of a series of crusades which librarians have engaged in for the purpose of attaining professional status and justifying the library's existence. These crusades -- uplifting the masses, Americanizing the immigrant, promoting the Allied cause in World War I, and upholding intellectual freedom in World War II -- have not supplanted, but supplemented, each other, resulting in a layering of incompatible ideals and a confusion of purposes. In Harris' somewhat cynical interpretation, American librarians took advantage of the country's wartime fervor to

construct roles which would further their own professional interests. Thus, in World War I, they mobilized public opinion to support the war effort and justify infringements of personal freedom. In the next war, they rode the wave of public indignation over Nazi and fascist book-burnings to assume a self-appointed role as guardians of intellectual freedom.[12]

A more balanced approach is taken by Evelyn Geller. Geller, who holds a doctorate in sociology, focuses on the relation between the development of librarianship as a profession and the evolution of the concept of intellectual freedom. Taking a qualitative approach to the content analysis of professional journals, she describes the early unorganized tendencies toward intellectual freedom, and how these tendencies were submerged during World War I; the change, spurred by actions of the publishing industry, which replaced the ideal of professional neutrality with that of freedom and destroyed overt commitment to censorship; and the official acceptance of intellectual freedom as a core value of the profession. By 1939, freedom had become more than a rule to guide selection; librarians' "duties were themselves set in the service of freedom."[13]

Frederick Stielow covers essentially the same ground, while emphasizing the often-overlooked early presence of dissenting opinions and awareness of the complexity of the censorship issue. Like Geller, Stielow refers to the "liberal tinge" of early-twentieth-century reform movements, later reversed in the conservatism of World War I.[14] He refers to a 1922 Library Journal survey which revealed a division of opinion concerning censorship; from that point, the movement toward an anti-censorship stance was rapid. Stielow proposes several reasons for this movement: the conflicts between censorship's controlling role and the voluntary nature of the library, and between service to a democracy and the suppression of free thought; the technical training of librarians; and changing public tastes and outside threats.[15]

A more detailed examination of libraries' activities in the First World War can be found in Wayne Wiegand's book, significantly titled "An Active Instrument for Propaganda".[16] Wiegand stresses the absence of organized protest from the public library community against either the libraries' wartime censorship zeal or governmental actions such as the Sedition Act of 1918. Underlying this whole-hearted cooperation, which manifested itself in public libraries' voluntary compliance with the Army Index of banned books, were librarians' participation in the general war hysteria as well as their desire to prove their professionalism and loyalty to their country. The prevailing attitude of the time can be summed up in a quote from the Wisconsin Library Bulletin: "It is most important... that the library authorities do not permit themselves to be misled by the argument that it is a duty to present both sides of all controverted questions."[17] Arthur Young's Books for Sammies goes into more detail on the Army Index and ALA's Library War Service. Young also points out that ALA's war policy on censorship was not a reversal but a continuation of its pre-war stance.[18]

James Mock's Censorship 1917, first published in 1941, is valuable more for the insight it gives into the atmosphere immediately preceding World War II than for its analysis of World War I censorship. In introducing an overview of censorship in previous wars, Mock writes, "The story of that phase needs to be told in order that Americans can see how far and how rapidly they have travelled on the road of censorship."[19] Considering that the book was written only twenty years after the events described, its tone makes it clear that Americans in general, if not librarians in particular, had indeed travelled a long way from the gung ho days of 1917-18. Although Mock acknowledges that governmental censorship is necessary in wartime, he deplores the carryover of wartime repression into the 1920s; concerning the crisis of his own era, he warns,

"If repression continues after the war is over, we shall have lost the very ideal for which we fought."[20]

It is apparent that the 1920s and 1930s must have been a period of great change in attitudes toward censorship. One of the catalysts of this change was the debate over libraries' treatment of communist and fascist propaganda. David Lincove uses contemporary library literature to examine this controversy, which led up to ALA's adoption of the Library's Bill of Rights in 1939. Proponents of the censorship of propaganda based their position on the library's tradition of social and cultural moralism and the librarian's educational role, and cited the need to defend democracy against the communist/fascist threat; their opponents claimed that the best way to defend democracy was to create an informed citizenry, and that the public, not the librarian, should judge the value of a book or an idea. The literature shows that during the 1930s, most librarians supported the principle of free access to materials and ideas, though actual practice was still limited by community pressure and individual bias.[21] A related article by the same author looks at another aspect of the propaganda issue by examining American librarians' positive, if circumspect, response to British propaganda and requests for aid in the years immediately preceding the United States' involvement in World War II.[22]

An appreciation of just how much opinions regarding censorship changed between the two wars can be gained by looking at ALA's reaction to Order No. 4, "Confiscation of Literature and Material of a Nazi and Militarist Nature," which was issued by the occupying powers in postwar Germany. Urged on by its executive secretary, Carl Milam, ALA protested "with all possible emphasis the reported decision of the Allied authorities in Germany to confiscate and destroy Nazi publications."[23] Librarians were not alone in their indignation; a New York Times

editorial deplored what was seen as the conquerors' imitation of the undemocratic means employed by the conquered. As Margaret Stieg points out, ALA's reaction seems out of proportion to the circumstances: The provisions of the order had been in effect for some time, and appropriate care was being taken for the preservation of materials for research purposes. Stieg attributes part of the overreaction to "the emotional freight with which the Nazi bonfires of 1933 had endowed book burning."[24]

Studies of library censorship in the third period under investigation, the Vietnam era, are fewer in number. In Activism in American Librarianship, 1962-1973, Stielow implies that by the 1960s, censorship had become a non-issue for most librarians: "To a large degree the [war] debate in the library field was not fought over the presences of dissenting materials... American librarianship had already opted in theory for information on both sides of any debate."[25] Following the tentative beginnings of the intellectual freedom movement during the first half of the century, ALA's stand against the McCarthyism of the 1950s had established a solid theoretical basis for the presence of dissenting opinions in libraries. Instead, the debate engendered by this war revolved around social responsibility: Was it appropriate for librarians, as librarians, to take a stand against the war? In the next chapter of the book, Noel Peattie echoes Stielow's statement that the core of the profession remained faithful to the principle of neutrality. Although most librarians did not involve themselves in the grittier aspects of censorship in the '60s, such as the official and unofficial attacks on the underground press, they remained active "on a middle-class, professional, organizational" level in the war on censorship. At the same time, the social responsibility debate added a new wrinkle to the censorship issue, as some librarians began to rethink the ALA's absolutist position regarding books they felt promoted

racism and bigotry. Anti-censorship purists thus began to find themselves opposed from both the right and the left.[26]

The studies described above are predominantly historical and interpretative in nature. The present study takes a more quantitative approach, using the technique of content analysis. It is also hoped that by comparing three discrete periods in which the censorship issue came to national attention, further insight may be gained into the development of our own present-day attitudes and beliefs.

III. METHODOLOGY

Scope and Selection of Articles

Content analysis was used to examine periodical articles appearing in three professional journals of librarianship during the following time periods:

a. April 6, 1917 (U.S. declaration of war on Germany) through November 11, 1918 (signing of the armistice)
b. December 8, 1941 (U.S. declaration of war on Japan) through August 14, 1945 (acceptance of terms of surrender by Japan)
c. August 7, 1964 (Tonkin Gulf Resolution) through January 27, 1973 (signing of the peace agreement)

These boundary dates have been chosen in an attempt to concentrate on periods during which the United States was actively involved in conflict.

The study includes articles appearing in the following three journals: American Libraries (earlier names: ALA Bulletin and Bulletin of the American Library Association), Library Journal, and Wilson Library Bulletin. There are several reasons why it was decided to limit the study to these three publications. First, the number of articles to be examined was thus reduced to approximately 150, which made it unnecessary to devise a scheme of random sampling to exclude articles on a more arbitrary and less consistent basis. Second, it would have been virtually impossible for the researcher to acquire some of the more esoteric titles listed in Library Literature; instead of setting up a sampling plan and then violating it for pragmatic reasons, it was decided to factor practical considerations in from the beginning. It is recognized that the exclusion of regional and specialized titles in the field necessarily narrows the range of opinion.

Library Literature and its predecessor, Cannons' Bibliography of Library Economy,[27]

were used to locate articles dealing with censorship during each time period. There are both advantages and disadvantages to using an index, as opposed to scanning the entire body of literature directly for relevant articles. The biggest disadvantage is that the researcher is essentially at the mercy of the indexer's accuracy and diligence. Changes in word meaning, as discussed above, may also result in relevant articles being missed or irrelevant articles being found. Because of this, it is also impossible to compare the amount of attention being paid to an issue at different times in the history of the field. On the other hand, given the vast expansion of the literature over the past eighty years, such a comparison would be statistically misleading and not particularly helpful. Finally, the direct scanning of the entire body of literature, especially for the decade between 1964 and 1973, was judged to be beyond the means of this particular study.

In short, no attempt was made to determine, for instance, whether more librarians were thinking about censorship during the First World War than during the Second World War. The indexes were used to assemble a group of articles dealing with censorship, which were then analyzed only within the context of that group, not within the context of the literature as a whole.

As the intent of the study was to analyze the opinions of librarians regarding censorship, news items and reports of research were excluded, while letters and editorials were included. Coding was done by author, not by article; in other words, if an article contained more than one clearly definable point of view (for example, a report of a symposium), each point of view was coded as a separate item.

Coding

The following questions were investigated:

1. How many items mention the war, other current social issues (for example, race relations), or the concept of intellectual freedom?

2. What is each writer's overall position regarding censorship? Possible positions included the following: a) unqualified approval of librarians' and others' rights to censor library materials; b) approval of the segregation of targeted materials, or of discrimination among patrons in giving access to such materials; c) qualified disapproval of censorship (e.g., recognition of practical considerations forcing compromise of the librarian's ideals); and d) unqualified disapproval of censorship.

3. In what context does the writer approve or disapprove of censoring materials? That is, does he/she approve of censoring materials for moral/ethical, political, social, or literary reasons?

4. What words does the writer use to refer to materials that are the targets, or potential targets, of censorship?

A sample coding sheet is included as an appendix.

IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

A total of 153 journal articles were examined; of these, 102 were used. The final count consisted of three articles from 1917-1918 (all from Library Journal), thirteen from 1942-1945 (from ALA Bulletin and Library Journal), and eighty-six from 1964-1972. The discarded articles consisted mainly of news items; there were also several committee reports and resolutions, one report of survey results, and one letter. The articles were coded as described above. Brief notes were also made regarding the content of each article.

Mention of War, Social Issues, and Intellectual Freedom Concepts

Articles were coded on a yes/no basis with regard to each of these three concepts. This means that, because an article often mentioned more than one of the three, the figures in the second, third, and fourth columns of Table 1 do not add up to those in the "Total" column. The figures in parentheses in the table indicate the percentage of articles from the period in question which mention that particular concept. (A similar table listing references by year may be found in the appendix.)

Table 1.-- War, Social Issues, and Intellectual Freedom Concepts (Question 1)

Period	Total # of Items	a) War	b) Social Issues	c) I.F. Concepts
World War I	**3 (100%)**	3 (100%)		1 (33.3%)
World War II	**13 (100%)**	4 (30.8%)	4 (30.8%)	7 (53.8%)
Vietnam War	**86 (100%)**	27 (31.4%)	46 (53.5%)	78 (90.7%)

As may be seen, there were no references to domestic social issues in the three articles from World War I. In the World War II period, references to social issues equaled references to war; and in the third period, there were close to twice as many references to social issues as there were to war.

This progression is even more striking when one considers the language used in the war references (see Table 2). Two-thirds of the World War I/World War II references to war used direct language; three of the sixteen articles from these two periods were devoted entirely to the issue of censorship in wartime. In contrast, over sixty percent of the Vietnam-era references were only to the more general concepts -- for example, the Cold War or communism -- which made up the political context within which the Vietnam War was fought. In other words, most of the Vietnam articles referred not to the specific military conflict going on in Southeast Asia, but to broader threats which had been troubling Americans on the domestic scene for two decades. (The figures in Table 2 do not correspond to those in the second column of Table 1; this is because the unit of Table 1 is the item/article, while the unit of Table 2 is the reference itself. Some articles referred to the concept of war more than once, in more than one way.)

Table 2.-- Language: War (Question 1a)

Period	Total # of References to War	Direct References to War	Indirect References to War
World War I	**4 (100%)**	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
World War II	**5 (100%)**	3 (60%)	2 (40%)
Vietnam War	**36 (100%)**	14 (38.9%)	22 (61.1%)

The fourth column of Table 1 shows references to concepts associated with intellectual freedom. References to intellectual freedom concepts increased from the first period to the last; by the Vietnam era, ninety-one percent of the censorship articles examined also mentioned such concepts. Overall, the most common references were to intellectual freedom, the right/freedom to read, the Library Bill of Rights, the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, the First Amendment, and freedom of the press (see Table 3). (Again, the total of 265 represents individual references, not articles/items.)

Table 3.-- References to Intellectual Freedom Concepts (Question 1c)

Period	Total	Intel. Free-dom	Right to Read	L. Bill of Rights	I.F. Com-mittee	Fr. of Expres-sion	Fr. of Speech	1st Amend-ment	Fr. of the Press
WWI	**3 (100%)**					1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)		1 (33.3%)
WWII	**11 (100%)**		1 (9.1%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (18.2%)	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)		4 (36.4%)
Viet. War	**149 (100%)**	37 (24.8%)	25 (16.8%)	20 (13.4%)	18 (12.1%)	16 (10.7)	12 (8.1%)	13 (8.7%)	8 (5.4%)
Total	**265 (100%)**	**37 (14.0%)**	**26 (9.8%)**	**22 (8.3%)**	**20 (7.5%)**	**18 (6.8%)**	**14 (5.3%)**	**13 (4.9%)**	**13 (4.9%)**

The types of social issues mentioned in each period were also tabulated (see Table 4). As may be seen, the results from World War II and the Vietnam War were roughly comparable. These results have no direct relevance to the topic at hand, but are interesting nonetheless.

Table 4.-- References to Social Issues (Question 1b)

Period	Total # of References	General Change	Civil Rights	Poverty	Sex	Youth/ Juv.Delinquency	Other
World War I	0						
World War II	9 (100%)	2 (22.2%)	5 (55.6%)	1 (11.1%)		1 (11.1%)	
Vietnam War	86 (100%)	12 (14.0%)	33 (38.4%)	5 (5.8%)	4 (4.7%)	17 (19.8%)	15 (17.4%)

Attitudes Toward Censorship

The second question on the coding sheet originally directed, "Mark all that apply." In the course of examining the articles, however, it was decided that the first, fourth, and fifth options (unqualified approval, qualified disapproval, and unqualified disapproval) were mutually exclusive and should be regarded as forming a continuum, while the remaining two options represented possible concrete applications of general attitudes. Each article (with the exception of two "no answers") was thus scored along this continuum, and the two additional options were also marked as appropriate. The results are shown in Tables 5 and 11 (appendix). (It should be noted that the "unqualified disapproval" category includes both the writers who stated outright that their position was absolute, and those who simply failed to enumerate any exceptions they may privately have admitted. The former, absolutist position was relatively rare.)

From World War I to the Vietnam War, attitudes migrated, as it were, from the upper left to the lower right, from approval to unqualified disapproval. However, the apparent smoothness and uniformity of this shift of opinion are partly illusory. The original concerns with changing

conceptions of censorship (see "Definition of Terms," above) proved to be justified by the number of writers who expressed disapproval of censorship, then proceeded to qualify this position with exceptions which were, at the time of writing, taken for granted -- for example,

Table 5.-- Attitudes Toward Censorship (Question 2)

Period	Total # of Items (Articles)	Approval	Qualified Disapp-roval	Disapp-roval	No Answer		Segregate d Material	Discrim-ination Among Patrons
World War I	3 (100%)	3 (100%)						2 (66.7%)
World War II	13 (100%)	2 (15.4%)	6 (46.2%)	5 (38.5%)			3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)
Vietnam War	86 (100%)	3 (3.5%)	17 (19.8%)	64 (74.4%)	2 (2.3%)		1 (1.2%)	8 (9.3%)

protection of children from strictly adult materials. Of the ninety-two articles expressing either qualified or unqualified disapproval of censorship, four also expressed approval of the segregating of materials, and eleven, of discrimination among patrons, almost always on the basis of age. By the Vietnam War, a consensus seems to have been reached regarding segregation of materials (1.2% approval), but a similar unanimity had not been produced regarding withholding materials from minors (9.3% approval). Many writers seemed to regard proposed "variable obscenity" laws as the lesser of two evils; also, a new concern for racist children's literature (for example, the infamous *Little Black Sambo* and *Mother Goose* controversies) gave new life to the pro-discriminatory side. Thus, it should not be assumed,

simply because librarians were involving themselves with bills of rights and intellectual freedom rhetoric at the time of World War II, that the concepts involved have remained static for half a century, or that the "purist" position embodied in today's Library Bill of Rights would have been accepted unanimously even at the time of the Vietnam War.

Relation of References to Issues and Attitudes Toward Censorship

The relations between the three issues of Question 1 and the attitudes expressed in Question 2 were examined using chi-square tests. Two of these tests were employed for each issue: one for the Vietnam period only, and one for the entire sample group. (The samples from the two world wars, taken together, totalled only sixteen articles, which was too few to permit similar tests to be run for these periods alone.) Table 6 shows the results of these tests.

Table 6.-- References to Issues and Attitudes Toward Censorship

Sample	Sample Size (n)	Degrees of Freedom	Chi-Square Value	Probability Level
War: Vietnam	86	1	4.3	.05
War: Total	102	1	.3	[.70]
Social Issues: V	86	1	11.4	.001
Social Issues: T	102	1	12.1	.001
I.F.: Vietnam	86	1	0	[1]
I.F.: Total	102	1	2.6	[.20]

In the Vietnam group, there was found to be a significant positive relation between mention of war and unqualified disapproval; that is, articles mentioning the war were more likely to express unqualified disapproval of censorship than those that did not mention the war. However, as may be seen, this relation did not hold true for the entire group of articles. As already explained, it was impossible, because of the small size of the first two groups, to explore this discrepancy further. It may tentatively be assumed, though, that the difference is due to a combination of two factors: a) the proportionally greater number of war references in articles of the first two groups (an average of 43.8%, compared to 31.4% for the third period); and b) the lower incidence of unqualified disapproval of censorship in the first two groups (an average of 31.3%, compared to 74.4%).

Reference to domestic social issues was found to be positively related to unqualified disapproval of censorship within both the Vietnam group and the sample as a whole. Surprisingly, reference to intellectual freedom concepts and unqualified disapproval were found to be totally unconnected within the Vietnam group ($\chi^2=0$), and only tenuously connected within the larger sample. This is probably because intellectual freedom and the ideas associated with it were so ubiquitously in vogue, at least during the Vietnam War period, that they were mentioned as often by their opponents as by their advocates.

Approved and Disapproved Motives for Censorship

Question 3 concerned the context within which a writer's approval or disapproval of censorship was expressed. That is, did the writer express approval/disapproval of censoring an item because of its moral/sexual or political/military content, its intrinsic value/literary quality,

or because of the harm it might do to society or to elements within society? The results of this question are valuable on two levels. First, the relative number of citations -- with either approval or disapproval -- of motives in each category varied significantly from war to war. As shown in Table 7, political motives (e.g., control of German propaganda) were cited three times in the first period, while moral/ethical motives were mentioned only once. (The "intrinsic value" category will be discussed separately.) In the World War II group, this proportion changed: Censorship for moral reasons was mentioned eight times, while only four references to political censorship were found. In the Vietnam period, moral censorship still led with 42 references, but political motives had dropped to third place behind social motives. (Again, a tabulation by year can be found in the appendix.)

Table 7.-- Motives Cited (A+D) (Question 3)

Period	Total # of Motives Cited	Moral/ Ethical	Political/ Military	Social	Intrinsic Value
World War I	**5 (100%)**	1 (20%)	3 (60%)		1 (20%)
World War II	**18 (100%)**	8 (44.4%)	4 (22.2%)	2 (11.1%)	4 (22.2%)
Vietnam War	**108 (100%)**	42 (38.9%)	24 (22.2%)	28 (25.9%)	14 (13.0%)

Table 8 illustrates the next level of significance: Did writers approve or disapprove of the motives they cited? In World War I, all opinions (all three of them) favored censorship for

political and moral reasons. In the second period, opinion was evenly divided in the social and political areas, but had clearly shifted in favor of an anti-censorship position regarding censorship for moral reasons. The same seven-to-one opposition to moral censorship prevailed in the Vietnam period. In this third group, though, strong disapproval of political censorship was evident, as was pronounced -- but not unanimous -- disapproval of censorship for the good of society.

Table 8.-- Approved/Disapproved Motives for Censorship (Question 3)

		World War I	World War II	Vietnam War
Moral/Ethical	**A**	1 (100%)	1 (12.5%)	5 (11.6%)
	D		7 (87.5%)	37 (86.0%)
Political/Military	**A**	3 (100%)	2 (50%)	
	D		2 (50%)	24 (100%)
Social	**A**		1 (50%)	7 (25%)
	D		1 (50%)	21 (75%)
Intrinsic Value	**A**	1 (100%)	4 (100%)	9 (64.3%)
	D			5 (35.7%)

The concept of intrinsic value or literary merit may have no place in an exploration of censorship; it overlaps the thin line between censorship and selection which was painstakingly drawn in the "Definition of Terms." Approval of "censorship" for reasons of worth still prevailed in the Vietnam period by almost two to one. Moreover, three of the five minority disapprovals came from non-librarians (one freedom-to-read advocate and two lawyers), making

it seem probable that the writers had in mind more the legal than the library issues. It is clear that librarians still had qualms about giving equal shelf space to inaccurate, badly-written, or biased books. Whether or not those qualms are appropriate is the proper subject of a different paper.

Language -- Targeted Items

Question 4 was intended to shed further light on the assumptions and attitudes of the article's authors through semantic analysis of the terms used to refer to the targets of censorship. Terms were coded per article, not per appearance: that is, if a phrase was used twice within an article, it was still only recorded one time. The terms seemed to fall naturally into four categories, corresponding somewhat to the categories for motives in Question 3:

a) Terms referring to the item's immoral or sexually explicit nature (e.g., "obscene," "pornographic," "lewd")
b) Terms referring to the item's political or military value, or its politically undesirable character (e.g., "propaganda," "subversive")
c) Terms referring to the item's intrinsic worth or importance, or lack thereof (e.g., "badly done," "heavily biased," "mediocre")
d) Neutral terms referring only to the item's position at the center of controversy (e.g., "controversial," "doubtful," "offending")

Miscellaneous adjectives (e.g., "shocking," "unsavory") were classed in an "Other" category.

The results are shown in Tables 9 and 12 (appendix). The figure in parentheses in each cell represents the number of instances of that type of language use divided by the total number of articles for that time period. As may be seen, the results are roughly comparable in general outline to those produced by Question 3. In the World War I period, most terms used referred to

an item's political/military value (an average of 2.7 references per article). In the second and third periods, in contrast, the language tended to concentrate on the item's moral qualities.

Table 9.-- Language: Targeted Items (Question 4)

Period	Total Instances of Lang. Use	Moral	Political	Value	Neutral	Other
WWI	**12 (100%)**	2 (16.7%)	**8** (66.7%)	2 (16.7%)		
WWII	**42 (100%)**	19 (45.2%)	2 (4.8%)	6 (14.3%)	**8** (19.0%)	7 (16.7%)
Vietnam	**252 (100%)**	84 (33.3%)	**8** (3.2%)	15 (6.0%)	**28** (11.1%)	17 (6.7%)

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research was originally designed to explore the relationship between librarians' attitudes toward censorship and major societal events such as wars. It was expected that by focussing on three very different twentieth-century war experiences, one would be able to discern three different sets of attitudes and beliefs in the library literature. These different attitudes would represent points in the continuum of the professional development of commitment to civil liberties and intellectual freedom, a continuum constantly shaped by wars and other crises in the national consciousness.

The results of the research may be summarized in two trends:

1. Fewer writers approved of censorship during the Vietnam War than during World War I or World War II. This shift in attitudes is especially pronounced with regard to political censorship.

2. Less attention was paid to war and political censorship, and more to social issues and moral censorship, in the censorship literature of the Vietnam period than in that of the earlier two periods.

Shift in Attitudes

Many reasons have been cited for the increasing emphasis within the library profession on intellectual freedom and opposition to censorship. Among these factors are changing concepts of the library's mission, from moral guide and teacher to guardian of the public's right to know; and the evolution of the profession itself and resultant dynamics among librarians,

administrators, and the public.[28]

Based on the results described above, it is not possible to determine categorically whether or not involvement of the country in war had any effect on librarians' beliefs regarding censorship. However, the chi-square test described on page 19 would seem to suggest that for librarians writing in the Vietnam period, at least, the concepts of political/military conflict and freedom from censorship were in some way connected. It is in this connection that differences among the three time periods are most acute and most puzzling. According to Table 5, in each of the three items from the World War I period, the country's state of war was used as a point in favor of censorship, while the Vietnam-era writers, without exception, cited war or political conflict to argue *against* censorship. Why should the two wars produce such dissimilar reactions?

The answer is that the Vietnam War was different in many important ways from the wars which came before it. For our purposes, the key to this difference is suggested by Table 2, in which we see that indirect references to war outnumbered direct references during the Vietnam period. The Vietnam War, in short, was perceived by Americans as an indirect, a limited, war. It was seen as a localized heating-up of the global Cold War, and thus did not engage Americans' full attention or energies the way the two world wars had done. Vietnam produced no rationing or mass worker migrations at home. Civilians were not called upon to sacrifice their butter, rubber-soled shoes, or civil liberties for the sake of the war effort, and so no such feeling of patriotic self-sacrifice was aroused.

The Cold War which had dominated the American consciousness since 1946 was also a fundamentally different type of conflict from the two "hot" wars that preceded it. World War I

and World War II had been straightforward clashes featuring a clearly identifiable -- in some cases racially distinct -- enemy. The Cold War, including its manifestation in Vietnam, was a war of intrigue and intimidation. Both the external enemy (the North Vietnamese) and the internal enemy (the spy, communist sympathizer, or student rebel) had become harder to identify.[29] In such an environment, in which the lines of battle were not clear-drawn and the enemy might turn out to be one's neighbor, it is not surprising (if somewhat paradoxical) that openness and freedom of discussion were regarded as so important. The ranks of secrecy could not be closed against the enemy; he might already be inside.[30]

Shift in Attention

The atmosphere of the Cold War may also be a factor in the second trend, the shift of attention from war and political censorship to social issues and moral censorship. This trend may be seen in the relative numbers of references to war and social issues (Table 1), in motives cited for approval or disapproval of censorship (Table 7), and in the language used to refer to objects of censorship (Table 9). All of these data seem to point to a turning inward, an increasing tendency of writers to focus on the moral or societal dimensions of censorship rather than the external, political ones.

It would be premature, however, to conclude that librarians became increasingly self-centered and oblivious to the outer world as the century progressed. It seems more likely that this shift in attention is due at least in part to a natural progression of the censorship dialog within the library profession. In his book on the role of the media in Vietnam, Daniel Hallin introduces a model of journalism consisting of three concentric regions: a central Sphere of

Consensus, a Sphere of Legitimate Controversy, and an outer Sphere of Deviance. The Sphere of Consensus, "the region of 'motherhood and apple pie,'" encompasses subjects which are not discussed because they are not seen as controversial. The middle region is the area of officially-recognized issues, of electoral contests and legislative debates. The opinions which the mainstream regards as unworthy of being heard fall into the outer region, the Sphere of Deviance.[31]

Hallin's model may be usefully applied to the censorship debate within librarianship. The model helps explain, for instance, why relatively little attention was paid to censorship for moral or sexual reasons in the literature of the First World War. It was taken for granted that such censorship was an appropriate part of librarians' duties; the issue had not yet moved out of the Sphere of Consensus into the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy. Only when dissenting voices are heard does the mainstream position need to be articulated explicitly. Similarly, by the 1960s, it was generally assumed within the profession that political censorship was wrong; hence the smaller number of references to political censorship from this period. Because of the absence of official governmental censorship of news from the front,[32] the Vietnam War itself did little to provoke debate on the matter.

Part of the shift in attention from the foreign to the domestic scene is undoubtedly attributable to the general sense of change and chaos the country experienced during the 1960s. The first stirrings of this change were apparent during the Second World War, when the unprecedented needs of wartime industry brought about mass migrations of workers and the entry of large numbers of blacks and women into the industrial workforce. Though many of the jobs ended with the coming of peace, the war fostered a new sense of racial unity which spurred

the birth of the civil rights movement in the 1950s. A decade later, this movement turned violent at the fringes and was joined by other groups advocating radical change, the largest of which was the amorphous but vaguely threatening student movement. There was a general sense that things were shifting, moving out of control. It is no wonder that librarians, hearkening back to their ancestral role as conservators of social order, found their attention drawn to the turbulent domestic scene rather than the equally turbulent but much more distant conflict heating up in Southeast Asia. Not all librarians wanted to resume that conservative role -- for example, in 1969 an employee of the State Library of Missouri was fired for her views on the importance of radical student publications.[33] But whether they expressed alarm at change or clamored for change themselves, Vietnam-era librarians seemed to be focussing their attention on problems at home. In a sense, the war most Americans fought between 1964 and 1972 took place more in the city streets and college towns of their own country than in Vietnam. This home-town war occupies the place in the censorship literature which, in the more unified and purposeful atmospheres of earlier conflicts, was taken up by the overseas wars themselves.

Suggestions for Further Research

A major difficulty in trying to come to grips with the topic of censorship is that there seem to be no natural boundaries to the subject. One could range off forever into the political, legal, sociological, and literary ramifications of censorship in libraries. As one of the standard arguments against censorship goes, once you start, it's hard to know where to stop. Research in the area seems at times to raise more questions than it answers. Three questions, in particular, arose from this project. First, how do (or did) librarians' attitudes toward censorship compare to

those of non-librarians, and specifically, of the media? Second, have libraries led or followed the rest of the world in other controversial areas such as new literary ideas and the use of new technologies? And finally, what are some of the recurring themes in the library censorship debate? Several of these themes were noted in the course of the present research -- for example, the aforementioned it's-hard-to-know-where-to-stop argument, or the much-debated connection between controversial books and juvenile delinquency -- but no systematic attempt to chart the careers of the various arguments was made.

Despite the quantity of material that has been written about censorship in the past hundred years, the issue remains, in some respects, murkier than ever. The debate lies at the heart of what libraries are and what their role in society is to be. In light of new challenges from the pro-censorship side,[34] it is more important than ever that all aspects of the controversy be explored.

Appendix 1: Coding Sheet

Discussion of censorship: _____
(journal name: volume/issue/page, date)

1a) __ Article mentions the war
1b) __ Article mentions other current social issues
1c) __ Article mentions intellectual freedom or associated concepts

2) Writer's position on censorship (mark all that apply):
a) __ Unqualified approval
b) __ Segregation of materials
c) __ Discrimination among patrons
d) __ Qualified disapproval
e) __ Unqualified disapproval
__ Other: _____

3) On what grounds does the writer approve or disapprove of censoring materials? (Mark all that apply with "D" or "A".)
a) __ Moral or ethical reasons
b) __ Political reasons (including wartime security)
c) __ Social reasons (effect on society)
d) __ Intrinsic value of item (inaccurate or of poor quality)
__ Other: _____

4) Words used to describe targeted materials:

Appendix 2: Supplementary Tables

Table 10.-- War, Social Issues, and Intellectual Freedom Concepts (By Year)

Year	Total Number of Articles	a) War	b) Social Issues	c) Intellectual Freedom Concepts
1917	**1 (100%)**	1 (100%)		
1918	**2 (100%)**	2 (100%)		1 (50%)
1942	**1 (100%)**			1 (50%)
1943	**1 (100%)**			
1944	**5 (100%)**	3 (60%)	3 (60%)	4 (80%)
1945	**6 (100%)**	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)
1964	**5 (100%)**	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	5 (100%)
1965	**31 (100%)**	13 (41.9%)	18 (58.1%)	30 (96.8%)
1966	**6 (100%)**	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	5 (83.3%)
1967	**5 (100%)**	4 (80%)	2 (40%)	4 (80%)
1968	**12 (100%)**	3 (25%)	6 (50%)	10 (83.3%)
1969	**7 (100%)**	1 (14.3%)	4 (57.1%)	6 (85.7%)
1970	**7 (100%)**	1 (14.3%)	4 (57.1%)	6 (85.7%)
1971	**10 (100%)**	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	9 (90%)
1972	**3 (100%)**	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	3 (100%)

Table 11.-- Attitudes Toward Censorship (By Year)

Year	Total Number of Articles	Unqualified Approval	Qualified Disapproval	Unqualified Disapproval	No Answer		Segregation of Materials	Discrimination Among Patrons
1917	**1 (100%)**	1 (100%)						
1918	**2 (100%)**	2 (100%)						2 (100%)
1942	**1 (100%)**		1 (100%)					
1943	**1 (100%)**		1 (100%)				1 (100%)	
1944	**5 (100%)**	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)				1 (20%)
1945	**6 (100%)**	1 (16.7%)	2 (33.3%)	3 (50%)			2 (33.3%)	3 (50%)
1964	**5 (100%)**	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)				
1965	**31 (100%)**		5 (16.1%)	24 (77.4%)	2 (6.5%)		1 (3.2%)	3 (9.7%)
1966	**6 (100%)**		2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)				
1967	**5 (100%)**	1 (20%)		4 (80%)				1 (20%)
1968	**12 (100%)**		2 (16.7%)	10 (83.3%)				1 (8.3%)
1969	**7 (100%)**		1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)				
1970	**7 (100%)**		1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)				1 (14.3%)
1971	**10 (100%)**	1 (10%)	4 (40%)	5 (50%)				2 (20%)
1972	**3 (100%)**		1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)				

Table 12.-- Language: Targeted Items (By Year)

Year	Total Instances of Lang. Use	Moral	Political	Value	Neutral	Other
1917	**4** (100%)		4 (100%)			
1918	**8** (100%)	2 (25%)	4 (100%)		2 (25%)	
1942	**2** (100%)	2 (100%)				
1943	**1** (100%)	1 (100%)				
1944	**22** (100%)	10 (45.5%)	1 (4.5%)	3 (13.6%)	5 (22.7%)	3 (13.6%)
1945	**17** (100%)	6 (35.3%)	1 (5.9%)	3 (17.6%)	3 (17.6%)	4 (23.5%)
1964	**15** (100%)	7 (46.7%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	4 (26.7%)	1 (6.7%)
1965	**48** (100%)	18 (37.5%)	1 (2.1%)	8 (16.7%)	11 (22.9%)	10 (20.8%)
1966	**18** (100%)	11 (61.1%)	1 (5.6%)	1 (5.6%)	3 (16.7%)	2 (11.1%)
1967	**8** (100%)	5 (62.5%)		2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	
1968	**23** (100%)	16 (69.6%)	1 (4.3%)		3 (13.0%)	3 (13.0%)
1969	**10** (100%)	7 (70%)			2 (20%)	1 (10%)
1970	**10** (100%)	7 (70%)		1 (10%)	2 (20%)	
1971	**20** (100%)	13 (65%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	2 (5%)	
1972	**0** (100%)					

Notes

1. Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, Intellectual Freedom Manual, 5th ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1996), 3.

2. See, for example, Karen Jo Gounaud, "A Vision for Family Friendly Libraries," Draft, 1996.

3. Evelyn Geller, "The Librarian as Censor," Library Journal 101 (June 1, 1976): 1255-58.

4. Office for Intellectual Freedom, 49.

5. John C. Swan, "Librarianship Is Censorship," Library Journal 104 (October 1, 1979): 2040-43.

6. Evelyn Geller, Forbidden Books in American Public Libraries, 1876-1939: A Study in Cultural Change (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984), 122.

7. Charles H. Busha, Freedom versus Suppression and Censorship, with a preface by Allan Pratt and introduction by Peter Hiatt, Research Studies in Library Science, No. 8 (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1972), 84.

8. Swan, 2043.

9. Lester Asheim, "Not Censorship But Selection," Wilson Library Bulletin 28 (September 1953): 67.

10. Marjorie Fiske, Book Selection and Censorship (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959); Mary Lee Bundy and Teresa Stakem, "Librarians and Intellectual Freedom: Are Opinions Changing?" Wilson Library Bulletin 56 (April 1982): 584-89.

11. Busha; see especially pp. 143-47.

12. Michael H. Harris, "Portrait in Paradox: Commitment and Ambivalence in American Librarianship, 1876-1976," Libri 26 (December 1976): 281-301.

13. Geller, 178.

14. Frederick J. Stielow, "Censorship in the Early Professionalization of American Libraries, 1976 to 1929," Journal of Library History 18 (Winter 1983): 48.

15. Stielow, 49-52.

16. Wayne A. Wiegand, "An Active Instrument for Propaganda": The American Public Library During World War I, with a forward by Edward G. Holley (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1989).

17. Quoted in Wiegand, 105.

18. Arthur P. Young, Books for Sammies: The American Library Association and World War I (Pittsburgh: Beta Phi Mu, 1981), 55.

19. James R. Mock, Censorship 1917 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 5.

20. Ibid., 231.

21. David A. Lincove, "Propaganda and the American Public Library from the 1930s to the Eve of World War II," RQ 33 (Summer 1994): 510-23.

22. David A. Lincove, "Activists for Internationalism: ALA Responds to World War II and British Requests for Aid, 1939-1941," Libraries and Culture 26 (Summer 1991): 487-510.

23. Quoted in Margaret F. Stieg, "The Postwar Purge of German Public Libraries, Democracy, and the American Reaction," Libraries and Culture 28 (Spring 1993): 154.

24. Ibid., 156.

25. Mary Lee Bundy and Frederick J. Stielow, Activism in American Librarianship, 1962-1973, with a foreword by E. J. Josey (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987): 35.

26. Ibid., 34, 43, and 48.

27. H. G. T. Cannons, Bibliography of Library Economy (Chicago: American Library Association, 1927).

28. Geller, 183-89.

29. Tom Engelhardt, The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), chapter 3, "The Enemy Disappears." See also pages 221-23, on the difficulty the American soldier experienced in distinguishing Vietnamese friend from Vietnamese foe.

30. The value of openness in fighting enemy infiltration is illustrated graphically in Robert Heinlein's science fiction classic, *The Puppet Masters* (1951). This is one of the many books, comic books, and movies of the Cold War era which exploited the insidious horror of infiltration by an unrecognizable enemy. See also Engelhardt, pages 96-107, for a discussion of the science fiction and horror genres' reflection of Cold War fears.

31. Daniel C. Hallin, The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 116-17.

32. Hallin, 126.

33. Wilson Library Bulletin 44 (November 1969): 275.

34. See, for example, American Libraries 27 (August 1996): 60-64.

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