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Introduction

Some librarians face the “difficult matter” of balancing personally held religious values and the values supported through American Library Association (ALA) documentation such as the Code of Ethics and Library Bill of Rights. Evidence of the struggle to balance these values, especially regarding intellectual freedom, can be found through several means including the written expressions of religiously affiliated librarians (whether personally religious or affiliated with a religious institution). This poster reviews the findings of a recently conducted content analysis in which the terms censor* and “intellectual freedom” were counted and contextualized over a 35 year period in Catholic Library World (CLW), the professional journal of the Catholic Library Association (CLA).

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the course of the study on which this poster reports:

1. What are the frequency and context of the terms “intellectual freedom” and “censorship” in articles about topics published in CLW?
2. What do these patterns indicate about the attitudes of CLW authors towards intellectual freedom and censorship? (Welsh, 2016)

Methodology: Content Analysis

1. Located CLW articles from 1980-2015 through keyword search in ATLA CPU and LISTA using “intellectual freedom” and censorship
2. Identified frequency of censor* and “intellectual freedom” in articles (OCR and reading) (see Figure 1)
3. Determine context of censor* and “intellectual freedom”: positive, negative, or neutral?
4. Analyze results: setting, over time, frequency

Findings

Of 94 statements, most of those about intellectual freedom were positive or neutral.

Of 202 statements about censor*, most were positive or neutral.

Future Research

The methodology used to analyze CLW could also be applied to other journals. It would be interesting to compare the findings of this research with content from The Christian Librarian (the official publication of the Association of Christian Librarians) and a journal with a broader audience and scope, such as Library Journal, over the same period of time. What have librarians who are not Catholic written about intellectual freedom?

Additionally, very few articles on the topic of intellectual freedom or censor* were retrieved from the 1990’s. This publication trend should also be analyzed. Why were more articles seemingly published on the topic in the 1980’s and after 2001? What about trends prior to 1980?

Conclusion

The findings of this content analysis suggest that the majority of CLW contributors expressed support for intellectual freedom in their writing. However, some acknowledged the challenges of maintaining individual values and practicing their professional values. More research should be conducted on the impact of religious values on professional practice relating to intellectual freedom.

References