

Nick Tanzi, the keynote speaker at the recent Evergreen Conference, [talked about a variety of interesting topics](#), and artificial intelligence (AI) was involved with a lot of it. One of the more troubling issues he related was how those intent upon limiting others' freedom of choice of library materials have been using AI tools to automate both scouring of library catalogs for items they object to, as well as to automate materials reconsideration requests. These requests often come from parties who are not patrons of the libraries they are contacting, or even residents in the service areas of these libraries.

This prompted me to do some web searching to see what sorts of ways libraries around the country try to minimize the potential disruption caused by bad faith materials reconsideration requests, and there are many. Among the strategies employed in various policies are:

1. limit requests to those residing inside the service area
2. require a library card to place a request
3. the library card must be at least a certain number of days old to place a request
4. require that the person making the request have completely read, viewed, or listened to the material in question
5. limit the number of requests that any individual can place within a certain time frame
6. if multiple requests are coming in from individuals who are part of a group, consider them all as a single request, sort of like a class-action court case
7. if an item is judged to be allowed to remain in the collection, that item cannot be challenged again for a certain period of time
8. due to the staff efforts involved in processing and responding, limit the number of requests the library will consider simultaneously, and/or during a given timeframe

We probably wouldn't need to do all of those (and, indeed, I found no one policy containing all of those restrictions), but one or more could certainly help library staff to avoid getting bogged down in handling a flurry of requests.

For reference, this is the entirety of the "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" section of our [Materials Selection Policy](#):

Patrons who find any portion of the Library's collections objectionable are welcome to discuss their concerns with Library staff. If those discussions are not satisfactory, patrons may file a formal request for re-examination of the materials by completing a Reconsideration Request form, which can be requested at any public service desk or found on the Library's web site. Typically, the Library will not remove materials challenged over any Constitutionally-protected category.

Submitted reconsideration request forms will be reviewed by the Library Director, along with relevant Library staff. The Library Director will respond in writing within sixty calendar days, describing the action the Library will take regarding the challenge. This Materials Selection Policy will act as the basis for the response. If unsatisfied, patrons may appeal the reconsideration request to the BDL Board of Trustees.

Historically, we have not received all that many reconsideration requests. If reconsideration requests were ever automated against us like Mr. Tanzi reports has happened to other libraries, we could certainly be unable to conduct business as usual, since we carefully and thoughtfully consider and respond to all such requests.

Would the Board be interested in modifying our policy to include any of the strategies listed above?

Submitted by John Rucker