

Newport Library Board
Special Meeting
December 3, 2008

Present: Curt Fewkes, Rebecca Cohen, Carol Fisher, Carol Ruggeri, Terry Obtshka
(Newport City Council representative), Jeff Ingram (note taker), Kris Bartell

Meeting called to order at 9:31 AM

1. Public citizen request for change in Newport Library policy:

Waldport resident Kris Bartell asked the Library Board to change library policy to require a photo ID in order to check out adult material.

Bartell summarized events which led to this request. Her 13 year-old special needs son was given a copy of *Eden*, volume 5 by Hiroki Endo (published by Dark Horse Comics) by an older student (15 year old Newport High Options Class student) while riding on the school bus. Bartell added that the school bus transports kids between the ages of 5 and 18 and she was concerned that such adult material could potentially be seen by any of these children. Bartell said that other businesses (taverns, grocery stores, video stores) restrict access to adult material, (alcohol, adult magazines, R-rated videos), so why are libraries different? Bartell also had called another library who told her that they do not carry adult material, so why is Newport Library different? Bartell stated she is not in favor of censorship, but rather in favor of requiring proof of identification in order to check out any material labeled as "adult."

Ruggeri suggested that the same material could have been checked out by an 18-year old and her son still could have been given it on the bus, and that perhaps it was the Olalla Center's responsibility as well as the students' parents to monitor what their children are reading.

Bartell reiterated that other stores restrict access to adult material. Cohen stated that she had contacted corporate headquarters for both Barnes and Noble and Powell's bookstores and they told her they do not restrict purchase of these titles by age.

Ruggeri asked if content labeling is usual for manga (Japanese-style graphic novels). Cohen said that most manga is labeled. Ruggeri asked what percentage of total library collection is so labeled. Cohen said perhaps a handful. Cohen also noted that the title, *Eden*, was originally requested by an avid manga reader, considered a classic of the genre, is very popular and well reviewed. (Copies of several reviews were handed out to the Board previously).

Cohen asked if the request to change policy to restrict access was only meant for labeled material. Bartell responded that that would be a good start. Cohen asked about other works, novels by Jean Auel, for example, that contain written scenes of graphic sex, violence, etc. Should these titles, too, be restricted? Bartell responded that if the publisher labels material as adult, it should be restricted. Cohen suggested that parents were in a better position to monitor their children's reading habits. Bartell said that libraries should help watch over kids. Ruggeri stated that libraries really can't take that role. Bartell asked that libraries restrict as other businesses and institutions do.

Fisher, Fewkes and Ruggeri each stated their support of open access as stated in the American Library Association's Freedom to Read statement as adopted by Newport

Library. Fewkes also stated that library material isn't like alcohol or tobacco. Bartell suggested that perhaps her next step to change library policy was the state legislature. Fewkes said that the board's first responsibility is to protect the rights of all patrons to free access to materials. Cohen asked what would warning labels warn against and who is to decide what constitutes "adult material." Bartell said that when books are published with warnings, they should be restricted. Fisher noted that some day perhaps such questions would be decided by the US Supreme Court.

Bartell said she was sorry that libraries are no longer safe places. Ruggeri noted that libraries are public spaces and such places aren't inherently safe. Bartell said she meant as far as content was concerned. Cohen said that many unsafe ideas can be found in libraries, *Mein Kampf*, for example. Bartell noted that perhaps parents should be responsible for picking out material from libraries for their children. Cohen agreed. It was general consensus of the board not to change Newport Library policy. Bartell thanked the board for their time.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM.