



*EDITOR'S NOTE: Not all challenges to free expression or privacy are covered by the US Constitution. This 'For the Record' section includes news about editorial, business, or social decisions in the private sector.*

## LIBRARIES Washington, D.C.

The Council of the American Library Association on June 23, 2018 voted to remove the name of Melvil Dewey—creator of the Dewey Decimal Classification System—from the association's top professional honor, the Melvil Dewey Medal.

Citing Dewey for racism, anti-Semitism, and sexual harassment, the ALA Council approved the measure, after a resolution was successfully advanced at the ALA membership meeting during the 2019 ALA Annual Conference in Washington DC. The resolution states:

Melvil Dewey did not permit Jewish people, African Americans, or other minorities admittance to the resort owned by Dewey and his wife;

- . . . he was censured by the New York State Board of Regents for his refusal to admit Jews to his resort, whereupon he resigned as New York State Librarian;
- . . . Dewey made numerous inappropriate physical advances toward women he worked with and wielded professional power over . . .

. . . the behavior demonstrated for decades by Dewey does not represent the stated fundamental values of ALA in equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Dewey was one of the founders of the American Library Association in 1876, and has long been revered as the “father of the modern library,” despite being ostracized from the ALA in 1906 because of his offensive personal behavior.

In an article in the June 2018 issue of *American Libraries*, Anne Ford questioned why the ALA and the library profession still associates its highest honor with a man whose legacy does not align with the profession's core values. Some 88 years after his death, Dewey's #TimesUp moment appears to have finally come. Reported in: *Publishers Weekly*, June 24, 2019.

## COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES Minneapolis, Minnesota

The “ABC of It” exhibit at the Kerlan Collection, the venerable children's literature archive in the Elmer L. Andersen Library at the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus, has been modified in response to concerns that some of the featured books include content now seen as racist and because of racist ideas expressed by some of the authors outside of their books.

The display, which opened on February 27, 2019, is based on a 2013 exhibit of the same title at the New York Public Library, curated by children's literature historian Leonard S. Marcus. The Kerlan Collection used Marcus's 2013–2014 catalog, but replaced the objects from the NYPL exhibit with materials from the Kerlan's own collection.

When Kerlan opened its version of the exhibit, its display of books and related artifacts presented them without comment. At the same time, the University of Minnesota published the exhibit's catalog, *The ABC of It: Why Children's Books Matter* (2019) by Marcus, with a forward by Lisa Von Drasek, who curated the new exhibit.

Critics of the exhibit said some of the children's books may be classics, but are now considered by some to be racist, such as *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss and *Caddie Woodlawn* by Carol Ryrie Brink. Another classic,

*The Wizard of Oz*, is not considered offensive to modern sensibilities, but its author, L. Frank Baum, has been widely condemned for his newspaper editorials calling for the extermination of Native Americans.

Children's author Trisha Speed Shaskan, who volunteers at the Kerlan and received docent training for the exhibit, said that when she previewed the exhibit before it opened, she “immediately saw problematic books on display. I felt that the exhibit fell short in terms of not including the racist history of some books.”

Shaskan says that she suggested to Von Drasek that footnotes be added to the signage to provide context about the books that are considered problematic, and a bibliography with suggested readings be provided to visitors. In response to her concerns, Kerlan personnel initially placed bibliographies of suggested readings and supplementary materials about racism in children's literature and banned books on the second floor of the exhibit area. The exhibit is spread out over three levels of the library.

The Kerlan opened its version of “The ABC of It” exhibit with a reception and program featuring a conversation between Marcus and Von Drasek. Several authors and others complained to *Publishers Weekly* that the program did not allow for audience participation, preventing them from addressing both Marcus and Von Drasek directly with their concerns.

In response, Von Drasek told *Publishers Weekly* (PW) via email that because the discussion went past its scheduled ending and the library's closing time, she made the decision not to allow audience questions. The following week, at her direction, signage labeled “Things to Think About” was added to the Dr. Seuss book display.



On March 6 Von Drasek sent an email informing a group of about ten Minnesota children's book authors and others about tweaks being made to the exhibit (to supplement the bibliographies on the second floor). The email announced a plan to hold a public forum on racism in children's literature. In the email, she wrote, "We appreciate our critical friends pointing out where we can do better and must do better as teachers and learners, as curators and librarians to be inclusive and reflective in our practice."

For his part, Marcus told *PW* via email that he is happy "that the current version of the exhibition has generated thoughtful discussions and appreciates the efforts that the university is making to respond to community concerns."

Reported in: *Publishers Weekly*, March 12, 2019.

## BOOK PUBLISHING Ann Arbor, Michigan

*The Siege of Tel Aviv* (2019) by Israeli-American author Hesh Kestin was only in print for two days. Dzanc Books published it on April 16, 2019, but reverted its rights back to Kestin a couple of days later. The publishing house determined that it no longer supported the author's narrative or generalizations of Muslims, according to Dzanc Books Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Michelle Dotter.

Dzanc co-founder Steve Gillis said *The Siege of Tel Aviv* addresses the "tragic situation" in the Middle East by wedding absurdism with satire and social commentary. It was not meant to be read literally as an Islamophobic text, Gillis said.

"That the material presents itself as problematic in this regard troubles me deeply," Gillis said in a statement after the book began to receive negative pushback. "I hoped readers would understand the intent of the novel,

the over-the-top absurdist narrative, drawing attention to—not championing—the ridiculous ways in which we, as a universal community, see one another and fail in our interactions. That the novel has been viewed as otherwise is our failing."

Kestin was a foreign correspondent in the Middle East for two decades, according to his bio, reporting on war, international security, arms dealing, and global business. The bio also indicates that the author, based in Long Island, New York, is an eighteen-year veteran of the Israel Defense Forces.

Kestin said Gillis' characterization of the novel as satire was made up. He described *The Siege of Tel Aviv* as "soaked in blood, as much a satire as 1984 or *The Manchurian Candidate*."

"In tossing out 'satire,' Gillis was trying to deflect the seriousness of the book—which is based simply on what Iran and militant Islam threaten every day, which is to wipe out Israel—instead saying it's really just a comic romp," Kestin said. "It posits a world in which Iran leads five Arab armies in a conquest of Israel that promises a second Holocaust. Nothing satiric here, just scary."

Kestin issued a press release after the book was pulled by Dzanc. He claimed the publisher pulled the book one day after a small corner of social media admonished the book's views on Muslims and the Middle East. Kestin also criticized Dzanc for quickly pulling half of the book's text that was posted online.

Kestin claims the two points of contention voiced online revolve around his use of the word "Moslem," rather than Muslim, and referring to Iran as an Arab country, which is not culturally accurate.

"My Iranian Moslem/Muslim family members in Houston use both spellings, though I'm unsure of

the usage by the family's Jews and Christians," Kestin notes in the press release.

Dotter said around two thousand copies of *The Siege of Tel Aviv* were printed—one thousand of which have already been sold. The other thousand copies remained in a warehouse after sales were halted.

Kestin has the option of purchasing the remaining copies rather than having them pulped, or destroyed, Dotter said. The editor-in-chief added that the publishing firm, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, would let the author sell the remaining copies if all mentions of Dzanc are removed from the book. Reported in: *Mlive.com*, April 30, 2019.

## New York, New York

*Blood Heir*, Amélie Wen Zhao's debut novel, will be published after all, the author announced in April 2019. In January, the author had cancelled the book's scheduled June release, in response to social media criticism by "influencers" who had been given advanced readers copies. [See *JIFP, Spring 2019, page 71.*]

Some early readers argued that Zhao's depiction of slavery was racially insensitive. Zhao said her young adult fantasy was inspired by human trafficking in Asia, but issued an apology to readers who judged the book in relation to the legacy of slavery in the United States.

In March, Zhao called her editor at Delacorte Press and told her that she wanted to move forward with the novel after all. She made some revisions, and *Blood Heir* is now scheduled to be released in November.

"Ultimately, it's true to my vision," she said.

After Zhao decided she wanted to release the book, she and her publisher sought feedback from scholars and sensitivity readers in an effort



to resolve any ambiguity around the type of indentured labor depicted. They had academics from different multicultural backgrounds, as well as one who studies human trafficking in Asia, evaluate the text, and Zhao added new material and made changes based on their comments. They had additional sensitivity readers vet the book for racial and other stereotypes.

It is unclear whether such efforts will mollify Zhao's critics. Reported in: *New York Times*, April 29.

## COMICS PUBLISHING Burbank, California, and Syracuse, New York

*Second Coming*, a satirical comic series about Jesus Christ coming back to earth and learning what has happened to his teachings, written by Mark Russell and drawn by Richard Pace, was cancelled by DC Comics, but resurrected by a new publisher, AHOY Comics, based in Syracuse, New York.

*Second Coming's* story line revolves around God commanding Earth's mightiest superhero, Sunstar, to accept Jesus Christ as his roommate. Jesus, shocked at the way humans have twisted his message over two millennia, vows to straighten things out.

DC Comics, based in Burbank, California, announced in the summer of 2018 that it would launch the comic in March 2019.

In January 2019, a petition was launched on CitizenGo.com to get DC to pull the release from its schedule. Stories calling the series "more blasphemous than biblical" started appearing in Christian news sources and Fox News. In February 2019, CitizenGo.com declared victory as DC announced it was canceling publication of the series.

The *Second Coming* creators asked DC Comics to revert the publishing rights back to them, and DC did.

AHOY Comics, which started publishing in September 2018, said it would release the first issue of *Second Coming* on July 10, 2019. In total, AHOY Comics will be publishing a six-part *Second Coming* series. Reported in: *Syracuse.com*, March 14, 2019.

## BOOKSTORES Washington, D.C.

A public discussion of *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America's Heartland* (2019) by Jonathan M. Metzler was interrupted by about ten self-proclaimed white nationalists at the Politics and Prose bookstore in Washington, DC, on April 27, 2019.

Metzler, a psychiatrist and director of the Center for Medicine, Health, and Society at Vanderbilt University, was discussing his new book when the protestors with their own videographer walked in. Videos posted on Twitter show them gathering in front of Metzler. An unidentified man with an electric megaphone then declared, "You would have the white working class trade their homeland for hand-outs." Amid booing, the man added, "But we, as nationalists and identitarians, can offer the workers of this country a homeland, their birthright, in addition to health care, good jobs and so forth." The booing got louder. The man with the megaphone then started a chant of "This land is our land," and the men walked back out.

Metzler's book explores how some lower- and middle-class white Americans are drawn to politicians who promise to improve their lives, but who promote policies that place white Americans at greater risk of illness and death. Metzler's research found that people in states that rejected Medicaid expansion and blocked the full Affordable Care Act lived shorter lives, and states that made it easier to

buy guns saw hundreds more firearm deaths.

No one was hurt in the protest, and no damage was done to the store, said co-owner Bradley Graham. "The audience was not particularly receptive," Graham said. "We just let them have their say, expecting they would leave, and they did. It doesn't often happen here. It's a sign of the times."

Metzler said, "It was very symbolic for me. In case anybody's wondering what's happening right now, they're illustrating my point." Reported in: *Washington Post*, April 27, 2019.

## TELEVISION Burbank, California

*The Simpsons* episode "Stark Raving Dad" is one of the iconic episodes from the show's early run—but it will now be harder for fans to view.

Michael Jackson provided a voice for the episode, which aired as the premiere of the show's third season on September 19, 1991. His involvement was uncredited, and only years later were rumors confirmed it was actually Jackson's voice on the show. But now, following extensive allegations of sexual assault by Jackson, as chronicled in the HBO documentary "Leaving Neverland," *The Simpsons* producers decided to pull the episode from rotation.

"It feels clearly the only choice to make," executive producer James L. Brooks told the *Wall Street Journal*, which broke the news on March 7, 2019. He told the paper that fellow executive producers Matt Groening and Al Jean agreed with the decision.

In the episode, Jackson voiced the character Leon Kompowsky, who meets Homer Simpson in a mental institution. Simpson brings home the character, a large white man who claims to be Michael Jackson. Ultimately, Leon helps Bart Simpson celebrate his sister's birthday by singing



one of the show's most memorable tunes, "Happy Birthday Lisa." Jackson didn't actually sing on the episode; Kipp Lennon mimicked Jackson's voice on all of the episode's songs.

"This was a treasured episode. There are a lot of great memories we have wrapped up in that one, and this certainly doesn't allow them to remain," Brooks told the newspaper. He said it would take time, however, for the show to be removed from syndication, as well as FXX's "Simpsons World" on-demand service, and future reissues of its DVD sets.

"I'm against book burning of any kind. But this is our book, and we're allowed to take out a chapter," he told the *Journal*. Reported in: *Variety*, March 7, 2019.

## New York, New York

In the middle of an episode of *The Good Fight* on May 2, 2019, a scene depicting a confrontation between lawyers and their clients abruptly stopped. Shortly after, for about eight seconds, a black screen flashed the words, "CBS HAS CENSORED THIS CONTENT."

Some viewers of the legal drama saw the message as satire, just part of the show's irreverent approach to current events, Michelle King, one of the showrunners, said in an interview. Others, King said, took it as the producers had intended: literally.

The show, which runs on the CBS All Access streaming channel, and is a spinoff of *The Good Wife*, often breaks from its plot for an animated musical short that digs into controversial political issues of the day with an explanatory style similar to *Schoolhouse Rock!* A theme of the May 2 episode was American companies that want to do business in China and the pressures they face to appease Chinese government censors. An animated short was created on that same theme.

But the short was pulled from the show at the request of CBS about two weeks before it was scheduled to stream, said King, who created the show with her husband, Robert King.

Jonathan Coulton, the songwriter who makes the shorts, said in an interview that this particular video started with the fact that *The Good Wife* had been banned in China, most likely because of an episode that showed a Chinese dissident character being tortured. (The spinoff *The Good Fight* has not been banned.)

Coulton said the animated short included a host of references to topics that have been censored on the internet in China. Those include Falun Gong, a spiritual movement that is repressed by the Chinese government; Tiananmen Square, a reference to the violent crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in 1989; Winnie-the-Pooh, to whom China's president, Xi Jinping, is often compared; and the letter N, used by critics of the recent change to the Chinese Constitution that lets Xi stay in power indefinitely.

"It was a little bit like poking the bear," Coulton said. "They had gotten approval all along, and at the last minute, a couple of weeks before, they got word that they couldn't put it in the show."

In a statement, CBS All Access said: "We had concerns with some subject matter in the episode's animated short. This is the creative solution that we agreed upon with the producers." A spokeswoman declined to comment further.

*The New Yorker* first reported the details of CBS's decision to censor the animated short.

King said that she and her husband initially told CBS that they would quit the show if the song was pulled, but that they eventually agreed on inserting a message saying that the company had censored it.

Coulton said that he was told that CBS had concerns for the safety of its employees in China if the segment were included. CBS also has a Chinese audience, and when releasing content that is critical of China, American entertainment companies often have to weigh the risk of having their shows or movies blocked in the country. Reported in: *New York Times*, May 7, 2019.

## INTERNET United States

Nearly 3 million students around the country struggle to keep up with their studies because they must make do without home internet. In classrooms, access to laptops and the internet is nearly universal. Yet at home, the cost of internet service and gaps in its availability create obstacles in urban areas and rural communities alike.

In what has become known as the homework gap, an estimated 17 percent of US students do not have access to computers at home, and 18 percent do not have home access to broadband internet, according to an Associated Press analysis of census data.

Students without internet at home are more likely to be students of color, from low-income families or in households with lower parental education levels.

A third of households with school-age children that do not have home internet cite the expense as the main reason, according to federal Education Department statistics gathered in 2017 and released in May 2019. The survey found the number of households without internet has been declining overall but was still at 14 percent for metropolitan areas and 18 percent in nonmetropolitan areas. Reported in: *Associated Press*, June 10, 2019.



## SOCIAL MEDIA San Bruno, California

YouTube on June 5 expanded its hate-speech policy.

“Today, we’re taking another step in our hate-speech policy by specifically prohibiting videos alleging that a group is superior in order to justify discrimination, segregation, or exclusion based on qualities like age, gender, race, caste, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status,” YouTube’s announcement said. “This would include, for example, videos that promote or glorify Nazi ideology, which is inherently discriminatory. Finally, we will remove content denying that well-documented violent events, like the Holocaust or the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary, took place.”

YouTube, which is owned by Alphabet subsidiary Google and has been under pressure to ban more offensive content, said on June 5 that it would begin enforcing the updated policy immediately. “However, it will take time for our systems to fully ramp up, and we’ll be gradually expanding coverage over the next several months,” YouTube said.

Some of the videos targeted by YouTube’s new policy do have “value to researchers and NGOs looking to understand hate in order to combat it,” the company said. Because of that, YouTube said it is “exploring options” to make banned videos available to researchers and NGOs in the future.

“Context matters, so some videos could remain up because they discuss topics like pending legislation, aim to condemn or expose hate, or provide analysis of current events,” YouTube said in its June 5 announcement.

The *New York Times* noted, “YouTube did not name any specific channels or videos that would be banned. But . . . numerous far-right creators began complaining that their videos had been deleted or had been stripped

of ads, presumably a result of the new policy.” Thousands of videos are expected to be removed.

YouTube last year started displaying Wikipedia links and other information alongside videos that spread conspiracy theories. The effort to recommend more accurate information will expand, too, YouTube said today.

“If a user is watching a video that comes close to violating our policies, our systems may include more videos from authoritative sources (like top news channels) in the ‘watch next’ panel,” YouTube said.

A day after YouTube announced its new policy, messages with threatening and biased terms directed at YouTube started appearing on social media about 150 times an hour, according to Storyful’s analysis. Reported in: *Ars Technica*, June 5, June 6; *Wall Street Journal*, June 6.

## San Francisco, California

Facebook claimed on May 23, 2019, that it had become more aggressive about scrubbing its platform of hate speech. In a report the company releases biannually, Facebook also said that its automated detection software for scrubbing illicit content was improving and now automatically detects and removes more than half of the hate speech on the platform.

Regulators have expressed renewed interest in cracking down on Facebook after a gunman in Christchurch, New Zealand, live-streamed his mass killings on his Facebook account. The video was viewed just four thousand times before Facebook removed it, but it spread rapidly across the internet and was reposted millions of times.

The video prompted government leaders from around the world to sign on to the “Christchurch Call,” an agreement to limit violent and extremist content online. Facebook

said it would introduce stricter policies for live-streamed videos.

Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s chief executive, said in a call with reporters that governments around the world should take a more proactive role in the regulation of online speech. “If the rules for the internet were being written from scratch today, I don’t think people would want private companies to be making so many decisions about speech themselves,” Zuckerberg said.

Facebook said it had removed four million hate-speech posts during the first three months of the year, and detected 65 percent of them with artificial intelligence, up from 24 percent the year before. Its automated systems for detecting violence also improved, Facebook said. It caught 98 percent of the violent content posted on its platform before users reported it.

“We estimated for every 10,000 times people viewed content on Facebook, 25 views contained content that violated our violence and graphic content policy,” Guy Rosen, Facebook’s vice president of integrity, wrote in a blog post.

But Facebook sometimes mistakenly removes content that does not violate its policies. Zuckerberg said Facebook would establish an independent review board that would double-check its removal decisions.

The social media company also reported a spike in the number of fake accounts, which it said had been caused by large groups of malicious users trying to register for accounts. The company disabled 2.19 billion fake accounts in the first quarter of 2019, up from 1.2 billion in the final quarter of 2018. Reported in: *New York Times*, May 23, 2019.