

# SELF-CENSORSHIP IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

## THE RESEARCH

Survey sent to NZ School Libraries Mailing List

53 school librarians responded from primary & secondary schools

All 53 librarians admitted to censoring their collection in some way

## WHAT IS CENSORSHIP?

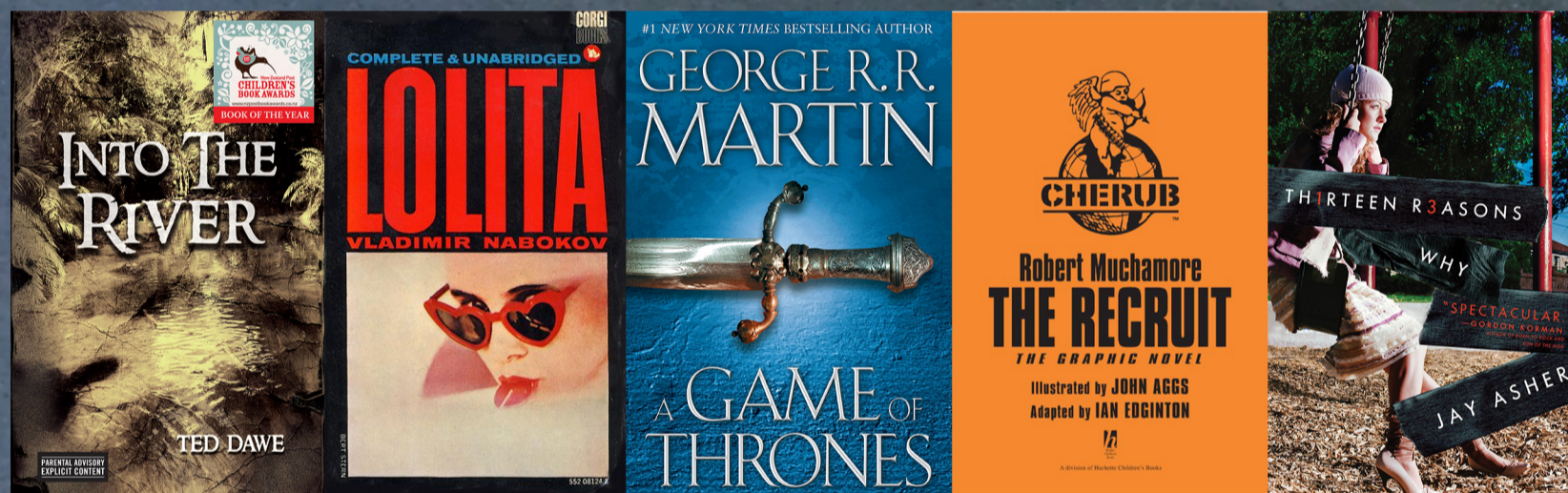
Banning	Limiting	Suggesting
Controlling	Protecting	Suppressing
Excluding	Removing	Withholding
Imposing	Restricting	
		Defined by librarians

### HOW?

Age restrictions  
Parental consent  
Removing material  
Refusing to purchase  
Mandatory conversation with librarian  
Keeping item behind library desk

### WHY?

Inappropriate for student age group  
Does not fit in with "school culture"  
Controversial or "concerning" themes  
To avoid potential challenges  
Government controls  
Low quality of writing  
Factual errors  
Religious reasons  
Sexist or racist viewpoints



## SELF-CENSORSHIP OR SELECTION?

"You need to be able to justify the inclusion or exclusion of items in the collection."

"If something is unsuitable it will generally not fall within our selection criteria and will not be purchased."

"That's not censorship. That's selection."

"Collection policies in themselves may represent a form of censorship."

"Some degree of censorship is unavoidable"

"If it fits with our policy I add the book to the collection."

## WHAT NEXT?

This is a complex issue in which librarians need more training and education.

"It is a very grey area for many untrained school librarians that often lack the understanding and confidence to stand their ground when being challenged or even in building a collection."

Developing a collection development policy to refer to when selecting material.

"It is hard to be truly unbiased in the selection of resources and the best we can do is be aware of our own deficiencies."

Teach children how to manage their own reading choices.

"We should teach self-censorship, so if you don't like something, you stop reading it but don't stop others from doing it."