

## The Library Juice Press Handbook of Intellectual Freedom: Concepts, Cases, and Theories

By M. Alfino and L. Koltutsky (eds.). (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2014). ISBN 978-1-936117-57-4  
Reviewed by Michael M. Widdersheim

*The Library Juice Press Handbook of Intellectual Freedom* is an essential text for anyone studying or teaching about intellectual freedom. As the authors of this anthology make clear, intellectual freedom is a central theme traversing through multiple conversations within the field of library studies, including philosophies of librarianship, law in libraries, and the social, cultural, and political roles of libraries. This volume therefore speaks to students, scholars, practitioners, and administrators within the library field, but due to its interdisciplinary nature, it is also relevant to audiences in related fields such as journalism, critical theory, law, and philosophy.

Each article in the collection explains how intellectual freedom applies to a particular area of inquiry, such as gender and sexuality, religion, and law. Some articles examine intellectual freedom through the lens of a single thinker, like Mill, Gramsci, and Habermas. The articles are authored by domain experts, including but not limited to library studies scholars. The collection examines aspects of intellectual freedom with both breadth and depth.

I approached this text as a graduate student and teaching fellow with instructional experience in masters-level library courses related to law, ethics, and management. I read and evaluated the *Handbook* from my perspective as a library science instructor and researcher. Some of the questions I asked myself while reading this collection were: Does the collection adequately explain intellectual freedom? Could this book be used successfully in masters- or undergraduate-level library courses? If so, how? What makes this an attractive classroom text compared to other resources, like Office of Intellectual Freedom's

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(OIF) *Intellectual Freedom Manual*? Could I imagine myself using this text in a course on intellectual freedom? Would students enjoy it?

The most attractive quality of the *Handbook* is its scope. The variety of approaches within the volume widens discussions of intellectual freedom beyond banned books, laws, readers' rights, and library policies. While these aspects of intellectual freedom are important, they do not sufficiently explain what intellectual freedom is about. I appreciated the humanistic and philosophical quality of many of the articles.

Related to its broad scope, the collection is interdisciplinary in that many of the authors do not write from within the library studies field. The collection departs from any single, parochial understanding of intellectual freedom. Compared to OIF's *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, for example, which is limited to American Library Association policies, the relationship of intellectual freedom to the U.S. Bill of Rights, and case law, the *Handbook* also reveals the philosophical genesis of intellectual freedom and the larger import that the value of intellectual freedom holds for society. Library students with humanities backgrounds would likely identify with the authors' writings.

Part of what makes me excited about the anthology is that it seems to locate the philosophical currents underlying librarianship. While reading the book, the chapters resonated with me, and I recalled why I wanted to study librarianship in the first place. I think these chapters would also resonate with students. Helping pre-professionals to articulate a personal philosophy of librarianship is something that often gets lost in classes about management or technical skills. Discussions about intellectual freedom may be one way to help students develop a professional identity in a field that often seems marginalized, strained, and reactive.

Many of the articles present complex ideas, abstract concepts, or theory-laden perspectives. While the articles might be challenging in ways, I don't believe that the difficulty of the readings should dissuade educators from using the *Handbook* in library courses. On the contrary, difficult readings present opportunities for teachers to scaffold instruction or for students to conduct further research on their own, in groups, or as a class. Many of the articles, while difficult, are clearly organized and present information in an accessible way. For example, the chapter 2 article on Gramsci outlines who Gramsci was, what the central concepts are, defines them, and clearly relates Gramsci's ideas to intellectual freedom. This chapter and others like it provide down-to-earth introductions to thinkers or ideas.

Another attractive feature of this book is its currency. The articles incorporate live issues, figures, and cases related to intellectual freedom, such as Julian Assange and WikiLeaks, the *Copyright Modernization Act*, Edward Snowden and global surveillance, *Cariou v. Prince*, and the Firefly incident at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. These are all extremely important people

and events representative of our current moment. These current challenges illustrate that intellectual freedom is a live, burning issue. While it may be that the *Handbook* dates itself and limits its shelf-life by focusing so strongly on current issues, students in library studies now have likely heard of these people and events, they can relate to them, and they probably want to understand them further. The cases and events are exciting because they are still emerging and are not yet fully understood.

The articles in this reader serve as good models to students of what scholarly work looks like. Each article is well-organized, contains section headings, uses citations, and includes references. Instructors who use this volume can point to the articles and say to students, “This is what scholarly communication looks like.” Some students seem to struggle with creating clear writing or using a consistent citation style, so using this book in class may serve as a helpful guide not only for studying intellectual freedom, but also for eliciting better writing.

The *Handbook* is a good starting point for students to dig deeper. Each article includes copious references and points toward a potential field of study. In this volume, students in the information studies field can easily connect with the key issues of the field as presented by leading scholars. I believe that students will connect with these writings, spark their interest in intellectual freedom, and pursue their inquiries further.

In the end, I see *The Library Juice Press Handbook of Intellectual Freedom* as a valuable resource for teaching and learning about intellectual freedom. The collection makes a suitable primary or supplementary text for library studies courses related to intellectual freedom, philosophies of librarianship, law in libraries, or critical library studies. I look forward to future work in this area from the authors of this collection.

#### WORKS CONSULTED

Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association. (2010). *Intellectual Freedom Manual* (8th ed.). Chicago, IL: American Library Association.