The Freedom to Read is Essential to the Mission of the California State University

The 23 California State University libraries are united in their commitment to supporting the freedom to read as well as the freedom to learn, teach, and create new knowledge in an environment where challenges to those freedoms are increasing throughout the United States.

According to the American Library Association, there were [1,269 documented attempts to censor or otherwise limit access to books or other resources in U.S. libraries in 2022](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/uniteagainstbookbans.org/2022-book-bans/__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHAlxMl9Q$), representing a 74% increase in censorship attempts since 2021 and “the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago.” According to PEN America, organized efforts to ban books in school libraries and public libraries overwhelmingly **“**[target stories by and about people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/pen.org/report/banned-in-the-usa-state-laws-supercharge-book-suppression-in-schools/__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHFY3C1t6$)**”** and reflect [broader efforts to limit](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/pen.org/educational-censorship-continues-in-2023/__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHCfCt0qh$) the ability for students to learn about race, racism, sexuality, gender, or other topics as part of their public education. While national attention has been drawn to systemic censorship efforts in states including [Florida](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.nytimes.com/2023/04/22/books/book-ban-florida.html__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHBwKH8J9$), [Louisiana](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.wwltv.com/article/news/education/battle-over-book-bans-in-louisiana-libraries-ramps-up-in-legislatures-lgbtq-education-politics/289-0a2cdda0-e1be-4f05-9d6e-d934ab79a6d0__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHHpOY74g$), and [Texas](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.texastribune.org/2022/09/19/texas-book-bans/__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHEFodPpB$), California has not been immune from efforts to censor library materials or limit access to instruction on certain topics in our schools, e.g., efforts [to limit access to LGBTQ+ materials in the San Diego Public Library](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-06-29/protestors-ruin-rancho-penasquitos-librarys-pride-exhibit-by-checking-out-nearly-all-the-books__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHHNjUzym$), and a decision, later reversed, by the Temecula Valley Unified School Board [to reject a state-approved social studies curriculum](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/edsource.org/2023/temecula-board-again-votes-to-reject-textbooks-despite-warnings-from-newsom/694317__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHB4s-06x$) owing to its inclusion of information about slain California gay-rights activist (and member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors) Harvey Milk. As the American Library Association and its partners among the publishing community argued more than 70 years ago in their [Freedom to Read Statement](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHFZXH3Y4$), “[the] freedom to read is essential to our democracy,” and, now as then, it is under attack.

For more than 50 years, the California State University has been a leader in learning, scholarship, and community engagement dedicated to exploring the history of our diverse community and to ensuring a better future for all members of our community, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual identity. The CSU is the [largest and most diverse four-year institution of higher education [calstate.edu]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/diversity__;!!OM2WEIN1DMg!BXw2GfXk9wQI9hP7a7SEvLq_WE3f-6aWMxyn5BYOl56aeHmBUbXZv8WrJfjcCwWpl2vNk_dxYz_r7lMosaadF1E$) in the United States, providing “more than half of all undergraduate degrees earned by California’s Latinx, African American and Native American students combined.” Of our 23 campuses, 21 are recognized as Hispanic-Serving Institutions and 14 are recognized as Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions. And, while individual CSU campuses have been national leaders in teaching, learning, and research in areas such as [Africana Studies](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/africana.sfsu.edu/__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHEYnvYPJ$) and [Chicana and Chicano Studies](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.calstatela.edu/academic/cls/history-1968-present__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHJZTXfPI$) for decades, we are now united in supporting the state-wide requirements for [General Education in Ethnic Studies [calstate.edu]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/diversity/advancement-of-ethnic-studies__;!!OM2WEIN1DMg!BXw2GfXk9wQI9hP7a7SEvLq_WE3f-6aWMxyn5BYOl56aeHmBUbXZv8WrJfjcCwWpl2vNk_dxYz_r7lMoPQwpRI0$). CSU campuses were also among the [first in the nation to develop programs in Women’s Studies](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/womensstudies.sdsu.edu/about-us__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHEzygyKm$) and today all 23 CSU campuses house women’s resource centers as well as [LGBTQ+ centers [calstate.edu]](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/diversity/Pages/LGBTQ-Centers.aspx__;!!OM2WEIN1DMg!BXw2GfXk9wQI9hP7a7SEvLq_WE3f-6aWMxyn5BYOl56aeHmBUbXZv8WrJfjcCwWpl2vNk_dxYz_r7lMoEJMBYu0$). The core commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice is fundamental to our system and to the plans and aspirations of our campuses and libraries.

Given this historic commitment to the freedom to teach and the freedom to learn about all subjects, including those increasingly challenged as inappropriate for inclusion in library collections or instructional programs, the California State University libraries join their colleagues in academic, public, and school libraries across the United States in re-asserting our commitment to the [core values of librarianship](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues__;!!MWueTNF2!T7pucDGC24fOIJ0us5oPk32r7zbMXt4wpq0ZHGuarJsIiFRgRANhTHTsDmgXPKzOj2WvXA0UaNJ17MUdHA2iAYa8$), including diversity, intellectual freedom, social responsibility, and the public good.

**The freedoms to read, write, inquire, learn, and create are essential to the mission of the California State University and fundamental elements of a free, informed, and educated citizenry in the State of California.**

Together, we will continue to build collections, provide public programs, and pursue campus and community partnerships that promote those freedoms, reflect those values, and extend the reach and impact of academic and co-curricular programs designed to strengthen an inclusive, just, and democratic society.

Please contact your campus library with any questions or to learn more about your campus library’s policies on collection development or on challenges to the inclusion of any material in your library collection.

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