

INTRODUCTION

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Guest Editor



This issue originated with a “call” for Guest Editors that appeared in *Focus on Indiana Libraries*. As cliché as it may sound, it seemed appropriate to me that as we begin a new millennium, we take stock of where we are in terms of intellectual freedom in libraries through an issue of *Indiana Libraries* devoted to this topic. As I prepared the proposal for the ILF Publications Committee, I was quite confident that my idea for an issue on intellectual freedom would be readily accepted by members of the ILF Publications Committee and that such an issue would be an excellent resource for ILF members. During this time, I had enthusiastic support from members of the ILF Intellectual Freedom Committee.

This issue presents a broad range of articles on intellectual freedom and should have something for everyone. Some of the articles are scholarly in nature, while others attempt to capture the meaning and spirit of intellectual freedom in libraries and in the larger society. Many of the articles have been contributed by members of the ILF Intellectual Freedom Committee; this issue would not have been possible without their efforts to fit authorship into their busy schedules. There are also several articles from nationally recognized experts in intellectual freedom. These authors generously gave of their time, providing articles that reflect the intellectual freedom scene from a national and from an Indiana perspective. A favorite colleague of mine from my years at the School of Dentistry was kind enough to offer her expertise on dealing with the media, particularly in the event of a crisis. School media specialists will enjoy the article by Ann Symons, former President of the American Library Association and librarian at a high school in Alaska.

One image has become my banner for intellectual freedom and in the preservation of our rights and those of our patrons to make full use of the rich resources libraries have to offer. This summer I had the opportunity to tour the Isle of Man by motorcycle. This country is geographically part of the British Isles, situated midway between England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. In fact, on a clear day, you can see the coasts

of all of these countries. The Isle of Man is about 227 square miles and measures just 33 by 13 miles.¹ It is not part of the United Kingdom, although it is a British Crown Dependency and relies on the UK for defense and in international matters.² If you saw the movie *Waking Ned Devine*, then you have seen the Isle of Man, since the movie was filmed there in its entirety. This small island, with its craggy coasts, beautiful glens, brisk winds, and quaint villages, is still unspoiled by overt signs of tourism. Although prosperous and very much a part of the global economy, the Isle of Man hides the trappings of commerce, politics and telecommunications behind dozens of walking paths, high hills of vibrant green dotted with sheep, twisting narrow roads that are a motorcyclist's dream, and beaches where the waves from an angry sea crash and churn against a rocky coast. It is easy to feel “free” in such a place, even for just a few days.

What does the Isle of Man have to do with intellectual freedom? First, its legislative body, known as Tynwald, is the world's oldest parliamentary body, with over 1,000 years of unbroken rule.² Second, it is considered by many to be the motorcycle “mecca” of the world, hosting one of the most celebrated races of all, the TT. If you read any literature relating to motorcycle riding, the theme of individual rights is pervasive. The intellectual freedom image I have is this. After visiting a breathtaking area along the coast known as the Calf of Man, we pulled up next to another motorcyclist. His gasoline tank bore the simple statement: “the price of freedom is vigilance.” This seems an appropriate way for a librarian to think about intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom is not a passive guarantee, but remains a fragile component of the individual liberty that we enjoy as Americans.

So, in a slight variation to a famous line of the television show *Hill Street Blues*, let's be very vigilant out there.

1. Location and Topography. <http://www.isle-of-man.com/information/location.htm>.

2. The Constitution and Political Situation. <http://www.isle-of-man.com/information/constit.htm>