

YOU CAN'T BE NEUTRAL ON A MOVING BOOKTRUCK

The Salaita Decision and What It
Says About Academic Librarians

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PREAMBLE

“While everyone knows that this land once belonged to Indians who were, alas, somehow and regrettably removed a long, long time ago, I would invite you each to step out into the night air tonight and really think about what the silence of those who cannot speak means to us now. What words might we have yet to find through which to confront the ongoing implications of that loss on this land and in this community?”

—Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw), American Indian Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

WHAT IS ACADEMIC FREEDOM?

“Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.”

American Association of University Professors, 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure

“Academic freedom is the freedom to teach and conduct research in an academic environment. Academic freedom is fundamental to the mandate of universities to pursue truth, educate students and disseminate knowledge and understanding.”

Universities Canada, Statement on Academic Freedom (2011)

UIUC VOTES OF NO CONFIDENCE

American Indian Studies

Philosophy

Asian American Studies

English

History

Latina/Latino Studies

Comparative and World Literature

Anthropology

French and Italian

Religious Studies

East Asian Languages and Cultures

Gender and Women's Studies

Sociology

African American Studies

Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership

Slavic Languages and Literatures

Geography and GIS

Urban and Regional Planning

WHERE IS THE LIBRARY?

(WHERE IS THE LIS PROGRAM?)

YESTERDAY
INVISIBLE MAN
TODAY
INDIGENOUS STUDIES



**READ BANNED
& UNCIVIL BOOKS.**

[image by Mimi Thi Nguyen]

INDIVIDUAL PETITIONS

<http://uiucfaculty.blogspot.com/2014/08/open-letter-to-chancellor-phyllis-wise.html>
(7 librarian signatures, 9 current LIS faculty signatures)

<http://ipetitions.com/petition/confidence-in-chancellor> (496 signatures)

<http://illusionofvolition.com/lis-practitioners-and-scholars-support-steven-salaita/>
(235 signatures)



WHY WERE WE SILENT?

Desire to remain neutral

and/or

Fear of repercussion

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND LIBRARIES

“Academic freedom does not exist for its own sake, but rather for important social purposes. Academic freedom is essential to the role of ~~universities~~ *libraries* in a democratic society. ~~Universities~~ *Libraries* are committed to the pursuit of truth and its communication to others, including students and the broader community. To do this, faculty must be free to take intellectual risks and tackle controversial subjects in their teaching, research and scholarship.

For Canadians, it is important to know that views expressed by faculty are based on solid research, data and evidence, and that ~~universities~~ *libraries* are autonomous and responsible institutions committed to the principles of integrity.”

(Universities Canada Statement on Academic Freedom; all edits mine)

SILENCE IS LOUD

(or, Not making a statement is
still making a statement.)

BEYOND LIBRARY NEUTRALITY

More than materials

More than patrons

More than the librarian/staff divide

But nothing without all of these

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE

Senate Committee on the Library
(Final; Action)

LB.15.01 Resolution on Intellectual Freedom and the University Library

WHEREAS the campus library is an academic unit serving the entire campus; and

WHEREAS libraries are the primary means through which students, faculty, professionals, staff and the public gain access to the storehouse of organized knowledge, and

WHEREAS the library performs a unique and indispensable function in the educational, civic and democratic processes; and

WHEREAS libraries in academic institutions guarantee that the widest array of ideas that promote academic discourse are available; and

WHEREAS in the interests of research and learning, it is essential that collections contain materials representing a variety of perspectives on subjects that may be considered controversial; and

WHEREAS anything less than open and unfiltered access to information would be a fundamental violation of intellectual freedom in academic libraries; and

WHEREAS all aspects of information work, including acquisitions, collections, user services, cataloging, digitization, publishing, preservation, exhibitions and public engagement necessitate intellectual freedom; and

WHEREAS it is recommended that the “Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights” be endorsed by appropriate institutional governing bodies, such as a senate or similar instrument of faculty governance; and

WHEREAS most academic institutions follow the 1940 American Association of University Professors (AAUP) “Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure” and their libraries follow the “Freedom to Read Statement,” and related professional ethics that are consonant with the 1940 AAUP statement; and

WHEREAS these statements are effective safeguards of academic freedom and embrace the free expression rights and responsibilities laid out in the First Amendment; and

WHEREAS the American Library Association opposes any legislation or codification of documents that undermine academic and intellectual freedom, chill free speech, and/or otherwise interfere with the academic community’s well-established norms and values of scholarship and educational excellence; and

THEREFORE be it resolved that the Senate of the Urbana-Champaign Campus endorse this resolution in support of intellectual freedom, the Library and the Library faculty and staff.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY

CONCLUSION

“In the name of ethics and civility, those with power accuse those drawing attention to structural violences and inequities of being bullies, of ruining something vital, of attacking something precious only power can fully appreciate and truly protect. In the contest of voices, the win has always been to make it seem as if both sides are equally matched in their opposition. There are, after all, two sides to every story.”

—Jodi Byrd