A Study on Cooperation between US Librarians and Publishers in the Early 20th Century:
Focusing on the Philosophy and Practice of the Freedom to Read

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ABSTRACT
In the early 20th century, the American Library Association and American publishers developed a close relationship in various fields related to the freedom to read. The purpose of this study will be to explore, from a historical perspective, their areas of cooperation and the philosophy behind the formation of the Freedom to Read Statement. An investigation of the primary resources reveals that the nature of the collaboration between librarians and publishers dramatically changed due to the adoption of the Freedom to Read.

INTRODUCTION
In 1939, the American Library Association (ALA), the oldest and the largest professional association of librarians, adopted the Library Bill of Rights, its first document to include a statement on intellectual freedom. The librarians of the time understood freedom of speech and the freedom of the press to be components of intellectual freedom, and since then, the ALA Council has continuously amended the Library Bill of Rights, regarding it as the core of their mission.

After the Library Bill of Rights was published, the ALA adopted the Freedom to Read Statement in 1953 in opposition to McCarthyism. Although the philosophy of the Freedom to
Read is based on the Library Bill of Rights, it was adopted by not only librarians but also by the American Book Publishers Council (ABPC), the trade association of general book publishers, founded in 1946. Even since the McCarthy era, the Freedom to Read has been continuously amended and endorsed by librarians, publishers, booksellers and other associations that support freedom of speech\(^1\).

There is a great deal of research that explores the philosophy and practice of intellectual freedom. Most of it centers on the Library Bill of Rights. There is less research, however, on the philosophy and practice of the Freedom to Read\(^2\).

The purpose of this research will be to explore the philosophy of the Freedom to Read, and from a historical perspective, to shed light on the relationship between the American Library Association and American publishers in the early 20th century.

In addition to the Freedom to Read, the ALA and ABPC and its predecessor actively cooperate not only in matters of censorship but also of reading development. The scope of this study will cover the period from the 1930s to the 1950s and will explore the cooperation between librarians and publishers who support the philosophy of the freedom to read.

The dissertation covers three points: 1) the development of a collaborative relationship between US librarians and publishers in the early 20th century, 2) the process of formation of the Freedom to Read, and 3) the roles played by the Freedom to Read in the development of the collaborative relationship between US librarians and publishers in the early 20th century.

**METHODS**

To explore the development of the collaborative relationship between US librarians and publishers in the early 20th century, related literature such as the *ALA Bulletin, Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly* will be discussed.

As an example of this cooperation, the ALA’s Committee on Relations with Publishers and the ABPC’s Committee on Reading Development held a joint conference in early 1950 that launched numerous projects related to opposition to censorship, reading development, copyright, and postal rates. The status of the projects shared between the ALA Committee on Relations with Publishers and the ABPC Committee on Reading Development is briefly reported in the *ALA Bulletin, Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. The records held at the American Library Association Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will be investigated as primary resources for exploring the details of these joint activities between the librarians and publishers, and the records and manuscripts held by the Library of Congress Manuscript Reading Room will be also investigated as part of my exploration of the process of formation of the Freedom to Read.

From 1940, one year after the publication of the Library Bill of Rights, the ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee worked to support free expression and counter book-banning in libraries. They took the leadership in most of the projects, related to the Freedom to Read[3]. In addition to the Committee, in the 1950s, the Committee on Relations with Publishers actively cooperated with the ABPC’s Committee on Reading Development. In 1957, these two committees merged to form the Joint Committee on Reading Development[4].

From the 1930s to the 1950s, librarians and publishers developed a close relationship in various fields, related to the Freedom to Read, that included anti-censorship and reading development. They formed a joint committee, which often held joint conferences for dealing with current issues.

THE PROCESS OF FORMATION OF THE FREEDOM TO READ

The Freedom to Read and the Library Bill of Rights share common ideas, but historically they have played different roles. The basic idea of the Freedom to Read Statement is somewhat similar to the Library Bill of Rights. The Freedom to Read statement strongly supports freedom of expression[5]. At the same time, it affirms both the publishers’ and librarians’ responsibilities in this regard. This is one of the characteristic views found in the Freedom to Read.

In 1953, the members of the ALA and the ABPC held an unofficial off-the-record conference to build consensus between them. The conference is now called the Westchester Conference, named after its venue. At the conference were librarians, publishers, and lawyers, but also the guest list also featured Harold Lasswell, a political scientist from Yale University, and Bernard Berelson, a behavioral scientist from the Ford Foundation[1]. The participants discussed how to support the Freedom to Read movement. The Freedom to Read was established through this close collaboration between publishers, librarians, and scholars.

THE CHANGE OF THE ROLES OF THE ALA COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH PUBLISHERS

The ALA Committee on Relations with Publishers was originally founded as a special committee in 1938. Its basic aims changed between its first period (1938-1941) and second period (1950-1957). According to the Committee’s annual report, its purpose was to encourage efforts to pass amendments to the State Fair Trading Act that would permit
exemptions for libraries[6]. The Committee took this action because that some publishers had begun to refuse to discount the prices of books for libraries, citing the resale price maintenance system based on the State Fair Trading Act. In 1941, the Committee on Book Acquisitions absorbed the Committee, which was working at the time on the amendment of state laws[7]. As a result, the Committee paid more attention at the time to business dealings than the freedom to read.

Despite the Committee’s policy in the early period, they moved toward cooperating with publishers’ associations in the 1950s. The ABPC was founded in 1946, and in 1950 its Committee on Reading Development started to expand book markets in rural areas[8]. In the same year, the ALA Committee on Relations with Publishers changed its policy, and the two committees began to hold joint committees regularly. In the 1950s, librarians and publishers started to pay close attention to questions of intellectual freedom and anti-censorship. They also worked to promote postal legislation by becoming lobbyists. At the same time, they held the National Rural Reading Conference and improved the distribution of books and of library services in rural areas[9]. In 1957, the two committees merged and started to work together under the name of the ALA-ABPC Joint Committee on Reading Development.

Looking at the ALA Committee on Relations with Publishers through the first and the second periods, it can be seen that there are major differences in the nature of the Committee’s practices. In the first period, from the late 1930s to the 1950s, the committee kept its eye on legislation, and its aims clashed with those of publishers. However, in the second period, the Committee started to develop common interests with publishers’ associations. Moreover, in the 1950s, the Committee focused on the matter of intellectual freedom and anti-censorship; but in the late 1950s, after Joseph McCarthy’s death, the committee’s interests gradually shifted toward projects that concerned reading development[10].

The ALA-ABPC Joint Committee on Reading Development, the successor to the Committee on Relations with Publishers, reports that the Freedom to Read provided the foundation for the public information programs that have since then been conducted by both librarians and publishers[11]. It is obvious that the cultural environment and the state of collaboration between librarians and publishers were greatly influenced by the publication of the Freedom to Read. It is therefore of interest and importance to explore these differences observed before and after the Freedom to Read.
REFERENCES

[11] Twenty Years of Reading Development Projects, by the Committee on Reading Development, in Collaboration with the National Book Committee, Inc., 1951-1971. (1971, 11 March), Record Series 6/1/6, Box 38, American Library Association Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.