appeal that influenced all branches of literature, including adult fiction, series books, and juvenile literature. She appropriately notes their growing lightness of spirit, which helped to shape the literature of the American Golden Age that followed.

A few omissions in this otherwise comprehensive history need remark. Very little is said about American children's book illustration, although I appreciate that text is more Avery's focus than illustration. I would have been interested in seeing how the illustrations developed a peculiarly American expression. While Barbara Bader's fine book on twentieth-century American children's book illustration, *American Picturebooks from Noah's Ark to the Beast Within* (New York: Macmillan, 1976) illuminates the critical growing years of American picture books, very little earlier history is available, except on certain isolated illustrators such as Howard Pyle or Jessie Willcox Smith. Also, I would have been gratified to see more attention placed on pioneer American children's librarians like Anne Carroll Moore, whose library influence extended to the literature itself. She does mention Caroline Hewins (inexactly named as a children's book librarian; she was a library director and advocate for children's libraries). More women's library history is needed that integrates with children's book history so that the confluence of these two fields in America's cultural history can be recognized. Avery graciously mentions the special collections across America where she conducted her research, which is a tribute to American collectors and curators, like Ruth Baldwin, who early on initiated a strong interest in the children's book as history and work of art and developed outstanding collections for research.

Harvey Darton's long-classic history, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932; rev. 1982) is being reexamined by contemporary historians, particularly feminist critics, for its omissions and often idiosyncratic interpretations that have shaped the historiography of the field. Gillian Avery's work *Behold the Child* nudges Darton's canonical status and reminds us that American children's literature is a subject worthy of the best in comparative history and cultural study. In Avery's words, her "skeleton outline" is "a beginning" (p. xi)—and more full-bodied than she imagines—to the anatomy of an American literature of childhood.

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Censorship of Expression in the 1980s: A Statistical Survey. By JOHN B. HARER and STEVEN R. HARRIS. Contributions to the Study of Mass Media and Communications, no. 45. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994. Pp. xvii + 181. $49.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-313-28746-5.

Since so few people in our discipline take up the challenge of formal inquiry in the minefields of intellectual freedom, we should commend and encourage anybody who does. It is therefore with all the more ambivalence, even reluctance, that I approach a review of this work by two university librarians, John Harer and Steven Harris, and find myself unable to be more positive about their contribution to the literature.

The main objectives of the authors were to present a compilation and analysis of censorship incidents in the United States in the 1980s as reported in the serial publications of four leading intellectual freedom advocacy groups and to compare and "benchmark" the picture thus obtained with the situation in previ-

ous decades. The authors note that their primary motivation for the study was to compare the picture in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which they described as an "era of liberal causes" that turned out to produce a decade of censorship, with the rate of challenges that many people feared would increase massively in the censorship-prone climate of the more conservative Reagan-Bush era that followed. Later on in the text, a more ambitious task is mentioned: to describe the total effect of complaints on intellectual freedom in the United States.

This work replicates a study by L. B. Woods—*A Decade of Censorship in America: The Threat to Classrooms and Libraries, 1966–1975* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1979)—who took as his source of data the newspaper accounts of censorship incidents compiled by the Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association and published in its *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*. In addition to the *Newsletter*, Harer and Harris used three other secondary sources of data: *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn*, published by People for the American Way, *Censorship News*, published by the National Coalition against Censorship, and *Student Press Law Center Report*, published by the organization of the same name.

The authors provide a cursory overview of the censorship literature and a similarly brief discussion of the limitations of relying on already published sources for their data. There is a promising theoretical analysis of the relationship between complaints and acts of censorship, a connection described as a "spectrum of the gross catalytic effect of citizen pressure" made up of four identifiable types of possible complaints that range from "benign complaints," where exerted pressure appears to have no effect and the governing authority's decision is therefore not threatened, through to "radical complaints," where direct physical action has been taken against the offending material (theft, defacement, and so forth) by vigilante private citizens. The promise of this model is deflated, however, by the failure of the authors to apply it to their own data.

One innovation that the authors added to their description of censorship incidents was the identity of advocates for intellectual freedom, defined as persons or groups willing to stand up to challenges and take positive action toward defending the expressive rights of others or confronting a complainant in a censorship challenge. This innovation is an interesting and promising notion, but there are two serious conceptual and methodological problems with its use in this work. First, the authors' definition of an "advocate" arbitarily excludes librarians "in defense of their own collection" as well as teachers in their own classroom because such individuals "have a vested interest in the defense of" an item and because they are required to defend challenged materials as part of their normal duties and as members of professions with professional codes such as the Library Bill of Rights; only by acting "in some substantial way" beyond their "natural advocacy" role would librarians or teachers be identified as advocates for purposes of the study (pp. 41, 86). Second, while the authors are aware that fewer than half of the incident reports compiled by the four advocacy groups were sufficiently detailed to give such information, they proceed to generalize from the source data anyway.

From these unreliable data, the authors conclude that teachers and professors were the most frequent advocates, followed by citizens, the American Civil Liberties Association, students, and parents. Librarians and library boards were identified in only thirteen out of 989 instances. These conclusions are artifacts of the authors' source data and its limitations rather than valid reflections of the social phenomenon of intellectual freedom advocacy across the country. As a result, such conclusions and claims not only mislead the reader but misrepresent the contribution and dedication of librarians to intellectual freedom principles.

But these are minor issues in a work whose stated objectives are ultimately

too ambitious for the research design created by its authors. The major issue is the validity and reliability of their sources of data for the goal of constructing a total picture of American censorship in the 1980s. These sources are the serial publications of four advocacy groups that contain secondary accounts of censorship incidents collected and compiled from the published reports found in local newspapers across the country.

I believe these and other like-minded advocacy groups are critical to the preservation of American democratic institutions. Their continuing efforts to raise public awareness of intellectual freedom issues are to be commended, and that is what their compilations of reports on censorship incidents help to accomplish. But these compilations show only the tip of the iceberg of censorship activity around the country. For one thing, local newspapers are highly selective in what they decide to report: their criterion is newsworthiness. Newspapers are much more likely to report challenges that have resulted in the banning or withdrawal of materials from schools or libraries than they are to report those that have resulted in retention. They are also much more likely to report challenges to the works of well-known authors such as Judy Blume, to titles that have already been frequently targeted or that deal with socially controversial topics and cultural taboos, and to materials that occasion public uproar and community divisiveness.

Evidence that the press overreports sensational—and hence, grossly unrepresentative—incidents is supplied by the data that the authors themselves presented from the compilations by the four serials. In only 2–25 percent of all incidents reported in the four secondary publications was the challenged material retained (the awkward label of "unsuccessful" challenges was used to describe these outcomes, while other outcomes were referred to as "successful" or "partially successful" challenges). These rates are at variance with those reported in recent nationwide questionnaire surveys. In her landmark study of challenges to materials in a random sample of secondary school libraries across the United States, Dianne Hopkins found that just over 50 percent of all targeted items were retained without restriction ("Factors Influencing the Outcome of Challenges to Materials in Secondary School Libraries," U.S. Department of Education, 1991). My own study of Canadian public libraries found that 72 percent of challenged items were retained without restriction or internal relocation ("A Study of Community Censorship Pressures on Canadian Public Libraries," *Canadian Library Journal* 49 [February 1992]: 29–38).

Another indicator of the skewed nature of the secondary source data is revealed in the pattern of single versus multiple challenges to particular materials over the decade. The data analyzed by Harer and Harris showed that 42 percent of challenged titles were objected to more than once during the period they studied. Both Hopkins's research and mine showed that only 10 percent of challenged titles were objected to more than once during the study period.

Other difficulties are also found in the source data. One is that the four advocacy groups vary widely in the extent of their coverage of censorship incidents. During the ten-year period studied by the authors, the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* reported 2,174 incidents, *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn* reported 344, *Censorship News* reported 41, and *Student Press Law Center Report* reported 234. Part of the explanation for these widely varying figures may be found in widely varying publication frequencies of these four "periodicals," as the authors describe them: the first appears bimonthly, the second annually, the third quarterly, and the last three times per year. Hence, the average number of censorship incidents reported by each publication varies from thirty-five per issue in the

Newsletter to thirty-eight in *Attacks*, one in *Censorship News*, and eight in *Student Press*. Yet the authors claim that all four "record numerous censorship incidents in each issue and gather information in a similar, systematic way" (p. 35). At least this is their initial claim. But just a few pages later, they note that higher numbers of incidents reported in the later 1980s are probably a reflection of changes in procedures for reporting incidents and "perhaps an increase in their vigilance of intellectual freedom issues" (p. 44). And near the end of the book, after all of their findings have been presented, they revisit the four sources and conclude that although each one is published by a nationally prominent intellectual freedom organization whose primary purpose is to combat censorship, "most of their other attributes beyond this fact are very different" (p. 113).

Not only do the four publications vary in frequency of issue and in coverage of incidents but they differ in scope of coverage and target audience, ranging from any type of challenge of interest to the library profession in the case of the *Newsletter*, to the much more limited focus on schools and academic institutions by *Attacks* and *Censorship News*, to an even more narrowly defined focus on student journalism and occasional reports of textbook or other school and college incidents by *Student Press*.

Another difficulty that the authors do not address is the extent to which there is duplicate reporting of incidents among the four publications. For example, *Deenie* by Judy Blume is mentioned eighteen times by the *Newsletter*, three times by *Attacks*, and twice by *Censorship News*. Are these all unique incidents, or have they been double counted? The authors are silent on this point, as they are silent on the process that they followed in selecting incidents for inclusion in their study: Did one person make all the selections? If more than one, what was the rate of interjudge reliability? How many reports of incidents were excluded, if any, and why?

Even more troubling, however, is that Harer and Harris's data reveal a strangely downward trend in the total number of incidents reported by the *Newsletter* during the 1980s. They documented 365 incidents in 1981, but by 1990 there were only fifty-one incidents. In the March 1995 issue of the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom reported that the number of challenges reported to it in 1991 was 514 (p. 36). Something is seriously amiss when the tip of the iceberg is reduced to a few snowflakes of data.

The same discrepancy is found in the authors' compilation of data from *Attacks*. The authors report that *Attacks* documented only forty-eight incidents in 1990. Yet People for the American Way, the organization that publishes *Attacks*, reported 220 incidents of attempted censorship in that year, according to a brief item in the November 1991 issue of the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* (p. 189).

Instead of questioning the reliability of their numbers, the authors accepted them uncritically and tried to explain them by claiming that the downward pattern shows a "slow dissipation of national interest in censorship over the decade" and that "under the charismatic leadership of Reagan, many Americans were spurred on to acts of civil indignity, and that this charisma gradually faded over time, almost to the point of disappearing under Bush's watch" (p. 43). Hence, the authors concluded, "the theory of a conservative tide toward a greater level of censorship held true for only the first part of the 1980s," and by the late 1980s "the face of conservatism had changed, although it was still very much active, but the growth of censorship had not been evident in the reporting sources" (pp. 118–19).

These speculative generalizations about national political behavior, based on such a limited foundation of source data, are inappropriate to the point of absurdity. A basic difficulty with the authors' sweeping characterizations is the questionable practice of feeling obliged to reduce every ten-year period to some manageable catchword or phrase, some simplistic label. This reductionism does little justice to the social forces competing for political hegemony and power at any one time. When people talk about the idealism of the 1960s and 1970s, they are surely unaware of or have forgotten just how much more systemically repressive those years were than contemporary society is, for the media code of invisibility in the 1960s and 1970s was still tightly clamped around a whole host of cultural issues and phenomena that now find unparalleled voice in public discourse: women's rights, gay rights, youth culture, racism, sexuality, sex education, birth control, abortion, rape, dysfunctional families, family violence, divorce, alcoholism, environmental destruction—the list goes on. Those earlier decades were anything but the halcyon days of freedom—they were merely witness to the awakening of a long and still continuing challenge to unchecked government repression. As my colleague Dr. Bernd Frohmann, at the University of Western Ontario, noted in conversation, the question of how conservative a time is is a complex question that involves teasing out all the contradictions among the many simultaneous struggles for freedom, control, or both.

All of the authors' findings and conclusions, then, have to be regarded as attributes of their methodology rather than as valid depictions of the phenomenon of social censorship in the United States during the 1980s. In other words, their findings and conclusions are artifacts of study design, not reflections of social reality. This is all the more disappointing because the authors themselves noted the major sources of bias inherent in their data-gathering procedure: lack of control over how the data were initially collected; newsworthiness as a criterion for newspaper reporting of challenges; difficulties in accessing local newspapers from around the nation; and reliance by the advocacy organizations on individuals to pass on reports to them (pp. 32–33). And they also acknowledge that only 4–20 percent of censorship incidents are reported by the media (p. 33). Indeed, Dianne Hopkins's study of secondary school libraries revealed almost two thousand challenges during just a three-year period in the late 1980s. Yet in spite of these profound limitations, they proceeded to invest much time and effort in this approach with inadequate results.

If I have inadvertently given the impression that an analysis of secondary data is of no value whatsoever, that is not my position. My point is that any conclusions drawn from such an analysis must be treated with extreme caution, and attempts to generalize beyond the source data themselves must be vigorously resisted. Harer and Harris chose to disregard, for the attainment of their research objectives, the profound disparity between the quality of the data-gathering procedure they adopted and that of the more conventional questionnaire and interview methods they rejected as being too time-consuming and costly. In variously describing their work as a "statistical survey" and a "statistical analysis," the authors promised more than they could deliver with this methodology. A more accurate description of what they did would have been captured in a much more prosaic title like "A Comparative Study of Local Media Reports of Censorship Attempts across the United States as Compiled and Published by Four Associations That Monitored Censorship Activity in the 1980s."

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