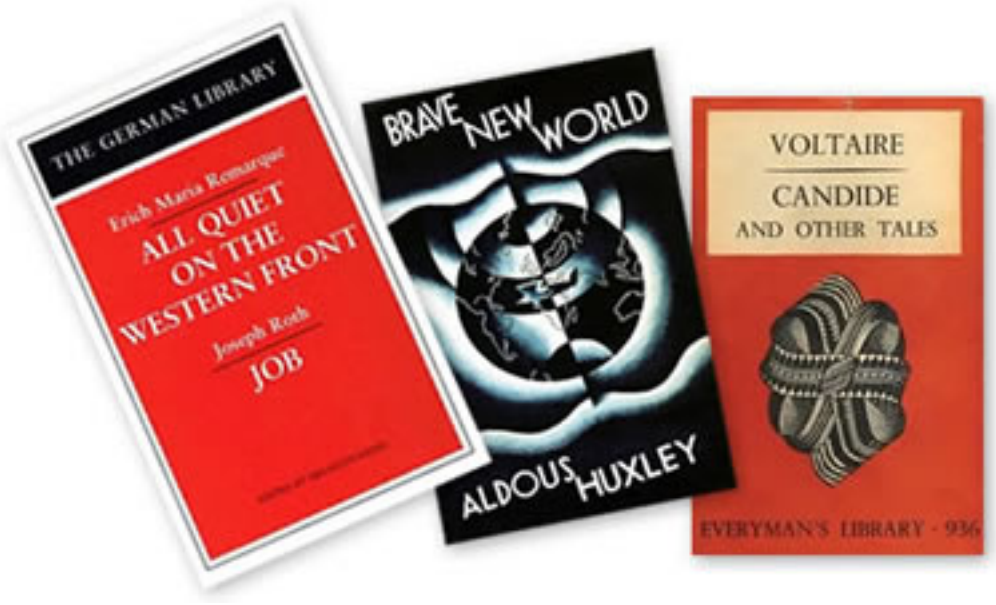

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove books from sale, to censor textbooks, to label "controversial" books, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as citizens devoted to the use of books and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating them, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read...

This statement was originally issued in May 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Books, music, art have at various times incensed the authorities - secular or spiritual. Books were not only banned in countries around the world, but burned in Nazi Germany.

Broadcasters, including the BBC banned some early rock and roll music. Classic books which were once banned but endured the test of time include:

All quiet on the western front (1929) by Erich Maria Remarque

When All quiet on the western front came out in 1929 soldiers in Austria and Germany were forbidden to read it. It was banned in Boston on grounds of obscenity, of all things, and copies of the English translation were seized by the Customs Department in Chicago. In 1933 the translation into Italian was banned because it was considered anti-war propaganda. In that same year, all Remarque's works were consigned to the Nazi bonfires.

Brave new world (1932) by Aldous Huxley

A description of the socialized horror of a futuristic utopia devoid of individual freedom, Brave new world was banned in Ireland, as were Huxley's other books Eyeless in Gaza and Point Counter Point.

Candide and other tales (1759) by Voltaire

No one writer of the 18th century contributed so many books to the flames as Voltaire. He himself was exiled for composing lampoons against the Regent Orleans, thrown into the Bastille for writing libels against Louis XIV, and arrested in Prussia for a lampoon against Emperor Frederick. His philosophic works were banned in France, Geneva and Soviet Russia. Candide was banned by US Customs as obscene from the 1930s until the 1950s, although it was being studied in college classrooms the world over as a literary masterpiece.

Source: http://www.aucklandcitylibraries.com/getdoc/a2208e56-a222-4384-89ea-ed150a4c1055/Famous-banned-books.aspx

The Koran

Revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad, The Koran, or Qur'an (recitation) is the sacred book of Islam, and is, with the Bible, the most widely read of sacred texts. Hostility and strict censorship towards it has existed since the Crusades. Church Fathers regarded Islam as heresy, Muslims as infidels, and the Muhammad as a 'renegade bishop, an imposter.' In Venice in 1530, an Arabic edition of the Koran was published and promptly banned. Latin editions were also prohibited, with a ban remaining in effect until 1790. Censorship has continued in modern times. In 1926, the Soviet Union restricted access to the Koran (along with the Bible and

Talmud); it was banned in China during the Cultural Revolution; and in 1986, the military Government of Ethiopia ordered the book confiscated and destroyed. This is a manuscript version of the Koran is from the Shoults Collection.

Like the Koran, the Bible has faced a long censorship history. For many years the Catholic Church discouraged translation of the official Latin Vulgate edition for fear that the text might be corrupted or misinterpreted. Like most Protestant reformers, William Tyndale felt strongly that the scriptures should be in the language of the people and read without interpretation by church authorities. He was the first person to translate the Bible into English from its original Hebrew and Greek, and the first to print it in English. His translation of the New Testament in 1524-26 was promptly banned and publicly burned by the Church. Printed in Cologne and Worms, 6000 copies were smuggled into England, some in bales of cloth. Those discovered owning them were punished. Tyndale paid the ultimate price for his work. In 1536, he was arrested, tried for heresy and strangled and burnt at the stake. This is a facsimile of the last revised New Testament edition of 1536.

Source: http://www.library.otago.ac.nz/exhibitions/bannedbooks/index.php

Questions

- What does the temptation to censor indicate?
- What role does censorship play in social control?
- Under what conditions would it be necessary?